

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

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AL TOMARE, 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, May 12, 2022

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

**Madam Speaker:** Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 40—The Hospitality Sector  
Customer Registry Act and Amendments to  
The Child and Family Services Act and  
The Child Sexual Exploitation and  
Human Trafficking Act**

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and early learning, that Bill 40, The Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act; Loi édictant la Loi sur les registres des clients dans le secteur de l'hébergement et modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille et la Loi sur l'exploitation sexuelle d'enfants et la traite de personnes, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Squires:** Bill 40, the hospitality sector customer registry act and the amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, will strengthen Manitoba's response to sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

The hospitality sector customer registry act—which will require hotels and temporary accommodations to keep customer registries and provide police with access to registries for sex traffic investigations. The bill also amends The Child and Family Services Act to improve no-contact orders to keep harmful individuals away from children and youth who are connected to a Child and Family Services agency. Bill 40 amends this Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act to require staff in hotels and temporary accommodations and operators of vehicles for hire to report suspected human trafficking to police.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to present this bill to the House for consideration.

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

**Bill 237—The Drivers and Vehicles  
Amendment Act  
(Poppy Number Plates)**

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** I move, seconded by the member from Kildonan-River East, that Bill 237, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Poppy Number Plates), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Isleifson:** Since December the 12th, 1918, the royal Canadian RCMP have provided a service of policing our communities throughout the province of Manitoba. At the same time, the Royal Canadian Legions are fully supportive of the services provided by the RCMP and they would like to recognize them for the work that they do. Bill 237 will allow retired RCMP officers to proudly display the poppy number plate on their vehicles throughout Manitoba.

On behalf of the RCMP Veterans' Association and the Royal Canadian Legions, I thank you for the opportunity to bring this bill forward.

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

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Justice  
Third Report**

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

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

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

**Meetings**

*Your Committee met on May 11, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.*

### **Matters under Consideration**

- **Bill (No. 7)** – *The Police Services Amendment Act (Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit Operations) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police (amélioration du fonctionnement de l'unité d'enquête indépendante)*
- **Bill (No. 27)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Alternative Measures for Driving Offences) / Loi modifiant le Code de la route (mesures de rechange en cas d'infractions de conduite)*
- **Bill (No. 30)** – *The Police Services Amendment and Law Enforcement Review Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police et la Loi sur les enquêtes relatives à l'application de la loi*

### **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 May 11, 2022 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).*

- Ms. FONTAINE
- Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN
- Hon. Mr. JOHNSON
- Mr. MICHALESKI
- Mr. SANDHU
- Mr. SMOOK

*Your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Chairperson.*

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

### **Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record**

- Hon. Mr. GERRARD

### **Public Presentations**

*Your Committee heard the following six presentations on **Bill (No. 7)** – *The Police Services Amendment Act (Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit Operations) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police (amélioration du fonctionnement de l'unité d'enquête indépendante)*:*

*Louise Simbandumwe, Immigration Matters in Canada Coalition*

*Damhat Zagros, Aurora Family Therapy Centre*  
*Shereen Denetto, IRCOM*

*Jennifer Montebruno, Police Accountability Coalition*  
*Rachael Howgate, SEED Winnipeg*

*Kate Kehler, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg*

*Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 27)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Alternative Measures for Driving Offences) / Loi modifiant le Code de la route (mesures de rechange en cas d'infractions de conduite)*:*

*Diane Redsky, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre*  
*Hennes Doltze, Private Citizen*

*Your Committee heard the following seven presentations on **Bill (No. 30)** – *The Police Services Amendment and Law Enforcement Review Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police et la Loi sur les enquêtes relatives à l'application de la loi*:*

*Louise Simbandumwe, Immigration Matters in Canada Coalition*

*Damhat Zagros, Aurora Family Therapy Centre*  
*Shereen Denetto, IRCOM*

*Jennifer Montebruno, Police Accountability Coalition*  
*Kate Kehler, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg*

*Lisa Forbes, Stop Violence Against Aboriginal Women Action Group*

*Catherine Biaya, Private Citizen*

### **Bills Considered and Reported**

- **Bill (No. 7)** – *The Police Services Amendment Act (Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit Operations) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police (amélioration du fonctionnement de l'unité d'enquête indépendante)*

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

- **Bill (No. 27)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Alternative Measures for Driving Offences) / Loi modifiant le Code de la route (mesures de rechange en cas d'infractions de conduite)*

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

- **Bill (No. 30)** – *The Police Services Amendment and Law Enforcement Review Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police et la Loi sur les enquêtes relatives à l'application de la loi*

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

**Mr. Smook:** I move, seconded by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Madam Speaker:** And I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the year ending March 31st, 2022. Copies of the report have been placed on members' desks.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

### Manitoba Day

**Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to announce that today, May 12th, is the 152nd anniversary of the Manitoba Act receiving royal assent. Today we embrace Manitoba Day as an opportunity to explore our history as well as to acknowledge, enjoy and honour our province's diverse mosaic of people and cultures.

In 1986, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba formally established Manitoba Day as a day to honour and learn about our history. Since then, Manitoba's centennial and heritage organizations, many powered by dedicated volunteers, have been taking the 12th of May as an opportunity to express their pride in our collective identity as Manitobans through activities and events highlighting our heritage.

Across the province, Manitoba's heritage organizations seize the time of year to shed the light on our history and to raise awareness about the events and people who came before us and who have shaped the world in which we live today.

Today we recognize the importance of our promise—province's diverse people and cultures, whether it be those who have made their lives on these lands for thousands of years, hundreds of years or decades and also to those arriving most recently as we provide shelter for those fleeing war in their homelands. Our province is further enriched with their own stories, languages and traditions.

I invite my fellow Manitobans on this day to learn something new about our province and to explore different perspectives. Consider visiting an unfamiliar museum or heritage site, revisiting an old favourite or

participating in any of the great programming planned by cultural organizations across our great province.

Now is also a great time to finalize your summer-time plans, whether you are considering day trips or staying in your favourite hotels, parks, campgrounds or cottages.

Manitoba's heritage sector is an important part of every community's vitality and of our province's tourism landscape, so be sure to explore the offerings of heritage sites and museums big or small wherever you may find yourself this summer.

I encourage Manitobans to seize the opportunity to learn about the thousands of years of human history linked to the land currently recognized as Manitoba for 152 years now. Understanding our history contributes to building community partnerships, common understandings and shared experiences. We need these connections now more than ever.

Madam Speaker, I invite everyone to visit Manitoba Day heritage—or the Manitoba Day page on the Sport, Culture and Heritage website to connect to some of the programming developed by our province's hard-working museums and heritage organizations.

On May 12th, and every day, we must recognize the historical events that have shaped our province. They contribute to where we are in our history and they help us develop and grow as a province.

Lastly, I would like to extend my warm thoughts to all Manitoban neighbours who are facing challenges with this year's flooding. Our government is here for you.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, 152 years ago today the Manitoba Act received royal assent after months of negotiation with the father of this province, Louis Riel. Riel and his provincial government had a vision for a Manitoba in which all peoples were treated equally and in which Indigenous communities played a central role in our cultural, social and political landscape.

Today, we reaffirm our commitment to Riel's vision for this province. We celebrate how far we've come, but we also recognize how far we have to go. When we see Manitobans lend their trucks to help neighbours sandbag in the face of floodwaters, we can hope that Louis Riel would be proud. But we know we have more to do to ensure that all Manitobans are treated equally in this province, regardless of race or socioeconomic background, and more to empower

Indigenous peoples. Only then will Riel's vision for our province be fully realized.

\* (13:40)

Manitoba Day is a time to look for the future, but also one to reflect on the past. We congratulate all the nominees of this year's association of Manitoba archives' Manitoba Day Awards for their contributions to our historical landscape. And there are so many other great organizations working to make our history accessible to us, like the Manitoba Historical Society and museums like Snow Lake Mining Museum, the Ukrainian Folk Arts Centre & Museum in Dauphin and the Neuberghthal Heritage Foundation.

We hope that Manitobans will visit museums like these and learn more about all those who contributed to this province's creation, the generations of Manitobans that followed them and the ones that continue to make Manitoba great today.

Thank you.

**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:** Today we recognize our province's entry into Confederation.

In 1870, Louis Riel and his provisional government began the effort of founding Manitoba and having it become a part of Canada. At this time, the Riel government wrote a bill of rights, which recognized language rights, religious freedoms, representation in Ottawa and the interests of the Red River Métis population.

The bill of rights became the Manitoba Act and was passed by Parliament on May 12, 1870 in a vote of 120 to 11. Later that June, land was transferred from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Government of Canada and, by July 15th, Manitoba was officially established as part of Confederation.

Madam Speaker, we must also recognize Manitoba's history pre-1870. Indigenous peoples were here on the lands long before what it is now, Manitoba. We must continue to strive towards reconciliation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, to ensure that their stories are heard and needs are addressed through equitable outcomes.

Now, since becoming a part of Confederation, Manitoba has become home for many people across

the world, making our province a cultural mosaic filled with people of different backgrounds, and the hard work, skill sets and dedication of all these people, Madam Speaker, have contributed significantly to the prosperity of our province. And this is why we need to continue to strive for more and play a greater role in response to the war in Ukraine.

Madam Speaker, since Putin's unjustified war, millions of Ukrainians have lost their homes and livelihoods, and are fleeing for refuge. Manitoba has the means, and we need to welcome these refugees in and help them settle.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

### Weather Event and Flooding

**Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** Madam Speaker, our hydrologic forecasting team will continue to monitor the projected rain event starting this evening and lasting into Friday. Estimates that—indicate that some localized areas could receive roughly 40 millimetres of rain.

An overland flood warning has been issued for parts of western Manitoba, the Parkland region, The Pas area and southeastern Manitoba.

Heavy precipitation is forecast for the Shellmouth basin starting this evening, and with the heaviest rainfall occurring on Friday. The total precipitation could be in excess of 50 million—millimetres.

The Red River peak is declining in Emerson, has peaked in St. Jean Baptiste and is near peak near—in Morris. Additionally, the water level in Fisher River has dropped over two feet.

However, water levels should—could rise again due to forecasted precipitation systems over coming days, depending on the amount of intensity of this rain.

Madam Speaker, 28 municipalities and four First Nation communities remain in states of local emergencies. The most recent to be declared was the RM of Reynolds. Total evacuees across the province total

around 2,500 people, including evacuees from First Nation communities.

Three RMs has requested flood mitigation resources in preparations for the forecasted rain event, and provincial staff are fulfilling these requests.

Our government will continue to support northern communities throughout this challenging time. Yesterday, Sturgeon Landing road, northwest of The Pas, was closed due to a washout, but the MTI staff has since reopened the road.

MTI continues to work with Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations Department on repairs to maintain road access. Along with Indigenous Services Canada, MTI crews will continue to monitor high levels in Peguis First Nation community. Reports indicate no significant increase in water levels from recent precipitation events in this area.

Manitobans as well as—brace another precipitation event. Our government salutes your continued resiliency, prairie-province grit in fighting this flood.

Along with all provincial staff, our government stands with you, and we will continue to support Manitobans across the province for the duration of this flood event.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, as another significant weather event approaches, Manitobans across the province are hoping for the best but preparing for the worst. Everyone in this Chamber is praying that there'll be less rain than anticipated and stands with those in our province who are gearing up for another tough few days.

In particular, the residents of Peguis First Nation are bracing for an even higher floodwater level than they've already experienced up to this point, which has destroyed 200 homes and displaced thousands of people. And while we continue supporting those flood fighters on the ground today, we also raise the concerns of Peguis leaders in this Chamber who have been vocal about the lack of support from both the Province and the federal government in the last few months.

In an open letter he sent last week, Chief Glenn Hudson wrote, quote: In February, Peguis applied to ISC for \$1.5 million for flood protection. At that time, we were told that there was—there would be no flood prep program for Peguis based on the inaccurate provincial forecasts. That left the community with no resources to fight the rising water. By ignoring flood

protection measures in this area, the Province is contributing to the degradation of the natural resources, putting drinking water at risk and destroying fragile ecosystems, not to mention the ordeal of emergency evacuation of residents. End quote.

In the coming weeks, when the water the levels retreat, we hope that this government will investigate what went wrong over the last few months and commit to offering Peguis and other First Nations the support that they will need. For now, we continue to salute all of those who are working to support all of those struggling in the Interlake, and, in particular, Katie Powell, who is organizing rescue efforts for dogs and cats from Peguis, and to all those in Winnipeg who are temporarily housing these pets.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, on behalf of our Liberal caucus, I thank all those who are working so hard to address the flood conditions and to protect people's lives and property. I will speak specifically to several concerns.

First, agriculture: there may be extensive areas of the province where there is late seeding. In earlier years, when conditions were like this, the government extended the crop insurance deadline and provided support for farmers who put in a green cover crop after the deadline. The government should announce its plans soon.

In earlier years, when plans were announced at the last minute, many farmers had laboured, sweated and muddied in crops to meet the deadline, when they would've been better to wait a few days 'til the land was drier with the extended deadline. I ask the government to let farmers know their intentions soon so farmers can better plan what to do.

Second, Peguis: this spring, shockingly, the community did not get an adequate flood warning until a day or two before it happened. Yet, the government has not made any announcements to date with respect to changes it will make in the future to make sure that Peguis gets more warning of an impending large flood.

Also, in relation to Peguis, the government should be updating the Legislature on any plans, discussion

and consultations with the community with respect to the long-run plans to protect Peguis so that, like many communities along the Red River in southern Manitoba, they can be protected.

I would remind the minister that homes and communities in the Red River Valley are generally protected to a level of the '97 flood plus two feet. The government should accept no less a standard for Peguis First Nation.

With these points, I thank the minister for his comments and the opportunity we all have to consider the flood situation today.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

\* (13:50)

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Grace Hospital Foundation

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development):** Today, I rise to recognize the Grace Hospital, the Grace Hospital Foundation and their health-care professionals and staff for their decades of health-care service and supports in the community of Kirkfield Park and, quite frankly, all around Manitoba.

The Grace Hospital is and has been a place where many lives' most important moments take place. Founded in 1904, the Grace is a 251-bed facility that supports patients from, really, all across Winnipeg and surrounding communities and the cornerstone of the Grace Hospital campus that includes the hospice and well as Access Winnipeg West.

The Grace is one of three acute-care sites in Winnipeg, along with Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface, that provides full-service emergency department, critical care as well as acute-care services.

The Grace Hospital Foundation, Madam Speaker, was established in 1990 and is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing patient care for the Grace Hospital individuals by raising money for vital equipment as well as programs.

The dedication and care of the Grace Hospital health-care professionals is very much commendable, Madam Speaker. We are grateful to have hospital officials working in the community as well as the kindness and compassion they share for all individuals.

Tomorrow is Friday, May 13th, the Grace Hospital Foundation's second annual radiothon, where listeners from across Manitoba and online will have the opportunity to pledge their support to the Grace Hospital and their health-care heroes.

The radiothon has been happening—will happen from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on CJOB and features important online conversations from staff and patients at Grace. There is also a book sale, live entertainment, as well as a drive-in movie happening tomorrow night, Madam Speaker.

In honour of the ongoing supports for the Grace Hospital and the Grace Hospital Foundation provided to our community, we are pleased to recognize the second Friday in May as the Grace Hospital Day. I encourage all Manitobans to listen in on the stories and share and take part in the activities offered by the Grace.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Allied Health Professionals

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the invaluable work of allied health professionals. There are nearly 7,000 allied health members across 190 professional, technical and paramedical health-care disciplines here in Manitoba.

Over the past two years, allied health professionals have adapted to the ever-changing situations, often being among the first to be redeployed to ensure the continuum of care is not impacted for Manitobans in need of care.

Throughout the pandemic, they have worked day in and day out, making sure Manitobans get the care they need, from diagnostics to emergency medical services and everything in between. Manitobans have relied on allied health care to provide—to deliver quality care.

The PC government's approach to health care is a failure. The continuous underfunding of allied health services is causing significant stress issues, including record-level wait times for diagnostic services and a critical staffing shortage of emergency response services in rural Manitoba.

Instead of investing in the allied health services and the people that Manitoba families count on, we've seen emergency rooms and ICUs close and important outpatient services eliminated. Allied health professionals have continued to provide the care Manitobans need despite being stretched so thin and many having



been denied a collective agreement for over five years by this government.

Providing extraordinary care whilst navigating the unknown is no easy feat, Madam Speaker. To all allied health professionals, your dedication, your knowledge and resiliency have been integral in caring for Manitobans throughout the pandemic. You've selflessly cared for Manitobans during a time where many were scared and often alone.

Today, during allied health professionals week, I, alongside our entire NDP team, would like to thank all allied health professionals for working tirelessly to save lives and acknowledge the many contributions you've all made in our communities. Know that we stand with you and we will continue to fight for robust health care in Manitoba.

Thank you.

#### Lac du Bonnet Constituency

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to pay tribute to the Lac du Bonnet constituency that I have been very fortunate to represent as the Member of the Legislative Assembly since 2011.

As summer is just around the corner, many Manitobans and visitors from outside the province head to their cabins or favourite campsites, allowing the businesses in surrounding communities to benefit from the economic growth.

Stay at Falcon or West Hawk lakes and explore the Whiteshell, cross the Pinawa Suspension Bridge or visit our many historical museums in Whitemouth, Beausejour, Brokenhead, St-Georges, Lac du Bonnet and many others. Many of our communities are partners in the building of the Trans Canada Trail which connects us all.

Whether you are following the La Vérendrye Trail through Powerview-Pine Falls, RM of Alexander, RM of Reynolds, Lac du Bonnet, Pinawa and Victoria Beach, or taking the historic No. 1 to Beausejour, RM of Brokenhead and Whitemouth, you will be able to explore many of our rural communities, each of which has something special to offer.

Several of the communities in the Lac du Bonnet constituency host annual events throughout the summer that have also become a tradition for many Manitobans and visitors alike: the Fire and Water festival, the Canada Day fireworks show in Lac du Bonnet, the Summer Winds festival in Victoria Beach,

the Double B Rodeo in Beausejour, the 4P Festival in Powerview-Pine Falls and the Boreal Shores Art Tour in various locations from Falcon Beach through River Hills, Seven Sisters, Pinawa, Lac du Bonnet, St-Georges, Powerview-Pine Falls and the RM of Reynolds.

Our government continues to invest in our parks, with over \$14 million allocated to provincial parks in Manitoba announced in Budget 2022. In addition, many organizations in the Lac du Bonnet constituency received the Building Sustainable Communities grant this year, which will have an—positive impact on communities for years to come.

Whether you're interested in sailing, hiking, fishing, camping or lying on the beach, Lac du Bonnet constituency is the place to be. I invite all members to visit and take part in our community events.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### Kiddie Korner Daycare

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** While this government has made many grand announcements about their child-care deal, the reality for my constituents is the complete lack of action. Daycare centres are still severely underfunded, cannot meet the demand for spaces nor afford to pay their staff a living wage.

The Kiddie Korner Daycare in Flin Flon has had its funding frozen for eight years now. They are having enormous difficulties in retaining staff because they can only afford to pay a median wage of \$13 an hour.

This wage is not a living wage and it's not fair to staff who have paid for their education to become certified ECEs, but with the majority of the daycare's income from parent fees and grants going towards wages already and the rest being spent on food and necessary supplies, they have no other choice.

Add the rising cost of living and the extra measures associated with COVID, this daycare would be forced to close its doors if it wasn't for the school board keeping their rent very low and frequent fundraising efforts they undertake to be able to afford basic maintenance and necessary improvements.

Kiddie Korner is the only daycare in Flin Flon that takes children who have special needs, which comes with extra costs. While the daycare is doing everything possible to provide children with the best possible care, they are frustrated because they do not have the funding and support they desperately need.

It's not enough for this government to try and make daycare more affordable for parents, without making sure daycares are sufficiently funded and staff can receive the wages they deserve for their hard work. This government must do more to invest in all aspects of childcare to make sure our children get the care they deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### **Karin Gordon and Tom Denton**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, today I pay tribute to Karin Gordon and Tom Denton. Together, particularly through the Hospitality House Refugee Ministry, they have contributed to tens of thousands of refugees coming to Winnipeg.

Karin Gordon, who is in the gallery today with family and friends, grew up in Thunder Bay in a family which helped refugees. She became an expert in radiation, and worked for many years at CancerCare Manitoba before returning to her passion—helping refugees.

A graduate of Acadia University and Dalhousie University's school of law, Tom Denton served for 14 years in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve before taking on the role of executive director at the International Centre of Winnipeg in 1984. There, for many years, he was the face of refugee sponsorship in Manitoba, a role he continued as executive director of Hospitality House. He has received many, many awards, including the Order of Canada.

\* (14:00)

In 2009, he was joined by Karin Gordon, who started as a volunteer involved primarily in refugee settlement. Karin became progressively more involved, to the point of being active—acting executive director in recent years. Karin Gordon and Tom Denton have worked together as an incredible team at Hospitality House, one of the largest acceptors of refugees in Manitoba and with an impressive track record of success. Karin has done an incredible job helping newcomers, so that many call her mom. She recently retired and has handed over the reins to others.

Thank you, Karin Gordon and Tom Denton, for the incredible efforts you have made together to help refugees to come, to settle and to succeed in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I ask that the list of people in the gallery can be included in Hansard.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

*Noor Khan Ahmadzai, Daniel Awshek, Andrea Cameron, Elodie Furaha, Karin Gordon, Gillian Gordon, Elias Mohamud Mohamed*

#### **Speaker's Statement**

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

Today, May 12th, 2022, marks the 152nd anniversary of the day the Manitoba Act received royal assent in the Canadian Parliament. This act created the province of Manitoba, and accordingly, May 12th has been designated as Manitoba Day.

In honour of this historic occasion, as we have done for the past several years, our Sergeant-at-Arms carried our original Manitoba mace in today's Speaker's parade.

Carved from the wheel hub of a Red River cart by a soldier with the Wolseley Expedition in 1870, this mace made its first formal appearance in March 15th, 1871, at the First Session of the first Manitoba Legislature, held in the home of A.G.B. Bannatyne in the Red River Settlement. The Bannatyne home was destroyed by fire in December 1873, but thankfully the mace survived.

After 13 years of service, our original mace was retired in 1884 when our current mace debuted. The original mace has a permanent home on display outside of the Speaker's office, coming out of retirement annually for this celebration.

This important historical artifact sits on the table today as a tribute to the rich history of our province.

In addition to the original mace, the star blanket cushion and the beaded—beautiful beaded mace runner—gifted to us by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in 2010—are also on display today to help celebrate Manitoba Day and to honour Manitoba's Indigenous heritage.

These artifacts also serve as a reminder that this Assembly Chamber and the Legislative Building reside on the traditional lands of the Indigenous peoples, as we recognize in our daily land acknowledgment.

I am pleased that we are able to include our original mace in the celebration of Manitoba Day, and I trust that this tradition will continue.

I would encourage members to reflect on the solemn responsibility we all share to serve our constituents in this Assembly, and recall that whatever heated debates we have here are all part of a long legacy of service to the citizens of this province.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us guests from Punjab, India. We have Mr. Devinder Saini, Mrs. Jagjit Saini, who are visiting their sons, Amit and Sohit [*phonetic*] Saini, who live in and are guests of the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Reyes).

And also, in the loge to my right, we have with us today Joy Smith, former MLA for Fort Garry, and in the public gallery, her daughter, Janet Campbell.

On behalf of all honourable members in this gallery, we welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Moose Hide Campaign Day Manitoba Day Acknowledgements

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, today is Moose Hide Campaign Day. It's an important opportunity for us to stand together to commit to ending violence against women and children. And so I see the moose hide pins on many of my colleagues on all sides of the Legislature here today, and I want to acknowledge this important occasion.

Today is also Manitoba Day. It's 172—or, 152 years ago, our province came to enter Confederation after the fight led by Louis Riel and the Métis. They envisioned a land where folks could pursue freedom, have their languages respected and, of course, their rights respected as well, and that continues to inspire us to this day.

I do have a question about infrastructure, but I thought I would begin with those comments.

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his statement, and I want to thank you for your statement on this wonderful day, the birthday of our province. Happy Manitoba Day, everyone.

And I think it is fitting that we are working together in many areas, and I think that, you know, it's important that we do that and we take this collaborative approach moving forward. And so I'm looking forward to the Leader of the Opposition's questions and that we continue in that spirit throughout the rest of question period, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I would add me too to that.

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

#### Strategic Infrastructure 2020-2021 Budget

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, we would love to collaborate with the government. However, they have a habit of making big announcements and then not following through, Madam Speaker.

So, again, on the subject of infrastructure today, we have these documents that I would like to table at this time that show that strategic infrastructure is 'unterspent' by some \$354 million. That's a huge amount of money. That's money that's being taken away from hospitals and clinics, it's being taken away from highways right across the province and everyone in Manitoba this year knows that our highways are in desperate need of attention.

Why did the PCs cut \$354 million from strategic infrastructure in 2020-2021?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** I see that that spirit of collaboration has ended very abruptly in the Manitoba Legislature today, Madam Speaker.

But, what I will say, this is a very serious issue and I know that in this budget, Madam Speaker, we announced \$1.5 billion over the next three years towards infrastructure, including strategic infrastructure in our province. That is a record level of investments in infrastructure and in transportation in our province.

We recognize there were challenges, obviously, during the COVID times, and that did have an impact, Madam Speaker. But what I will say is that we are absolutely committed for the next three years to that \$1.5 billion and all of those infrastructure projects that will take place in Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, Madam Speaker, this is the heart of the matter. The PC government, the Stefanson government, they make all sorts of big announcements, but then when the time comes to actually make the investment, the action, the follow through is sorely lacking.

The issue that we've documented here today and that we've tabled documents for the House to prove is that last year even though they stand up and they say, b-b-billion in their b-b-budget, when it actually comes

down to spending, \$354 million are cut from that budget within that year.

Madam Speaker, \$354 million could go a long way to help repair our highways after the pothole season that has befallen us; \$354 million could go a long way towards helping repair the damage to hospitals, medical clinics that we've seen under the PCs.

Why did the Premier cut \$354 million from the Infrastructure budget within the year?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, again, Madam Speaker, the litany of false accusations by the member opposite continues in this Chamber, and it's unfortunate.

But what we have invested and what we are looking at for the next three years—and I know the Heavy Construction Association and others out there have commended us on the—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —commitment to the three years, Madam Speaker. And \$1.5 billion, it's an historic investment in the province of Manitoba when it comes to infrastructure. We look forward to working collaboratively—in fact, the other day I was out announcing with Mayor Bowman, as well as Kam Blight from AMM, more money, \$15 million towards pothole repairs.

So we'll continue to take that collaborative approach when it comes to infrastructure projects in our province.

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

\* (14:10)

### **Education Property Tax Credit Corporate Refunds**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, if you had a million dollars—not saying that you do, but let's just say that you did have a million dollars—would you choose to give that million dollars to the massive corporation that owns Polo Park mall or would you give that million dollars to school kids in Manitoba who in many cases are going to class hungry?

On this side of the House, it's very clear. We would invest that money in public education.

What has also become clear is that we see the priority of this government is to give that million dollars to a massive corporation that certainly doesn't

need a tax break at the expense of Manitoba school children.

Why has the Premier cut a million-dollar cheque to a company that has a market cap of \$20 billion?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** We will continue to make record investments in education and health care and social services in the province of Manitoba, billions of dollars more than the NDP ever did back in those dark days when they were in power here in—Madam Speaker.

We will continue to make those record investments in those areas, Madam Speaker. I think it's important that Manitobans know and understand the facts, that there are more investments being made in all of these areas in Manitoba, unlike what the member opposite is talking about.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, the Premier is giving record amounts of corporate welfare to companies that don't need it by racking up record deficits here in Manitoba.

The company that owns the Polo Park mall is worth \$20 billion. They got a cheque for a million dollars from this government at the expense of funding for our schools. Why was that decision made?

Families who are waiting for supports for children with additional needs would like to know. Families in Brandon whose schools have less teachers in them this year because of this government's cuts would like to know. Families in Seven Oaks where there are fewer educators in the classroom want to know.

Why did this government cut a million-dollar cheque for a company that's worth \$20 billion?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** The member opposite likes to talk about a million dollars.

Well, just earlier this week the—or, the minister for—sorry, Economic Development, Investment and Trade was out announcing a million dollars to the Manitoba Hotel Association, Manitoba Restaurant & Foodservices Association, Food & Beverage Manitoba, supply chain management association Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, these are areas that we needed to invest in because they had very, very difficult times during COVID. So, that was \$250,000 to each of those four areas, and those are the kinds of investments we'll

make to ensure that we continue on making sure that Manitobans are back to work in Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, the experts on this topic are clear. They say, and I quote, it's a fabrication to maintain that the PC program is putting more money into the pockets of Manitobans. End quote.

Reason why the experts say that is because a \$20-billion company that certainly doesn't need hand-outs from this government, that certainly doesn't need corporate welfare at a time when schoolchildren are asked to do with less, they got a \$1-million cheque from this government. We can't even get all of the PC caucus to admit that there should be a nutrition program for hungry students in school, and yet they rush to give a \$1-million cheque to a company worth \$20 billion.

The only question left for the PCs to answer is: Why would they give an extra million dollars to a company that's already worth \$20 billion?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should know that we're making record investments in education in the province of Manitoba, almost \$1 billion more than the NDP ever invested in education in our province, a 17 per cent increase over the last two years, well over \$320 million more in the last two years alone.

So the Leader of the Opposition continues to put false information on the record. It's really unfortunate, Madam Speaker.

### **Education Property Tax Credit Corporate Refunds**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans are falling further and further behind under this PC government.

Today, we're once again reminded about who this government actually cares about. Millions of dollars are being handed over to out-of-province corporate landlords, meanwhile our hospitals and schools are bursting, and they have never been this bad.

Why is this government 'giling' millions of dollars to out-of-province corporate landlords instead of properly funding our schools and hospitals?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** It's quite a game that the NDP is trying to play, to pretend that, somehow, these cheques—these rebate cheques—the largest tax rebate in the history of Manitoba—isn't

going to Manitoba households who desperately them—need the money.

It was only two weeks ago that the Leader of the Opposition sat here in the Chamber—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:**—and in question period said that affordability is what Manitobans are focused on. Finally, a point of agreement with the Leader of the Opposition.

He is correct. Manitobans are focused on affordability, and that is why—*[interjection]*

He's right in one thing: Manitobans are focused on affordability. And that is why the government is also focused on giving back this tax rebate for all Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Madam Speaker, low-wage earners are falling further into poverty. Manitoba will soon have the lowest minimum wage in the entire country. That is a national embarrassment.

Now, the government can't even defend its position, as we can see, yet they carry on rewarding their friends, like the member from Fort Whyte. Now—and they are borrowing tens of millions of taxpayer dollars to turn around and have corporate welfare for corporate landlords.

Why is this government allowing working people to fall further into poverty while giving massive 'handsouts' to out-of-province corporations?

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, let's punch some appropriate holes in that feeble argument.

Madam Speaker, 425,000 Manitoba households will receive this rebate cheque of an average of \$500.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans are focused on affordability. They are concerned about rising grocery bills. They are concerned about rising fuel bills. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** So even now, while the members of the opposition try to shout me down, I can assure them they cannot shout down those Manitobans who are crying out for relief. Our government is responding with a rebate that will go to 425,000 households.

We're proud to be standing up. Is that NDP government—is that NDP opposition going to also support action to bring relief for Manitobans on taxes?

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

**Mr. Wasyliv:** Madam Speaker, this government intends to borrow millions of dollars to give away to out-of-province corporate landlords.

These companies are worth tens of billions of dollars, and that doesn't make any fiscal sense. And it's not fair to thousands of working Manitobans who need a real break when they're facing down inflation of over 6 per cent. That's the absolute wrong approach.

Why are this government putting Manitoba taxpayers on the hook for millions of borrowed dollars for out-of-province landlords while ignoring Manitobans who are struggling just to get by?

**Mr. Friesen:** That's a false premise. It was disproven yesterday in debate when I answered that member's questions.

But let's get to the real issue. The real issue is that yesterday in this Legislature, the Legislature debated Bill 39. Bill 39 is the mechanism by which the tax rebate can flow to those 450,000 Manitoba households.

What did the NDP do? They blocked the largest tax rebate to Manitobans who are asking for action on affordability. They are—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —blocking the plan to send those rebates. So, let them shout from their seats, but we know that they cannot shout down the voices of Manitobans who are crying out for help on affordability.

\* (14:20)

We will continue to fight for that affordability. If they continue to block it, they're going to have to have an awful lot of explaining to do to their constituents. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

#### **Use of Private Agency Nurses Impact on Public System**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, earlier this week, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) and I wrote the Auditor General. I'll table the letter for the House.

We raised our concern with the PC government's growing reliance on private agencies to replace nurses working in the public system.

Will the minister support an investigation, and will she make necessary investments to reduce their government's reliance on private agencies?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for Union Station for the question because it gives me an opportunity to put on the record, again, that in their last few years in government, they spent four-over \$46 million on agency nurses, Madam Speaker.

And our government has taken proactive steps to ensure that more nurses come into the health system: \$19.5 million to add more nursing seats. We'll be expanding to 400 nursing seats.

And, Madam Speaker, I'm so pleased to share with Manitobans that nurses continue to go through our critical care orientation program and will be serving in many emergency departments and ICUs throughout the province.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) recently claimed that there is no difference whether government uses a lot of private agencies or not. That's just not true; the government's overreliance on agency care is destabilizing the public system.

There are 2,400 vacant nurse positions. Nurses worked nearly 1 million hours of overtime last year—nearly 1 million hours of overtime, Madam Speaker.

Meanwhile, this government is now spending \$40 million on private agencies, more than three times what it was spending three years ago—sorry, four years ago. That's not fiscally responsible.

Will the minister support an investigation and invest in public nurses today?

**Ms. Gordon:** It was the members opposite's refusal to invest in nurses and staring at the problem instead of going to the table of solutions like our government has that has led to the staffing challenges that we now see in the health system.

But our government has taken action. We have invested in nearly 1,600 nurse training seats now, over double the 700 the NDP had when they took power, Madam Speaker.

And I was so pleased to be part of the graduating class ceremony last fall to welcome 115 nurses into the health system.

And also, our government has invested \$4.3 million for 37 additional nursing training seats—

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

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, this government fired hundreds of nurses from our public health-care system, and now they're spending \$40 million on private agencies, and it's hurting our health-care system.

Nurses in the public system are currently being told that they can't take summer holidays with their families. Meanwhile, private agencies are provided more money—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —and more flexibility. That's wrong.

Nurses in the public system are being ground down day in and day out and worked nearly 1 million hours of overtime last year. That's according to data released by the Manitoba Nurses Union.

The situation needs to change, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister support an investigation, and will she invest to change her government's over-reliance on private agencies today?

**Ms. Gordon:** Another area that the former government continued to stare at the problem was in terms of internationally educated nurses and ensuring that those individuals had an opportunity to gain licensure in this province.

Our government, the government of the yes, is offering over \$23,000 to each internationally educated nurse—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** —to gain licensure. It was our government, the government of the yes, that established the undergraduate nurse employees program—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** —Madam Speaker, seeing 63 third- and fourth-year nursing students join the health system. And it was our government, the government of the yes, that added 60 new full-time nursing positions to ICUs—

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

## Upgrades to Highway 6 Repair and Maintenance

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve to be safe while driving on our highways, no matter where they live. For northern Manitobans in particular, our highways are essential for access to health care, access to remote communities and for travel to and from work.

This is why it's so important that real actions are taken to improve road safety, including upgrades, better maintenance and timely snow clearing. Today, residents from the North have travelled here to the Legislature advocating for upgrades to Highway 6.

Will the minister commit to addressing their concerns?

**Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question.

But the member actually was in the government, the NDP government, back in the day and he knew that for 16—for 17 years, the NDP government under-spent in—when it came to infrastructure and transportation.

And the thing is, our government is going to invest everywhere in this province when it comes to infrastructure, Madam Speaker. We are going to be—invest over \$1.5 billion in the next three years.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, over 5,600 Manitobans have signed a petition calling on the provincial government to upgrade Highway 6 and to improve safety and to reduce accidents.

They're asking for widened shoulders, a wider—more passing lanes, rest stops along Highway 6, rumble strips to be installed in key areas. And they are asking for this government to release a three-year plan about how they're going to get it done, and to start work this summer.

Will the minister simply speak to the people of the North and tell them he will take their concerns seriously and start work on Highway 6 immediately?

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Madam Speaker, you know, the member was in government up to 2016, and you know what? I would say right now, we're going to invest money throughout the province, including Highway 6. We got—projected for the next three years over \$50 million is going to be invested in Highway 6.

The NDP, during their days, they underspent in infrastructure: \$109 million in 2010; 2011, they underspent by \$117 million; in 2012, they underspent by \$88 million; in 2013, they underspent by \$126 million; and 2014, they underspent by \$140 million.

They could've got the job done, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, over the winter this Legislature lost one of our own, Danielle Adams, as she was travelling 'houth'—south on Highway 6.

But we know this issue affects so many in the North. The citizens who have collected those 5,600 signatures on the petition, they also allowed folks to share their own painful stories of loss and close calls on their website. So I invite everybody in this Legislature to take the time to read those personal accounts.

We owe it to them, we owe it to all northerners to ensure that our highways are safe.

Will the minister simply commit to addressing the concerns that these northerners have brought here to the Legislature today?

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Madam Speaker, our department is looking at all ways to make sure that all our highways are safe. That includes everywhere in this province, including Highway 6.

And the thing is the minister gets up—I mean, the member from Concordia gets up and talks about a high—the Perimeter Highway, how he wants a bit more access. We want highways, safe highways, for the city of Winnipeg too. With all our loved ones that come from throughout the province of Manitoba, we want to make sure when we get to a—city of Winnipeg, we also want the Perimeter Highway to be safe too.

\* (14:30)

So, the member is basically talking from both sides of his mouth, Madam Speaker.

### **WPS Headquarters Construction Calls for Public Inquiry**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Manitoba's top civil court ruled former Winnipeg CAO accepted a \$327,000 bribe in connection with the police headquarters tendering process. The project was—subsequently, it went \$100 million over budget, and now

taxpayers are on the hook. The full story isn't still known, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, like Brian Pallister, the Stefanson government refuses to call a public inquiry.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) do the right thing by Winnipeg taxpayers and call an inquiry today?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows—and I think all of us are concerned about what we've been hearing and the resolutions that have been coming out of the civil court—but she also knows that there are many civil cases that continue on, and has been described by those who are familiar with the system that it would be difficult and perhaps dangerous to have a public inquiry during a civil inquiry where there's civil proceedings, Madam Speaker.

So, we'll let the civil proceedings play themselves out and then make determinations after that.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** The minister knows that's not true.

Winnipeggers deserve to know why they're on the hook for a project \$100 million over budget and involved bribery. The RCMP opened two investigations on the police headquarters, yet they were closed without explanation. Last month's court decision proves wrongdoing occurred.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve answers. The Premier could call a public inquiry today to make sure that those who are responsible are held accountable.

Will she get up in the Chamber today and call a public inquiry?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, there certainly is accountability being held when the civil court is finding rulings, Madam Speaker.

That is, of course, why these issues are before the Legislature, because the civil court is doing its job. It is weighing evidence. It has a broad range when it comes to disclosure of evidence to be able to weigh. And then they are making rulings.

Now, there are dozens of more civil cases that are working their way through on this matter. It is important, as others who've been involved in public inquiries, including those in the Phoenix Sinclair



inquiry, have indicated, that it is—dangerous thing and potentially a disruptive thing to call a public inquiry while there is a civil case ongoing.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Again, the minister knows that what he just said isn't accurate or true.

Manitobans want transparency and accountability. Taxpayers are on the hook for a project that went \$100 million over budget, Madam Speaker, and Winnipeg's CAO was just found guilty of accepting a bribe.

Clearly, there's more to this story, Madam Speaker. The Premier has no excuse. She should call a public inquiry so that we can all learn the truth of what happened.

Will she do the right thing, stand up in the Chamber right now and call a public inquiry?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, on the one hand, the member says that there's no accountability, and on the other hand she says that somebody's been found guilty. They've been found guilty because there is a civil proceeding happening in that particular case. There are other civil proceedings happening related to that case.

Madam Speaker, it's important and there is a wide range when it comes to disclosure in a civil case. It gets put before the court, it gets weighed as evidence and then there's an outcome that comes from that.

To have a public inquiry laid on top of that can be disruptive to the civil proceedings. We've seen that in other cases. There's already been advice given on that and we're going to ensure that the civil proceedings can work there way through the court.

#### **Mission Industrial Park Lead Removal Plan**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** The Province released a report showing that Mission—that lead levels of the Mission industrial park in St. Boniface reached 88,000 milligrams per kilogram of lead, which is 146 times the acceptable industrial level, 338 times the commercial level and 600 times the acceptable residential park level. That area is less than a kilometre away from east St. Boniface and Elmwood.

For years, the NDP and PC governments alike hid reports on the 'highed' lead levels in Point Douglas, Weston, St. Boniface, and knew about them since the

1980s and never acted. There is a vague commitment to get the City to act.

What is being done to get the lead out of Mission industrial?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks):** I certainly appreciate a question from the member from St. Boniface.

And certainly, I'd like to thank my colleagues, my predecessors in Environment, Climate and Parks, for the work they did to bring lead to light, Madam Speaker, unlike the NDP that hid reports for 17 years.

Our government takes this issue very seriously, and we will continue to monitor lead within Winnipeg and throughout the province.

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

#### **Lead Levels in School Drinking Water Public Health Measures, Testing and Treatment**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Yesterday, I received an email from my child's school in the Winnipeg School Division with a link to the dismal results of lead in drinking water. Because the Manitoba government dragged its feet for years, it took the Auditor General to order all schools and child-care centres to be tested for lead.

I table the results, which show that there are excess levels in drinking water at Children of the Earth school, Churchill, Clifton, Daniel Mac, Earl Grey, Kelvin, Dufferin, Elmwood, Inkster, J.B. Mitchell, Lord Roberts, Luxton and the list goes on. And that's just the Winnipeg School Division.

The taps have been shut off, but will this government fund public health measures to prevent further exposures, test children for exposure to lead to reassure parents and provide treatment where it's needed?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks):** The member from St. Boniface is just simply wrong, Madam Speaker.

As a matter of fact, we are committed to reducing childhood exposure, Madam Speaker, and lead, which is why our government established grant funding to assist not only schools, but child-care centres as well, in testing and remediation of lead in drinking water.

Madam Speaker, we take this matter so seriously that we've carried over funding to ensure that every

single child-care centre and school in Manitoba is tested for lead to protect our children going forward.

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

### **Radon Exposure Levels Action Plan to Address**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, each year radon—a radioactive gas and a major cause of lung cancer—is responsible for about 150 new lung cancer cases and 110 deaths in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, 24 per cent of homes in Manitoba have high radon levels, second highest in Canada. Some communities are much higher: Brandon, 37 per cent; the region of Portage, Morden and Winkler, 44 per cent; the RM of Dauphin, 71 per cent; the RM of Harrison Park, 79 per cent.

The government needs to implement a major action plan to address this serious public health issue, including subsidizing the mitigation of homes to reduce radon levels.

I call on the government to act today. Will it?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks):** I certainly appreciate the question from the member.

And certainly, as we—as lead, we take radon very seriously too, as well, Madam Speaker. We know that 'radion' is a very—an issue that we will take seriously, and certainly, I would welcome the member from River Heights to have a discussion with me on the seriousness of it.

As a matter of fact, we—as homeowners, Madam Speaker, we have taken action as well. We've tested our home for radon. And I think Manitobans will be, obviously, wanting to test their homes for radon.

We want to make sure that gets done and working in non-partisan ways, we'll get it done, Madam Speaker.

### **Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Introduction of New Legislation**

**Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Madam Speaker, our government has and will always remain committed to standing up and protecting the most vulnerable in society.

Today, the Minister of Families introduced Bill 40, which is a continuation of this commitment.

Can the Minister of Families please explain how this bill will improve the lives of Manitobans and protect children and youth?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I'd like to thank my colleague for that question. I'd also like to thank my friend, Joy Smith, who is a leader in combating sexual exploitation and human trafficking in the province of Manitoba, for being here today to witness this introduction of this historic legislation.

Bill 40 will protect vulnerable children and youth from sexual exploitation by ensuring a no-contact order against a harmful individual can be obtained before sexual exploitation occurs for any child in the province. This will also help law enforcement garner the tools that they need to stop sexual exploitation of our vulnerable children and youth.

\* (14:40)

This bill creates a duty to report by those who often have a line of sight into exploitation, and will make Manitoba a leader with some of the strongest laws in the nation on combatting sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Employment Leave for Miscarriage or Stillbirth Request for Support for Bill 219**

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** The experience of a miscarriage or stillbirth can traumatize parents emotionally and physically. Parents should have access to paid time off so they can grieve and heal. No Canadian province offer—currently offers this and Manitoba has the opportunity to be the first.

That's why I've introduced Bill 219 for a second time, so that parents can access paid leave if they need it.

Will the minister commit to supporting Bill 219?

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** Thank you to the member opposite for introducing the bill. It's certainly an interesting concept.

We know that families grieve when they lose a child. Our family itself, my wife and I, lost a child through miscarriage, and it is a very significant time. So we're reviewing the bill to see if it can be applied to the Manitoba circumstance, and we'll look forward to debate.

**Ms. Lathlin:** I know that many members in this House know someone who has lost a child due to a

miscarriage or stillbirth. They would also know the trauma that inflicts upon an expectant parent.

I'm asking the members opposite to support Bill 219 so that parents can take time to grieve and heal after a miscarriage or stillbirth. Bill 219 would reduce financial worries parents currently experience if they take time off.

Will the minister support paid leave for parents grieving a miscarriage or a stillbirth?

Ekosi.

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, as I responded in the previous answer, we'll look forward to debate on the bill and review it to see if we can use it in the Manitoba circumstance.

We recognize that this is a very emotional and traumatizing time for the families that are involved, as we went through ourselves, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a final supplementary.

**Ms. Lathlin:** Having access to paid time off of miscarriage, stillbirth, would give parents time to grieve and heal. It would also reduce their worries about their next paycheque. Our Province should be the first to introduce this legislation. This would be a step forward to ensure that grieving parents are supported at every step of the way.

Will this government do what is right and legislate paid leave for Manitobans grieving a miscarriage or stillbirth?

Ekosi.

**Mr. Helwer:** So, it's not just something that the Legislature needs to look at.

We also have the Labour Management Review Committee that needs to review issues of this nature that have impacts on both labour and management, Madam Speaker.

#### **Path to Reconciliation Act Timeline to Develop Strategy**

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** The minister is simply not living up to his legal responsibilities.

The Auditor General has determined the PCs have no strategy for reconciliation and no plan for when they might advance one. This is now five years since The Path to Reconciliation Act was passed. In fact, Madam Speaker, two weeks ago I asked the question about a timeline, and the answer was: I would like to

point out that reconciliation isn't a document, reconciliation isn't a strategy.

That's simply unacceptable. It's time for this work to begin.

By what date will this minister put forward a reconciliation strategy for Manitoba?

**Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations):** Our government is committed to addressing all five recommendations of the Auditor General's report, and I want to provide assurance that significant work is currently under way on all five areas.

As the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, I am guiding the development of a strategy to reconciliation that is guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and UNDRIP and builds on meaningful engagement with Indigenous people.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired. Petitions?

The honourable member—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

#### **Point of Order**

**Madam Speaker:** Oh, the honourable member for Radisson, on a point of order.

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, earlier in question period on a question about infrastructure, the Leader of the Opposition referenced a billion-dollar budget in a way that was denigrating toward people who stutter or have a speech impediment.

I found the way the member asked his question to be derogatory, disrespectful and beneath the level of decorum we expect in this Chamber, and I'd like to give that member the opportunity to apologize for his ill-conceived remarks.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, Madam Speaker, when I repeated the opening syllable of the word billion and budget, it was to emphasize and draw attention to the point.

I sincerely apologize if my comment was misinterpreted in any other fashion.

**Madam Speaker:** And I think that should take care of the matter.

## PETITIONS

### Foot-Care Services

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altomare:** —necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of our province.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

This petition is signed by Carol Ann Halcrow, Walter Halcrow, Mabel Weir and many more Manitobans.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

The city of Thompson can—the city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for the foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

And this has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

\* (14:50)

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern health authority, N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Joyce Mymko, Marjorie Beardy, Catherine Hegalson [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

### **Louise Bridge**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

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

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

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

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

(10) The provincial budget due in mid-April 2022 is the Province's opportunity to announce its portion of funding for this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg in her new 2022 provincial budget to build this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

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

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

### Foot-Care Services

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

This has been signed by Arnold Bienell, Jamie [phonetic] Pronteau, Marie Dumas and many Manitobans.

### Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Madame la Présidente, je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

(1) La Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library a été avisée par la division scolaire vallée de la rivière Rouge de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de l'École Héritage school d'ici le 31 mars 2023.

(2) L'auditorium a été construit dans les années 1960 par le célèbre architecte manitobain Étienne Gaboury et y est installé depuis 48 ans.

(3) Une photo de l'auditorium intitulée la bibliothèque régionale est publiée dans un document de 2008 intitulé bâtiments patrimoniaux des 'monsieurs'-Salaberry [phonétique] et Saint-Pierre-Jolys. Il est indiqué qu'il s'agit un bâtiment moderne important qui pourrait atteindre le statut de site patrimonial.

(4) B-R-G et DSRR ont été prospéré grâce à un protocole d'entente mutuellement bénéfique pendant 54 ans.

(5) Leur collection commune compte plus de 50 000 livres et possède la quatrième plus grande collection de littérature française dans les régions rurales du Manitoba.

(6) Les élèves qui sont transportés par l'autobus des municipalités voisines qui n'ont pas de bibliothèque publique comme Niverville, Grunthal et Kleefeld, ont accès gratuitement à la bibliothèque publique et à sa quatrième plus grande collection de livres en français dans les régions rurales du Manitoba pendant l'année scolaire.

Nous présentons à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba la pétition suivante :

(1) De demander au ministre du Travail, de la protection des consommateurs et des Services gouvernementaux d'envisager de concéder l'auditorium à la B-R-G d'ici le 1er mars 2023.

\* (15:00)

(2) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation de reconnaître la valeur que la B-R-G apporte à la population d'étudiants de l'ÉHS ainsi qu'aux communautés du village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys et de la MR de De Salaberry.

(3) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation et au ministre des affaires francophones de reconnaître qu'un protocole d'entente entre la RRVSD et G-R-L est mutuellement bénéfique, financièrement et culturellement.

(4) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et son statut au sein de la communauté.

(5) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine d'empêcher toute rénovation de l'auditorium qui détruirait et dévaloriserait l'intégrité architecturale du bâtiment.

Cette pétition a été signée par Marie-Josée Clément, Christiane Boulanger et Caleb Boulanger.

Merci.

### **Translation**

*Madam Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.*

*The context for this petition is as follows:*

*(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library was notified by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate premises currently located in the auditorium of the École Héritage School by March 31, 2023.*

*(2) The auditorium was built in the 1960s by famous Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the JRL for 48 years.*

*(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned "The Regional Library" was published in a 2008 document titled "Significant Heritage Buildings of De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys". It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of Heritage Site.*

*(4) The JRL and the RRVSD have flourished by means of a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.*

*(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth-largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.*

*(6) Students that are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French language literature in rural Manitoba during the school year.*

*We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:*

*(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1, 2023.*

*(2) To request the minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.*

*(3) To request the minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that a memorandum of understanding between the RRVSD and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.*

*(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.*

*(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.*

*This petition was signed by Marie-Josée Clément, Christiane Boulanger and Caleb Boulanger.*

*Thank you.*

### **Eating Disorders Awareness Week**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

An estimated 1 million people suffer from eating disorders in Canada.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses affecting one's physical, psychological and social function and have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

The development and treatment of eating disorders are influenced by the social determinants of health, including food and income security, access to housing, health care and mental health supports.

It's important to share the diverse experiences of people with eating disorders across all ages, genders and identities, including Indigenous, Black and racialized people; queer and gender-diverse people; people with disabilities; people with chronic illness; and people with co-occurring mental health conditions or addictions.

It is necessary to increase awareness and education about the impact of those living with, or affected by, eating disorders in order to dispel dangerous stereotypes and myths about these illnesses.

Setting aside one week each year to focus attention on eating disorders will heighten public understanding, increase awareness of culturally relevant resources and supports for those impacted by eating disorders and encourage Manitobans to develop healthier relationships with their bodies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support a declaration that the first week in February of each year be known as eating disorders awareness week.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

### **Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library**

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

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

The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, JRL, has been served notice by the Red River Valley School Division, RRVSD, to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school, ÉHS, by March 31st, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and it is—it has been home to JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned the regional library is published in a 2008 document titled heritage buildings in RM De Salsberry [*phonetic*] and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

(4) JRL and RRS—RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students that are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

(2) To request the minister of education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM De Salsberry [*phonetic*].

(3) To request the minister of education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition has been signed by Stephanie Gosselin, Alice Dearborn, Ken Chapman and many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

### **Foot-Care Services**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the—to this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.



(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical foot care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2020.

And this has been signed by Nicole Brightnose, Jag Sandhu, Sharan Sandhu and many other Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### House Business

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I wish to table a revised Estimates order that will be in effect only for May 13th and 16th of this Estimates session.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you for that tabling.

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Goertzen:** On House business, I want to announce that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Monday, May 16th, 2022 at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 2, The Public Services Sustainability Repeal Act; and Bill 8, The Court of Appeal Amendment and Provincial Court Amendment Act; Bill 15, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act; and Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Monday,

May 16th, 2022 at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 2, The Public Services Sustainability Repeal Act; Bill 8, The Court of Appeal Amendment and Provincial Court Amendment Act; Bill 15, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act; and Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Could you please resume the appropriation procedure on Bill 39, which I believe is at second reading.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider debate on second reading of Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona, who has eight minutes remaining.

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

### Bill 39—The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate)

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** I'm very happy to rise to debate this supplemental appropriation because when we enter into debate we're hoping that we can convince; we're hoping that we can sway opinion; we're hoping that, after listening to some considerable reasoned debate this afternoon in this House, that we can convince the government, at this point, to rethink this supplemental appropriation and base it on principles of equity and fairness.

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Deputy Speaker, we find that when we have a system now, our education system, that—and I've stated this before and it's there in black and white in the framed documents—we've seen, since 2015-16, a systematic decline of the provincial contribution to public education.

It's right there on page 1. It shows clearly that since 2015-16, when it was at 62.4 per cent, it has now declined to 58.2.

And so what ends up happening then is that the extra burden to fund a system that, in a province that's growing with a growing student population, the burden now gets shifted to school boards and their education levy.

So what was once in the range of 38 per cent, now, school boards have to fund over 42 per cent, and that talks a bit about equity and fairness. And when we're talking about equity and fairness, this is something that fair-minded Manitobans understand.

Deputy Speaker, I'll say fair-minded Manitobans are deeply troubled when billion-dollar corporations receive million-dollar rebates. When billion-dollar corporations that don't even have their head offices here in Manitoba are asked to reduce their contributions for the benefit of Manitobans—not even asked, they're just given—and that is a direct slap in the face of hard-working Manitobans.

Deputy Speaker, I want to stand here right now and ask this government to reconsider how this supplemental appropriation will be used. If this government—like the hard-working teachers in this province, like the hard-working educators, everyone in the system—understands is something called fairness and equity, they know that that's not fair nor is it based on anything that's equitable.

This government needs to reconsider how this supplemental appropriation will be used, Deputy Speaker. Most Manitobans, fair-minded people that they are, will understand that on their tax bill they see the education tax rebate. What was once \$700 for every homeowner—and I can talk about every constituent in Transcona saw that and understood that, because a house that was valued at \$180,000 in my constituency got that \$700 and saw a real appreciable reduction in their education support levy. A person that had a house at a half-a-million dollar value also had that \$700, but then paid a bit more because of the value of their home, something that's based on a person's wealth, something that is understandable, Deputy Speaker, and equitable.

So if this government was truly interested in that, what they could've done is increase that particular rebate on the tax form so that a person that's living in a home valued at, say, \$350,000 or lower will have seen an increase in the education support levy, something that is based on fairness and equity, Deputy Speaker, almost to the point where many homeowners in the province, at a home, say, valued at \$350,000 or less would have seen most of their education support tax removed. But that's not what happened here.

Deputy Speaker, what's happened here is that people that have a higher personal wealth are receiving more of a rebate. And it's so perverse that it's gotten to the point now where we're sending the hard-earned tax dollars of Manitobans out of the province

to benefit another jurisdiction. It's ham-fisted, it's not well-thought-out and it's insulting. I wonder if members really thought this through.

We were here exactly a year ago, Deputy Speaker, debating bill 71 and how ham-fisted it was, how poorly constructed that bill was because it insulted our value of fairness and equity. It's very difficult to go back to my constituents right now and say, you know, when they ask me, how is it that Cadillac Fairview and other real estate investment trusts are making off like bandits with our tax dollars? They're making off with it, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) knows that. I think, at his core, because the Minister of Finance is a teacher, and I know that the values of fairness and equity mean a lot to the minister because that's what we based our whole piece.

When you're an educator we try to impart those values, and I will tell you, when we see and we're debating this supplemental appropriation today, it's not based on fairness, not based on equity and it's very, very difficult to explain this to the constituents in my riding who will be asking me why people that are well off are receiving more of a rebate than they are. Answer that question when we're supposed to have a tax system that's based on fairness and equity. That's the issue here. And this is one that this government has not answered, but is still going to plow through with this, Deputy Speaker, still going to plow through with this, and that is something that is going to be very difficult for Manitobans to swallow and to understand.

And as I wrap up my comments today I'm hoping that in my 30 minutes I've convinced the government to rethink this, to pause, to reconsider because this is an insult to Manitobans and something that they will pay for in 2023.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member's time has expired.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I have a few comments on this legislation.

\* (15:20)

First of all, it needs to be clear to everybody that this tax rebate is using borrowed money. The deficit on this year is basically \$198,200,000, and with this bill, the deficit goes up to \$548 million. That's an increase in the deficit for this year of \$349,800,000. It is an increase in the deficit, which means that the money which is being used to pay this \$349,800,000

to give rebates to people—some, as we've heard, outside of the province—is adding to the deficit and adding to the amount that needs to be borrowed this year by \$349,800,000.

Now, I had asked the Minister of Finance what are the terms on this. Would it be borrowed? We know that we have inflation and that the interest rates—that money will need to be borrowed—are going up. We suspect the government—and the Minister of Finance hedged and dodged the question saying that they could borrow anywhere from two years to 10 years or more. But the reality is that this is likely to be money which is borrowed over a longer term, just because of the big potential for the cost of money to go up very significantly.

So, we are borrowing, this year, \$349,800,000 to pay rebates to people all over the province. I'm not saying that rebates are always bad but that when you're borrowing that money, that that's a problem. And it's a bigger problem when you borrow that money at a time when interest rates are rising and you have to pay more for that money, and it will end up costing not \$349,800,000, but something considerably more than that. Maybe over the term of the length of time that that money is borrowed, it might be 500 or 600 or 700 million dollars—we don't know because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) wouldn't answer the question when it was asked.

So there is a problem with the approach that the government is taking. They are going out of their way to borrow money, and that money is going—it has to be clear—primarily to people who are middle or high income.

And the reason that that is the case is that this money is going to property owners, primarily. It will go to people who own property, and therefore it will disproportionately go to those who are more well off. It will disproportionately go to people who live in Tuxedo, which is the constituency of the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). It is, from her perspective, perhaps a nice way to give a gift to people in her own constituency, but it's not so fair for people all over the province.

And when so many people are struggling—and people are struggling more right now because of the rising cost of food, rising cost for all sorts of things. I see this in the people that I talk to, they are saying, I don't know how I'm going to survive, how I'm going to eat. I—when we were campaigning in Fort Whyte, I ran into a woman who was absolutely desperate; you know, what am I going to do, I'm on a fixed income,

is what she said. All these costs are going up and up and up and it's a very, very difficult situation for a person like that.

I talked recently to an individual who gets social assistance, and he pointed out that, you know, after his housing is paid for, he actually gets very little each month. And now there's no way that that little is going to cover the extra costs that he's got, which are costs for food, costs in order to have just the very basic services that one needs in order to live in today's world.

And that, you know, for lots of people, for most people, right, includes access to a smartphone. You know, it's pretty darn hard to live in today's world without a smartphone, but this is not figured into EIA.

And it is a problem, right? And it is a problem because this smartphone is essential for people to arrange hospital visits or clinic visits, physician visits or for meeting friends and not being so isolated. You know, it's for getting help, it is for finding out in the winter where you can go if you're homeless. There are lots and lots of very basic reasons why people need a smartphone, but, you know, this is not taken into consideration in any way, shape or form by the current government when they're allocating funding through the Employment and Income Assistance.

So we're at a time when costs are going up. The Premier's government is giving money which is destined to go disproportionately to her constituency of Tuxedo, and which is forgetting a lot of people who are on low incomes.

Now, the Minister of Finance says that, oh, but we're going to help renters, we're going to give a tax credit of \$525 to renters. Now, I've looked very carefully; there is no indication whatsoever in all the budget documents that this is a refundable tax credit. So it is a tax credit which will work if you earn income and if you pay taxes.

There are a lot of people in Manitoba who are on low enough income that they are not paying any taxes, would get zero benefit from this tax credit. They are the forgotten people by the PCs. They are people who they don't seem to worry about, they don't seem to be concerned about, and yet they make up a considerable proportion of Manitobans and we need to be concerned about them. We need to make sure that we have a society which has got some equity, that all people have opportunities and those opportunities are there for those who have low income as well as those who have higher income.

So the other thing about this tax credit is that tax credits like this, usually you put these tax credits into your tax forms which you file at the end of the year and you get that money after you have filed your income tax forms. And that, you know, it may not be much of a problem for the Premier who has, you know, \$31 million that she's been investing and forgot to tell us about. The situation is that somebody who's got a tax credit, when they have to wait for maybe a year before they actually get the money, then they are living in very difficult circumstances because, you know, they need that money now; they don't need that money a year from now.

\* (15:30)

And while the Premier can manage things so that, you know, if she were in a position that she was renting, she could get that tax credit. But—and it wouldn't be a big problem, you know, whether she got it a year from now or now, but it is a really big issue for individuals who are on low incomes.

Now, I have just been passed a note from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and his note scratched in front of me says that it may be a refundable tax credit. We are waiting for details and waiting for confirmation. The minister has not yet said this and confirmed this in the House, but at least have a piece of paper here with this on.

If that is the case, that is an improvement. But it is still a problem, right, if it is going to come a year after you need it. And it is something that clearly needs to be indicated on how they are going to deliver this and what is going to happen in terms of whether people get it when they need it or a year afterwards.

The other thing about the treatment by this government of renters that is worthy of mention is that they have put a freeze on rents, right? But there is an escape clause, and the escape clause is if people improve the property. And so what we're seeing at the moment is lots and lots of people who are landlords making improvements in the property and jacking up rents. And from what, you know, I'm hearing in talking with people, that can be quite considerable.

A fellow that I know who was—and we've tried to help, right—was in an apartment which was—he could afford, and all of a sudden he's no longer able to stay in that apartment. And the result is that he now has to find another apartment, and he looked all over the place and the apartment that was the lowest cost; one that, you know, met his needs, was \$400 and some more than—in fact, when you added up the various

items that go along with it, that I think that that extra cost is probably going to end up being \$500 more because he's got to pay some utilities and things like that.

So, I mean, it's a serious issue and it's one that—the problem with the PCs is that they live in one environment where people are well off and they own homes, and they don't so much live in environments and talk with people who have low incomes.

And, you know, there may be some members and some MLAs who live in rural areas and who actually do look after and, you know, relate to and deal with people on low incomes. But the fact is that so many of the programs of the PCs are really targeted primarily at helping those who are well off instead of helping those who are less well off. It's something which the PCs should learn from, and, you know, they are making claims about the poverty rates going down. But it's going down because of programs like CERB and once CERB is gone it's likely to go right back up because this government is not paying enough attention.

In fact, I'm trying to help a woman right now who's—has Rent Assist and she has—gets Rent Assist, but the situation is this: that she was in a position where she was able to get a CERB benefit. The amount of Rent Assist that the PC government calculates is based on your income last year, or the year before. Because she was getting CERB, her income is estimated to—higher than it will be this year by a considerable margin, and the result is that her Rent Assist has been cut by four or five hundred dollars a month.

That's an extraordinary amount for somebody to try and make up, and all of a sudden, you know, instead of having Rent Assist, which is—was coming to her—about \$500 a month—she's now getting, I think, about \$200 a month. And there's just no way that she can manage with—faced with this sort of a situation.

So, you know, I've written to the minister about this and see if there could be an exception because of this kind of situation. But one has to recognize that there's a lot of people who are struggling right now, and that some of the programs—the way the PCs have them operating and designed—are actually creating a lot of difficulties for people. And that is something that we need to recognize, and one of the reasons why we are concerned about a program like this, which does a lot more of targeting for people who are well off than targeting people who are at the low income.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that there's probably a few others who would like to speak to this, and I will pass it on. My—the MLA for St. Boniface would like to speak shortly and so I will let him have an opportunity.

Thank you.

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** It doesn't give me any pleasure at all to stand up and talk about this particular piece of legislation, but, by golly, that's my job, is to stand up here and tell people what's wrong with this government.

And they make it easy, because pretty much everything they do is wrong. It's wrong for average Manitobans, but not so bad for their friends—not so bad for their friends. Which, you know, we can see that with this particular piece of legislation when you look at the—some of the numbers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and let me just find it here. I've lost it.

But that, when you look at things like the huge conglomerates that own the shopping centres, that are getting a million-dollar tax break. And yet, some folks that live in the heartland of the city, in Point Douglas, they're getting eight bucks.

And then you wonder why we stand up and say there's something wrong with what this government's doing.

The biggest thing that's wrong with what this government doing—is doing, of course, is simply the fact that it's pork barrel politics at its worst. It's trying to buy an election with our money. That's exactly what it is. And so, why is the government in a big panic to bring this legislation in? Well, I'm told there's a by-election happening in Thompson and they want to be able to hand out cheques to voters in Thompson: look what we did for you.

But at the same time, those voters in Thompson are going to say, but wait a minute, we had a hospital that didn't have hot water—not for days, not for weeks, but for months—and this government sat on their hands. The minister didn't even know that didn't have hot water until we started raising it here in this Chamber.

People in Thompson aren't stupid. They'll be able to see through this vote-buying scheme very quickly because while that hospital didn't have hot water for months, they're—they know that the other thing that it didn't have is nurses. And it doesn't matter which health-care facility we talk about in the North—well, in reality, anywhere in the province—they don't have

nurses. They don't have human beings in those facilities.

\* (15:40)

Something like 80 per cent vacancy rate for nurses in Lynn Lake, and the numbers are almost as bad in every other health-care facility in northern Manitoba. Well, Leaf Rapids, the folks in Leaf Rapids, they're not going to fall for getting a \$50 cheque in the mail. They didn't have a hospital for weeks, never mind hot water. They didn't have a facility at all because this government just shut it down simply because of their cuts to the health-care budget.

And they stand up and spew these numbers and, look at us, we're spending more money than anybody in the history of mankind has ever spent before. Well, that's not true and we know that.

Time after time after time we introduce documents into this Chamber, documents from this government, their own documents that we get through FIPPA that show constantly that they don't spend that which they keep claiming they're spending. And then they stand up and say, well, you're putting false information on the record. If it's false information, then it's being given to us by this government so then they should doubly be ashamed that they're underspending and giving out false information.

And they can stand up and talk about how much money they're spending in their budget, but they're not actually spending it. It's, again, a make-believe number designed to trick people into thinking they're doing the right thing when, in fact, they have no intention of doing that. And every member opposite knows that, just like every member on this side knows it.

We see the cuts that this government has made to the northern patient transportation system that people, quite frankly, now just stay home. They don't bother trying to get the care they need until they get flown out on an air ambulance because they simply can't afford the expense.

It's interesting that when this government, because they had bungled health care, they had bungled hospitals so badly in the city of Winnipeg that they actually had to start shipping patients, against their will, out of the city to other communities. In fact, they actually sent some to Flin Flon, which is quite surprising when you consider that most of our hospital is shut down because they don't have any staff.

But they also decided, well, gee, if we're sending people from the city north, we better give them some money for their families so that they can go and visit. Do they do that for people in the North? Well, as a matter of fact, no, they do not. Under the terms of the northern patient transportation system the only time a family member would get anything whatsoever is if they can convince their doctor and the clerk at northern patient transportation that they need to take an escort, that they're not capable of going there. And the clerk regularly overrules the doctor with no medical training, no medical knowledge, only financial knowledge—that no, you're denied, you're denied, you're denied.

You have no idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many constituents I've dealt with that have raised that concern, that the doctor says I need an escort, and yet northern patient denies it until we get involved and fight for them.

So this government hasn't spent the money that they claim—certainly not in the North. And I don't claim to be an expert in what they have or haven't spent in the city of Winnipeg on health care. I'll let other MLAs that are more familiar with that talk about that. But I can tell you that they haven't spent anywhere close to the money that they claim they're spending on health care in the North.

They haven't spent it on the facilities. That's why the Thompson hospital didn't have hot water for so long because they haven't done maintenance. Came as a surprise that this is a lot of plumbing in a hospital. Thompson hospital doesn't actually have a plumber on staff, so they had to hire one from somewhere else. So, there's so many things that this government could be doing instead of giving money to their friends.

So, let's talk a little bit about education, because that's kind of what this is all about, right? It's taking money that should be earmarked for education in the province of Manitoba, and they're giving it to corporations in a form of a cheque.

But what they haven't told us—what they haven't told us is where are they getting the money to replace those funds that are supposed to be earmarked for education. Are they going to put other taxes up? Well, no, no; they're not going to do that, because they're very adverse to actually paying for health care, education, infrastructure or anything else that actually betters society. They only want to help their friends, not the general taxpayers. They'd just as soon they didn't hear from them.

So, what are they going to—where are they going to get the money that they're going to spend—or, should be spending on education?

Well, we already know and we've heard from several members, and I know from talking to my own school board that they're doing a juggling act now already because of the funding freezes and the—any funding that they do get that's below the level of inflation. So, they're already deciding: should we lay a teacher off, should we do away with the lunch program, should we stop busing kids that we used to bus and cut off that, trying to maintain some level of people in the system to actually educate our kids?

So, taking millions and millions and millions of dollars out of the system to give to the—well, there's a list here in this CBC article that talks about kind of—so, Polo Park mall getting \$1 million-plus; St. Vital Centre getting \$522,000—that's almost as much as one of the members got; True North Square getting \$259,000; Outlet Collection Winnipeg—\$249,000; Kildonan Place—\$218,000; 360 Main Street—214; Fort Garry Place—\$194,000; oh, the Richardson Building—oh, thank goodness that they're going to get some money back—\$164,000; Grant Park Shopping Centre [*phonetic*]-146; 201 Portage—\$140,000. And, again, the people that need the help the most, people in Point Douglas: eight bucks.

What's wrong with these people? Do they have no human compassion whatsoever? Are they only so focused on money that they forget about people?

And the answer is yes. The answer is—absolutely the answer is yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**MLA Lindsey:** Well, the member from Radisson, he has a radical idea: kids should get fed at home with their family. At the same time, his government is refusing to raise the minimum wage so that people can afford to feed their kids. He should absolutely be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the kind of mentality that people on that side of the aisle have. That—they don't care about families; they don't care about people unless they're people that hang out at the Manitoba Club.

Madam—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they should be ashamed and they should apologize to every person in Manitoba that they just insulted, that that member from Radisson has just insulted. That is just disgusting

to listen to what he's spewing across the way. My goodness.

\* (15:50)

I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for getting upset, but when I listen to things like that that disrespects people, it really does upset me. I represent a lot of people that aren't sure where their next meal is coming from, and giving \$1 million to a shopping mall isn't going to help those people one little bit.

This government has constantly attacked working people. The first several years of their tenure in government, they froze working people's wages. They froze the minimum wage for the first couple of years that they were in government and then tied it to inflation a year later so that right now when inflation is running at, what is it, 7.6 per cent or something to that nature, the raise that they're talking about giving for minimum wage is tied back to last year.

So people are going to fall further and further and further behind and they're going to find a struggle to pay their taxes, to live in their houses, to be productive members of society. And what this government is proposing to do isn't going to help that situation.

And one shouldn't think that I'm opposed to changing the tax system to actually make it more fair, and perhaps there's some family farms that are paying a disproportionate amount. But to just say, we're going to take this shovelful of money and give to our friends and not say what they're going to replace it with is wrong.

A well-thought-out plan might have been more acceptable, more palatable, but we'll never see that kind of well-thought-out plan because then they can't give out pork barrel cheques. I mean, the last time they wanted to do this, the premier at the time wanted to make sure his name and his picture and he was going to put a pamphlet in there to say what a wonderful human being he was. Well, thank goodness we said, no, hold on, that's not going to happen, that's not going to happen, and it didn't.

So every time they figure out that they're making life more affordable, we need to look at who they're making it more affordable for. When they took the PST off \$50 haircuts, it didn't help the people living in the inner city of Winnipeg, it didn't help people living in remote northern communities. Who did it help? Well, again, it helped their friends.

When they took the PST off of wills, who did that help the most? Well, a goodly portion of

people that are struggling probably don't have a will anyway, but somebody with a million-dollar property or several million dollars, I guess, like the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)—I mean, she forgot about \$31 million so we don't know how many millions she's going to leave someday. But certainly a will prepared for someone of that nature is going to save, again, a pile of money by taking the PST off the preparation of that will. But it's not going to help make life more affordable for average Manitobans.

And there's nothing in the budget and there's nothing in this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is going to make life more affordable for the average Manitoban. It's simply designed to buy votes.

You know, they could have said, well, we're going to change the way the rebate works, whereas previously, the rebate came off your tax bill so you didn't have to pay it. So now, I still have to pay the taxes, right, but then I'll get this cheque back in the mail.

There's a problem with that. It's that people are struggling to make ends meet; they all of a sudden get a cheque in the mail—well, they're going to catch up on their rent payment, maybe. Maybe they're going to make sure they buy some extra groceries with that money, because they've been going without because they can't afford it. Maybe they'll pay to get their hydro turned back on because lots of folks have been having trouble with that, thanks to this government, in particular, cranking up the hydro rates.

What they're not going to do is be able to use that money to lower their tax bill like someone who's getting a million dollars back. Sure, they'll pay it up front, get a million dollars back. Life is pretty good.

They continue to mislead Manitobans when they talk about making life more affordable, when we look at having soon to be the lowest minimum wage in Canada. Even Scott Moe came to the realization that he couldn't starve people any longer.

Unfortunately, this Stefanson government hasn't come to that realization. They're fine with starving people still. They're fine with Manitobans struggling to get ahead while they take some of these tax dollars—that should be going towards health care, education, infrastructure—and give it to their friends.

Let's talk about infrastructure for a minute. You know, they say they're spending more money than the NDP ever did. Well, if they are, I don't know where they're spending it. I know where they're not: they're

not spending it on Highway 6, certainly not in the North. They're not spending it on Highway 60.

My colleague from The Pas-Kameesak told us earlier the other day about the adventure of driving on Highway 60—and I know I drive on that one every day as well—that it keeps getting narrower and narrower and narrower as the edges of the pavement get chewed up, because they haven't got proper shoulders because they don't maintain the road.

So, you meet a logging truck on that road now; it's hugging the centre line on a good day. Now, you meet that same logging truck on a day that it's been snowing; it's not just hugging the centre line, it's driving right down the centre.

So, why don't we plow the road? Ah, there would be an idea. If only we still had snowplow operators. The last snowplow operator in Snow Lake retired in the fall of 2021. So, did the government think ahead of time, hey, this person is going to retire; we'd better get on the hiring of somebody to take his place? No, they did not. They figured Snow Lake, I guess, was going to magically figure out how to make the snow go away. So, here we are now in—what is it, May, 2022? I don't believe they've hired a snowplow operator yet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's only one position I'm talking about. They were short somewhere in the neighbourhood of—I think it was 16 positions in what they deemed as the northern part for infrastructure. There was another 15, probably, short in Interlake area; a bunch more short in a different area.

So, while they say, look at how much money we're spending; in reality, again, they're not spending it. Not always where it needs to be spent, for sure. They don't have people left anymore to maintain the roads.

\* (16:00)

So what does a snowplow operator do when it's not snowing? Well, he's on maintenance of that road. He—they're patching it. They're fixing culverts. They're making sure the ditches are up to standard. They're doing all the rest of the maintenance things that are not being done, and we can see that.

Highway—Provincial Road 800 going into Pukatawagan washed out the other day because they don't maintain culverts. They don't go out and check to make sure the culverts are free anymore.

Highway 39, water washing across the road right by Wekusko Lake because there's nobody left to do the maintenance.

Highway 6, the last time I drove on it, which was last weekend, water pouring across the road, ditch—the thing that they pretend is the shoulder is completely washed out, nothing whatsoever left to it, undercutting the pavement, chunks of pavement now starting to fall into the—to cavern.

I talked to the minister; he didn't know. I asked him about it. I asked him about 391. I asked him about 800. He didn't know. He said, well, you should talk to my staff. I said, well, I would if they'd call me back. It's tough to talk to people who you can only leave a message on their answering machine and they don't get back to you until they get called out, which is a shame because I'd like to just talk to them and either inform them what's going on or have them inform me as to what they're doing to rectify it. But it doesn't work. So then we have to track the ministers down and try and get them to do something.

Part of the problem with a budget like this one or with a piece of legislation like we're talking about here today is it's based on the completely debunked theory of Reaganomics, trickle-down economy, that if we keep cutting taxes on the rich people and if we keep making sure that corporations don't have to pay tax, that, magically, that'll mean they'll create more jobs and pay their workers more money.

And time after time after time, study after study has shown that that is completely not the way the system works. What do those corporations do when they get those tax dollars? Well, they pay the shareholders more money. They buy back shares to jack their share price up. And the worst of the worst is they take that money and invest it somewhere offshore so that they don't have to pay tax on that, either.

So, this whole mentality that this government brings to the table when it comes to taxes is 30 years, 40 years out of date. It didn't work then, doesn't work now. It doesn't make life more affordable for Manitobans and it never will. The tax system certainly needs to be looked at, and in 2023 when we're in government, I'm sure we'll do that. We'll look at how to make a tax system more fair for everyone so that people at the bottom, people that are struggling can actually get ahead in the world. It's unfortunate that how many more people are going to be left to suffer for the next year and a bit, unless, of course, they decide to pull a Pallister and call a early election



because somehow they magically think they'll win. Pretty sure that's not going to happen either.

People need to pay attention, and this government thinks that they can fool people by giving them a cheque for 50 bucks, 100 bucks, and people say, well, what a bunch of good folks they are; they give me this cheque. People know that their kids' education is suffering today. People know that the health-care system has been starved for resources since this government came to power. People know that the roads and streets are falling apart around them. People know what this government has done to them. People know that this government has been the worst possible thing that could have ever happened to hard-working Manitobans. People aren't going to be fooled by the pork barrel cheques that this government tries to hand out before an election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they promise tax relief but it's only tax relief for those at the top. People at the top walk away with the big cheques. The people at the bottom are still left wondering how they're going to pay the mortgage. They're still left wondering how they're going to survive. Nothing, absolutely nothing, that this government has done since they got elected in 2016 has been to make life more affordable for all Manitobans; they've only made it more affordable for their friends. People are going to remember that at elections.

People are going to know that everything this government has put their hands on—they've cut the funding, they've destroyed it, they've attacked the very fabric of Manitoba to make sure that their friends at the top have been able to get more money in their pockets, out of the pockets of everyone else. They didn't leave more money on the kitchen table like they claim, they took money—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

The honourable member for St. Vital, sorry.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking with regard to the appropriation bill this afternoon.

And as we begin my time for debate today, I want to stress how grateful I am for the team, this NDP team in opposition, a team for fighting against the idea of asking more money, asking the Province to go into more money—into debt—that we can pay millionaires

and billionaires, give—write them a cheque because this—ultimately, what this is about.

This is about the priorities of a government who thinks it's okay, who thinks it's a plan, who thinks it would be a benefit to the province to make the wealthiest, already the wealthiest individuals and the wealthiest companies in our province even richer by cutting them a cheque. By writing a million-dollar cheque to the billion-dollar company that owns the largest mall in Winnipeg, in Manitoba, by writing them a million-dollar cheque—they think that's a good idea.

And in order to pay for that million dollar cheque, where do they get the money from? It comes right out of education; this is our education property tax. And as that money comes out of education—and as it comes out of education, the money that would otherwise go to benefit the kids in classroom, as it would otherwise go to benefit those kids and the students and the teachers who are trying to educate our youth, our young people, this government decides to rob our education system and spend that money on the wealthiest property owners in our province.

\* (16:10)

And not just wealthiest individual property owners, but the wealthiest companies with values of millions or billions of dollars. They feel free and think it's a good idea. I don't want to brag to Manitobans that that's a good plan when there are hundreds and thousands of young students who need that support in classrooms, who need that money to help them get nutrition, get a head start to their life, to actually have an education system that could be the great equalizer that we all wish it would be.

But instead, this government has its priorities out of whack, out of line with Manitobans, completely unaware of the priorities that regular Manitobans have—Manitobans in my constituency of St. Vital, Manitobans who live in the apartment buildings along St. Anne's Road and Niakwa and Morrow Avenue, the people who live in there who are living paycheque to paycheque, who walk over to the FreshCo to try to get a little bit of food for the day, questioning whether—parents who question whether they have enough food to feed their family that week, whether the food will last the whole week, often, unfortunately, sending their kids to schools in my neighbourhood with a tummy that is not full, with the need to have their kids get a little bit more sustenance, a little nutrition, in their lives and wishing that we had a school system that would provide for them that basic need, wishing

we had a government that cared about that basic need, wishing that they had a community that would support them in that basic need for food so that they could have all the opportunity to learn in our education system.

But, sadly, they don't because of this government's priorities, because of the priority of this government to look at the wealthiest 'Manitobians'—Manitobans, the wealthiest property owners who own the mega mansions, the largest businesses and say, hey, you know what you guys need? You guys need a break at the expense of the renters and the poorest Manitobans who still pay taxes but don't get the benefit that the wealthiest Manitobans get.

And so, we come to debate this bill. We come to debate this bill today, which calls this all into question. And so I asked myself first, when it comes to this bill, is why are we even debating this appropriation bill in this way? Didn't the government make these pledges already in the budget? Didn't they commit to making these changes already when they announced their budget?

Well, we heard them already before they've said them. Did they do the work to ensure that the money was in place before they made the commitments? I think this goes to the financial mismanagement that we've seen, not just in this budget, but over several budgets with this government: making claims of programs, of initiatives, of things that they want to achieve that they'll say they'll do, but not follow through with actual plan to do it.

It's a failure to plan by the government. How many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have we heard announcements about improvements to the ER at St. Boniface? I think back in 2018, we heard about a plan to improve the ER at St. Boni [*phonetic*]; back in 2019, we heard a plan to improve the ER, to expand the ER. We heard it again in 2019. In 2020, again, we heard a plan.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

Where was the action? Where was the effort, the actual concrete steps taken either legislatively, 'leither' policy-wise, the funding to get the job done? Nothing from this government. No action—all talk and no action. We've seen it time and time again. We've seen it time and time again, and we're seeing right now, today, with this appropriation bill.

They claim that they're going to make life more affordable through a tax rebate, a property tax rebate—a property tax rebate, mind you, that doesn't apply or

benefit renters or people without property in the province, I'll remind you, and I—get to more on that later. But a property tax rebate. That's their suggestion; that's their idea. Forget the fact that it's not indexed to wealth or to income and is really going to benefit the wealthiest Manitobans, but the fact that they're—they have this idea.

And do they actually execute the idea? A plan, idea, from there to execution, well, that's where we see a big gap, a big failure on the behalf of this government to actually put forward the necessary action and follow through to to turn that idea—which has major flaws, by the way, Madam Speaker, into the real and concrete execution of their idea. Did they do it? No, they failed, they failed.

And that's why we're here today, because they have come back to this House, to the Legislature, to say, we need more money, we need to go back and get more money to pay the wealthiest Manitobans. We set an idea and we forgot to plan it out; we forgot to plan it out through our budget, so we need to come back with this appropriation bill to ask for more money for the wealthiest Manitobans, to give them a tax break.

Well, I say there are better priorities for Manitobans. There are better options that we should be looking at in the province of right now. In the province of Manitoba, there are better things that we should be doing, we should be having debates on. And there—quite frankly, there are Manitobans whose priorities we need to be looking at in this Chamber.

Now, let's get this straight, Madam Speaker, that we have many issues in Manitoba, many high-priority issues that we need to resolve as a society, as a community, and we hear those as the 57 MLAs that represent the Province of Manitoba. We hear these issues, we need to be listening to these issues, bringing them forward to debate and debating them in 'earnesty', with the sincerity and the clarity to effect positive, realistic action and change.

It has been impossible, Madam Speaker, to go the last year—the last two years without dealing with the pandemic that we've been through, and the critical nature that—effect it has had on our health-care system. It's impossible to have avoided that. We've been hearing it from all stripes and all people, all demographics, ages and wealth and income factors in our province have been affected by the pandemic.

It's had a toll on our health-care system; our nurses, we've seen those vacancy rates skyrocket with absenteeism across the board. We've seen the struggle or

with which our system has been hanging onto in critical-care issues. People have suffered because of those. We've seen, recently, stories of hospitals being full. And that's a huge priority; that is a huge issue that needs to be addressed with concrete steps and substantial investment that has been lacking from this government.

That priority issue is not what we're debating today, and the reason is because this government has failed to have its priorities in straight, to priorities that line up with the issues of Manitobans. If they had their priorities straight, we would be investing this type of money into the surgical backlog that we've been facing and to addressing that backlog of surgeries, where cataract surgeries are behind, knee surgeries are behind, hip surgeries are behind, shoulder surgeries are behind. These are all critical priority issues that we ought to be dealing with.

But instead, this appropriation bill suggests that we spend millions of dollars on a tax break that will, in large part, go to the wealthiest individuals and the wealthiest Manitoba companies, some of which aren't even based here in Manitoba—that money is going to leave, it's going to go out of the province. We're spending millions of dollars on owners who don't even live here. For what reason? There are Manitobans here suffering who actually need that money to make their lives better.

And so, back to my community, Madam Speaker, I think about families who live and rent in my community, and I think about the choices that they have to make every day. They set out—many families set out a list of priorities on how they budget their expenses; got their rent cost, got their transportation costs, they've got costs for their children to get them educated, they've got costs surrounding food, clothing—*[interjection]*—and everybody sets budgets, that's right.

\* (16:20)

It's important not only to set a budget, but also to follow through with a budget. But most importantly, it's important to prioritize that budget for the most important expenses. And one of the priorities that this government has put on display through this appropriation bill—they've put on display that they are the most willing to spend their time and their money—the Province's money—on making the wealthiest Manitobans richer. That's their priority. That's what they're signalling with this.

We all know that this is not indexed to wealth. It's not indexed to income. And as a result, the largest property owners, the wealthiest among us in our community, are receiving the largest benefit of this. It's no secret. This has been laid out crystal clear by the government that that's their priorities: that their rich friends will get richer.

And so I ask you, is that the right approach we should be taking? No. As a moral place, as a place that here in this Chamber that seeks to benefit all Manitobans, how can we with a good conscience make a decision that will provide excess for those—who are the wealthiest and provide nothing for the renters who need it the most—who need it the most?

And so you ask a family who rents in a building along St. Anne's Road in my constituency if they can consider what priorities they set when they make their weekly or monthly budget. There is no way, not a chance, not a single iota of a possibility that they would consider making a decision that this government has made—a decision to prioritize the wealthiest people in our communities, the biggest property owners over the people who don't even have a property, who rent, and the people who need it the most.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, but you look at the other issues that we face in this province. The issue around making sure we have an equitable education system, one that provides good access for quality education across the province, a system where we can see people of new immigrant backgrounds, people of diverse backgrounds, people in the BIPOC community who need lifting up, all of those people who might need lifting up, who might need equity from our education system, we see none of these people supported through this idea.

There's millions of dollars going out the window to people who are, for the most part, very wealthy and set on the financial end when there are so much need through our education system. So much need.

I think about families who come here to this country as new immigrants and try to educate their children who yet—have yet to fully learn English as a language, are being placed in our education system without the needed supports to get them up to speed with their language. So—and as a result, they're not able to take in the content of their courses.

So they're—for example, Madam Speaker, a grade 9 student who go—comes from another country and hasn't spoke very much English. You pop them

into a science class in our grade 9 curriculum. Well, there'll—struggle to understand the content of that course. They will do their best; I have no doubt.

But I think it's reasonable and very understandable for all of us to see that that person who may not speak English as a first language might struggle a bit. And as we take the time to educate that person and get them up to speed in that course, they still may have—fall behind because they need that extra support with language in order to understand the content of that course.

And as they do that, that means, Madam Speaker, that we need assistance provided for that individual in that course so that they can have an equitable outcome through education. If we don't provide equitable access to education for all of our children, those who come here and English is no problem or French is no problem and they understand and can learn content through the school as well as those who perhaps come from other countries or struggle through other various barriers. Whether it's language, whether it's cultural differences, whether it is poverty, we need to address those barriers through our education system.

This bill would be a great opportunity to take the money and add it into our education system to address some of those inequities and create a far more level playing field for people who need that additional support. Because learning outcomes is something that we all benefit from. Having a well-educated society is something that entire community benefits from.

Ensuring that the well-educated people come from all stripes across the province, all communities around Manitoba, ensure that we can have a more equitable province here in Manitoba. At the same time, it gives those young people in education more empowerment to go and build our economy, to continue their education in post-secondary, whether it's in a college or a university. And as they do so, they now become positive benefits into our economy.

But if they don't get the supports that they need because of this government's cuts and lack of funding to our education system, if they don't get that at their early ages, at the basic steps in our K-to-12 system, it'll be far more difficult and expensive from the Province to support that person or to help them get educated at—later on. And there's no reason to wait that long, Madam Speaker, because we could do it now.

The last sentence there, Madam Speaker, I think the key word was could. We could do it now. We could choose to support young people in education.

We could choose to put more resources in classrooms. We could choose to make sure young people have opportunities. We could choose to make that system more equitable for those who need barriers—who face barriers and need help overcoming them.

Those are choices we could make, but every day, day in and day out, we've seen the government fail to make that choice. They fail to make that choice, specifically in this appropriation bill. When, instead of choosing those who need help break down barriers in our society, they choose to send millions of dollars to the wealthiest property owners in Manitoba, send a million-dollar cheque to the company that owns the largest mall in Manitoba, a billion-dollar company—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Moses:** —send them a straight cheque that goes out of the province. And we need all of those dollars to be benefiting us right here in Manitoba. So, Madam Speaker, I think it's important for us to recognize and understand the priorities that we ought to have when we're making these critical decisions with the limited dollars that we have here in Manitoba.

I want to also talk about an issue, Madam Speaker, of priorities. A major issue when it comes to the environmental crisis that we're seeing. And I bring this up only to contrast some of the choices the government could be doing with the money that they're instead choosing to give to the millionaires, the wealthiest Manitobans.

We could be fighting the climate crisis. This is a massive project that would require a lot of investment but have so much positive potential for our economy. Imagine being able to create hundreds, or thousands even, of jobs—green jobs, clean jobs, jobs that would retrofit houses with clean energy solutions, jobs that would transfer—transform our transportation system in Manitoba into a clean transportation system, jobs that would harness the power of our hydroelectricity and ensure that every watt of power that is used in Manitoba comes from a clean energy source; using that amazing Crown corporation we have in Manitoba Hydro, our Crown jewel, to ensure our clean-energy future. That's going to take resources, Madam Speaker, to accomplish a goal like that. It's going to take will to accomplish a goal like that. Determination.

\* (16:30)

Not only have we not seen that from this government—to be clear, in fact, CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen under

this government. They've taken no action on climate. But when it comes to making a choice a priority between cleaning up our environment, making clean energy commitments and financial contributions to plan—to a plan that would give us a clean energy future, Madam Speaker, do we see that action taken? Instead, we see the choice of this government choosing to give millions of dollars to the wealthiest among us.

And I don't have a problem with people who are wealthy or rich, but I do have a problem with this government prioritizing them above all else when we already have the most critical issues in our province: critical issues with people's health, with thousands of people on surgical wait-lists. When we have a critical issue in our education system with people unable to access equitable education services. When we have a critical issue in our environment with desperate needs for us to take concrete steps to limit our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and find clean energy solutions for the future.

When we have all these problems existing already in our province, how on Earth can this government, with a straight face, look at Manitobans in the eye and say that instead of helping to solve any one of those problems let alone all three of those problems, they chose instead to give the wealthiest of us who already are financially secure the largest tax break out of any of us in Manitoba, above all else?

And for me, Madam Speaker, that comes down to a priority that—a government that simply does not understand the real lives of Manitobans, a government that does not understand what the issues are that Manitobans face, a government that's out of touch, that's not tethered to reality, that doesn't live in the same reality as the rest of us in Manitoba. The rest of us in Manitoba who drive through potholed streets and wish they had a provincial government to work to support them. The rest of Manitoba who see projects and work that needs to be done to improve our schools through ventilation upgrades, through new school investments, through a whole host—more teachers to support growing class sizes.

When we see all of this as regular Manitobans and we see, at the same time, a government investing only in the wealthiest, when we hear of ourselves or live through a wait-list of months turn into years turn into multiple years before we get that surgery done, or we have a loved one, a friend, a family member who's waiting for week after week after week just to get a call from their surgeon or their medical expert to see, will I get a surgery this month? Oh, no, no, no. They

won't say this month. They'll say, will it be this year or will it be next year or will it be two years from now? We simply don't know because the wait lists have gotten so long with this government and no investment to keep up with the demand, the growing demand for surgeries and medical diagnostic tests in Manitoba.

And these are problems that every Manitoban sees and deals with and feels. I have loved ones who are waiting on surgical lists right now. Many in this Chamber are in the same boat, and we don't have a government that has put forward any concrete solution to address this in any real way. Yet day after day, they come in here and bring forward bills like this appropriation bill which not only doesn't solve the real problems that Manitobans face, not only does it ignore the issues that I hear from my residents every day, not only does it ignore that, Madam Speaker, it also takes money out that could help to solve these problems and puts it into the hands of a billion-dollar corporation who owns the largest mall in our province. It puts it into their hands.

And how's the money in their hands going to help that family who is struggling to feed their kids before they go off and walk to school? How's it going to help that senior who's been waiting for a year on a surgical wait list? How is it going to help us clean up our environment, to actually address the climate challenges that we face? How is it going to do that, Madam Speaker? It's not. It's—sadly, it's not. And that's the priorities that we've seen from this government.

And so in the last few minutes that I have, Madam Speaker, I want to round up this debate today. I want to round up this debate today by saying that on this side of the House, we understand that—the clear priorities of Manitobans. We listen to the Manitobans in our communities. We see the issues that they face. We hear about and go through the same problems as every Manitoban.

I drive through the same potholes as you and wish we had a provincial government to make real infrastructure investments. I have a loved one on a surgical wait-list and wish that I had a government that made a more concrete effort to addressing that issue. I want to get to a clean future in this province and I wish we had a government that took that issue seriously and could make steps to make change in that.

I see the rising prices of every item at the grocery store and see the meter on the pump go up every time I drive by; to see that get higher and more expensive and more out of reach for every Manitoban. And I

wish I had a government that worked for affordability. We don't have that in Manitoba.

But on this side of the House we understand that, and we on this side of the House are serious about those issues. We're serious about making those issues better. We've got the plan to actually put into change, to affect real change for more affordable Manitoba, for a better health care in Manitoba, for a cleaner Manitoba, for a better education system in Manitoba.

And quite frankly, Madam Speaker, that's what we are going to be fighting for. Every single day when we come to this place, we're going to be fighting for every Manitoban in the system so that they can have a better—

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

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** You know, there's a Monty Python sketch called about a character named Dennis Moore. It's a parody of Robin Hood, and he starts out robbing people on the highway and then starts stealing from the poor and giving to the rich. And then he realizes he's made a mistake and he starts stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. And he does it for so long that the—he makes the rich people poor, and the poor people he's taking money to start complaining about the the quality of the stuff he's stealing for them, at which point he says, this redistribution of wealth is trickier than I thought.

There is no reason—none whatsoever—that this bill needs to be broken out of the budget. This government has a majority, they could have put it into the budget and treated it as passed. So we are really dealing with some rather expensive political theatre and, frankly, unfortunate political theatre because the government is pretending that the opposition can somehow permanently block this legislation when they've designed it and put it forward in a way that it can be blocked. So they're playing victim. This is the sort of thing you see on soccer pitches and it's really unfortunate.

But it's also an incredibly bad bill. It borrows from the future while shifting the burden to paying it off to those who will not benefit. The communications on this bill are kind of a bizarre world, they're completely divorced from economic reality. It's utterly regressive. It will do nothing to spur the economy or help the 50 per cent of Manitobans and more who are teetering on the edge of bankruptcy.

The reality is that the decision to move forward with the property tax cut at this time, which offers some commercial landlords millions of dollars, it comes at a time of national/international crisis. It's

appalling, quite frankly; this is immoral. It is inter-generational theft. It goes out of its way to make growing inequality worse. And it's cutting cheques for thousands of dollars, sometimes multiple cheques, to people who really don't need it.

So it's misleading, really, to the point of cruelty, to say that the—to make the claim that the average Manitoban will get \$500 and we simply know that's not the case. There are many people who will get absolutely nothing. There are some people who will get eight dollars, others who will get \$6,000 and others who will get a million dollars.

\* (16:40)

And I do want to mention the commercial landlords who are benefitting: one is Polo Park—just Polo Park mall; other malls, like St. Vital, of course, would benefit. And one of the things about malls—though, I like—look, I like spending time at malls, I like visiting them, shopping there—but the reality is that lots of the chains there are multinationals. They have lots of products, none of which are made in Manitoba, that are imported from places with less-than-stellar working standards and wages and they pay minimum-wage employees.

It's worth mentioning the actual owners of Cadillac Fairview is the Ontario teachers' pension that—the same thing with St. Vital mall is owned by the Ontario pension fund. Revera, which was a private company, was owned by a pension fund for federal workers.

And the reality—and this is actually something that Canadians should grapple with—is that some of the biggest investment funds in the world are public sector, unionized—public sector pension funds for unionized workers that don't do a terribly good job of being good corporate citizens. They depend on low—on investing in existing properties and essentially skimming off the top.

Polo Park, St. Vital, all these malls, all these buildings, were not built by pension funds or by real estate investment trusts. They were bought after the fact, and they get to enjoy passive income, which is fine from one point of view, but it means that they're actually not—they're essentially extractive. And when I say they're extractive, they're extracting lots of money out of Manitoba. This is really a challenge that needs to be done.

But also, these pension funds are also buying up Manitoba farmland, which means as a result that people once who might have run their own farm are

being turned into tenant farmers. And, quite frankly, this is part of a 40-year or longer process which has been trying to return Canada's economy and the global economy to something much more like the 19th century, where large landowners were able to just extract wealth from people who had to pay rent them; they had no choice in them at all.

So, we're going to be borrowing money to cut multiple cheques for thousands or millions of dollars to—both to the wealthiest individuals in this province, while half—half—of Manitobans have been struggling with just \$100 a month, maybe \$200 a month and are the verge of bankruptcy. The—a substantial number of Manitobans are already technically in default, and this will do nothing for them.

And it has to be said there's a—one group of Manitobans who will not see a penny of this, and this is First Nations on reserve, individual Manitobans who are not allowed to own properties because of the institutional racism of The Indian Act. They will be denied anything, and they are among the poorest people in this province, the poorest people in Canada.

And again, we have to ask, why wasn't this in the budget? This government puts all sorts of stuff in budgets and in omnibus bills. Couple of years ago in one budget they took \$338 million from First Nations in care—this money could be going to compensate them, to return the money that is owed to all those children and to which the First Nations Family Advocate Office is suing this government right now.

They could be—what else could we be spending \$350 million on? We could be spending it on shortening wait time—wait times. We could be making sure that children aren't going to school hungry. We could be providing people with energy retrofits and permanently lowering their—helping them permanently lower their energy bills. We could be investing in electrical vehicle charging stations, which we've been told Hydro doesn't have the money to do. We could be helping seniors and people with chronic, life-threatening diseases with the cost of life-saving drugs, whether it's diabetes or cystic fibrosis, because I've been getting complaints from people that they can't afford those things. It could be used to help Manitoba businesses who have been struggling, who, we've been told by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce and CFIB, that they're struggling under massive debts that they accrued during the pandemic, but they're not going to see any major benefit from this.

And one of the things about it is that—it took a while for me to realize exactly how it's been presented, but there's this narrative that, if we're running a deficit then if—then, clearly, we must be borrowing to be spending on something, it must be spent on programs; how can we be cutting if we're running a deficit? When reality is we are running a deficit in order to pay to borrow and pay for tax cuts.

We've borrowed and paid for PST tax cuts, we've borrowed and paid for all these things and the majority of these benefits don't go to the people who need it the most. It's completely regressive.

We are adding to debt to cut cheques to the wealthiest people and to the largest pension funds in the world who've been making year-over-year increases of 10 and 12 and 15 per cent. These are the people who've been doing the very best in the last 10 years while everyone—well, the majority of people have seen their wages stagnate and their incomes stagnate, in part because of the enormous debts and the fact that these massive investment companies have been—have a vested interest in keeping minimum wage low and in making sure that they can get as much out of their rents that are being paid to them, whether it's by farmers, or ultimately farmers, by multinational chains and by—which all depend on, again, the huge international network of imported, low-cost garments and products that aren't made in Manitoba or in Canada and which depend on overwhelmingly on minimum-wage workers.

There is a—we have a complex here which needs to be addressed and dealt with. But this bill, which is beyond the scope of this bill and, indeed, beyond anything, it needs to be dealt with on a national level. But the reality is is that we are seeing huge pension funds squeezing lower- and middle-class people and trapping them in poverty because they depend on—because they're able to benefit from it. It's a huge problem.

It's also the case that, you know, people talk about wanting to have government run like a business. If this government were running like a business they'd be looking at some of their biggest customers who they depend on for the most revenue and they'd be telling them, look, you know, Polo Park mall, we're going to give you—we're going to borrow money and cut you a cheque for a million dollars, and we want to keep doing this over and over and over again in perpetuity.

So what kind of business would borrow money, take on debt in order to lower prices for its biggest customers, the people it depends on for revenue?

No business would do that. It doesn't make any sense, but that's exactly what this government is doing.

And it's also disappointing because, you know, there've been references to the fact that this is a time of international and national crisis. We see war in Ukraine. We see gas prices surging, and there's no shared sacrifice here. I mean, I remember somebody saying this about George Bush—George W. Bush, when he went to war in Iraq. He said, well, what are we going to do to try to have—encourage people to make a shared sacrifice because there are going to be people who we're going to be sending away, people who are going to be suffering—people who are suffering.

What are we going to do about this? Well, we're going to give the richest people in the province tax cuts. That's not shared sacrifice. When—and when we look at some of the entities and businesses that are going to be benefitting from this, again, one is their oil pipelines are one of the properties who can benefit from this.

Commercial real estate, we've seen changes to the PST that benefit insurance and landlords, and the thing about these, these are all overhead. These are all actually the people who've been doing pretty well in the last while, and so we're giving more of it to people who need it while the funds—the people who are in need don't get the help.

And, you know, when you talk about inflation, you talk about oil or real estate. Yes, there is an issue with supply chains; there's no question of that. And—but one of the major things that no one has talked about in this is price gouging. In the very first week or just the week before the pandemic we warned this government. They said look, you have to watch out for price gouging because that's something that happens in an emergency, in a crisis. When you look at one of the reasons that prices are going up it's not because there's been fiscal stimulus; it's not because of CERB; it's not because businesses were actually covered with wage subsidies. Those are all things that kept businesses afloat and actually mean—that meant that there are going to be more businesses that exist and more people who are actually able to make it through this pandemic.

That doesn't cause inflation at all. The thing that has caused inflation is price gouging. One of the things that's happened is because so many businesses have gone under—main street businesses, small businesses. We've seen an enormous increase in—

colossal increase in inequality where billionaires have doubled and tripled their net worth, while everyone else has struggled because they have been able to enjoy mass monopolies.

So when we talk about things even like the freedom—the free market, the free market people used to say, well, it's not just a free market; it's capitalists, and the fact is that someone like, let's say, Elon Musk, with his tweets can completely—can manipulate markets.

So we're not talking about the free market of a whole bunch of people who are all equal competitors and they being able to make their decisions. We're talking about when inequality gets really, really bad. You—talking about a few giant players who are able to control and manipulate the market.

And the only way we're actually going to be able to stand up to that is by—is through governments. It's through governments taking a stand on behalf of people. But the fact is, like, we're looking—and the other thing is—so there's two things: one is that you get pandemic price gouging and the other is that you can get war profiteering.

\* (16:50)

So is—like, when we look at what the price of oil is, why are we giving it—why are we increasing the tax cut to pipelines and giving them more money, because that is not going to go into cutting the price of gas? We're seeing people take advantage of the fact that there's a crisis in order to be able to gouge people, and that's something where government needs to step up, to step up and protect citizens who are being exploited. But that's not what's happening with this bill.

Now, I do, too, want to say when it comes to property taxes, there are ways it can be unfair, especially for people—and it can be difficult for people on a fixed income, if you want—is—that is the one area where you really want to protect people, where especially seniors on fixed incomes who are unable to, you know—when they face increases, they are not able to go out and take another few shifts at McDonald's, although I have—I've seen people who have taken shifts at McDonald's, and I've talked a woman in her 70s who, because she had no money, had to go back to work basically doing janitorial services in a hospital because she does not have enough money to support, to live.

But what—property taxes are actually one of the incredibly fair ways to pay for government services.



If we look at other types of taxes, we talk about income tax—income tax is, generally speaking, a tax on labour. And often, people talk about taxes being punitive: well, why are we bringing this tax because it's—we often actually support taxes that we see as being punitive. We, like, we don't have a problem with taxes on alcohol. We don't—generally speaking, we don't have a problem with taxes on cigarettes because we see is—these things as tacking something bad, as a way of discouraging something bad.

So why do we have—so—but we don't have that question about income taxes, generally speaking. We don't say, well, why are we having taxes on labour? Why are we discouraging people from working? Why are we making it harder for people to work? But that's exactly what's happened.

If you look at taxes and how taxes have shifted over the last few decades, it has been shifted away, more and more, to people who work for a living, where people who own for a living don't have to pay as much. And it really is a problem because there's that distinction between people who can earn money in their sleep and they're not actually building anything new. And the capital that they're using is not going to build new factories, it's not going to invest in new projects, it's not going to buy new machinery or farm equipment. It's generally being used to either speculate either on luxury—to buy luxury real estate or in the market.

So all of this is adding to a burden of inequality, and it's not actually going to do anything to drive new investment. It won't drive insurance. And the other thing about it—one of the things about property taxes and why they're a fair way to pay for—why they're a fair and good way to pay for services, though it can be a challenge, is because they're incredibly hard to avoid. The people who really hate taxes, the people who want to avoid and evade taxes, hate property taxes almost more any other one because the concentration of property ownership is far greater and inequality in property ownership is far greater than income inequality.

But the other is that it's hard to avoid property taxes. It's easier to avoid income taxes. It's easy to avoid corporate taxes, and we know that not just because people offshore things but because they can hire lawyers and accountants, create shell companies and use all sorts of ways in order to be able to distribute their income that the very wealthy can do—as we know this because there's studies about this—that people in the very, very thinnest line, the 0.01 per cent

of Canadians who own not just one company, but they'll own hundreds of small corporations which are used to help them avoid taxes. That's something that most individuals can't do. But they're able to do that because you can do that with corporate taxes. You can take a loss; there's all sorts of ways in which people will pretend that charity or philanthropy is—they're being charitable or philanthropic when really they're getting a big tax writeoff.

I would say that, just as a note, that social impact bonds in particular are an issue because instead of paying taxes, somebody can set up a foundation; they can put money into a social impact bond. If it pays off, they make money. If it doesn't, they don't have to pay taxes. It's a win-win situation that is one of the reasons why social impact bonds as they've been constructed are a complete departure from what the person who came up with them were, but also they're just a form, unfortunately, of legal tax avoidance.

But it's also—it is incredibly important because when we talk about inequality, it's actually hard to even grasp and get a handle on how unequal even Canadian society is and Manitoba society is. Because when we talk—you know, people have talked about the 1 per cent or the 0.1 per cent. But if you've been through business courses, you probably heard about the 80-20 rule.

So the 80-20 rule is that you will get 80 per cent of your revenue from 20 per cent of your customers, and it breaks down—it's a very common distributional rule. It applies in all sorts of situations, people have realized. And the thing about it is that it actually means that the—it is recursive.

So of that top 20 per cent—so if you say, well, the 80-20 rule even applies to the top 10 richest people in the world, so the top two richest people in the world will actually own 80 per cent of the total wealth of the top 10 because it keeps going up and up and up.

And the reality in Canada is that the top 20 per cent own about 67 per cent of all assets. And when you look at the change in wealth in Canada that's happened—this is—these are slightly older figures, but between 1999 and 2012, the top 20 per cent—the change in wealth of the top 20 per cent of Manitobans—sorry, not Manitobans—Canadians, they—their wealth grew—just the top 20 per cent—by \$2.9 trillion. The next 20 per cent, their wealth grew by \$949.4 billion. The middle quintile, as they're called, 20 per cent, it went up by \$383.2 billion. The next one when up by \$78.3 billion, and the bottom

20 per cent actually were \$6.7 billion worse off between 1999 and 2012.

And in the 10 years since then, it's only gotten worse. It's gotten much, much worse—is that the fact that the total amount of debt that Canadians are in—exceeds the entire GDP of Canada for a year when you add up all the mortgages and private debt and credit cards that everybody is in. The amount of farm debt in Manitoba is astronomical—it's about \$10 billion. So, our provincial debt is about \$20 billion; Hydro's debt is about \$20 billion, but the amount of money that farmers owe is about \$10 billion.

And the 80-20 rule, when you break it down, it ends up meaning that about 0.1 per cent of the population will have 40 per cent of the wealth. The next six point—0.64 per cent will own 11 per cent. So just the top 1 per cent will own over 50 per cent of everything. And it's—it varies a little, but that's pretty close to how it works in Manitoba. It's pretty close to how it works in Canada.

And the absolute wealth of people in Canada is that the top 20 per cent have point—\$5.44 trillion. The bottom 20 per cent have negative \$10.8 billion. They owe money. They owe more than their worth. And that—those people who owe more than their worth will not own property at all. They will see nothing from this. They won't even get the \$8.

And one of the things about—if there were concerns about inflation—and there are, of course, concerns about inflation—the irony is that this bill will actually make inflation worse because one of the major drivers for inflation is increasing property prices, and one of the things that drives up property prices is when you cut property taxes. Because, the

bank will look at the amount of money you're supposed to be paying on that piece of land, and they say, well, look—you're not paying—you've had a \$500 decrease, so you're paying \$2,000 less on your property taxes. You know what? We're going to replace that with interest on your loan.

So instead—instead of all that—instead of that money going to the public good, instead of that money being used and staying in Manitoba where it'll go into the—Manitoba's coffers and it'll go to be spent in Manitoba programs where it'll actually be spent in schools, improving ventilation systems, or it could be spent anywhere—it actually means that the government is contributing to the pyramid scheme that's been happening with assets—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) will have 8 minutes remaining.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** I'm noting for the House that on April 8th, 2022, I received a letter from the House leaders advising of their agreement that the Committee of Supply will sit on May 13th, May 20th and May 27th.

Accordingly, in order to comply with this direction, I will be recessing the House at 5 today with the understanding that the three sections of the Committee of Supply will be meeting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

Therefore, the hour being 5 p.m., this House is now in recess.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 12, 2022

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

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