

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTomARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	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, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	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, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	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>	Thompson	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 21, 2022

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.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

Introduction of—routine proceedings, introduction of bills.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 35—The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months and Related Repeals and Amendments Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), that Bill 35, The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months and Related Repeals and Amendments Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, members of this Assembly and previous Assemblies have done a good job of creating commemoration days or weeks to recognize a variety of different things. This bill consolidates into a single act the 36 statutes or parts thereof that recognize occasions that are significant and have importance to Manitobans. This will make it

easier and more convenient for Manitobans to locate and identify the list of current awareness, recognition and commemoration days, as well as allow members to add others to them as they arise.

The bill also creates a new recognition occasion: Manitoba Day. Manitoba Day would be recognized on May 12th. This day has traditionally been—commemorated the anniversary of the Manitoba day act, received royal assent and facilitated Manitoba's admission as the fifth province into Canada. This is an annual province-wide event celebrating Manitoba and its people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 233—The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 233, the engineering and geoscience professions amendment act, be now read for a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie, seconded by the honourable member for Lakeside, that Bill 233, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Wishart: With this act we'll be updating and modernizing of the engineers and geoscience act, catch it up to modern standards and be consistent across this country.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development
Fourth Report**

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 20, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 31)** – *The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022/Loi corrective de 2022*
- **Bill (No. 32)** – *The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Déclaration des droits des victimes*
- **Bill (No. 205)** – *The Filipino Heritage Month Act/Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine philippin*
- **Bill (No. 223)** – *The Ukrainian Heritage Month Act/Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine ukrainien*
- **Bill (No. 227)** – *The Turban Day Act/Loi sur la Journée du turban*

Committee Membership

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020, and subsequently amended, Rule 82(2) was waived for the April 20, 2022 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

- *Mr. BRAR*
- *Mr. ISLEIFSON*
- *MLA MARCELINO*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. NESBITT*
- *Mr. SMOOK*

Your Committee elected Mr. NESBITT as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE as the Vice-Chairperson.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- *Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Ms. LAMOUREUX*
- *Mr. WASYLIW*

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 31)** – *The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022 / Loi corrective de 2022*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 32)** – *The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Déclaration des droits des victimes*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 205)** – *The Filipino Heritage Month Act / Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine philippin*

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

THAT the preamble of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the fourth paragraph:

AND WHEREAS recognizing the Filipino Community will provide opportunities to educate the public about the contributions of the community and increase public awareness of their role in enhancing Manitoba;

- **Bill (No. 223)** – *The Ukrainian Heritage Month Act / Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine ukrainien*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 227)** – *The Turban Day Act / Loi sur la Journée du turban*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Nesbitt: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Estimates for the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care for 2022-23.

Madam Speaker: Any further tablings?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the supplement to the Estimates of expenditure for the Department of Families for the year 2022-23.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Economic Development?

Okay, the Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): I am pleased to table the Supplementary Estimates for the Department of Environment, Climate and Parks for the financial year 2021-22.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): I'm pleased to table the supplement to the Estimates of expenditure for the Department of Economic Development, Investment and Trade for the financial year 2022-23.

Madam Speaker: And I have two reports to table.

In accordance with section 28(1) of The Auditor General Act, I am tabling: the Auditor General's report titled Follow-up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations, dated April 2022; and the Auditor General's report titled Manitoba's Implementation of The Path to Reconciliation Act, dated April 2022.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health—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.

Daffodil Campaign

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker, and honourable members of the Legislative Assembly.

I'm so pleased to rise today to acknowledge that the Canadian Cancer Society's annual Daffodil Campaign is currently taking place.

Every April, the Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Campaign raises funds to support and help people with cancer live their lives to the fullest and to raise awareness about the needs of Manitobans affected by cancer.

The daffodil that I'm wearing on my lapel, as well as members in the Assembly, is used for their campaign, as it is the first flower to bloom in the spring, serving as a symbol of strength, resilience, courage and hope for those living with cancer.

* (13:40)

Manitobans interested in supporting the cause can donate to the campaign, start their own fundraiser or join an existing fundraiser through the Canadian Cancer Society website.

In partnership with volunteer advocates and donors, the Canadian Cancer Society works to support cancer research, educates the public on making healthy choices for cancer prevention and supports the physical and mental health needs of those living with cancer and their loved ones by providing access to information specialists and a moderated online community.

Madam Speaker, smoking, I'm told, is the leading cause of cancer. The Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness recently launched a five-year roadmap titled A Pathway to Mental Health and Community Wellness that includes the development of a provincial tobacco and vape cessation and control strategy. And smoking, I'm told as well, kills more than 2,000 Manitobans every year, a very alarming number.

Research shows that cigarette smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causes many diseases and reduces the health of smokers in general. Smoking also increases the risk of 18 different types of cancers. Quitting smoking lowers your risk for smoking-related diseases, such as lung cancer and heart disease, and can add years to an individual's life.

And that is why our government supports the Canadian Cancer Society by providing \$150,000 annually to operate the Smokers' Helpline, which is a free, confidential service offering support and information about how to quit smoking, vaping and also able to access this by telephone, text and online. The goal of the program is to improve the overall health of Manitobans by reducing tobacco use in Manitoba.

And, Madam Speaker, the Canadian Cancer Society also operates Talk Tobacco in Manitoba, a free and confidential service for Indigenous people that offers culturally appropriate cessation support by telephone, text and, again, online as well.

In addition, our government provides \$75,000 annually for the transportation program, Wheels of Hope, that helps patients across Manitoba receive access to transportation services in order to attend their cancer treatment appointments.

It is important that our government support those living with cancer and take actions to prevent the disease. Sadly, in 2021, 6,900 Manitobans were diagnosed with cancer and 2,900 died of the disease.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to the Canadian Cancer Society for their continuous support to people affected by cancer.

In honour of the Daffodil Campaign, I encourage all Manitobans to work together to raise awareness about the challenges of living with cancer and to work together to improve the quality of life of people affected with this disease.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, every April, the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Campaign offers hope and unites people from all walks of life to take action in supporting those battling cancer.

The Daffodil Campaign was first launched in Canada more than 70 years ago. This campaign raises vital funds to save lives and improves the quality of life for those affected by cancer.

A key part to this effort is supporting the work—the world-leading work of cancer researchers in Canada to transform cancer care, a patient's quality of life and cancer survivorship. It's so important to bolster and strengthen our existing research and innovation sector to accelerate the development of advanced science in prevention, detection and the treatment of cancer.

This is why it's so important to not only invest in strong, publicly funded education systems here in our province, but ensure that, as legislators, we support the world-class academics, scholars and researchers in our province who conduct such integral research.

Comprehensive cancer care starts with timely access that is accessible. Unfortunately, one of the PC government's first acts was to cancel a significant expansion of CancerCare here in our province. We were also disappointed that the PC government cut two CancerCare outpatient sites, at Concordia and Seven Oaks, in 2020.

Patients deserve cancer care close to home, but, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this PC government is not delivering.

On behalf of my colleagues, I'd like to thank the Canadian Cancer Society and health-care professionals for working tirelessly to save lives. To those battling cancer, know that we stand with you and we will continue to fight for strong health care here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, cancer can be a tragic, challenging and difficult disease which too often still ends in death from the cancer. The good news is that there is more hope than ever with existing and new treatments that deliver longer and longer survival and increasingly higher and higher rates of cure.

In Canada, much thanks is due to the Canadian Cancer Society and its efforts, including the Daffodil Campaign every year.

When I began my internship and residency to be a pediatrician in 1971 at the University of Minnesota, there was no evidence that a child with acute lymphoblastic leukemia could be cured. It was considered a death sentence. By the time I left my time as a physician, looking after children with blood problems and cancer, to enter politics in 1993, 75 to 80 per cent of children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia were being cured.

Today, the rates of improvement and cure from treatment of all cancers have improved—some dramatically, some less so.

One of the most difficult cancers to treat is and has been lung cancer. The government of Manitoba should be doing much more to prevent lung cancer by reducing radon levels in homes, as well as in reducing smoking. The lifetime risk for lung cancer for those who are both smokers and who are exposed to radon is one person in three: very high, and much higher than somebody who is just a smoker only. This is why we need to be very active in reducing both.

My experience in Minneapolis working with individuals who were at the leading edge of the research and treatment of cancer in children showed me how important it is to have research and the clinical trials to test new options. It made a huge difference in the treatment of children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and in—is making a big difference in more difficult to treat cancers like lung cancer.

The Daffodil Campaign raises awareness and funds to prevent cancer and to improve the lives and the outcomes for those who develop cancer. Thank you to the Canadian Cancer Society for all you do to help in this endeavour and to help Manitobans and Canadians in this respect.

Yazidi New Year

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today to

recognize and celebrate the Yazidi New Year, Eîda Charšama Sôhr. [*Red Wednesday Festival.*]

On this day, the Yazidi people observe the new year, the coming of spring and the ever-renewing cycle of rebirth. A traditional activity for Yazidis is painting and cracking eggs representing the beginning of life. I'd like to take this opportunity to share in this celebration as Manitobans transition into the spring season, even if the weather sometimes disagrees.

As you know, Madam Speaker, the Yazidi people have experienced significant hardship and persecution in their homeland in recent years. Beginning in the mid-2010s, the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, began to carry out a horrific genocide against the Yazidis in the Sinjar area of Iraq. The Yazidi people were targeted, killed and exiled from their 'ancestral' land in upper Mesopotamia. According to the United Nations, more than 5,000 Yazidis have been killed by ISIS, with an additional 4,200 to 10,800 kidnapped or held captive.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I commend the Yazidi Association of Manitoba and Operation Ezra for their leadership in providing support for Yazidi refugees. Their efforts to protect, preserve and celebrate Yazidi heritage in this province, even through difficult circumstances, is admirable. With great pride, we can say that Manitoba is home to one of the largest Yazidi communities in the country and often affectionately referred to as the Yazidi capital of Canada.

* (13:50)

Madam Speaker, their stories and heritage demonstrate great perseverance and the capacity of human spirit to continue on and work to overcome terrible adversity—adversity. We all recognize the strength and courage of all who have made the difficult journey to establish a new home here in our province.

Celebratory days such as these are important reminders of how Manitoba's cultural diversity enriches all of us. As artists, activists, educators and business owners, Yazidi Manitobans have expanded and deepened our province's cultural mosaic, contributed to growing our province and making it a very special place it is today.

Last night, I was honoured to join the Yazidi community in their new year celebrations with my colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), as we listened to the beautiful sounds of rich and unique music of the

culture and faith and enjoyed the great feast, of which included tashreeb [*broth-soaked bread*] and, of course, taking part in the traditional cracking of eggs.

I'd like to thank the Yazidi Association of Manitoba for hosting this amazing event and a special thank you to all the volunteers in their great efforts in bringing us all together to celebrate Yazidi New Year.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all Manitobans to reach out to their friends in the Yazidi community and wish them a bountiful new year.

Madam Speaker: And I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings has been provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, Madam Speaker, yesterday evening, I had the immense privilege of being able to join members of the Yazidi community to celebrate Yazidi New Year and Easter, as I've had the privilege of doing a couple times in the past.

And I have to tell you that from the moment—even before I entered, just walking up to the door, the hospitality and the happiness and the celebratory mood was absolutely amazing. I was made to feel as though I was practically an extended member of the community and, you know, ushered in and shown a great meal and a great time.

And as I watched people rejoice and smile and laugh and joke around and shake hands and hug each other, it really hit home that this is the type of cultural celebration, this is the type of family gathering that so many of us in Manitoba have been missing out on these last few years.

And as I sat there with some of my colleagues from across the aisle and community members, it was really nice to see the range of the Yazidi community here in Manitoba. You have those families that have been here for decades, folks who went to school and, you know, put down roots and have founded successful businesses here in the community, and you have those members of the community who have arrived more recently. And yet, through it all, you see a tremendous sense of fellowship and a cultural resurgence, if I can call it that, Madam Speaker.

Again, the festivities include some amazing dishes. I wasn't allowed to leave until I tried many desserts, I have to say. And, of course, once we finished our meals, my colleagues from Lagimodière and Waverley and I helped to stack some chairs to make

room for a dance floor. Now, of course, I didn't burden anybody with having to watch me dance, but I'm just trying to give you an idea of what the celebration entails.

Now, we know that the Yazidi people have been through terrible things over the past number of years: war crimes and a genocide, persecuted by ISIS in their homeland. But it's also been quite something to watch the Yazidi Association of Manitoba, along with partners like the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, Shaarey Zedek synagogue and the Mennonite Central Committee, pull together Operation Ezra and to ensure that many folks can relocate here.

So, as we stand at this inflection point in Manitoba history where we are so cognizant and welcoming of the return of normal life and cognizant of the shared sacrifices that we've been through these past few years, I look at the Yazidi community and say, well, they've been through quite a lot, and I'm sure their rejoicing of their new year and their Easter means all the more significance.

So with that, happy new year, happy Easter to the Yazidi community of Manitoba and around the world.

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: The Yazidi New Year, which is known as Ser Sal, recognizes the beginning of the new year. It's celebrated on the third Wednesday in April, which is also considered Red Wednesday.

The day commemorates Tawsi Melek, which is the peacock angel and supreme Yazidi deity that first came to Earth to restore calm and to spread his peacock colours throughout the world.

Madam Speaker, that's in part why this is a very colourful celebration and, traditionally, it is a time where people in the community gather together to connect with their friends, neighbours, relatives and loved ones.

When people gather for Yazidi New Year, they share meals together, sometimes big feasts. They spend time praying with one another and asking for forgiveness. They decorate eggs and place dried egg shells and a red rose above the doors to their homes. They do big spring cleanups. They share stories about what they are grateful for and how they can make our community a more peaceful place.

Here in Winnipeg, there have been gatherings where the Yazidi New Year is celebrated and has been organized with local initiatives like Operation Ezra. Operation Ezra is a Jewish community initiative for the rescue and resettlement of Yazidi refugees.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful we have a growing Yazidi community here in Manitoba that prioritizes relationships and human connection, and works to make our community a more cultural and peaceful place.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Student Voice Club

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Madam Speaker, I have often stated that we have a lot to learn from our youth, especially when it comes to caring for others. One particular group of youth in Fort Richmond who demonstrate a heart for the community is Bairdmore elementary school's Student Voice club.

I was contacted last month by the school's teacher-librarian Alison Bodner and school counsellor Sarah Hampton, asking for some assistance with an idea for a fundraiser. The students had expressed concerns for the Ukrainians who were fleeing the violence of war and they wanted to find a way to help out. They decided to create ribbon pins in the colours of the Ukrainian flag and to sell them to raise funds for the families who will be arriving in Manitoba over the next few months.

I was happy to purchase enough pins for every member in the Chamber this morning, each one made with careful thought by the hands of students.

It was a special treat to visit with the students at their school and to learn about their efforts to welcome and support the newcomers. In addition to the ribbon pins, the students are hoping to organize a food and clothing drive to support Ukrainian refugees.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation for the caring leadership shown by these students and their teachers. I know that the families from Ukraine will feel welcomed and loved because of the actions of community members just like them.

Joining us today in the gallery are three members of the Student Voice group: Imani Oyugi, Biftu Mohamed and Timothy Bueckert, along with school

counsellor Sarah Hampton and teacher-librarian Alison Bodner. I'm so very proud of each member of your group for turning your kindness into action.

I'd like to ask all members of the Chamber to join me in thanking the members of Bairdmore Student Voice group for their efforts.

Bairdmore Student Voice group: Biftu Mohamed Ahmed, Anami Arora, Parizaadh Brar, Timothy Bueckert, Jaap Deol, Rachneet Gabria, Markus Ho, Chloe Johnson, Bhagat Kaur, Ved Lad, Sourav Mandal, Presley McPhee, Zeshan Mian, Aveena Naso, Samuel Ogunbekun, Kingsley Okolie, Michelle Onyelonu, Imani Oyugi, Miuri Silva, Avesch Syed, Newthya Thenuwara, Esther Uwacu, Abeeha Zia

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin).

The member needs to unmute.

Brandi Woodhouse

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I'm excited today to recognize the accomplishments of Brandi Woodhouse, a young Indigenous entrepreneur. Brandi is Anishinaabe Ikwe and hails from Pinaymootang First Nation, where she owns and operates her business, RezGal Lashes Inc.

When salons closed due to the pandemic in 2020, Brandi stocked up on eyelashes for herself. Realizing that she can use her skills and passion for others, Brandi started to—started her own business in summer 2020 with the goal of providing a high-quality, affordable and assessable brand that young Indigenous girls everywhere can relate to and feel pride for.

Brandi decided very intentionally on the name RezGal Lashes because she wanted to change the narrative of what it means to grow up on a reserve by making the term RezGal something that woman and girls can be proud of and feel empowered by. Being an Indigenous woman often means overcoming obstacles and breaking cycles that are greatly 'mistunderstood' as she hopes bringing awareness to these issues and become a role model for Indigenous girls all over Canada.

* (14:00)

Since she started her business, Brandi has not only received orders from across Manitoba, but also from all over Canada and around the world. Brandi has also just been chosen as the recipient for the Oscar Lathlin Memorial Award at the keep the fires burning celebration with Ka Ni Kanichihk.

The most important message Brandi wants to share is this: I hope that RezGal inspires young girls and women living on a First Nation that have dreams of starting a business, whether it be in cosmetics, art or culinary arts, that you can do it. Don't let these barriers that we face limit our drive and determination of becoming successful business owners. I find that I become stronger when other women encourage and build me up, and that's the key to helping young business women with encouragement and support.

Please join me in congratulating Brandi, who's in the gallery with us today.

Thank you.

Winnipeg Trails

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I rise today to recognize Winnipeg Trails, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting active and sustainable transportation in our city.

When the pandemic hit, Winnipeg Trails leapt into action and worked tirelessly on new initiatives to help Winnipeggers get outdoors and stay active. In a few weeks, the team had mapped out a network of temporary bike routes across the city. They lent out spare bikes to help those who relied on public transportation to get around during the pandemic.

By collaborating with organizations based in the inner city, Winnipeg Trails provided bikes to over 150 newcomer and Indigenous women in the area, empowering them with increased mobility and opportunity.

When kids went back to school in 2020, Winnipeg Trails started the School Loops project to encourage children and families to explore their neighbourhoods on foot or by bike. They created 41 circular trails connecting schools together and marked them with colourful signage, like the Green Owl and Orange Eagle trails in my constituency of Southdale.

Protecting the environment is a high priority for Winnipeg Trails. For example, they started the Future Forests project to plant 150,000 trees throughout Winnipeg, which our government was pleased to support through the Building Sustainable Communities grant program.

Executive director Anders Swanson could not be here today, but we do have three outstanding members of the Winnipeg Trails team here with us in the gallery.

I ask members to please join me in welcoming Simon Pensanto [*phonetic*], Marlow Wilson and Mihiret Kumbi to the Manitoba Legislature, and to thank them for all that Winnipeg Trails staff and volunteers do in making Winnipeg a more active and vibrant city.

Thank you.

Defunding Russian War Effort

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Every day that Russia's assault on Ukraine continues, innocent people are losing their lives as more and more parts of this beautiful country are being destroyed. While we must do everything possible to help those Ukrainians who are fleeing the war, we must also get serious about defunding the Russian war machine.

Profits from companies and assets in Manitoba should not be used directly or indirectly to fund the war in Ukraine. There are many actions the Manitoba government should look at to prevent this. One way is to look at establishing a beneficial ownership registry for property to ensure that those who purchase property through a corporation, trust or partnership cannot remain anonymous.

BC has already implemented this and Ontario is currently considering a bill which would create a land-owner transparency plan. This government should also explore our corporate rules surrounding beneficial ownership and increase transparency by making the information publicly available.

Manitoba should also look at a strategy with the federal government to replace Russian trade goods with Manitoba trade goods. We mine lithium, cadmium and palladium in Manitoba and could replace Russia as a supplier for companies in our province and throughout the world. It makes sense that government could help companies in our province to find alternative suppliers for many other goods.

While defunding Russia's war machine is crucial, we must also focus on helping Ukraine's economy, which has been devastated by war. One way to do this is to see if any of our pension funds or Crown corporations hold sovereign Ukrainian debt. We should consider ways to help Ukraine, including forgiving this debt. In addition, we need to support reconstruction efforts in Ukraine, and should look at significant pledges like building a school to help replace over 300 schools that have already been destroyed.

Madam Speaker, there are many actions this government can take to help Ukraine defend itself against

this violent aggressor. I'm calling on the government to back up their words with actions today.

L'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madame la Présidente, cette semaine, des représentants de l'union nationale métisse de Saint-Joseph sont à Rome avec Monseigneur Albert LeGatt pour rencontrer le Pape au sujet de la réconciliation.

Depuis la découverte de tombes d'enfants au pensionnat de Kamloops, les Canadiens ont été forcés d'affronter la réalité de leur histoire, d'une manière qui exige une réponse. Je tiens à saluer le travail de Monseigneur LeGatt, qui a été un leader de l'Église catholique, qui a abordé ces injustices historiques avec un esprit ouvert, un cœur ouvert, une humilité et un véritable engagement en faveur de la justice et de la réconciliation.

Sa sympathie à l'égard des parents des Premières nations qui ont perdu leurs enfants était aussi motivée par sa propre expérience personnelle, que l'un de ses premiers souvenirs d'enfance en Saskatchewan était le décès d'un petit frère ou d'une soeur.

Monseigneur LeGatt a aussi travaillé en partenariat et, je dirais, en amitié avec Phil Fontaine, à qui tous les Canadiens sont redevables d'avoir été une force motrice pour révéler la vérité sur les pensionnats, et en faveur de la justice pour les Premières nations, ce qui n'a pas encore été fait.

Paulette Duguay est la présidente et Justin Johnson est le vice-président de l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph. On peut cependant retracer ses origines au 24 septembre 1884 à Batoche, lorsqu'à l'Église Saint-Antoine de Padoue, après la messe du dimanche, Gabriel Dumont, Louis Riel et d'autres patriotes métis de l'époque fondèrent l'Association Saint-Joseph—le nom du patron ayant été choisi par Louis Riel lui-même.

Au nom des Libéraux du Manitoba et en tant que député provincial de Saint-Boniface, nous offrons nos meilleurs vœux et notre soutien à Monseigneur LeGatt, à Madame Duguay et Monsieur Johnson alors que nous travaillons à la réconciliation, à la justice, au part-à une meilleure compréhension et à la réparation des torts du passé.

Merci.

Translation

Madam Speaker, representatives of the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph are in Rome this week

with the Archbishop Albert LeGatt in order to meet with the Pope in regards to reconciliation.

Since the discovery of children's graves at the Kamloops residential school, Canadians have been forced to face the reality of their history, in a way that requires a response. I want to praise the work of Archbishop LeGatt, who has been a leader in the Catholic Church in tackling these historical injustices with an open mind, an open heart, with humility and a real commitment to justice and reconciliation.

His empathy for First Nations parents who lost their children was also born of his own personal experience, as one of his earliest childhood memories in Saskatchewan was of the death of a younger brother or a sister.

Archbishop LeGatt also worked in partnership—and I dare say, in friendship—with Phil Fontaine, to whom we are all indebted for being the driving force behind the efforts to reveal the truth about residential schools and to get justice for First Nations—which has not yet happened.

Paulette Duguay is president of the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph, and Justin Johnson is vice-president. The origins of the union date all the way back to September 24, 1884, in Batoche, when Gabriel Dumont, Louis Riel and other patriots, upon exiting Sunday mass at the St. Antoine de Padoue church, decided to establish the Association Saint-Joseph—with Louis Riel himself choosing the name of the patron saint.

On behalf of the Manitoba's Liberals, and as the MLA for St. Boniface, we offer our best wishes and our support to Archbishop LeGatt, to Mrs. Duguay and to Mr. Johnson, as we work towards reconciliation, justice and a better understanding and redeeming of past wrongs.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Plans for Education Funding Staffing Level Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We know that the Premier was fully behind Brian Pallister's bill 64. She seconded it, and I'm sure, before seconding it—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —she read every article of the bill and carefully considered the impacts it would have on the

education system and agreed, mistaken as she was, that she thought bill 64 was the way to go.

So, yesterday, I guess they had an announcement regarding education, but we know what their plan is when it comes to schools in Manitoba. It's to cut, cut, cut. There are fewer—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —teachers working in communities like Winnipeg and Brandon and Swan River because of this government's cuts to education.

Will the Premier stop cutting education right now?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, I think the important thing here, Madam Speaker, is that we have a plan, unlike the members opposite that have no plan about the education of our children in the future.

Leader of the Opposition likes to put false information on the record. He continues that day in and day out in this Chamber, Madam Speaker. The fact of the matter is that we are investing more than \$1 billion more in education in the province of Manitoba than the NDP ever did.

We will continue to invest in 'qualer'—betty—better quality care—or, better quality education for our children, and that's what the education plan is all about.

We recognize, Madam Speaker, that—after listening to people within the communities—that bill 64 was not something we wanted to go forward with. So we made the right decision by listening to our constituents and pulled that bill from the Chamber.

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

Mr. Kinew: You'll notice what the Premier did there.

She caught herself when she was saying care and then changed the same talking point to be about schools. That's because they have the same talking points when it comes to health care as they do with education, because they want to do the same thing to health care that they did to education, Madam Speaker: cut, cut, cut.

* (14:10)

They've never met a department in government that they didn't want to cut, Madam Speaker. But we're saying, enough is enough. Bill 64 is not a plan. Cutting teachers in schools is not a plan.

To the parents and students in the Seven Oaks School Division, in the Brandon School Division, in Kelsey, in Swan River, who have fewer teachers in the classroom today, how does this government justify their cuts of schools?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, the Leader of the Opposition likes to put false information on the record. We are investing more than \$1 billion in education more than the NDP ever did when they were in power, Madam Speaker.

And let me just say to the Leader of the Opposition, we can provide better care for Manitobans, along the same—at the same time providing better education for our children.

But again, Madam Speaker, we have a plan, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite. We have a plan. And let me just read a quote. It said: If you want to go somewhere fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. And I view the shift in policy of the Province as we'd like to go far and we'd like to go together.

Madam Speaker, who said that? Brian O'Leary, Seven Oaks superintendent.

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

Mr. Kinew: Yes, Madam Speaker, let's talk about Seven Oaks School Division, where under this government, there are eight fewer teachers and 20 fewer educational assistants this year.

Why don't we talk about the Brandon School Division, where there were 10 full-time teaching positions cut? Why don't we talk about Borderland? Why don't we talk about Kelsey? Why don't we talk about Swan River, where this year there are fewer teachers in the classroom because of the cuts to education funding that this government has made?

You pay more and you get less with the PCs, Madam Speaker. Fewer teachers in the classroom, less one-on-one time with your kids.

Our plan is clear: invest—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in education so kids will succeed.

Why doesn't the government finally catch up and admit that their cuts to schools are plain wrong?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the only thing and the person who's plain wrong is the Leader of the Opposition, once again, Madam Speaker.

More than \$327 million more in just two years to the education budget—a 17 per cent increase in that budget just in the last two years alone, Madam Speaker.

But the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about teachers. Well, I've got another quote for him, Madam Speaker: It's gratifying to see that the extensive consultation undertaken by the commission is finally reflected in the government's planning. It's clear that MTS, along with other education stakeholders and, indeed, thousands of private citizens committed to public education, have been heard.

And who was that? James Bedford, the head of Manitoba Teachers' Society.

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

St. Boniface ER Services Beds and Staffing Levels

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): These are the facts: 28 fewer teachers and educational assistants in Seven Oaks; fewer teachers in Brandon; fewer teachers in Swan River and in Kelsey. There are fewer teachers working in the classroom. That's a fact. There are also fewer—they can't contest it, by the way, I would point out—there are also fewer beds in the hospital system in Manitoba right now.

An emergency room doctor said on Wednesday that 47 out of the 55 ER beds at St. B were full of people waiting to get into a ward. We know that one patient had waited 162 hours in the emergency room. It's unacceptable, and it's because of the cuts that they made to acute care, starting in 2017.

Will the Premier begin by acknowledging that there is a crisis in our hospitals, particularly at sites like St. Boniface?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, I know that Manitobans don't go—want to go back to the dark days of the NDP government, with skyrocketing wait-lists in our ERs even without a pandemic. Manitobans don't want to go back to those days. What they want is a plan to get Manitobans the care when they need it, including in St. Boniface Hospital.

That's why, in Budget 2022, Madam Speaker, our government is investing more than \$100 million to redevelop the St. Boniface Hospital emergency room. This investment will triple the size of its ER. It will reduce wait times. It will improve patient flow and provide more room for clinical staff to work in St. Boniface Hospital.

The question is, there is a budget before this Chamber today, Madam Speaker. Will the NDP support it or not? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: We are going to stand with the people of Manitoba and vote against the terrible PC budget, Madam Speaker. Reason why we're going to do that is because the budget that the Premier's bringing in is going to cut health care much—the same way that they have every year since taking office.

Even prior to the pandemic, St. Boniface emergency room was often put on diversion, meaning they did not have the capability to accept patients showing up on their doorstep. That happened when the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) was the Health minister. That happened when the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) was the Health minister. It continued when the Premier was the Health minister, and unfortunately, it continues to this day.

St. Boniface emergency room is in crisis.

Ahead of making a substantive investment to solve the crisis, will the Premier simply admit that our hospital has a problem?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the Leader of the Opposition has just said that he's—you know, that he will vote against a \$100-million investment in St. Boniface Hospital, the very hospital that he's talking about emergency room wait times, Madam Speaker.

We remember what those emergency—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson:—wait times were in the dark days of the previous NDP government, Madam Speaker. Manitobans don't want to go back there again. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, who could believe this government when it comes to health care?

How many times have they made announcements about the St. Boniface emergency room? They have announced it in budgets. They have announced it in election campaigns. And yet, still, people get turned away from St. Boniface emergency room, waiting longer and longer.

So, I predict that we'll be here next year listening to another budget in which they make another announcement about St. Boniface emergency room, and yet nothing happens to improve care.

What actually does happen? People wait longer. People are waiting longer for surgeries; people are waiting longer in emergency rooms than ever before, Madam Speaker. The PC health-care cuts have delivered some of the worst health outcomes anywhere in Canada over the past six years.

Will the Premier simply admit that they were wrong?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition indicated to Manitobans that he would put his own ideology ahead of patient care and the province of Manitoba. We say that's wrong.

He said and indicated that he would fire dozens of nurses, preventing thousands of Manitobans from getting the much-needed health care that they deserve, Madam Speaker, just because of his own ideology. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, we think that's wrong, Madam Speaker. We have a plan to deliver better health care to Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson:—closer to home, Madam Speaker. That's why, in the St. Boniface Hospital alone, we are investing in this budget more than \$100 million to ensure that Manitobans get the health care that they need when they need it.

Availability of Health-Care Beds Request to End Patient Transfers

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: –Speaker, over 300 Manitobans have been transferred away from their homes, many of them hundreds of kilometres away. Yesterday, we learned that there are still nearly 70 such patients that want to return home but can't because there's no bed for them.

* (14:20)

This government cut beds. There are 124 fewer beds in our hospitals than four years ago. Health care is simply not there for those who need it.

Will the minister end those transfers and bring these patients home today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member opposite for the question.

What I would like the member to do is to speak with the Leader of the Opposition and members of their caucus to ask that they all vote in favour of a Health budget in Budget 2022 that will add \$7.2 billion to the health system—\$1 billion more than their government ever invested in health care. That will help, Madam Speaker, to bring more care beds, more staff, more supports, more ambulances, more paramedics.

Will they vote for or will they vote against the budget?

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, nearly 70 patients are waiting right now. Some of them have been away from their homes and their communities for many months. They want to return, but they can't because there's 124 fewer beds in our hospitals. There are fewer PCH beds, and though this government promised 1,200 of them, there's a net loss.

David Matear, who is now co-lead for the health incident command, said in November, and I quote, that he completely understands the frustration. Quite simply, we just don't have the beds. End quote.

Madam Speaker, the solution is more beds.

Why won't the minister restore the beds that they cut and bring these patients home today?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I want to just remind the member opposite that Budget 2022 also aims to add \$30 million to add 28 additional beds to our intensive-care units, beds that Manitobans need in their time of care. So this would raise our bed baseline up to 100 from the current 72.

Will the member for Union Station talk to the Leader of the Opposition and members of their caucus to please encourage them to support Manitobans by voting in favour of our budget? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the facts are that PC cuts hurt Manitobans. There's fewer hospital beds, fewer personal-care-home beds mean less care available close to home for those who need it when they need it. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: Yesterday, the Province doubled down saying that inter-region transfers, and I quote, very much remain a strategy that will be utilized. End quote.

Madam Speaker, we need a new strategy and a new plan, one that restores the beds that were cut by this government and builds personal-care-home beds for the future.

Why won't the minister restore the beds that they cut, and when will these 70 Manitobans finally be able to come home?

Ms. Gordon: I'm pleased to respond to the member opposite's question.

Those beds need to be staffed. They need to be staffed by nurses, allied health professionals, physicians. That is why our budget adds \$19.5 million to add 259 additional nurse training seats that will lead to our plan to increase seats by 400; \$11.6 million to add the next phase, permanently, Madam Speaker, expanding seats in Manitoba; \$4.3 million was also announced for 37 additional nurse training seats in the North.

Will the members opposite vote in favour of more staff so that we can have more beds for individuals that are waiting? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Education System Pandemic Recovery

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Yesterday, this government had a real opportunity to restart the relationship with teachers and families and communities. They failed, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Education last year called opposition to bill 64 fear mongering, special interest groups. He strongly supported bill 64 and broke trust with teachers, families, communities across the province. The minister thinks he can wave a wand and make bill 64 ideology disappear, but instead he needs to repair the damage.

Will he start today by reversing his government's cuts to K-to-12 education?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, today is a great day for Manitoba students and Manitobans in general because of the announcement yesterday made on the K to 12 Education Action Plan.

We have been—Madam Speaker, we have been working with our education partners. We have been listening to 25,000-plus Manitobans, which is how we developed the K-to-12 action plan, which is a road map to student success. I strongly recommend the Leader of the Opposition and my friend from Transcona to read the action plan.

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

The honourable member for Transcona, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Altomare: It's evident that this minister wasn't paying attention to my first question, but the auditor 'genewal' was, and he stated, in page 35 of his report, and I quote and table it at the same time: the government had not yet initiated pandemic recovery efforts, and only 15 per cent of school leadership, Madam Speaker, believe that the government is taking appropriate action to address long-term impacts of pandemic.

There's a crisis of confidence in this government. They tried to ram through bill 64, Madam Speaker, instead of focusing on student recovery. The minister has to repair the damage.

Will he stop the cuts and give our kids 'se' support they need?

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, unfortunately there is so much misinformation and fear mongering in that question, I don't have enough time even if you give me leave to run and the 20 minutes left in question period. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, during COVID, over the two years, the pandemic that hit not only Manitoba

but Canada and the world, we had spent more on COVID recovery efforts—of over \$250 million into our education system alone. And then he talks about cuts. Cuts? Three hundred and twenty-seven million more dollars to education over the last two years—that's over 17.2 per cent—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Transcona, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Altomare: I want to remind the minister that school divisions are making impossible choices right now with human resources, not only cutting teachers but cutting programs like psychology, reading recovery, speech language in Brandon School Division. And this is why, Madam Speaker, senior school leadership doesn't trust this government to help them respond to the pandemic.

When they were struggling to meet the need, this government tried to jam through bill 64. And that's a big shame on this government. Instead of focusing on kids, they're focusing on a failed bill.

Will the minister finally stop cuts and provide our kids the support they need to recover from these past two and a half years?

* (14:30)

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker—and it's unfortunate again that my friend from Transcona continues to put misinformation and continues to use his leader's self-serving talking points. It's unfortunate because, you know what, my friend from Transcona is better than that.

I will correct the record, though, Madam Speaker. In Brandon School—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —Division alone, the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —Brandon School Division saw 11.4 per cent increase in funding for the past two years, Madam Speaker, which excludes the General Support Grant. An increase also does not take into account the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —\$6.1 million provided for Safe Schools funding.

Madam Speaker, we're not going to take any lessons from the NDP. That is more money, not less. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I'm coming very close to asking specific members to be very, very careful with their heckling and their level of heckling, and I'm going to ask for co-operation from all members.

And so—you want your constituency names in Hansard? Keep it up, because I don't think your constituents want to know that you have been called out in this House for misbehaving and for bad heckling.

So, I'm going to give fair warning to all.

Provincial Park Fees in Manitoba Revenue to US-Based Company

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm looking forward to a quiet set of questions.

This PC government continues to make it harder to enjoy Manitoba's parks. Rather than investing in parks, they're sending, now, over \$1 million of Manitoba's money to a Texas-based company.

The document which I table shows that in 2020-21, Manitoba sent over \$566,000 out of the country. But this year, another half million is being sent to Texas yet again, all so Manitobans can just get a little peek into our parks. This is wrong.

Will the minister commit to reversing course and stop forcing Manitobans to send \$1 million out of the country?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Certainly, our government is very pleased of the investments we continue to make in parks after 17 years of complete neglect, Madam Speaker.

We know that there is a very, very large mess in our parks to clean up. Madam Speaker, we're committed to cleaning up that mess, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, it's sad that Manitobans who want to enjoy our local parks have their money sent out of the country to a Texas-based company. And to make matters worse, Manitobans are still struggling with the disastrous park reservation system.

In two years—just two years—regular families paid over \$1 million in fees to an out-of-country company so they could just enter a park in Manitoba. That is a huge amount of money the PC government is forcing Manitobans to pay.

Will the minister stop forcing Manitobans to pay over \$1 million to enjoy our parks?

Mr. Wharton: Well, again, Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to highlight the non-work that the NDP did for 17 years in our parks.

We know, under the NDP: cut, cut, cut to our parks, Madam Speaker, in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015. As a matter of fact, they even forgot to cut the grass in our provincial parks.

We are making historic investments in our parks to the tune of \$20 million in our parks endowment fund alone, that will fund new projects that were left behind under the NDP.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, we are six years going into seven years of this government. I know that's incredibly depressing to hear, but I'm—just need to highlight it. This is—it's about time, maybe about time for this government to tart—start taking responsibility.

The cost to go to a park jumped ten times more when the PC government hired a Texas company, and so in 2021 alone, Manitobans paid over \$566,000 to see their parks. Now it's over \$1 million.

I'm sure many Manitobans who tried to reserve campsites this year would rather see that money invested in fixing the Province's disastrous reservation system.

The minister needs to stop forcing Manitobans to pay \$1 million to a Texas company to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wharton: Again, I would like to highlight the great work by our department this year to, again—trying to clean up a mess left by the NDP when it comes to parks reservations.

Madam Speaker, we know that there were going to be continued issues with that system. We are committed to fixing that system. There will be a new system in the works by 2023.

We know the mess they left behind. We also know, Madam Speaker, that all of our sites have been

booked for 2022 season. Manitobans are ready, we just need some warmer weather.

Northern Manitoba Highways and Roads Maintenance and Repair—Budget 2022

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Madam Speaker, every year this PC government breaks its promises regarding infrastructure. They've cut the highways budget by over 36 per cent and, since taking office, the infrastructure budget has been underspent by millions and millions of dollars each year.

These cuts have real impacts on Manitobans across the province, particularly in northern Manitoba. Northerners rely upon highways to access health care, shop for groceries and so much more. However, Budget 2022 froze highway maintenance and repair.

Will this government commit to ending this freeze today?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Acting Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Well, again, the opposition loves to put false information on the record. And our government is committed, in 2021, to spending \$1.5 billion over three years, minimum of \$500 million in capital investment, throughout '22-23.

There's the truth, Madam Speaker. They can't handle it.

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

Mr. Bushie: The truth is, over 5,300 Manitobans have signed a petition calling for upgrades to Highway 6.

Highway 6 is the only route from Winnipeg to Thompson, is the main route from Winnipeg to The Pas, Flin Flon and many, many other northern communities. However, the highway continues to see multiple fatal accidents every year due to challenging conditions, which only gets worse in the winter.

Budget 2022 froze maintenance and repair for these highways. This is not an acceptable response.

Will the minister reverse course and end the freeze on highway maintenance and repairs today?

Mr. Helwer: I repeat: \$1.5 billion over three years. That's the investment that we're making.

Six—since 2016, has—our government has made investments across the province, including PTH 6. Our government will continue to invest \$9 million in upgrade projects along the northern parts of PTH this—PTH 6 this year.

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

Mr. Bushie: Well, Madam Speaker, where are these upgrades?

Community members are still calling today for road upgrades, rest areas and more frequent passing lanes to help reduce accidents. Northern Manitobans want to see increased investments in the highways they rely upon, not a freeze to maintenance and repairs. Unfortunately, Budget 2022 continues down this government's path of freezing and cutting infrastructure spending.

This issue is bigger than money; it's about increasing safety on Manitoba's highways for Manitobans.

Will the minister commit to doing so today by ending this freeze today?

Mr. Helwer: Well, Madam Speaker, \$9 million in the budget this year.

The member has the opportunity to do the right thing. Will he vote for the budget and support that \$9 million to be spent on PTH 6, Madam Speaker?

Housing for Ukrainian Refugees Request for Rent Assist Program

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yesterday, I received a letter, which I table, from a non-profit volunteer agency that wants to house Ukrainian refugees.

They wrote, and I quote: What's happening now with this government is a complete disaster, to be frank. They have supports which are convoluted and rely heavily on non-profits and private donors to do all the work while they sit back and get the credit for it. All the volunteer agencies I've spoken to date all share the same sentiment: we have to act because the government isn't. We have refugees with no place to live and agencies with apartments but no way to pay for it.

* (14:40)

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) commit to a Rent Assist program for Ukrainian and other refugees for a safe welcome to Manitoba?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Let me assure that—the member that we are ready to welcome as many Ukrainian citizens as possible once the federal government brings them to Canada.

I understand we have a backlog at the federal level when it comes to processing the permanent 'resi' backlog applications, as the majority of the 'correspondence' that I receive in my office and that I hear from my fellow colleagues is that delay is at the federal level.

Madam Speaker, we are ready to welcome many Ukrainian nationals, refugees. That's why Budget 2022 offers \$5 million in newcomer support programs in investing in newcomers when they come here so that they can get sufficient jobs and have the support that they need when they come to our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamont: If the minister doesn't realize that settlement is his job and a provincial responsibility, I don't know why he has it.

The letter reads, quote: We currently have vacant suites and an overwhelming influx of refugees wanting accommodations, but we're a non-profit and there's only so much loss we can actually take. End quote.

Refugees, especially women with young children, arriving only with—arriving only with clothes on their back. The risk of 'expotation' for vulnerable women and children is exponentially higher, as we've seen in the UK, where the UN Refugee Agency warned that single men were preying on Ukrainian refugees who ended up homeless.

The people who are coming to Manitoba are fleeing mass murder and mass destruction, and they need a safe harbour and a roof over their house in Manitoba.

Will this government provide temporary Rent Assist to help house refugees, and when—

Madam Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, when the first arrivals come to Manitoba, we'll be ready.

That is why one action item from Budget 2022 is the creation of a central reception centre near the Winnipeg international airport to help Ukrainian citizens with intake services, temporary accommodations and meals, access to co-ordinated health-care services through Manitoba Health, and registration, orientation and referral services on language training, workforce and settlement needs through Manitoba Start.

We also announced a—\$5 million in Budget 2022 for settlement services for newcomers, including Ukrainian citizens in Manitoba.

We have a plan. We are ready, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a final supplementary.

Constituent Health Concern Access to Rehabilitation Care

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, yesterday I asked about the availability of rehab for a gentleman who had his leg amputated. Sadly, his experience is not unique.

Shay-la MacLean also had a leg amputated, and instead of a focus on rehab, her pain and health concerns were initially dismissed.

Jeff Carpenter, who had parts of both his legs amputated, described being beyond frustrated at having to wait at least 21 weeks to get an occupational therapist to help him. As I table, he said of the health-care system for which the minister is responsible: Nobody has a clue what's going on.

I ask the 'ministoer' to explain why such a basic item of care as rehabilitation following an amputation is being so poorly looked after in Manitoba?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for River Heights for bringing this to my attention. I will certainly have discussions with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority as well as the facility leads to investigate each case in specifics.

Unfortunately, due to The Personal Health Information Act, I cannot discuss the specifics of an individual's health status, or the health services they will receive, in the Chamber, but happy to look into each and every case the member has brought forward.

K-to-12 Education System New Action Plan Announcement

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Education announced the K to 12 Education Action Plan, and the response from stakeholders has been swift and it has been positive. This five-year plan is the result of extensive consultation and lays the framework to advance student success in collaboration with our education sector partners.

Can the minister briefly inform the House of this exciting announcement?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'd like to thank my colleague from Borderland for that great question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I was honoured to announce our government's action plan yesterday. I'd like to thank Principal Loewen, school staff and students for hosting us at École Templeton, one of our government's 22 new schools.

I'd also like to thank—Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the commission for all their hard work, all our education partners for their extensive consultation and who gave perspective towards our action plan. Lastly, I'd like to thank our over-25,000 Manitobans who participated in the consultation process.

I invite all Manitobans to take a look at the action plan, Madam Speaker. It's available on the government website. I strongly encourage—

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

Order.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition Costs for the Year

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, this year's budget leaves Manitoba students behind. There's been a big increase to tuition fees this year because the PC government's cuts to universities and colleges is doing lasting damage to students and universities and colleges.

Will the minister tell Manitoba students and parents how much more they will be paying for college and university this year?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, as outlined in Budget 2022, we are delivering on the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy by ensuring that more students have access to affordable post-secondary education and employment once they graduate.

That is why our government is investing in programs such as the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative to provide more than \$33 million in bursaries for students accessing post-secondary institutions in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we have a plan for students to get world-class post-secondary education and good jobs in Manitoba once they graduate, unlike the all-talk-no-action NDP.

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

Mr. Moses: The PC government intends to collect an additional—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —\$35 million from Manitoba students this year. Tuition fees collected have nearly doubled since they came into office. That means higher and higher costs for Manitoba students.

That's not enough for this minister. Now he wants to start charging yet higher levels of tuition for some students, depending on what they study. That's simply not the right approach.

Will the minister reverse course and will he tell Manitoba students and parents how much more they will be paying for college and university this year?

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House will always fight for our post-secondary sector throughout the province.

We continue to invest \$1 billion in post-secondary education and engage with our post-secondary partners, including presidents, students and faculty unions. Our government continues to provide high quality education and skills for graduates to succeed in the labour market.

And, Madam Speaker, I want to share with you a quote: Manitoba universities are 'astonishingly' successful, grads are employed at high levels and at good income levels.

Who said that, Madam Speaker? Dr. Peter Miller, president of the University of Winnipeg faculty association.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: And I have a ruling for the House. *[interjection]* I have a ruling for the House.

Just a reminder to members that they shouldn't be leaving their seats.

The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv)—I would just remind members that when I have made an announcement that there is a ruling to be presented, a member should remain in their seat.

* (14:50)

Prior to routine proceedings on Thursday, April 7, 2022, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) raised a matter of privilege regarding the honourable First Minister organizing events outside of the House that, on several occasions, coincided with oral questions. The Official Opposition House Leader claimed these actions served to avoid accountability and that this lack of participation in question period makes it harder to keep the government accountable. At the conclusion of their remarks, the Official Opposition House Leader moved, and I quote, "that the matter of the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) failure to participate in question period be condemned, and that this matter be referred to a standing committee of this House for review."

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) also offered contributions to the Chair, and noted that it is up to the discretion of the government to decide which minister will answer a question. He further noted that, from time to time, ministers, including the First Minister, have duties that need to be attended to outside of the Chamber.

The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) shared the observation that, in his experience, there have been occasions when premiers were not in attendance during oral questions for one reason or another. He also opined that such an absence is not determined by a matter of privilege or a point of order.

I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for a matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege: was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and was sufficient evidence provided to support the member's claim that their privileges or the privileges of the House were breached?

On the first issue of whether the issue was raised at the earliest opportunity, it is difficult to make a determination that timeliness was met, as the honourable Official Opposition House Leader referred to this non-participation in oral questions happening on several occasions, but did not identify any specific dates. Therefore, it is difficult to assess whether the test of timeliness has been met, and I am unable to do so.

On the second issue, whether sufficient evidence was provided, I must advise the House that a lack of participation in oral questions by the First Minister or any minister is not a violation of the privileges of the House or of individual members.

Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 31(2) advises that the failure of a minister to answer a question may not be raised as a question of privilege. In addition, as noted in Beauchesne citation 31(4), the absence of a minister, such as from a committee studying Estimates, would be a grievance but not a question of privilege.

Further, as Bosc and Gagnon explain on page 127 of the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, although there is a collective privilege of the House regarding the authority of the House to maintain the attendance and service of its members, it refers to the privilege of exemption from jury duty and exemption from being summoned to appear as a witness.

Bosc and Gagnon further state on page 127: "The Standing Orders of the House of Commons provide that every Member is bound to attend the sittings of the House unless otherwise occupied with parliamentary activities or functions or on public or official business. Because the House sits during prime working hours, scheduling conflicts with other parliamentary or official commitments (for example committee meetings) may prevent Members from being present in the Chamber. In practice, considerable leniency is exercised in this regard. Indeed, the Chair has often discouraged any references to the absences of any individual Member." End quote.

On the issue of the operations of oral questions, questions are technically put to the government as a whole, and it is the prerogative of the government to decide which minister will answer the questions. Additionally, each ministerial portfolio has through order-in-council assignments a listing of first and second acting ministers who can answer questions or act if the minister responsible is not able to do so. With this statutory provision in place, it should be possible to receive information and answers to questions even in the absence of the minister responsible.

I therefore rule that, although this issue may be considered discourteous by some honourable members, there is no prima facie case of a breach of parliamentary privilege.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: If there are no petitions, we will then move into orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please resume debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE

(Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and the amendment and subamendment thereto.

Debate is open.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It doesn't really give me a lot of pleasure to stand up and talk about this budget. Really, the budget book itself should probably be referred to as a book of fiction, as most of this government's budgets have been books of fiction because they like to talk about big numbers that they're going to commit, but then they fail to actually spend those dollars on the programs and things that they talk about.

We know—we just heard from the member from Keewatinook about infrastructure spending and how this government has frozen that funding and failed to live up to the commitments in previous budgets as to how much money gets spent on roads. We know that there's some 5,000-plus citizens of the North that have signed a petition wanting this government to pay attention to what's wrong, particularly with Highway 6.

But it's not just Highway 6. Highway 6 is the main route of transportation, but many of us also travel on Highway 60, which is in worse shape, which has multiple logging trucks and other large vehicles as it is a main transportation route for things going to The Pas, things going to Flin Flon.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The shoulders of that road are in such a sorry state that you'll find those big trucks, at best, hogging the centre line, and at best—or at worst, many times over the centre line because they're afraid if the trailer catches one of those torn-up edges where there are no real shoulders, that it will lead to them having an accident.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you've heard me talk in this Chamber about snowplow operators. Once again, this government has failed to supply, to hire, to train, to ensure that there's sufficient operators to maintain these roads in a safe condition after a snowstorm. I can personally attest to the storm we had last week that wasn't anywhere close to being as bad as what the forecast was, so I waited an extra day before I attempted to drive to Flin Flon just in the interest of making sure that my wife and I could safely travel on that road.

Unfortunately, when we started out, even the Perimeter wasn't properly plowed. And this was more than 24 hours after the last snowflake fell. Then we turned onto Highway 6, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it should've still been closed because it was not safe to drive on. And yet, nary a snowplow was seen. Some stretches were just straight blare ice: no salt, no sand, no plow.

Unless somebody thinks that this is just me raising this, there's an entire Facebook page devoted to people reporting on the conditions of Highway 6. And one of the posts asked, why isn't this road plowed? And somebody directed that person to contact their MLA—the MLA for the Interlake—because, clearly, he doesn't care that his own constituents can't travel on a highway because it's not maintained safely. He ignores them. He ignores their concerns, just like the rest of his government. He doesn't care as long as he gets his paycheque, doesn't matter if the road is safe to travel on. That member from the Interlake should be ashamed and should answer to his constituents why he does not ensure that their roads are maintained safely, but he does not.

* (15:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had an issue brought to my attention from some of my far northern communities that depend on winter roads. Now, this year in particular the winter roads were extremely late in opening. But the problem wasn't actually with the winter road, the problem was residents couldn't get to the winter road because the year-round road is not being properly looked after. In fact, at the time, it was under water.

So, I contacted the minister's office, and, a few days later, one of his assistants got a hold of the assistant to the manager of the northern region, and he told me that, yes, we know about that, but it's going to require a lot of work because there's a creek there.

And my question to him was, so? If it requires work, is there a plan to do the work? And the answer

was, no, there is no plan to fix highway—I think it was 393, 394. It's an extension from 391 that runs into Lynn Lake and actually carries on—goes to the Saskatchewan border. And off that road goes the winter road to Tadoule, Brochet and Lac Brochet.

So, while those communities depend heavily on the winter road to get supplies in—particularly to get diesel fuel in, because some of them are still running on diesel, they don't have hydro power yet—in fact, we saw Tadoule Lake that was short from last year because the winter-road season, again, was extremely short. It's down to being open for a few weeks at best—generally less than a month, now, which doesn't give them sufficient time to lay in the supply of diesel fuel that they need to keep the community going. They had Calm Air flying 45-gallon drums of diesel fuel in trying to keep the lights on—trying to keep the essential services running.

And we've asked the government in the past what their plan is for winter roads, and the answer is, they don't have a plan. They have no plan to do anything, even though it is their responsibility to maintain those roads in an operable condition, to allow those northern Manitobans to have access.

But they don't. This government doesn't include that in their budget. They don't include repairs to any of these roads in the North in their budgets. But even if they did, like I said earlier, their budgets are works of fiction because department after department after department doesn't spend the money that's actually budgeted there.

Let's talk about northern health care. Now, as we pointed out earlier in the week, the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) doesn't really know where the Northern Health Region is and doesn't have an understanding of the needs of northern people to access health care.

Can you imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a hospital anywhere else in this province that months, months, and months and months, patients don't have access to hot water, staff doesn't have access to hot water? And now we heard the minister—I believe it was yesterday—said, well, hopefully, the plumbers will fix it in May.

She doesn't know. She doesn't care because it's just people in the North, so this government doesn't care about those people—not one little bit, which is shameful. It is completely shameful that they continue to ignore the needs of northern Manitobans in their budget and in their day-to-day operations.

We know that it's not just the Thompson hospital that's in trouble. Leaf Rapids Health Centre—they just

shut it down for weeks because there's a shortage of nurses. But there were nurses scheduled to go there, but because this government is so short everywhere else, they took those agency nurses and moved them somewhere else because people at Leaf Rapids didn't matter.

So we asked, well, okay, if the place has got to be shut down, can we get a second ambulance on stand-by? Because it's several hours over bad roads, so that ambulance would be gone about eight hours if it takes a person from there to Thompson.

And the answer we got was, well, no, we can't assign a second ambulance there because we don't have any. Because this government has starved every portion of this province for resources so bad that there are no ambulances. And we see that even in the city of Winnipeg now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that—how many hours was it—28 hours that there was no ambulances available in the city.

So we know that there's been starvation of resources, even though, in budget after budget, this government talks about how much money—and we listen to minister after minister stand up and spew out these meaningless numbers when they have no intention of actually spending the budgeted amounts, so that at the end of the day they can stand up and say, look at us, we balanced the budget. Oh, you don't have health care? Well, that's too bad, we balanced the budget. Oh, you don't have a safe road to drive on? Well, gee, that's too bad, we balanced the budget. This government cares about money, but they do not care about people.

So we know that, going forward for the next year, they talk about the number. They talk about how much money they're going to spend. So we focused a little bit on infrastructure and a little bit on education—not education yet, we'll get there—a little bit on health care, and about how they're underfunding all of those.

We know that, from things that we've heard, that schools in the North are also starved for funding. Speaking with people in authority positions at the Flin Flon School Division, they were trying to decide how to rearrange their resources so that they wouldn't have to actually lay off teachers, but it meant changes in busing schedules and changes in start times and stop times that meant parents were left scrambling to try and find daycare for their kids.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Speaking of which, the funding levels for particularly things like the Kiddie Korner Day Care in

Flin Flon, the major child-care resource that's attached to the Flin Flon School Division, had their funding frozen year after year after year. They've got announcements out now, Madam Speaker, asking for donations—donations of food, donations of anything they can think of to try and get by to supply a service to Flin Flon parents because this government won't properly fund them.

So they can talk all they want about their big numbers, but the reality is, particularly for people in northern Manitoba, we know that cut, cut, cut—every time we turn around there's less service.

Let's talk about northern patient transportation. It costs people more money to come to Winnipeg because Calm Air cut the flight schedule.

Did the government say okay, well, we can help because you have to spend a week in Winnipeg now? No, they did not. They would not increase that funding. In fact, they've throttled back what they spend on northern patient transportation because they don't care that you have to drive from Lynn Lake to Thompson and spend the night in a hotel to get health care.

This government should be ashamed of themselves. And they stand up now and their new talking point—I'm sure they've got it stamped on every page—is, why won't the NDP support our budget?

* (15:10)

The reason we won't support your budget is because it's completely meaningless. It's because it's a bad budget that's designed to hurt Manitobans, and that's exactly what every one of your budgets have done since 2016, is hurt Manitobans, and it's time for that change to happen and the next election can't come soon enough.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): I do 'appreesh' the opportunity to put a few words on the record today about our budget and all the increases and funding, pretty well right across the board for each and every department of Manitoba. And I think Manitobans will be happy when they have the opportunity to read this particular budget.

I—off the top, Madam Speaker, I do want to thank the good folks of Spruce Woods constituency. Certainly, I just want to acknowledge the challenges that we've been through together over the last two years as we continue our fight against COVID and the pandemic here in Manitoba.

It's certainly been a challenging time. I think Manitobans are looking forward to spring arriving, and with spring arriving, some optimism and hopefully some optimism that COVID is slowly getting behind us. I will also say, if they have an opportunity to look at this budget, there is plenty of opportunity for optimism in this budget going forward and I'm excited to support this particular budget.

Madam Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about the department, and the new Department of Economic Development, Investment and Trade. And I think it's very important to recognize, and our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has stated this and our government has stated it, economic development and recovery is critical to Manitoba, it's critical to the investments in Manitoba, it's in—critical to the bottom line of Manitoba to generate income. And for us to generate income, then we have the money to pay for the social services, including health care, education and other family services that Manitobans come to expect. So it's critical that we develop our economy.

To that end, we've created a new department and with a focus on economic development. We've also, this year, added investment. And, clearly, investment in Manitoba has to be key for economic recovery here in Manitoba. And I'll talk a little bit more about the investment component in a few minutes.

The other issue and component of economic development that maybe had been lost a little bit is the trade component. We are clearly a trading province and we rely on trade, and Manitobans rely on trade for the economy and for providing jobs, so our new focus on trade within this new department.

So, Madam Speaker, in terms of our focus about economic development, I will say we have created an economic development committee of Cabinet. That particular Cabinet will be chaired by the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), I—happy to serve as the deputy chair for that committee, and we will be engaging other departments across our government. And the concept here is to have—making sure that we have the ability to respond quickly for economic development opportunities that we have in front of us.

The committee of Cabinet will be supported by a brand new Economic Development Secretariat, and I'm happy that we brought on Michael Swistun to support that, and Tracey Maconachie, a former deputy minister, to assist in that role. So we're excited about bringing people on to that secretariat, supported by not only people within government but people external to government as well. So we think this will be a great

mechanism to foster economic development here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I do also want to mention our partners in economic development here in Manitoba. We have a number of key departments—pardon me—key partners that we're working closely with that we fund, and we want to make sure that we're working closely with them to make sure that we capture all the opportunities that are there.

And I'm speaking of the Economic Development Winnipeg, certainly they have fairly mature in their activities around economic development. We're supporting them and working closely with them. We also support the Communities Economic Development Fund. A lot of that is in regard to economic opportunities in northern Manitoba.

We are also supporting rural Manitoba economic development corporation. In fact, this year we have expanded their budget by somewhere in the neighbourhood of 35 per cent, funding them to the tune of \$1 million this year.

We continue to work with the World Trade Centre here in Winnipeg on some of the trade and training initiatives.

And last, and certainly not least, I do want to mention North Forge Technology Exchange. Obviously, great things happening in that particular sector and we've got some great entrepreneurs working with other entrepreneurs in terms of mentorship programs.

So, \$6 million—over \$6 million going to our partners in economic development, and we look forward to working closely with them as we build on economic development here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I do want to talk a little more about some of the investments we are making on the economic development file.

And we have announced the launching of a new venture capital fund. This year's budget, we've set aside \$50 million for that venture capital fund, and we're excited. Next week, we'll providing Manitobans more information about how that fund will work, and we're excited about it. It's been something that we've talked about for years, and this government is delivering on that venture capital fund. This will provide tremendous opportunities for businesses in Manitoba, and we look forward to having that fund up and running in the coming months.

Madam Speaker, in relation to this, we've also made the Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit

permanent. We've also expanded it to support the venture capital funds as well. This is a very substantial signal to the business community that we want to work with them, partner with them, to grow business in Manitoba. And when we business in Manitoba, we create jobs for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we know we can't do this alone. We're also looking to inject some money into our immigration program to attract newcomers to our province. We know business community is calling on that, and we're responding to that as well.

We've had a real focus on the tax 'competitives' here in Manitoba. We've certainly made a lot of positive changes over the last few years. We recognize there's more work to do. We will be calling on the business community and others to provide us even more direction in terms of how we become even more competitive as a province. We reduced the payroll tax, and that has positive implications for close to a thousand businesses, taking probably 200 businesses, or close to that, completely off the payroll tax roll.

Madam Speaker, we also have signalled a lot of other investments in terms of our workforce development. We know this is key as we continue with economic growth. We recognize the challenges that businesses face in this regard and it's certainly coming from all sectors of our economy. We have to be focused on making sure that our workers are skilled, they're trained for the jobs that are here today and the jobs that will be there tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, to that end, we've—investing in sector council development and workforce development to the tune of almost \$30 million in this year's budget. We've also provided other training and financial assistance to the tune of \$76 million—obviously critical for getting people trained in Manitoba. And just this past week, we announced the first intake for the \$10 million for funds that will come to the Manitoba Job Grant to address workforce training needs. Again, critical infrastructure there to make sure Manitobans have every opportunity to work here in our great province.

Madam Speaker, we also continue on our effort to reduce red tape in Manitoba. We think that's critical for the business community to be successful, and just reading that Canadian Federation of Independent Business recognizes our great work in terms of reducing red tape here in Manitoba. And we were going to continue to focus on reducing red tape for small businesses. It's clearly critical for them to recover from COVID, as we move forward.

* (15:20)

So we will continue to do that and working with the business community to make sure those issues are addressed.

Madam Speaker, great work in economic development here. I just want to touch on a couple of other issues that I know many people here in my constituency of Spruce Woods want to hear as well.

And health care is certainly a priority for our government. Additional investments in health care in Manitoba this year: \$7.2 billion going into health care, record investments in health care, and we are going to continue to rebuild health care here in Manitoba.

We recognize the pandemic has created backlogs when it comes to surgical and diagnostic wait times. That's why we've committed in this budget \$110 million to that. And, Madam Speaker, we've even committed over \$600 million in this budget for contingencies, and, hopefully, we can find those services for Manitobans.

Manitobans also want to hear about our infrastructure investments—again, record investments in infrastructure: \$2.4 billion, and, importantly to, certainly, people in my region is the infrastructure investment in Manitoba highways: \$1.5 billion over the next three years, a commitment of over \$500 million in each of the next three years to address infrastructure.

Manitoba—Madam Speaker, great investments in this particular budget for Manitobans. We, certainly, on this side, are very supportive of this budget going forward. I certainly thank the—all the work of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the previous minister of Finance put into this particular budget.

And I was happy with a number of my colleagues and the minister this morning to partake in a discussion at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and it was certainly reassuring hearing their analysis of our budget as well. And it was very favourably received through the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and we will continue working with our partners at the Chambers, whether it be the Winnipeg chamber or Manitoba chambers or other business organizations as well. And I certainly want to recognize the Business Council for their advice that they have provided our government on a number of areas, including, in particular, the venture capital initiative that we're undertaking.

So, Madam Speaker, yes, we do have more work to do. We recognize that. But this budget, I think, is very balanced. It's very supportive of Manitobans and Manitoba families. And, certainly, when you look at the affordability component in there, we have taken great strides in the last six years and there'll be more opportunities for making great strides in the years ahead.

So with that, Madam Speaker, just a few words from my perspective on this budget. I thank you for the opportunity, and I certainly thank the Minister of Finance for—and his department for all the great work on this budget.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm glad to have the opportunity to rise this afternoon and speak in response to the budget. And going to cover a wide array of topics in this response, Madam Speaker.

But I think, first and foremost, what I want to talk about is Ukraine and how I believe that, as provincial politicians, we have a huge responsibility and we need to be more aggressive in doing more and—much, much more to help with refugees who have already began arriving in Manitoba. And that's a mistake the minister made earlier today in question period: he's not even aware that Ukrainian refugees and displaced Ukrainians have already begun arriving here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, it's heartbreaking, the war that's going on right now, and our Ukrainian population is continuing to grow, and that is why we have this responsibility to go forward and do everything in our abilities to help, and this includes making the transition smoother.

You know, I still receive emails to this day, and this war has been ongoing, Madam Speaker, of people wondering how they can come to Manitoba. Are people allowed to just buy a plane ticket and land here and then figure out the logistics? There needs to be clarification.

We need to talk about post-secondary education, and we've been asking about this in question period. But those who are displaced from Ukraine who happen to be students, (1) will their education be recognized here in Manitoba; and (2) are they going to be able to continue on with their education, recognizing that people who are coming from Ukraine, all they have are the clothes on their back. They don't necessarily have the funds to begin education and paying

for post-secondary education, especially at international rates, Madam Speaker.

These are the conversations we should be having because they are provincial, not federal. I'm so sick of this provincial government continuously blaming the federal government for immigration backlogs. They have a role to play, too, Madam Speaker.

We can also talk about child care. We know that we need spots for child care in Manitoba, and this is before the war in Ukraine. What's going to happen now, Madam Speaker? And with the pandemic sort of releasing and people heading back into their workplaces, we need to ensure that parents who want to go back to work have places for their children to receive child care.

And we can talk about housing units. Again, this has been talked about in question period, Madam Speaker. Those who are coming to Manitoba, are there housing accommodations set up for them? Are there—whether it's Rent Assist programs and, in my opinion, it should just be free housing for refugees coming into Manitoba.

We know that we have buildings that—some of them need some fixing up, Madam Speaker, but we have facilities in place. We have houses—we have empty houses here in Manitoba that could house refugees, yet none of these conversations are happening. And again, it's a role of this provincial government. Housing is a provincial topic.

Another thing we can be doing is lining up displaced individuals from Ukraine with jobs here in Manitoba. Let's make sure that when people arrive in Manitoba their skills are lined up with jobs in demand. We want to ensure that people can continue to pursue their dreams and contribute to the economy in the best way that they can and they know how to and they want to, Madam Speaker.

And talking about refugees, that sort of leads into the Provincial Nominee Program, and I always like to give a very small history of the Provincial Nominee Program.

When it was first introduced, it was under the Filmon government and it was actually a terrific program. I want to give credit to that. Provincial Nominee Program ran successfully for many years. Hundreds and thousands of immigrants came to Manitoba under the program with no wait times, with no head taxes, nothing like that. And it's because of the Provincial Nominee Program that our province is the great province it is today.

You think our Filipino community would be what it is today without the Provincial Nominee Program? Not a chance. Our Indo-Canadian community—not a chance. And that's why this government has a responsibility to make the program what it once was: a stronger program that allowed more individuals to come to Manitoba in a smoother process.

And I, wholly, I want to recognize—I don't want to give all the credit to the Conservatives when they first introduced it under the Filmon government, because then the NDP came into power, Madam Speaker, and, frankly, they destroyed the program. Wait-lists were up to five, six years. I remember when I first got elected in these Chambers, over six years ago, learning about how people had been waiting to hear back from immigration Manitoba on whether or not their application would be received and accepted.

Imagine being, for the sake of this argument, Madam Speaker, in the Philippines, applying to the program: five years later saying, well, how should I plan my life accordingly, how do I plan to move ahead when their application is on hold, over and over and over again?

Madam Speaker, it was a mess, and so then this government gets elected, and we had some fun protests. I remember sleeping on the floor of the Manitoba Legislature. It was a wonderful experience. And those wait-lists got cut down, and that's awesome. I want to give the government credit for specifically that: cutting down that wait-list.

But with that, they decided to bring in this \$500 head tax, and it's not justifiable, Madam Speaker. It is—they are ripping people off, quite frankly. It's not fair. We know that their program ran successfully in the past without the head tax. It's a cash grab, and I think that this government needs to revisit that and completely remove it.

Madam Speaker, about a week and a half ago, almost two weeks ago now, MP Rechie Valdez—she's the first Filipina MP. She came down to Winnipeg, and she came and she sat with me at my weekly McDonald's, which was awesome. She got to meet some of my constituents in the heart of Tyndall Park and then we went over to PCCM, the Filipino community centre, where we had a big round-table discussion with probably about 30 or 40 different people in the community and we talked about immigration, including Provincial Nominee Program.

We talked about applying for jobs that are in demand and that are still relevant online. There's a big

mishap happening where people in different countries will go online to apply for the Provincial Nominee Program and say, hey, look, this job is in demand. They will apply under that job, only to find out, when their application is finally being processed, that job is no longer in demand. This isn't lining up, Madam Speaker. It's—there are many, many cracks in the system.

* (15:30)

I also want to talk about accreditation of education in jobs. Madam Speaker, a lot of people who are choosing to come to Manitoba, they have a great education and they were working in their field of passion and that they have gone to school for back in different countries.

And allow me to share an example. A lot of the health-care workers here in Manitoba are people who are qualified to practise health care here in Manitoba. They started in a different country. They went to school for years and years. They practise—some people practised for 20, 30 years, they had full-fledged careers, Madam Speaker, and then they come to Manitoba and it's not recognized.

So instead some of them go back to school and some of them decide to work at other places. And, man, like, I just think about how badly we could have used, and we still need, these health-care workers especially through the pandemic. So education and job experience needs to be better recognized.

Madam Speaker, we need to ensure that certificates are not being wasted. If specific files for whatever reason are not going through, we know that Manitoba is given a certain amount of certificates every single year for Provincial Nominee Program, and I'm curious how many of those certificates end up being completely processed.

And Manitoba has a role to play with international students, ensuring affordability and accommodations—talk about this in a bit more detail shortly.

So with all of these needs, why was Immigration Pathways decreased by over half a million, from 7.576 to 7.060 million? And the Fair Registration Practices Office, it was reduced from 513 to 480–478, Madam Speaker. It doesn't make any sense. With the high demand of immigration coming to Manitoba, why are these programs being cut right now?

I also want to use this opportunity to talk a little bit about infrastructure. And I mentioned the PCCM, so we'll start with that. They have a very small space

for storage, Madam Speaker, and as a result they're facing limitations in their abilities. So if this government were to invest in PCCM, their ability to host parties and cultural events would be enhanced, and, most importantly, our Filipino community, which has now exceeded over a million people in Canada, would benefit from this.

I've also talked a lot about the Komagata Maru Park and how when the area first began being developed in 2016 the initial development plan implied that the residents of Kaur UMBER Trail would have a recreation area named Komagata Maru. However, once residents began moving in, they were surprised to discover that there were no plans for the park.

I strongly believe that the City has a big responsibility and role to play in this, but I am hopeful, because of the significance of the Komagata Maru, that this Province will take some initiative and help contribute, whether that be through the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage or through the Department of Infrastructure, to this park and to the community.

Lastly, I'm hoping this government will consider Tyndall Park Community Centre, very much in the heart of Tyndall Park constituency, Madam Speaker, and is a very popular community centre in high demand used every day by different sport groups. I know every time I walk in, sometimes you see jerseys for hockey teams, sometimes you see a—soccer balls, whatever it may be. It's used by cultural groups as well as justice groups. Lately, when I go there it's because I'm joining Bear Clan northwest, a wonderful group; and the second one is 204 Neighbourhood Watch, who go around to different areas, but whenever they come to Tyndall they allow for me to join in with them.

But these groups, they patrol the area and they pick up paraphernalia and they help out children. They provide snacks to people. And, more importantly, Madam Speaker, they really assist in the everyday activities. I've been with them where they are unshovelling fire hydrants in case there was a fire and we needed quick access to the fire hydrant. They also shovel people's driveways, especially for seniors who need to be able to get in and out of their homes. They've even cut grass in the summer.

So these groups are much more than just patrol groups. They go out of their way to service the community, and one of the things that they do whenever I go walking with them is they educate me on the community needs. And one of these needs is reconcilia-

tion. I continue to learn how there needs to be a commitment to working in partnership with First Nations, and especially to sharing resource revenue, and this budget fails to address this.

Madam Speaker, at 1:30 today the Auditor General released a report, and because we were in question period, until now, I didn't have the opportunity to read the whole report. But I did read the press release and I'm tabling it now.

I'm just going to read a couple of lines from the press release from the Auditor General that came out, again, today, Madam Speaker. The title of the press release: The Government of Manitoba has not fulfilled its commitments to reconciliation.

The audit found the government has not developed a strategy for reconciliation, which is required under the act. Without a strategy, efforts towards reconciliation are hampered, ultimately lacking focus and vision.

In addition, the audit found reconciliation efforts were lacking cross-government co-ordination and there was no direction given to the departments. The act requires each Cabinet minister to promote measures to advance reconciliation through the work of their department and across Canada. Of the five departments examined in the audit, only the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations (Mr. Lagimodiere) had any significant mention of actions to advance reconciliation in their most recent mandate letter.

Madam Speaker, this is a perfect example. Reconciliation is a responsibility all of us have, not just one department inside of the Manitoba Legislature.

Madam Speaker, I want to pivot a little bit. Back on November 22nd in 2016, we started to call for a seniors advocate here in the province of Manitoba, and we've spoken about it in many different contexts: response to Throne Speeches, budget responses, question periods, members' statements—whatever it may be. And, you know, I think it is starting to pay off, because recently, the NDP decided to support it, which is absolutely fantastic. It warms my heart.

But now we need this government to support it, and they are talking about it more. They're talking about senior strategies, and so I think we're making progress. So I really want to continue to encourage those who have reached out to us: keep pushing, keep reaching out to your MLAs. It's really, really important. We've seen how helpful and productive the seniors advocate can be. We talk about how this

extends much beyond the pandemic with the long-term care facilities, ensuring people are in the facilities that best suit their needs. It's often lost between the lines that personal-care homes are not the only long-term care facility. We also have supportive housing homes; we have retirement homes, and these all need to be part of the conversation.

And I know home care has become an enormous issue. And in addition to home care, Madam Speaker: home repairs. Home repairs for seniors is actually something that I've been learning a lot about, specifically over this pandemic. I've learnt about seniors who cannot leave or enter their homes because they need a ramp, and so they are feeling isolated, and senior isolation is up more than ever.

I've learned about seniors who are having trouble having a shower during the day because they don't have a bar in their shower to hold onto. These little, tiny home repairs—small investments, Madam Speaker—will enable seniors to remain into their homes ultimately five, 10 more years. But instead, this government won't help fund any of these small home repairs, which leaves many people here in Manitoba with their hands tied. And they are then forced to leave their homes and go into housing, whether it's unit or long-term care facilities that, in the long run, are much, much more expensive.

So we do need to do something at a provincial level, because, again, housing—provincial issue; seniors—we have a department. They like to brag about, it's just for seniors. So, let's make it so seniors can remain in their homes, Madam Speaker. They deserve better.

And our students here in Manitoba, they deserve better, too. I want to thank everyone for—everyone in the education, Madam Speaker—education system. It's not just teachers, but teachers are right up there, but it's everyone who works in our school, who works in the departments—for their incredible work and how adaptable they have been throughout the entire pandemic.

We've heard about people and teachers having to pay for school supplies out of the—their own money because this government isn't giving them enough resources. We've heard about the need for child nutrition meals and how evidently children do much, much better in school when their bellies are full. And we do have a responsibility to ensure that children in Manitoba are being well-nourished.

If we talk about high schools. We can talk about how students have had to sacrifice graduations through the pandemic. Some have had to postpone travelling, going to post-secondary, Madam Speaker. And what has this government done? Not a lot. If anything, they've deterred people from going to post-secondary.

We can talk about when this government first came into power, they got rid of the tuition rebates. Madam Speaker, these tuition rebates were often a form of revenue for students when they graduate to put a down payment on their first house. And we know the housing market's only going up. These tuition rebates were often used to be able to pay for a vehicle once they graduate post-secondary school, Madam Speaker. These rebates were extremely important, and it's a form of incentive to encourage students to stay here in the province.

* (15:40)

And we got to talk about health care for international students. This government has decided to charge international students for health care, as if international students aren't already paying enough for their school fees. Madam Speaker, it's absolutely ridiculous. It is completely uncalled for. We need to be grateful for our international students and everything that they contribute to our economy, not be charging them more. It's completely backwards.

We can talk about faculty retention—and I'm not even going to waste my time on bill 64, Madam Speaker, but I'm noticing my time, and I do want to share a couple of thoughts.

I want to talk about MAPSS. MAPSS is a student group, Madam Speaker, and they have been trying and trying to get a meeting with the minister responsible for Education—for post-secondary education and propose an idea they have that would actually save this government money, except the minister won't even have the courtesy to get back to them. What is happening? These are post-secondary students and student groups, and the minister responsible won't even respond to them?

And I want to talk about the Canadian Federation of Students, too. They were kind enough to actually provide me with some of their thoughts, and they share—this is about the budget, Madam Speaker. And they talk about how—\$15 million in government funds, while the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration receives a total budget of

\$1.6 billion. Why do students continue to see no return on investments?

There's no plan for international student health care. See, they're passionate about it too, Madam Speaker. International students continue to be excluded from publicly funded, barrier-free health care. Private, for-profit health insurance coverage results in high upfront costs to individuals, fails to accommodate for emergency care and denies coverage to those with pre-existing conditions.

Talk about the lack of on-campus mental health supports—students continue to take on heavy academic loads and rising tuition in the middle of the pandemic, Madam Speaker. And many students work from the front—on the front lines or in precarious jobs, so accessible and on-campus mental health supports are essential for their success.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to table some of these—I've got to get a few more copies, and then I'm going to table some of these excellent points that CFS here has actually made, and it's just their responses to the budget.

And I recognize I'm running out of time. I only have 42 seconds left, but I have so much more to say on child care and climate change and mental health. Madam Speaker, we need much longer time to be able to respond to the budget. And overall, not impressed, and thank you for the opportunity.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On a matter of House business.

During the Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness' (Mrs. Guillemard) member's statement earlier today, the minister meant to request that names be included in Hansard, but she neglected to do so in her statement. I am seeking leave of the House to have the names from the minister's statement included in the Hansard transcript from today's sitting immediately following the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to have the names from the Minister for Mental Health and Community Wellness' member's statement included in the Hansard script from today's sitting. Agreed? Oh, the honourable—[interjection] Oh. Is this agreed? [Agreed]

House Business

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House 'busineps'—business, pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of

private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Resolve Issues Afflicting Northern Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private member's business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Resolve Issues Afflicting Northern Manitoba.

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Madam Speaker: Proceeding now with budget debate, the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): It's a pleasure to speak on this budget, our budget. In fact, I believe it's our seventh budget as a government that we've introduced.

And I can tell you, then, when you are crafting a budget, the most important thing you can always do is consult with Manitobans. And I know this budget did a lot of that. I was a part of part of that consultation, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) finished it off and made—really made sure that individuals could get connected.

This year, on a consultation basis, little bit different as we have been over the last two years, you know, we had—did some that were in person. We went to kind of all areas of the province—north, south, east, west in Winnipeg.

We also did virtual settings and that kind of turned more into the virtual settings later on down the line. We used technology—that would be a part of that—to make sure we can get people's views because, as you go to communities, some people, you know, can go out to local events and some people need the technology that's there. And some people have different comfort level with COVID too, as different waves started coming up.

So, very proud of the fact that we consulted with over 51,000 Manitobans, and I think this budget, for the most part, got it right in terms of the priorities for Manitobans.

We heard loud and clear that health care is a priority for Manitobans. Very proud of the fact that this budget invests more money in health care than any

time of this province. I believe the number is around \$7.2 billion, millions—hundreds of millions of dollars more than we have spent in previous years for this.

We also know that the surgical and diagnostic task force, probably one of the biggest issues. So, you got COVID, you've got the surgical task force that was brought on, of course, because of some of the shut-downs that had happened. That's not something that's just happening across—in Manitoba, it's happening, really, across the country. It's made up of a whole number of things; some staffing, some resource. And I know we've got a plan, a team, together that's looking to address the surgical backlogs.

I know there's been some successes that we've seen already in terms of hip and knee and other things. Some of it includes sending people to places in the United States for spinal and other avenues, and we're looking at a creative solution to do that. And I think, really, Manitobans very much are there.

Very pleased that the budget also includes substantial investments for things like the Health Sciences Centre—or, rather, the St. Boniface. Over \$100 million for the hospital emergency rooms. We know it's important. It's something that we campaigned on in the last election. Very pleased the fact that we're delivering on a lot of these promises.

We also know that it's important to invest in health care, not just in Winnipeg but in rural Manitoba. And our commitment as a government is to invest over \$812 million on capital-related projects, whether that be new hospitals in things like Portage or Neepawa, or centres in Selkirk and Steinbach and other regions like that.

What's important is to make sure that people have health care in their communities, right, so they're not having to travel always to Winnipeg and other areas. So that's really important to our government. We believe that will save—not only will it save people's lives, but it'll be very—more convenient for people to have those health facilities that are in place.

We also know that there's substantial investments in terms of—whether it be funding for things like nurses. We know that over 400 new nurse spots will be created by this government through a combination of both health as well as advanced education and social services.

And I think, for the most part, what we're doing is we're trying to deal with a global pandemic. This has been going on for over two, two and a half years. And as a society, I think we need to look at the health-care

system, how we can deliver that. I think Manitobans are there delivering things in a way. Maybe there's some new creative ways we can deliver the health care and making sure the health-care dollars are stretched further.

Our government is very much committed to making sure the investments are there, but it's also making sure you've got the resources. Very happy that we were able to resolve our contract disputes, and that was in negotiations with the nurses. So, I think that's really important as we go forward.

We also know that education is very key to Manitoba's future. And very pleased, No. 1, that we are listening to Manitobans. We know that, potentially, the previous bill that we had, bill 64—we heard from Manitobans that we need to kind of go back, to a certain extent, to the drawing board and make sure we're focused in on something that's going to get better outcomes for children, and better supports that are in place.

And so, I think the plan that the minister introduced seems like we've got some support from the local stakeholders, whether it be the MTS, which generally hasn't been supportive of this government but gave very supportive comments of the reform package that we brought forward, as well as other superintendents that we've talked to—Brian O'Leary, very supportive of the plan as I read in the paper. So, we're happy to see there's a good combination of things.

Part of that plan, of course, is making sure that the funding is in place. This budget increases the funding towards education by over \$127 million, Madam Speaker, on a year-to-year basis. So, there's a lot more money that's going into the education system. So, there's a lot more money; it's a fact. It's a fact; it's in the budget.

* (15:50)

So, if you'd like, you could read the budget. I encourage all members to read the budget because it's a fact that the money is being allocated to—and—\$127 million. What that represents, if you look over the last two years, about a 17.2 per cent increase in the education system. So that's really important, making sure the funding is in place that's there.

What is also another important is making sure we're building schools. This budget and other budgets that we've had, investing over 22 new schools that we built here in the province. They're at different kind of stages of construction that are there. We've also made

substantial investments over the last couple of years of enhancing to make sure ventilation systems are supported in schools. That is really important, as well as additions to these areas. So that is something that we're very proud of in terms of our support for these things.

We also know that child care is something that is very much needed. If you have young children, you've got a young family, you know and value child care, making sure that moms and dads and everyone can go into the work world but have great supports for children. And this budget does that. We are the first province to sign on with the federal government. We saw the priority of making sure child care is a priority, to make sure those are in place but also on a affordability basis.

And the plan that we brought forward as a partnership agreement with the federal government was to ensure that there's affordability on the child care—the amount people are paying. So, it's \$10-a-day child care; that's on a average basis. But it's going to make life more affordable for those individuals.

In fact, you know, of that, we increased the amount of children, I guess they'd call, and the parents that get—be associated with the subsidy. And it went from about 6,000, of course, under the former government and ours up until recently, to about 18,000 people. So, almost triple amount of people were able to apply for a subsidy for 10 day—\$10-a-day child care, so we think that's important.

We're also committed with the federal government to creating 23,000 new spots. We know that having more spots for child care is really important. We're not taking an ideological approach to this either, Madam Speaker. We've got home child care; we've got child care in bigger centres, smaller centres and also with mom and dad that are home that are taking care of children, right? And that's everyone's decision of how they do it. So not an ideological approach. You know, the second plank of that child care plan, again, is to create a lot of these spaces.

And the third thing that I heard, you know, even back when I was minister of Families—seems almost 150 years ago now; maybe not that long, but sometimes it feels that way—was that we're ensuring that ECEs are being well paid, right? That's something we hear. We know with the ECE systems what happens—a lot of times they'll go to the education system or whatever, so there's a lot of turnover. And anyone that has children in the child-care system knows how important that the type of role that

they do. So a part of that, very important, those three elements of that. We think that we're on the right track with child care.

We know, in terms of social services, there's important investments that we've made, whether that be supporting other individuals, whether that be supporting the child-welfare system. There, of course, is a lot of transformation that's happened in the child-welfare system. We want to work, obviously, with the federal government, but the utmost importance is to make sure that children are prepared.

And I can say, on a global scale, over the six years—over six years that we've been in government now, our focus, really, has been to really invest in early intervention and prevention. We think that if you can invest in these early areas, you're going to prevent more children from coming into care. And we have seen the number of children in care go down, and that's one of the landmark things, I guess I would suggest, of the government—our provincial PC government. You've seen about a 15, almost 20 per cent reduction in the amount of children in care, which is really important.

We've also made substantial investments in things like the Rent Assist program. The Rent Assist program is a program that supports individuals—lower income individuals. You know, over the last number of years we've increased, kind of, the amount that's—flows out, which builds on that affordability theme, Madam Speaker. You know, people have more money in their pocket.

What we really like, a program that's kind of like a portable shelter benefit. It allows you to get your money right off the bat and allows you to have choice. So if you live in St. James, in Kirkfield Park, you could decide to live at the Courts of St. James. You can decide to live, really, wherever, right? So it provides some choice, it provides some immediacy for this, and so we think that the fact that there's over 3,000 more people that are involved in this program is really going to support individuals.

We also know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) introduced a new Renters' Tax Credit, and a part of that will benefit renters for Manitobans. I think there's upwards of 45,000 more people that are going to benefit from a renter tax credit, and—as well as investing in social housing and other areas like that are really key to our investments in social services.

We know that the poverty rate, actually, has gone down since our government has been in place. I think

it's somewhere—it kind of goes—you know, it depends which years, but there's over 30,000 less kids that are in poverty now than there was when we first came to office.

And I think some of that has to do—No. 1, there's a Canadian child benefit that impacts all over the—all of the country. But the reason why we've been able to kind of leapfrog other provinces is probably because of the generous Rent Assist program giving a little bit more money in the pockets of individuals.

We've also created some new programs for disabilities. You know, having new categories that have been in place that I think will benefit and, you know, one of the hallmarks of our government, I think, is exactly that: investments in social services.

We also know that making investments in advance education is really key to ensuring peoples' future. And that's why we want to work with post-secondary education—post-secondary institutions—to address those types of issues. We know that the bursaries have gone up. I think it's upwards of \$33 million, Madam Speaker, that goes to bursaries. That's there. It's something that's really important.

And we also want to work with universities and post-secondary educations to evaluate what's in the labour market. So, for instance, right now, Madam Speaker, we know that we need more nurses—to graduate more nurses. And so we've invested money to make sure those nursing seats are in place at a number of the post-secondary universities as well as colleges, in the tune of 400 more spots.

So, we think that's a really important hallmark of the advanced education. So, again, aligning more with post-secondary education on this.

We also know that mental health and addictions is something that we're all experiencing, probably because of the pandemic, because of some of the measures that all governments have had to take in terms of addressing the pandemic. We know that child suicide, as well as suicide rates, have gone up. We know that mental health and addictions, especially addictions, have gone up.

This budget invests more than \$17 million in a whole bunch of different measures to address things like addictions. We've got a—you know, there was a consultation led by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) in terms of that addictions process that provides a five-year roadmap of where we go with it. So, very proud that we're making these investments in

these particular areas that will really help Manitobans in so many different areas.

We know—of course, initially started out with kind of a landmark document that put us—and I think, the former minister of Health, who is now the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), kind of started that process out and made sure that we had a mental health and addictions strategy that was in place. And that's been, really, the start of the process that's in place, and it's been working very well. Things like the RAAM clinics have helped out.

We also know that seniors—and this is something that touches the heart of both myself and the member from Assiniboia, the Minister for Seniors and Long-Term Care, you know, making sure that we have an important seniors strategy. And we put some money where our mouth is. We know some of the tragedies that have happened, not just here in Manitoba with the long-term care, with the pandemics; but we know that there's important investments that need to be had.

And so, there's been some important studies. The Stevenson report, I think, is one, in particular, that identified where we need to invest in these areas. And so, our government is very proud that we were able to invest, well, close to—over \$15 million—\$32 million in and itself in seniors strategies that will help build and provide supports for individual seniors in their work going forward.

We know that infrastructure is something that is extremely important, and it's—not is it—not only is it something that will help build the road systems that were ignored for far too long; but it also something that'll help us as we're pulling out of, I guess, the downturn, you know, with the economy that came with the pandemic. You had, of course, the, you know, probably historical pandemic as well as a downturn in the economy.

But some of these jobs for infrastructure are just so much needed. Very proud of the fact that we've got a three-year plan, so people will see on the outset of how much we're spending on that. We've also committed, with our infrastructure plan, three years of over \$500 million of investments. That's something the heavy construction and others have talked about. And people will see, and I said—in terms of where we're going and when the project's going to be funded. So, that's really important for Manitobans.

We also know that investing in Lake St. Martin in Manitoba is really important, so we've invested over

\$100 million in this process in and itself. All told, I think it's about \$1.5 billion in infrastructure.

We also know that taxation and affordability is something that we're hearing mainly from citizens. A report that came out just recently talked about over a six—I think, a 6.7 per cent increase in inflation that's happening, probably driven from a number of different things.

A lot of the monies that people have borrowed, governments have borrowed, are driving things. There's obviously supply chain issues that have been—happened. There's things like, you know, the war in Ukraine and other things that have—in and—on the international basis that have driven up the costs for inflation.

* (16:00)

So, our government is very focused in on making life more affordable for individuals, and I'll highlight a few things. (1) The education property tax: of course, we were able to reduce it by upwards of 25 per cent last year. This year we're offering another, kind of 12 or 13 per cent, a part of that, so people will have money in their pockets.

And that's just not notional money that comes out. You're going to get a cheque from the government later on this year that will help address inflationary types of issues.

We also have done things like investments in—and dollars we're putting in terms of indexing the tax brackets and the basic personal exemptions. So, that's a tax break for all Manitobans which we think important; a lot of other different tax measures that we're making—trying to make life more affordable for individuals and the—to which some have I already mentioned is in child care, life more affordable as well as other measures like that.

We know that the tax—and we're hoping that the opposition will support our tax measures to make life more affordable. *[interjection]*

In terms of the economy, Madam Speaker, this is probably the—one of the most important things: it's making sure that we have the foundations in place for a strong, growing economy, and that's what's going to grow and make sure that we have important jobs.

We've got a very low unemployment rate and have over the last two, three years. One of the factors I think we should be proud of: coming out of the pandemic and during the pandemic, we were one of the ones that rebounded the quickest; a part of that

coming out of that pandemic and also maintained resiliency, I guess, in terms of the money and how we spent it during the pandemic.

We also included things like a new credit venture—not a credit, a venture capital plan. Manitoba's been kind of like a desert, I guess, if you will, for venture capital, so increasing it by over—having \$50 million for a venture capital fund, we're going to make sure that people are invested in Manitoba.

Manufacturing's growing 'expedientially' here, whether it be food processing and that sorts. We've got to take advantage of the things that we have here in Manitoba.

We also know that other factors—ensuring that we have a viable plan in terms of the debt reduction—and that's been my one criticism of the federal government throughout the course of this pandemic. And I think they do dirt—deserve some credit. They've been investing, and we worked closely—when I was in, as minister of Finance, we would have meetings every week with all the ministers of finance across the country for probably about almost two years of the pandemic, so we'd be able to see what other things were doing. It was really an important opportunity to do it. And we worked with both Bill Morneau and—as well as Chrystia Freeland, and they both were very good to work with.

So, I don't have any qualms at all, in terms of the investments that the federal government made. My one concern, of course, is having a deficit reduction plan; you know, that's a part of it.

So once the expenditure is there, you need a plan to get yourself to get yourself into balance. And that is where our government is very proud of. We've got a strong plan to grow the economy, make investments in core areas, whether it be health or education, social services, justice—you name it. But we also plan to grow the economy, but also get yourself back into balance. You can't run deficits like all governments have for a long period of time.

We made substantial investments. I can tell you, one of the budgets was \$2.1 billion, and then it went down to \$1.5 billion and this budget, of course, is on a pathway to get ourselves in a balanced position. And that's something that the bond rating agencies will find important, whether all members of the Chamber, you know, care what the bond rating agencies say or not. I can say, our side of the government—our side of this aisle very much cares, and I think that you need to live

within your means. You need to provide some affordability measures, which I think we've done in here and make priorities, investments for Manitobans.

So I want to really recognize the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). I think he did a wonderful job putting the budget together. I want to thank all the ministers, our administrative staff. I want to thank the budget team. I was involved in the budget team for over four years and the individuals that run Treasury Board and put it together just work tirelessly and that process really starts really from May or June onward, where the interim, you know, the interim Estimate process come forward and then when you have all the ministers and all the members of Treasury Board that make those decisions.

You know, they work tirelessly to get this done, and I think the document that before us is something that we're hearing from many Manitobans is a step in the right direction with it. So I want to recognize all those people and I want to recognize Premier Stefanson for the work and the leadership that she provided to put it together.

So thank you, Madam Speaker, and I encourage all members of the Chamber to support the budget.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to the member that when referring to other members, it should be by their constituency name or by their portfolio.

Also, to clarify for the House regarding the last leave request by the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), I neglected to include all of the words of the motion that had been put forward, so I'm going to have to repeat the whole motion—oh, I'm going to have to repeat the leave request from the honourable Government House Leader.

And that was: Is there leave of the House to have the names from the Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness' (Mrs. Guillemard) member statement included in the Hansard transcript from today's sitting immediately following the minister's statement?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Moving on, then, to the next speaker in debate for the budget motion, is the honourable member for Notre Dame.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): You know, as a representative for the constituency of Notre Dame, I was very, very disappointed with the reading of the budget last week. It didn't have anything in it for my constituents that are, you know, facing real

affordability challenges. We were looking for some steps towards a living wage. Many of my constituents, you know, work two and three jobs to make ends meet and, you know, they didn't even—some of them, when I speak to them about what a living wage is, they didn't even know something like that would be possible.

And I remember distinctly this one conversation that I had with this one Tim Horton's worker who said, is that even possible to make \$15 an hour? And I said, is that something that you would really like? Would that make a big difference for you? And she just was completely floored by this, by how much of a difference that would make for her in her life.

So this is—these are real people, and a real living wage would mean so much to them and their families. But, again, nothing like that in this budget—and, again, nothing about, you know, things to make life more affordable.

So I just recently got a notice from Hydro—Manitoba Hydro talking about how much more my monthly bill would be, and it was probably almost 30 per cent more and that's a big, huge chunk for folks in Notre Dame.

So, again, things that this government could have done to help address the affordability crisis that many of my constituents are facing were completely ignored in this budget.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was at a parent council meeting just last Wednesday, I believe, and the parents there were talking about would it be possible to try to get that milk subsidy again because they were having a hard time affording milk for our kids.

And, you know, that kind of thing used to be possible because school divisions used to have money that they could put towards the milk subsidy that families could partake of. And things like milk, I mean, I just think about how much milk my own children go through in the course of the week—and to see the rising prices of milk—and knowing that my neighbours, also, are having a hard time with, you know, getting milk to their kids too.

This isn't right. And these are the things that government should be taking a look at, making sure that these kinds of basic needs are met for people so that they can get on with their lives and live happy and healthy lives for their families.

In this budget, again, there was nothing in it for—no mention of a comprehensive plan to deal with lead

contamination in soil. There were no funds allocated for an advertising campaign to educate residents on how they can reduce their risks of lead exposure. And this continues to be a major problem for my constituency of Notre Dame as well as in other parts of Winnipeg.

Notre Dame constituents have presented many petitions already to this government and more petitions continue to be signed. But, again, Budget 2022 from the PCs ignores our Notre Dame constituency's appeal for help on this issue.

Specifically, we're asking the government to implement their own recommendations from their independent review. This was a review by a company called Intrinsic, and it was published in January 2020, and it called for the creation of an action plan for the Weston neighbourhood to develop a lead awareness communications and outreach plan, requisitioning a more in-depth study because the study that was here in the January 2020 Intrinsic report, it wasn't even any new information or any new research. It was just a compilation and a synthesizing of all the different kinds of studies previously on lead contamination in Winnipeg.

* (16:10)

So, we actually need a new, more in-depth study, and also to create a tracking program for those tested for blood lead levels so that medical professionals can follow up with them. And this is a real issue for children in my constituency, especially those aged under the age of seven, because we know that they're the most susceptible to very, very harmful effects of lead. And this is completely preventable and it's actually affordable to mitigate this issue.

As the representative here, I also know that my constituents are looking for a better, more comprehensive plan to deal with the mental health, housing and addictions crisis, and the resulting violence that is happening because these issues are allowed to continue to fester. And this was entirely missing in this PC 2022 Budget.

We feel that this government is ignoring us. This government is ignoring that there is a mental health, housing, addictions crisis. There is a lack of commitment and resources to addressing homelessness.

And last week, I spoke about how directly—homelessness and addictions and violence is directly impacting my low-income seniors at the Manitoba Housing complex on Elgin. These seniors are no longer—they feel—they no longer feel safe in their own

apartment, in their own buildings because they're afraid. And then, just this past weekend, there were two more murders in Notre Dame, one on Elgin Avenue and one on Sargent Avenue.

And another way to viscerally illustrate, you know, how bad this mental health and housing, addictions crisis is translating in my community is by just taking a look at the garbage on the streets and in vacant lots in my community. So, normally around May, we have a series of spring cleanups. There's going to be one by the West Alexander Residents Association, another one by the Spence Neighbourhood Association, another one by Central Neighbourhoods, on the weekend of May 14th and 15th.

And normally, you know, I try to help out by getting a bunch of volunteers from the different churches and different organizations that we know. We put on our little shirts, we get things from the dollar store, those garbage picker-upper things and garbage bags, and away we go. Right?

But this year, we're not going to be able to even begin to deal with the kind of garbage, you know, doing this kind of regular spring cleanup. This is not an ordinary spring cleanup that we're dealing with, because we're actually dealing with the neglect of mental health, housing and addictions, and homelessness that's allowed—that's been festering in our communities.

So, when we take a look at the garbage—so, on Fridays when I'm—when we're not in here, I'm in the constituency and I respond to calls and I go and visit people's homes—and just the amount of garbage on vacant lots, in the greenspaces, in the back lanes, the type of garbage—we're talking about, you know, piles and piles of furniture. We're talking about, you know, feces. There are rats in here. How is this going to be just like a regular community cleanup that's going to be able to deal with this?

What we're right now trying to look at is, I had to actually make appointments to try to see our ministers so that we can try to get more resources to deal with this garbage. I've had to contact the city councillors to see, you know, what is it that you can do here? Because we know that phoning 311 is not enough.

Again, in this budget there were no—there's been funding freezes for operations for the municipalities for these last six to seven years. So, they're at the end of, you know, the line in terms of the downloading of these services, and they're trying to deal with very

very serious issues that are actually provincial responsibilities. So that's part of the reason why we're seeing all this garbage.

For the spring cleanups, I'm going to have to try to rent skid-steers, like the Bobcat ones, so that we can try to deal with this garbage. This isn't our regular community cleanup. And it's just an example of how bad that our mental health, housing and addictions crises are affecting our community and that this government is not taking that seriously. There's no focus on this. There's no strategy for this and, really, so much more needs to be done.

You know, it's not just the budget. It's also the track record, you know, where this government has failed to address this addiction crisis. Three years ago, the police chief, Danny Smyth, said, we are a city in crisis, if you look around, you see evidence of drug use all around us and in all corners of the city. And those words still hold true today.

Four hundred and seven people died of drug overdose in 2021, and that's double what it has been in previous years. And since 2016, there have been a three-fold increase in needles distributed in Winnipeg and a 400 per cent increase in Brandon. The WRHA distributed 2.7 million needles in 2021, and over 400,000 in Brandon.

Since the pandemic, opioid overdoses have doubled and reached a record high, and the Winnipeg fire and paramedic services report having to administer more than 550 naloxone doses in just six months.

You know, we have seen huge spikes in blood-borne illnesses and in other types of diseases. Hepatitis B is 10 times higher than 10 years ago, and syphilis has increased nearly four times in just a few years. This is directly impacting the residents of the constituency of Notre Dame.

And this PC Cabinet has continued to fail to act, and they continue to deny the facts that have been placed in front of them by experts and their own government departments. Even the WRHA revealed that, quote, there is a lack of provincial leadership in dealing with the drug and meth crisis here.

And years after receiving the VIRGO report, the Province hired yet another consultant to do another review instead of action, so right now, we're now entering another consulting phase for another five-year mental health action plan.

Meanwhile, Manitobans deserve help right now, not five years after lengthy reviews and cost-cutting plans.

Nancy Heinrichs, who's the executive director of NorWest Co-op Community Health, has said that they have seen a 500 per cent increase in referrals for counselling. All these needs are a cry for help for a real mental health strategy, a fully funded mental health strategy that's going to deal with addictions and especially one that targets the needs of our youth because we know that a lot of mental health issues start when folks are very young. So, this is the time that we really need to deal with this. All these facts are laid bare. Just come for a walk with me when you—if you have some time. And we'll go rifle through garbage together.

You know, instead of addressing these plans—like, if you take a look at their record, the PCs have—under their watch, the wait for addictions treatment has increased, and four staff positions at the Compass Residential Youth Program were cut in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba's only long-term-treatment centres for teens with addition and mental health issues through the Behavioural Health Foundation had to shut their doors and, in the fall of 2018, the children's advocate put out a three-page letter addressing their concerns about the PC's lack of response on services and response for children and youth dealing with mental health and addictions, and she said that she could republish that statement today.

You know, instead of helping to provide those kinds of mental health resources, the then-former Health minister accused her of finger pointing, and then the premier—Pallister at that time—said, I'm not one to throw money around without a purpose. Well, what other purpose would we be serving as government officials other than to serve the public and to help those, especially our most vulnerable, which I would say would be—you know, you could argue youth with mental health challenges? That's not throwing away money. That—you would be serving a purpose by helping those folks, you know. Have the resources to be able, you know, to help them function properly in their lives.

So, these barriers to supports and services have increased during the pandemic, especially for those who need help with substance abuse and mental health concerns. So, again, this PC Budget 2022, it doesn't address mental health, addictions and housing and the resulting preventable violence that is happening in the community. I live in the constituency of Notre Dame—

well, actually, right on the border. And, you know, I see first-hand what it's like here. I didn't always live here. I used to live in Sage Creek. But after getting elected, I tried to move. And now, I live with the folks that I serve.

You know, going to the parks in the community, there's syringes there in the playgrounds that my kids and their cousins play in. There are homeless encampments in the parks where we go take our dog for a walk. And on Friday, garbage day pickup, you know, we have our community members going through my garbage, our garbage, looking for food or any items of value that they can use. Property theft is a regular occurrence. Our car windows have been smashed. I think, twice, folks have unsuccessfully tried to get into my property, and I think they were only deterred because—due to the valiant efforts of my little cocker spaniel named Mac.

* (16:20)

And, you know, our community, we really want change, and we deserve change. Even the seniors at 515 Elgin that I've spoken about, they want change. And they have noted to me that they feel sorry for the folks that are squatting in their building and in their stairwells and in their laundry rooms, because, you know, these folks are, you know, offering drugs and offering sex, even to the senior residents, or—because—and the seniors know that they have no place to go, that—these folks that are squatting. And so they actually feel sorry for them.

You know, an Addictions Foundation of Manitoba worker actually explained to me one time in a meth-in-community workshop that was planned by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, she explained to me that it makes sense to use meth if you're freezing outside and you're homeless, because meth—one of the physical effects of meth is that it can help you feel warm.

So, you know, it's actually like a coping mechanism that actually makes sense. But, you know, this is not the kind of coping mechanisms that we want to, you know, have people, you know, have to deal with. And we want them to have a warm place.

You know, even the Barrion brothers—that family of that young John Lloyd Barrion that was killed on February 15th while he was working a night shift at the beer vendor—even his family in my community are looking for lasting change to address the mental health and addictions crisis that have led to their brother's killing.

Our community is asking for leadership, but it wasn't there in Budget 2022; it's business as usual for whoever is drafting this budget and for whoever gets the final say on this budget.

A few weeks ago, the Families Minister, you know, made some comments about, you know, the declining child poverty rates in Manitoba. The former Finance minister has also echoed those comments, and I wanted to get some clarity on those comments for myself.

So I reached out to the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and they prepared a note for me after doing some research. They said, first of all, that those declining poverty child rates are based on the Market Basket Measure, and these—and this Market Basket Measure does not include children from First Nations communities in Manitoba. So, first off, okay, we know that that's not going to be a very good measure of child poverty rates in the first place.

And they told me that very little of, you know, this Market Basket Measure of poverty rates—whatever has been declining—very little of this success could be attributed to provincial programs or policies, and that, in its annual review of social assistance programs across Canada, the Maytree foundation found that Manitoba was among the jurisdictions that offered only limited COVID-related benefits for EIA recipients.

Manitoba provided a one-time \$200 payment to individuals on EIA disability, but otherwise, no provincial COVID-related benefits were directed to low-income people. The bulk of COVID-related improvements to EIA incomes came from federal programs in 2020.

And then, as documented by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Manitoba government received an extra \$275 million from the federal government last year, but this money instead went—instead of going towards poverty alleviation and program improvements, it instead went to tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthy. I don't know.

While significant progress was made towards reducing poverty in 2020, almost entirely all of this was due to federal income support policies with very little being attributable to the provincial government.

So, you know, it's not really something to really pat yourself on the back for and keep bringing up over and over at different talking points. Like, our critic of Finance has already memorized the then-Finance minister's speech because he said he always brings

that up. It's not even true in the first place, so why do you keep bringing it up?

So, in contrast to this provincial government in action, the anti-poverty coalition Make Poverty History Manitoba is calling on this province to increase support for people on EIA to at least 75 per cent of the Market Basket Measure, and to build at least 300 units of social housing per year.

So let's just put that on the record, okay? Let's have that as, you know, something that we're trying to shoot for because this is exactly what folks, especially in my constituency, really, really need.

So, instead of all—instead of doing that, the PC government—Pallister-Stefanson governments—have instead sold off social and affordable units; and they've cut the maintenance budgets; and they've raised rents. They've not built a single unit of affordable housing during their time in government. Like, I don't understand that, not even one. Please come down with me to the streets of Notre Dame and let's go for a walk and rifle through garbage together.

So Manitoba Housing has disposed of hundreds and hundreds of social housing units and those in Manitoba Housing were forced to spend more of their income on rent. So, before, they used to spend 25 per cent of their income in 2016 and now they have to spend 30 per cent of their income today.

Again, the wait-list for social housing is growing fast. As of November 2020, the wait-list was 6,021 and in May 2017 it was 1,699, so—1,699.

Under the Progressive Conservative government, homelessness has increased. According to the latest street census, more than 11,000 Winnipeggers are homeless, the majority of whom are Indigenous: 66 per cent. This census was based on data that was collected over a 24-hour period on April—

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's a pleasure to be able to speak to the budget this afternoon.

First, I want to begin, as I often do on these keynote addresses when it comes to the Throne Speech or the budget, and simply acknowledge my family. This has been, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a difficult time over the last two years for everyone, for everyone in society and for a lot of different reasons and in a lot of different ways.

And, of course, MLAs and all elected officials have had their own challenges, but in particular, I think for the family members of those who are elected; I know that it's been a particularly difficult time. We often say that those of us who've run for election, we sign up for some of the challenges that we get, but our family members don't sign up in the same way. They're a part of it but it—they're not ascribed in the same way.

And so I want to particularly thank my wife, Kim. It's been, I know, a challenging of—like, for all of us in the last couple of years. It's been challenging for her. Now that we're returning to some of the things that are more normal, that we're more used to in terms of activities and events, we're really enjoying being able to connect again with friends and neighbours and others—more broadly, Manitoba—in addition to returning to some of those social activities.

And to my son, Malachi, who is still in school—he's in grade 10, and so this has been—like a lot of school-age students—it's been a real challenge over the last couple of years. School has been interrupted when it has been going on. It hasn't been the same for students. Different students have reacted differently to that.

I know for my son, in many different ways, he missed the activities that he would otherwise be able to participate in, but it wasn't because of a—public health regulations. But he actually has done remarkably well over the last two years and I'm very, very proud of him and I'm very, very proud of my wife, as I always am, but never more proud than I am in the last couple of years.

I'm also proud, transitioning now and 'bridgiting', Mr. Deputy Speaker, proud of this budget. I'm proud of this budget because it does many things for many Manitobans. And being the MLA for Steinbach, I want to speak a little bit about what the budget does for the city and the constituency of Steinbach and southeast Manitoba more generally, which I know you're very familiar with, being neighbouring ridings.

So the budget funds personal-care homes and, in particular, the Rest Haven personal-care home, which has been undergoing a major expansion over the last two years. More than 100 new personal-care-home beds are set to open at Rest Haven personal-care home in Steinbach, probably just in a few weeks. It's built on the small-home model of personal-care homes, and so each of the units are sort of cloistered together in

units of, you know, I think five to eight, and in little communities.

And so residents, of course, both get to know each other, but they're there together in a community setting, in a much larger building. And that has lots of advantages from a staffing perspective. It also has advantages—although this wasn't why it was designed that way—from the disease control advantage because you can, if you have outbreaks, it doesn't necessarily have to affect the entire facility because people are 'modulized' and in these sort of small communities within a personal-care home.

I had the opportunity to see the Carman personal-care home facility. It opened—together with my friend from Midland—it opened last fall. Very similar kind of model in terms of those small units. Really, really great way to build a personal-care home and to get the best experience for those who are there.

* (16:30)

Now, I know the opposition members don't like to talk about new personal-care-home beds, but in fact, there are new PCH beds coming online: the one that opened in Carman last fall and a very major one that'll be opening in the city of Steinbach. It's also worth noting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these are the first net new personal-care-home beds in the city of Steinbach, the third-largest city in the province of Manitoba, and one of the fastest growing in western Canada; the first net new PCH beds since the 1970s, and that speaks to how badly needed these beds were.

If you think about the size of the city of Steinbach back in 1970 compared to now, it is more than doubled in size, and yet there hadn't been net new PCH beds added, and that is happening now in just a few weeks. And it's a credit to this government and it's a credit to the operational funding that is happening in this budget, which I expect that the opposition will vote against. So, on the one hand, they talk about the need for new personal-care-home beds; on the other hand, they vote against the money that actually supports it.

I also know that within this budget there is significant funding for capital improvements to hospitals around Manitoba, and included in that is the Bethesda regional health-care centre which will be getting an expansion of new medical beds. You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the growth of the southeast requires there to be a new investment. The Bethesda hospital is the regional centre for the southeast, and

there is a need for new medical beds. So I'm proud to say that that will happen.

Members opposite—I know the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)—will remember because he was here at the time. They will remember the Bethesda regional hospital because the NDP—that's the hospital that the NDP built an entrance to, a new entrance that had a series of stairs, dozens of stairs to get into the hospital, and then it had a wheelchair ramp that was so narrow and so steep that it couldn't be traversed by more than one person in a wheelchair at a time, if they could get up the ramp. It was so bad at one point that the NDP had to hire navigators—navigators to be outside the hospital to help people get into the hospital, because if there was more than one wheelchair going up the ramp, then somebody else had to turn around, and so they had to have navigators to coordinate how people could get into the hospital.

This is the third largest city in Manitoba and that's how badly bungled, or maybe how little they cared about rural health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was fixed under our government and now there's an expansion happening to Bethesda and I expect that the members opposite will vote against that. They didn't support—*[interjection]*—and I hear there they've indicated they're going to vote against it. They didn't care about rural health care when they were in government, and they don't care about it now.

Added to that, of course, is that there are new dialysis units coming to Bethesda regional health-care centre, too. Under the NDP, they would put people on the highways who needed—who had dialysis service. They would just let them drive into Winnipeg to get that. If they had to go daily or weekly, of course, it didn't matter to them, if they had to drive. Our government is funding this new dialysis service, not just to Steinbach, but other facilities. And of course, members opposite who, on the one hand, claim to be supportive of health-care funding will, I've no doubt, vote against that dialysis service.

I want to talk about new schools. Government announced that 20 new schools would be built over a decade. We've accelerated that. We've added to that number of 20. I think it's 22 now. There's a new elementary school that's going to be built in Steinbach.

It's also worth noting that that's the first elementary school to be built in decades as well in the city Steinbach, even though it has grown at such an exponential rate. So residents, of course, are very much looking forward to the new elementary school. I know that the members opposite will vote against

that investment as well, because they talk about supporting education, but they don't want to support the dollars when it comes to actually supporting new schools in the province of Manitoba.

So those are really, really important investments that will benefit, for sure, the city of Steinbach and the constituency, but really the southeast, because when we're talking about the Rest Haven personal-care-home new beds, or we're talking about the expansion of the Bethesda regional health-care centre or we're talking about those dialysis units, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of those will support your constituents as well, along with all those who are in the southeast part of Manitoba.

And so, while it may not be important to members opposite, those investment dollars—and they'll demonstrate that by voting against the budget— it is very important to the residents of southeast Manitoba.

Also important, of course, is the issue of affordability. And I want to speak a little bit about affordability. So I know the Finance critic for the NDP and others in the NDP have spoken in negative terms about providing tax relief to Manitobans. And there's significant, historic tax relief coming for those who are homeowners, but also for those who are renters.

Those members of—or those residents of Manitoba, they are feeling the high cost of food, the increased cost of food, dairy products and others, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're feeling every time they go to the gas pumps, the high cost of gas. Part of that, of course, is caused by the conflict in Ukraine, and part of it is caused by other factors, but for them it doesn't really matter the cause of it.

We could talk about, you know, how much of this is driven monetary policies of the federal government and the expenditures that they've had and the lack of fiscal responsibility causing inflation to be a record level in Canada. We could talk about all those things. But for those who are going to the gas pump or those who are going to the grocery store and they're seeing their food bill go up, you know, by 10, 20, 30 per cent. When they're going to the gas pump and they're seeing that the cost of gas is going up—it's doubling over the last few months, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're not as concerned about the cause; they're concerned about how they're going to actually pay for those bills.

So a budget that provides historic tax relief—historic tax relief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be voted against by the NDP. They will vote against that tax relief. On the one hand, they come into this House and

they say they are concerned about the economic well-being of those who are paying more for food and paying more for gasoline. On the other hand, they do the exact 'opposhit' of showing that caring by voting against tax relief, and why is that?

For those of us who've been in this Assembly for a long time, as my friends opposite might say, too long; and I actually just heard at the same time the member saying too long—they will—*[interjection]*—I can give them—him some historical knowledge; this is some advantage of being here for a long time. And when I sat on the other side for many years, longer than a person should sit in opposition, but hopefully not as long—or hopefully they'll sit longer in opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when I sat there in opposition, the budget would come around every spring, and it became an annual thing with the NDP budgets. And it would be put into the paper, you know, a few days before the budget came out, what taxes are going to be increased?

It wasn't a question of if taxes were going to be increased; it wasn't a question of, you know, is this going to be the year that the NDP increase taxes? It was simply a discussion of which taxes are they going to increase; as the deficit was going up, they were increasing taxes.

And so year after year we'd see that, and, you know, it started off with fees and you'd see additional fees that would be added on, and then it kind of grew to the expansion of the PST and they started to add it on to products that the PST didn't apply to before.

And then, of course, there was the time in 2011 or 2012 where they then actually increased the PST. And I remember sitting on the other side; actually I think I might have been sitting close to where the current opposition Finance critic is sitting, and heard them as they announced that they were going to be increasing the PST.

And I could almost hear the gasp around Manitoba because this wasn't as though there hadn't been any tax increases for a number of years and all of a sudden the government was increasing the PST, which would've been bad enough. This was after years of increases on fees, on various taxes and spreading the PST to a number of different products. And Manitobans had just had enough.

But what is clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the NDP have not had enough. They want to continue to increase taxes. They will vote against—they will vote

against the provisions in this budget partly because they know it provides tax relief to Manitobans.

And the critic for the opposition, the Finance critic, he has said he doesn't believe Manitobans deserve a tax break. He's willing to take even more; even as the cost of living increases on every Manitoban for common items, he's willing to take more from them.

And we talk a lot about the fact that the NDP doesn't have a plan, and they don't have a plan, except I do think they do have something of a plan. They absolutely plan to increase taxes if they were ever to get back into government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they proved it. They proved it in years when the economy was going well, when the finances were flush, when transfer payments were being restored. Even during those years, they increased taxes. Who's to believe they wouldn't go back to increasing taxes again?

* (16:40)

In fact, we don't have to look far. The member opposite, the Finance critic, has said that they want to increase taxes. There's lots of tax room, he believes. Tax room is another way of saying that he believes more money should come in from Manitobans and Manitobans should pay more. So that is their plan.

Now, they might not want to talk about it right now, and they might try to couch it a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we know that that has always been the NDP plan. And particularly at a time when Manitobans are hurting, when it hurts them to have to pay for the common things that we know every Manitoban has to pay for, they can't afford an NDP government who's going to come into government and look around and go, where can we get more money from Manitobans? Where can we take more money from Manitobans?

And that's why—one of the reasons they don't support this budget, because this budget will put money back into the hands of Manitobans, give them a little bit of relief when they need relief. It doesn't make them whole. It won't make all the inflationary pressures that we're having in Manitoba and in Canada when it comes to inflation—we're going to see, I'm sure, more increased interest rates. It's not going to solve all of those problems.

But why wouldn't a provincial government want to do something, and do something historic and try to put money back into the hands of Manitobans and try to stop an NDP government from taking those money—that money out of the hands of Manitobans?

So that's what we're doing, and that's why they're going to oppose it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we'll remind Manitobans. We'll remind them. In a year and a half, of course, we'll be, I guess, out for election. I know everybody's looking forward to election time, and we will remind Manitobans about what the NDP is all about.

And, of course, they sit there now on the other side, and they go, oh, well, that was many years ago. We don't have to look far. You know, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) has put on the record many times how he feels about tax policies, put on the record many times that he's more than willing to take more money from Manitobans. He doesn't think that Manitobans pay enough.

Well, it's never enough, of course, under the NDP. It's never enough. There's never enough money that they'll take out of the pockets at Manitobans, and particularly at this time—I would say almost at any time, but particularly at this time, when Manitobans are struggling and Canadians are struggling, and they're concerned about their future. They're seeing record-high housing prices. They know it's difficult for young generations to get into the housing market. They're not sure where this is all going with inflation.

Those, of course, who remember inflation in the early 1980s and how significant it was and how it eroded the buying power of Canadians understand the damage of that. They understand the damage that then comes with record-high inflation rates.

Of course, we're nowhere near that right now. The prime rate is—it's 1 per cent. But it's every time that that interest rate increases, those who are leveraged against that interest rate are going to be paying more. And they don't need an NDP government or any other government to say, well, that's not enough, you should pay more on top of that.

But even now the Finance critic says, I think Manitobans should pay more. It's never enough when it comes to the NDP, never enough. And I know that from sitting in opposition for too many years and watching budget after budget after budget after budget where the NDP acknowledged it wasn't enough. Now we're going to spread the PST to other products. Now we're going to try to go after these fees. Oh, you know, there's—we're not taxing enough on propane. Let's charge more when people go to barbecue.

There was never a fee or a service that the NDP couldn't find a way to tax more of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they want to do it again. They absolutely

want to do it again to Manitobans, but Manitobans will be reminded it's not the way to go.

So this is a budget that does many things. I explained the things, of course, within my own constituency, but broadly, it invests in health care. Broadly, it invests in education. It ensures that Manitobans get a little bit of tax relief.

We see more money for the arts. Very, very important for those within the arts community who provide so much vibrancy to our province. We see when it comes to community projects, announcements that were made today: more money for community projects.

These are the things that the NDP are going to vote against next week. They're going to vote against those investments. They're going to vote against those things that are important. But primarily why they're going to vote against it is because they want to take more money out of the pockets of Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And that's fine. You know, they're going to go and put that forward. That's what the NDP are. That's what they've always been. That's probably what they always will be. But we will remind Manitobans that this is not a time for them to go back to a place with the NDP to take more money because they can't afford it. They can't afford an NDP government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm proud of this budget. I'm proud of the investments that it makes in the community that I represent. I'm proud of the investment that it makes in communities across Manitoba and the norths and in the south, in Winnipeg, in Brandon and all the areas in between.

I am proud that it recognizes that Manitobans are hurting when it comes to the costs of food, costs of gasoline and the monetary policies that are happening federally. I am proud that it has a path back to balance, a one that is responsible, one that is longer term, but that is actually a path back to balance. It meets all of those needs that a budget should 'meet'.

And while the member opposite, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), the Finance critic, he sits in his office and he plots a way to find a way to tax Manitobans. He's got his charts there and said, well, we could raise this tax and we could raise this that tax, and we'll make—oh, here's another way we can make another Manitoban pay more. I know that that's his plan 'huddled' away in his little office and he's got that planned out.

We will do everything we can to stop that member from jacking the taxes on Manitobans making them pay more like the NDP have always done, will always do and always want to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The—order.

The honourable member for St. James.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Really happy to have a chance to put some words on the record about this budget, a budget that is in keeping with this government's unofficial slogan which is: You're on your own.

This budget confirms, I think, what a lot of Manitobans already knew, which is the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and this government is completely and totally disconnected from the realities facing regular Manitobans. They're not listening and we can just take a quick glance at the budget to see and confirm how disconnected this government really is.

I know my colleagues and I, when we go out into the public and when I'm in St. James either at community centres or people coming into my office, the No. 1 thing we hear about is the concerns with our health-care system and the state of our health-care system here in Manitoba.

Almost everybody in this Chamber knows someone who's been impacted by the surgical test backlog. Almost everybody in this Chamber knows someone who likely has been shipped across this province or knows somebody who's been impacted by somebody being shipped across this province to get access to health care. Our personal-care homes are in a disastrous state, underfunded, lack of staff. People are being impacted by that across this province, and we know, of course, that people are being impacted by huge underinvestment in our hospitals.

And I think about the story that I heard from a nurse who works in my community about the reality she faced prior to this government coming into power and how she had far more time to spend with patients, time to get to know them when she's working at the Deer Lodge Centre, time to spend quality time with them in the morning. That has now been impacted, and hearing the stories from her and others about how their jobs have changed, how they've been forced into a new reality where they don't have time

to give proper care to patients is really hard to hear about, but that's the reality facing Manitobans when they head in to one of our health-care facilities.

Manitobans wanted to see a budget that demonstrated levels of investment that were commensurate with the scale of the challenge we face right now in this province. Manitobans were ready for a historic investment in our health-care system, but we didn't see that. Instead, what we saw was investment that was far below the rate of inflation, and I think that's left a lot of Manitobans wondering what this government thinks they're up to in the relates to our health-care system.

Manitobans thought that maybe this new Premier and this new budget was an opportunity to change the channel, to demonstrate that she was different from her predecessor. But, no. We've seen with total clarity with the release of this budget that this Premier is executing on Brian Pallister's vision for health-care in this province.

And, you know, we've heard in this budget some announcements—I'll call them. You know, they'll say they're commitments, but I think we know that they're really just announcements that would suggest that they're going to make certain types of investments. But we know, we've just recently revealed \$50 million that they said they were going to be spending last year to deal with backlogs—a massive portion of that went unspent.

* (16:50)

No one trusts this government. No one trusts them when they say that they're going to be making an investment in our health-care system because they've proven time and time again that we can't trust them when they make an announcement about some type of investment or some promise that they're making to Manitobans.

Another huge concern that we're seeing that this government has failed to speak to in this budget is the fact that they're clearly intent on increasing the role of private service providers in health care here in Manitoba. That's a massive concern for the average Manitoban. And I know just yesterday we heard our Premier confirm that it doesn't matter how we deliver health care in this province.

According to her and according to this PC government, it's just as well if we provide it through private means. That sends chills down the spines of Manitobans when they hear that. We know what that means. We—that means that the bigger your bank

account, the better your access to health care, and that's not a health-care system that Manitobans should be faced with in this province.

All Manitobans deserve to quality care, equal access to care, regardless of how much money they have and this government is trying to steal that away. And we can very clearly see that they're intent in increasing the role of private service providers in our health-care system instead of investing in our public system to create and ensure that we have adequate supports when we need them, where we need them. That's wrong. We should not be going down the path of privatization. We need to firm up our public health-care system.

Manitobans should feel confident that when they go to the hospital, they're not going to be shipped across the province for care. They should feel confident that if they need a test or a surgery that they're going to get it within a reasonable amount of time. They should feel confident that if go to one of our hospitals that they're not going to be left in a hallway for five days on end, waiting for a room. And they should know if they go for basic care or if they end up in a personal-care home that they're going to get the care they need, or if a family member sends someone to a personal-care home that they're going to get the supports they need.

The cuts that have been made to our health-care system by this government put people at risk. It puts the health of Manitobans at increased risk and the cuts that have been made by this government over the last six years and their failure to invest in this budget will be felt for years and years to come. It's putting Manitoba's—Manitobans' health at risk and this has to change and this budget continues their work of underfunding health care in this province.

I want to speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a bit about the affordability crisis that's being faced by Manitobans in this province. We all hear it and we know inflation is rampant right now. Just today I think they updated the newest numbers. We're now north of 6 per cent. We can expect that that inflation is here to stay for the foreseeable future and just like probably everyone else in this Chamber, I've heard from a lot of constituents about the challenges that they're facing in affording their basic costs of life.

It's not just impacting the lowest income Manitobans. It's impacting all Manitobans, and Manitobans have a right to expect that they would have a provincial government that would care enough to take action to help them during this period—during

this challenging period but instead, we've seen the opposite from this government.

We've seen no commitment to keeping hydro rates low. Instead, they bring forward a bill that guarantees much higher hydro rates for years to come and, in fact, moves rate setting from an independently managed process over the Cabinet table. That's wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's going to result in higher rates than Manitobans need to pay for hydro. They're going in the wrong direction, making life more expensive.

We also know that they're not helping to keep MPI rates low. Instead, they're taking dollars that should be used to help reduce our rates and they're using those to cover core government costs—another example of this government's failing to think out of the box to help keep our costs low.

University tuition going up and up and up. What are they doing in an affordability crisis? They're contributing to making it worse by allowing those costs to continue to grow.

And our out-of-control above-guideline rent increase issue continues to be an issue. This budget was an opportunity for this government to show Manitobans that they cared, that they're listening to their concerns and that they understand what is driving our housing affordability crisis in this province.

Did we see that? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not. Instead, this government has resigned Manitobans to continuing to face huge, above-guideline rent increases when we need to do what we can to help keep rental rates affordable in this province.

We've also seen that this budget locks in a \$175 tax increase that this government imposed on Manitoban renters. That is shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's absolutely shameful.

And, of course, we know what they've done. They've locked in that tax increase from last year, where they reduced that benefit from a \$700 benefit to \$525. Manitobans were angry about that, rightfully. Renters were upset about that.

And what did they do? They locked it in, and they tried to sell it as a benefit. So now, Manitoban renters are being told that this is actually a good thing, we're giving a \$525 tax credit here, when this is actually the end result of a \$175 tax increase.

And let's think about who those renters are: those are our seniors; those are people on fixed incomes;

those are people with disabilities; those are the people that are going to pay for this government's lack of concern over the challenges that they're facing right now.

That is shameful, and it shows just how disconnected this government is from the needs of everyday Manitobans.

No minimum wage increase—or, sorry, a 40-cent minimum wage increase on the horizon. Again, this government has failed to commit to a living wage in this province.

EIA rates are—they're not even poverty level. It's hard to describe how low they are. It's a \$195 basic living allowance for a single person on EIA. Think about what that means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a given month, trying to survive on \$195. I challenge every single member on the other side of the aisle to try to live one month on \$195.

And we know that this government doesn't care about people on EIA. We know that they don't care about the challenges people are facing in poverty in this province. They're not doing anything to help lift those people out of these situations. Instead, they're allowing them to languish with a \$195 benefit that hasn't been indexed to inflation. And this budget proves they're intent on doing nothing about this.

Manitobans need help. Their costs of living are out of control. This government can act. There are things they can do. But they're failing to do it, and that's a shame, and it speaks to their total disconnectedness from where Manitobans are at.

I'm running low on time—or time's running out quickly here. I want to speak a bit about climate.

This, for me, was one of the main reasons I wanted to sign up for this job, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when I think about why I'm here, I think about my kids; I think about the future we're leaving for our kids, in this province and everywhere—not only in Manitoba, in Canada and abroad.

We're seeing the warnings from the IPCC, and we're—we know what's coming. And we know we need to act because we have a responsibility to future generations—again, not just in this province but elsewhere across this country and the planet.

Manitobans want a government that cares about the future of this planet. They want a government that's willing to act and take the necessary actions to ensure we preserve this planet. But instead, we've got a government that has proven with this budget they continue to be totally unconcerned with climate—the climate crisis, and they've allowed emissions to rise year after year after year that they've been in government.

How can they go home to their kids or their families and suggest that they care about the future of this province when they've allowed emissions to go up year after year, and have done nothing to slow the rise of those emissions? That is a huge failure for future generations in Manitoba.

We're in year six, going into year seven of a PC government. We've got no progress on electric vehicle charging in this province. None. Literally no progress. We're fortunate that there are other organizations that are seemingly filling in the gap here or there, but the Province has done absolutely nothing to advance EV charging in this province.

That forces people to continue to make that decision about their next vehicle, I'm going to have to buy a gas-powered vehicle because I don't have access to the electric vehicle charging infrastructure that I need to get around. This Province has failed on that account.

There's no plan to invest in retrofitting and helping to improve the efficiency of Manitobans' homes. Instead, what do we get? We get a government that's taking away funds from Efficiency Manitoba; that stole \$40 million that the federal government gave to create additional net new programming at Efficiency Manitoba. And what did this government do? They stuffed it away in general revenues.

As a result, they've slowed down the ability of this province to move forward—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) will have seven minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 21, 2022

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