

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 30, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the chair.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Deputy Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development First Report

MLA Billie Cross (Vice-Chairperson): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the first report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on November 29, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 3) – The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday) / Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants (période d'exonération de la taxe sur les carburants)**

Committee Membership

- *MLA BEREZA*
- *Mr. BLASHKO*
- *MLA CROSS*
- *MLA DEVGAN*
- *MLA KHAN*
- *Hon. Min. SALA*

Your Committee elected Mr. BLASHKO as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA CROSS as the Vice-Chairperson.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- *Ms. LAMOUREUX*

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following six presentations on Bill (No. 3) – The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday) / Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants (période d'exonération de la taxe sur les carburants):

*Jason Wiebe, Snoman (Snowmobilers of Manitoba) Inc.
Cam Dahl, Manitoba Pork Council
Michael Shaw, Private citizen
Josh Brandon, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
Gage Haubrich, Canadian Taxpayers Federation
Christopher Crawford, Canadian Propane Association*

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 3) – The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday) / Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants (période d'exonération de la taxe sur les carburants)**:

Carson Callum, Manitoba Beef Producers

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 3) – The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday) / Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants (période d'exonération de la taxe sur les carburants)**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

MLA Cross: Honourable Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Deputy Speaker: I have a report to table.

In accordance with section 29(3) and 36 of The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, I am tabling the annual report and service plan for the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Deputy Speaker: The required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility): This Sunday, December 3rd, marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, a day we recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of our Manitoba relatives living with disabilities, and advocate for their rights and well-being as we work towards a future in which full social, political, economic and cultural inclusivity is realized.

Too often citizens with disabilities are made to advocate for themselves or mask their disabilities to avoid ableism at home, at work and in their communities. The disability community is so diverse, and I encourage all Manitobans to continue learning more

about disabilities, especially those which are hidden or invisible, and how to be a good ally.

We also know how ableism intersects with gender-based violence, disproportionately impacting women, BIPOC folks and 2SLGBTQ communities. Violence against women with disabilities is perpetrated when safe spaces that centre victims living with disabilities are not made available. It is incumbent on all of us to learn about the intersectionality of ableism and its pervasiveness in our society so that we can disrupt these cycles of discrimination and violence.

This month also marks the 10-year anniversary of the passing of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, which made Manitoba the second province to develop comprehensive accessibility legislation. This was an important step in our long journey to break down physical, architectural, technological, informational and social barriers our society imposes on citizens living with disabilities.

Accessibility is a public good that should be made available to all Manitobans regardless of identity, income or location. We must address the additional barriers experienced by rural and northern communities.

As Minister responsible for Accessibility, I have seen the incredible work of disability rights groups and resource organizations across Manitoba and I look forward to working together to move our province closer to full inclusion for every Manitoban.

Miigwech.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: Before we continue with ministerial statements, I just want to direct members' attention to the gallery. We have seated in the public gallery, from Collège Béliveau, 24 grade 9 students under the direction of Josée Trudeau. This group is located in the constituency of Southdale, and the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable). Go 'Cudas.

We also have seated in the public gallery, from École Précieux-Sang, 20 grade 7 students under the direction of Richard Alarie. The group is located in the constituency of St. Boniface.

* * *

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to address International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Each year, on December 3rd, we take this important day to promote the rights and well-being of all

persons with disabilities across every level of society, both those in our great province and across the world.

This day is an important opportunity for us to raise awareness of the current situation of persons with disabilities of all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life.

* (13:40)

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House firmly believe in the importance and significance of securing the rights of people with disabilities, ensuring not only are their rights protected, but further promoted so they can equitably, efficiently and actively engage, not only in their rights—not only in our society, but also facing no barriers in all aspects of their lives.

Our PC government made great strides to this effort and demonstrated a willingness to act and do everything we could to support persons with disabilities.

Consider, for example, Manitoba Supports for Persons with Disabilities, an income-support program we created that sought to provide better supports and services for Manitobans living with severe and prolonged disabilities.

This PC caucus listened, engaged and took much needed action on the words told to us from Manitobans to separate this program from EIA, and we did so with the passing of bill 72, The Disability Support Act and Amendments to The Manitoba Assistance Act.

We also made historic investments toward increasing support worker wages, as we recognize the importance of recruiting and retaining highly skilled front-line workers in the adult disability sector.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, despite our significant efforts, we know that, moving forward, more must be done. We remain committed to advocating for all individuals with disabilities, and will continue to promote, protect and empower in every way possible that we can the rights and interests of Manitobans.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, as we take this time to acknowledge International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I thank you for this opportunity to express, on behalf of this side of the Chamber, a determined commitment that we will see us continue to work to identify, remove and prevent any and all barriers that still exist and increase the opportunities available to persons with disabilities to build a Manitoba that is more inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning—oh, sorry—the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Day of Action for Early Learning and Child Care

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I am pleased to have the opportunity today to express our government's gratitude for the early childhood educators and child-care centres across Manitoba.

Families across our province rely on the inspiring work of child-care workers—*[interjection]*

Yes, well, I'll try that one again. Families across our province rely on the inspiring work of child-care workers each and every day. Raising a child requires a community effort, and I'd like to commend child-care workers for dedicating their time to the future of our province.

Today is the national Day of Action for Early Learning and Child Care. I was honoured to spend it at the grand opening this morning of the Manitoba Métis Federation's newest child-care centre, Li Pchi Pwayson, located in St. Laurent. This centre will add 40 much needed spaces and will provide culturally appropriate and relevant programming to help young Métis children connect with their culture.

Accessible, high-quality, inclusive child-care services close to home is important for Manitoba families, especially in rural communities, especially if we want to grow those rural communities.

I am proud to work with our child-care partners, like the Manitoba Métis Federation, to work towards the common goal of accessible child-care spaces for all families.

Part of this work includes listening to the needs of families and the experiences of child-care workers. This will ensure those who are helping raise the future of our province that they are properly supported by their provincial government.

Child-care workers will no longer be undervalued, and I look forward to working alongside early childhood educators and the child-care-centre staff to ensure an approach that recognizes their significant contributions throughout our province.

To child-care workers in Manitoba, I'd like to thank you for your dedication, your tireless efforts and your hard work. Investing in children in Manitoba is investing in our future. I'm excited for the work we will continue to do and to recognize the contribution of child-care centres, their staff and communities.

Thank you, Monsieur le président adjoint [*Mr. Honourable Deputy Speaker*].

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Today is the national day of action on child care, and it is my pleasure to rise and respond to the ministerial statement.

Our PC government was proud to include \$250 million in Budget 2023 to advance accessible, high-quality and affordable early learning and child care in our great province.

In April, we introduced \$10-a-day child care and commit to creation of 23,000 child-care spaces to make child care accessible, affordable and inclusive for all families in our province. As of August this year, the average parent fee for child ages zero to six is \$8.43 compared to \$20.70 in '21-22.

We know that parents need child-care space now, and that's why we partnered with the federal government to invest \$94 million in ready-to-move child-care centres in our rural municipalities. The first of eight facilities opened with Headingley being the first back in July. That's 300 spaces in rural communities such as Oak Bluff, Whitemouth, Stonewall, East Selkirk, Ile des Chênes and Portage, with more communities to follow, of course, in the second phase.

We made sure that no matter where they lived, Manitoban families had access to high-quality, culturally appropriate, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care.

In partnership with the Government of Canada, we also increased the availability and accessibility of child care in public schools and post-secondary institutions in the province with an investment of \$132 million, more than 2,400 new spaces.

Our PC government also had the post-secondary stream, adding 60 school-age spaces to the Université de Saint-Boniface and 216 spaces to Assiniboine Community College.

We partnered with our education partners on municipal, provincial and federal levels; opened and committed to over 12,000 child-care spaces, on track to that 23,000. We removed barriers for individuals to obtain the certification— attract people to train early childhood educators.

With that, Mr. Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you; thank our early childhood educators throughout this great province of ours.

Thank you, miigwech and merci.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable member for Tyndall Park have lead to—leave to reply to the ministerial statement? [*Agreed*]

MLA Lamoureux: Thank you, Honourable—Deputy Honourable Speaker as well as the minister for bringing forward today's ministerial statement.

There are quite a few issues facing child care in our province right now. There are not enough child-care spots and the wait-lists are far too long. Some wait-lists have more than 300 families on them.

We also know that early child-care educators, ECEs, are very underpaid and short-staffed. We presently need about 1,000 more ECEs.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, earlier today I attended the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba's briefing, and here they expressed several needs, which I am tabling now for the reference of other MLAs.

One need is about how facilities are very under-resourced. Paper towels was an example provided, and how they have almost doubled in price, yet money—funding—for these resources have remained stagnant.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, our Province has promised to develop 23,000 new full-time child-care spots by 2026, yet we are lagging far behind this number. We aren't building enough spaces fast enough to meet the commitment that was made to Manitoba families.

We need to accelerate the creation of new spaces by improving infrastructure funding for charitable non-profits. And we need to be looking at ways government can help retrofit existing buildings that can be suitable for child-care centres.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, public and non-profit spaces are urgently needed, and this government needs to act immediately to expand Manitoba's child-care plan to support Manitoba parents, children and ECEs.

In closing, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to thank all of our ECEs for the tremendous work

and advocacy that they have been doing for child care here in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

* (13:50)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Shamrock School's Socktober Campaign

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I am proud to speak to the amazing contributions made towards our community by the students at Shamrock School, who are joined-joining us here up top.

Last month, Shamrock School participated in Socktober, an annual campaign hosted by the Main Street Project. Winnipeggers are asked to donate new pairs of socks for folks who use Main Street Project services to ensure they stay warm, dry and healthy.

The 7th and 8th grade students at Ms. Katie Hewitt's class set their sights on the ambitious target of 1,000 pairs of donated socks to make up the difference between Main Street Project's 29,000 sock goal last year and their 30,000 socks goal this year. As a class, they brought in their donations, promoted their drive to other community members and even wrote to local businesses, like Home Run Sports, to regress-request additional contributions.

Our unhoused relatives are more susceptible to the negative impacts of colder weather, like illness and frostbite. As hands and feet cool faster than other parts of the body, the value of socks is easily forgotten, but incredibly important. Sock drive was a simple call to action that Shamrock students answered swiftly-swiftly.

Their goal was to collect 1,000 socks before the end of October and, Honourable Speaker, it is no surprise that through their hard work, outstanding leadership and dedication, they surpassed their goal with over 15,000 new pairs of socks.

The donations raised by Shamrock School were graciously matched by Virgin Radio Winnipeg in support of the fantastic work pioneered by these young leaders, doubling their total donations.

I want to invite all members to join me in celebrating the tremendous work done by Ms. Hewitt's grade 7-8 class. Manitoba is lucky to be left in the capable hands of this next generation of leaders.

Shamrock School student volunteers-Socktober Sock Drive

Grade 7 students: Kaydance Badgely, Amiin Dahir, Tiago Gomes, Josie Mak, Ron Medvedev, Myles Mordi, Ayodimeji Omotoso, Ethan Perera, Avery St. Louis, Braxton Stewart, Lacey Terpstra.

Grade 8 students: Ayomide Ajayi, Aviel Akindipe, Lucas Chien, Summer Desrochers-Bricklin, Audrey Edokpa, Cian Jonker, Angelina Joy, Miles McKay, Zafira Odutola, Eden Ruman, Xinyi Wang.

Highway 75 Upgrades and Maintenance

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, Highway 75 is one of the most important highways in our province. It links Manitoba with the United States and Mexico and forms an important trade corridor that runs through the Emerson border crossing.

The Emerson-Pembina crossing processes more cargo and international travellers annually than the Winnipeg and Grand Forks airports combined. More than 1,000 commercial trucks are processed through the port every day, and approximately 65 per cent of Manitoba's exports to the United States and Mexico are transported by truck through the Emerson-Pembina crossing.

More than 1 million travellers cross at Emerson each year. That's a lot of traffic on Highway 75.

And yet, embarrassingly, the first thing every traveller will notice is the difference between the smooth I-29 on the American side and the awful state of Highway 75 on the Canadian side. Highway 75 is a major safety concern, and taking a motorcycle on it could easily result in a serious accident given the deep and wide crevices and potholes that mark the road.

Earlier this year, a truck driver from southeastern Manitoba was headed southbound on 75 when he was passed by another southbound semi. The passing truck picked up a three-pound chunk of concrete and sent it through his windshield, shattering his eye socket, cheek, nose and upper jaw.

My constituency office regularly receives complaints about this highway, including one just recently where a couple had two tires blown out on their car due to hitting a pothole on this road.

Our Conservative government took action and committed over \$100 million to rebuild this highway, including the 30-kilometre stretch between Ste. Agathe and Morris that recently reopened. But more needs to

be done, in particular south of Morris to the US border, in both the northbound and southbound lanes.

And so I call on this NDP government to continue the work our government began and to rebuild Highway 75 to the standard we can all be proud of.

Active Living Seven Oaks 10th Anniversary

MLA Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): ALSO, or Active Living Seven Oaks, is a local community organization started by Cory Juan in 2013. From a humble seven-member group, ALSO has grown to support over 93 members from the Seven Oaks community and surrounding areas. They recently celebrated their 10th anniversary this past October, and I would like to thank them for including me in their celebrations.

While their initial objective was to promote good health amongst seniors in the community, the mandate has expanded to include facilitating various activities that focus on collective sharing of life experience, learning opportunities and active living.

Cory Juan is a pillar of the Seven Oaks community. Being a trusty supporter of literacy and community organizing, Cory is also regarded as a well-respected advocate and pioneer in the Filipino community.

Through these community associations, we continue to grow and enrich each other's lives. By dedicating, acknowledging and giving continuous support to these organizations, we are keeping members of our communities productive, mobile and healthy.

Please join me in celebrating ALSO's 10th anniversary and thanking Cory for her dedication to the Seven Oaks Community.

Tourism Minnedosa—Marketing Partnership

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Deputy Speaker, the town of Minnedosa community development corporation and tourism will have Canadian country music entertainer Brett Kissel assisting them with a two-year campaign to market the beautiful community nestled in the Little Saskatchewan River valley in my constituency of Riding Mountain.

This campaign is being made possible with significant financial contributions by community-minded businesses like Cenovus Energy, the Sunrise Credit Union and Heritage Co-op.

The heart of this partnership extends beyond attracting visitors to Minnedosa. It aims to drive economic growth for local businesses, fostering a prosperous and sustainable community.

Kissel is very well known in music circles, with his career to date boasting three platinum and two gold-certified albums, 10 gold singles and a remarkable 16 top-10 radio hits. The Alberta musician accepted his third Juno Award this past May for his critically acclaimed album *What is Life?*

His song from that album *Make a Life, Not a Living* is the message behind Minnedosa's campaign.

Kissel is a family man, an avid outdoorsman and is very community spirited with deep country roots. His love of Minnedosa is a testament to the town's multi-faceted appeal. You will see photos of Brett enjoying Minnedosa's outdoor activities, showcasing the multitude of locations the community offers.

The campaign 'encapsulates' the essence of living country life. From a walk around town and through the parks, a round of golf with friends, some family time on the beach or challenging yourself on the trails with your bike, there is something for everyone. You will find a vibrant downtown area with unique shops and restaurants that will lend itself to connecting with friends after a fun day.

This exciting collaboration, spanning over two years, will illuminate the town's commitment to slow living and exploration of outdoor activities, the importance of getting active, making connections with friends and family, some self-care and exploring life beyond digital devices and technologies.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I encourage all Manitobans—if they haven't done so already—to take some time and explore what Minnedosa has to offer.

Skyliner Immigration Services

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): It is my privilege to rise today to highlight the incredible work of Skyliner Immigration Services. Located within my constituency of McPhillips, Skyliner Immigration Services is a leading immigration advisory agency which assists and supports those wishing to work, study and live in our province with visas, work permits and pathways to permanent Canadian residency.

Skyliner Immigration is helmed by four women working to inspire and empower other women to follow their dreams. Armed with the lived experience of having gone through the Canadian citizenship process themselves as international students, they not only work to guide newcomers through the immigration pathways, but also advocate on their behalf to address problems and roadblocks in the immigration system.

Skyliner Immigration is a thriving business, no doubt because it puts people and communities above all else. Skyliner Immigration works openly and honestly with clients to make consultations affordable and, in extreme emergencies, will even waive professional fees.

Skyliner is a thriving and growing business. In January 2024, they will celebrate the opening of a new branch in India.

* (14:00)

Residents of McPhillips have proven themselves to be compassionate and welcoming people. We are a diverse community of citizens, permanent residents and international students, many of whom have lived here for generations while others only recently call this province home.

Community-oriented businesses like Skyliner help demystify our immigration systems and provided that extra level of support needed to truly settle into a new place, making newcomers feel at home.

I am honoured that two of Skyliner's—Skyline [*phonetic*] Immigration Services directors, Simran Mangat and Palak Gupta, could join us in the gallery today. I invite my colleagues to congratulate them and the whole team at Skyliner Immigration Services for their professional, compassionate and dedicated work supporting newcomers in our province.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Expiry of Fuel and Carbon Tax Increase Affordability Concerns for Manitobans

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Last night in committee, it showed that the NDP are not interested in providing Manitobans with real sustainable economic relief when they need it most.

Instead, in a year when many Manitobans are going to be forced to remortgage their homes at interest rates that are the highest in a generation, the combination of the federal carbon tax increase and the elimination and the end of the short-term gas tax cut will mean that Manitobans will see a 20-cent-a-litre hike in their gas price next summer.

The NDP could have tried to prevent this by directing the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) to eliminate the end-point of the gas tax and go to Ottawa and tell Trudeau to axe the carbon tax.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I wanted to acknowledge that my friend from Steinbach has his new location on the opposition benches. It's a position that

he occupied in the past. He spent a short time here on the government side before returning there.

But I do want to point out for the House that in transit, he seems to have forgotten the role of sitting on that side, which is to end your statement by asking a question. There was no question posed at the end of that statement.

And I'll just simply point out the following: our government is doing something the PCs never did. We are cutting the provincial fuel tax to save you and your families money.

On the topic of questions, perhaps my friend from Steinbach would like to explain why he and his colleagues voted against saving Manitobans money last night.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Steinbach, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Goertzen: The Premier didn't listen when he was on this side of the House, and he doesn't listen when he's on that side of the House.

The combination of the carbon tax increasing in April and the end of this short-term tax holiday will mean that in the summer of next year, Manitobans are going to pay 20 cents a litre more on gas. That's at a time when they can least afford it.

Now maybe that doesn't mean a lot to the Premier, who spent, as his very first act in government, \$20,000 on a private party for him and his friends.

But short-term solutions aren't going to help when Manitobans need long-term relief.

Will he direct the Finance minister to not have the end date next summer and go to Ottawa and tell them to axe the tax?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I recognize the fact that there's probably many members opposite tripping over one another trying to pursue federal Conservative nominations at this time, so I don't begrudge my friend from Steinbach from trying to try out one of Mr. Poilievre's lines.

Though I do want to point out that it was actually Brian Topp who came up with that line in the first instance, 2014.

So, when we get back to the Manitoba context, which is where our team is laser-focused, we are focused on saving you, the people of Manitoba, money. That's why we are bringing in a fuel tax holiday to save you every time you visit the pump, on gasoline and on diesel.

Inexplicably, the PC Party, which never took this step during two terms in government, is now trying to make a ton of noise about it. And inexplicably, they also on the one hand, are calling on us to do more in the way that they never took action in government, and yet at the same time, they vote—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's time—*[interjection]* Order.

The honourable member for Steinbach, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Goertzen: Now marks the first time that Pierre Poilievre and Brian Topp have been compared in the history of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that 65 per cent of Manitobans in a recent survey said they don't support the carbon tax.

Now, earlier last year, the current Premier said that he supported a carbon tax and that he would negotiate a provincial one with Ottawa if he was elected. Now, I don't know how those negotiations are going, Honourable Speaker, but I suspect that he has a better chance of getting a handshake from the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) than a good deal from Ottawa.

But in reality, most Manitobans don't want either a handshake from the member for Fort Garry or the carbon tax.

Will he direct his Finance Minister to not have the end date next summer and go to Ottawa and tell them to axe the tax?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I hope that the other members opposite are going to give Ted Falk the heads-up that he's going to be challenged for the nomination for that federal riding.

But bringing things back here to the provincial level: here in Manitoba, our government has been very clear. We are taking action right away to save you and your family money. Now this is something that the PCs never did, even though they had two terms in office to try and help you out during a period of record inflation.

And now, one of their first acts in opposition is to vote against, at the committee stage, our steps to help you and your families.

We're not going to be distracted with federal ambitions like they all share on that side of the House. Instead, we're coming to work each and every day to work hard for you, the people of Manitoba, and to lower costs.

Fuel Tax Amendment Act Request to Include All Fuel Types

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank everyone that came to committee last night, and I wish the minister showed up with half the energy that they did.

We want to be clear. On this side of the House, we want Manitobans to get affordability measures. We want a bill that is inclusive of all Manitobans.

Last night the minister dismissed applying the exemption to propane because he doesn't know anyone that drives a propane vehicle, so they must not exist.

In 2020, it was reported that almost 1 million litres of propane were used to fuel vehicles. I table that report for the minister to see.

Just because the minister doesn't know anyone that uses propane doesn't mean they shouldn't be covered.

Will the minister listen to Manitobans today and say yes or no to applying the fuel exemption to all fuels?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): So, again, it's quite surprising to me that the members opposite are criticizing us for taking steps to save you and your family money. We're bringing in a cut to the provincial fuel tax, something that they never did during their time in office.

What did they do, however? Well, every single member of that front bench brought in a provincial carbon tax bill on multiple occasions, and then they voted in favour of it.

Now, I recognize that the member for Fort Whyte was not a part of the team at that time, and he's indicated throughout his time in office that he's probably not part of that team right now.

But we know that on this side of the House, we are laser-focused on serving you, the people of Manitoba, and that's why on January 1st, fuel taxes are coming down.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Whyte with a supplementary question.

MLA Khan: The Premier wants to talk about affordability measures, well let's talk about affordability.

This proposed gas tax will save Manitobans \$250. That is a lot of money, but let's talk about the previous government: \$5,500 the previous government saved Manitobans.

The minister said last night it is the intent of the bill that matters, not the words. Well, intent matters, but so do words when you're making the law.

The minister said yesterday he has no plans to enforce the provisions he is writing within this bill.

So, is the minister encouraging—I guess the Premier encouraging Manitobans to break the law, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: Well, of course, you know, the member opposite speaks fondly of the PCs. They gave him \$500,000 for a private business interest.

All we're saying on this side of the House is that the rest of Manitoba should be helped out by their provincial government as well.

* (14:10)

They're for one; we are for all. And that's why we're bringing in this bill to ensure that on January 1st you and your family will start to save money.

Again, a provincial government can't do everything, but we can do one thing, and that's to save you 14 cents a litre each time you visit the pump, at the time of year when the credit card bills from the holidays come due.

We're looking forward to helping you, and this is the first of many steps in that process.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Whyte, with a final supplementary question.

Request for Permanent Reduction

MLA Khan: This Premier and that whole side is so fond of listening—they're even doing the couch tour to listen—but yet they refused to listen last night when presenters came out.

Every single presenter said last night—and the minister refused to listen and address their concerns—that this tax credit, this tax holiday, should be made permanent and on all fuel types. Everyone said that last night. The minister refused to listen. Now the Premier refuses to listen.

Will the Premier stand up today and listen to Manitobans and say that this tax will become permanent and for all types of fuel, yes or no?

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable first Premier.

Mr. Kinew: PCs have no credibility on this topic because they never took this step during two terms in office.

Now, as one of our first actions, we're doing a direct affordability measure, which will help you, the people of Manitoba. It's because we think that this is a concrete, tangible step that we can do that will help you, the average person out there.

We recognize that the PCs have continuously played politics with this issue. While provincial governments were taking this step in Alberta, in Ontario, they stood pat; they did absolutely nothing.

And now when our government takes action, they want to raise opposition fear mongering, they want to raise criticisms. They even want to vote against this important measure at committee.

We say no, we don't agree with the PCs. We're on your side. We're saving you money.

Fuel Tax Amendment Act Request to Include Propane and Dyed Gas

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Deputy Speaker, again, on behalf of myself and the rest of us that were there last night, thank you very much for the time at the committee.

Honourable Speaker, after hearing concerns last night from a number of agricultural groups, will this government amend the fuel tax cut to include propane and dyed gas?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): It is my honour to stand up today and speak about agriculture and the importance of agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

Just returning from the AMM convention and hearing the applause that we took part in at the AMM convention, and the atmosphere was so positive, that I haven't seen that for so many years, especially when the opposite party were in power and I was on the AMM directory. Even the president says, we have a good feeling; we have a new government; we have positive moving happening at the agriculture sector.

So I think maybe some of the members opposite should listen to their fellow people from the AMM convention on the importance that we do in this province, and we're setting a good example for people—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member—the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

Firefighting Equipment on Hutterite Colonies

MLA Bereza: Again, when it comes to clarity in the fuel tax cut bill, in reference to firefighting equipment by municipalities, will the minister amend to include

firefighting equipment by a Hutterite colony, yes or no?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I can't keep talking about and want to spread the good news at the AMM convention, and we had a conversation about the fire trucks, and it was definitely brought up.

But I want to share something with you. As I took in a number of meetings with municipal officials, and I want to ensure all these conversations we had with various municipal governments throughout the province of Manitoba, you know what the No. 1 concern was? Was the closures of all the MASC offices that this government across the road chose to do and put people out of work and put them out of opportunities to make economic development in the province of Manitoba.

So I would wonder to say, make the right decision and be careful what you said because it's the problem of the Manitoba government—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, a number of presenters were expressing concerns about clarity around the tax cut bill. The definition of clarity means clearness.

Why won't this government amend this bill to provide clarity for all Manitobans?

Mr. Kostyshyn: We want to talk about clarity, and we've talked about affordability in the province of Manitoba.

Let's talk about the 300 per cent increase in the Crown land rates that this government chose to do. We want to talk about the opportunity of providing opportunity for young families to get ahead.

What they've done is taken away that opportunity for young farm families that were born and raised in this province and will continue to provide the population growth in their schools, the opportunity of business development in our small communities.

What they have done is taken away the opportunity of economic development in all communities across the province of Manitoba, and for the betterment of the beef industry. They should be ashamed of—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Conservation Officer Services Funding Concerns

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Under our PC government, a commitment was made to revitalize our Conservation Officer Service, which was historically cut and neglected by the NDP.

Yesterday the minister took advantage of recycle Wednesday to re-announce the great work by our government to connect officers into a central dispatch in Brandon.

The question is: Will the NDP cut the \$7.4 million that was allocated to our conservation officer revitalization plans?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): I'm really pleased to be standing up and answering this question because it gives me opportunity to highlight the important work that conservation officers do across Manitoba.

That was the point of our announcement yesterday, to highlight the added dispatch service that's available for conservation officers.

Because we know their job is so challenging, we want to make sure that they can do it safely. They now have a dispatch office where they can be connected throughout radio across Manitoba so that they can do their jobs safely for all of Manitoba.

Mr. Wowchuk: Yes, a recycled June announcement; thanks for that.

Conservation officers protect our natural resources across the great province and serve as peace officers in rural and northern communities.

After years of cuts and neglect by previous NDP governments, our PC team set out a course to hire more officers and open more offices to serve Manitobans.

Will the minister confirm that today that the plan to recruit and train officers will not be cut?

Mr. Moses: We're once again really happy to be talking about how we are going to reinvest, revigour and revitalize our conservation officer services so that they can service the people, the natural resources, right across this great province of Manitoba.

We will continue to make those steps, including the announcement we made in Brandon at the dispatch office, which keeps conservation officers safe. That office opened on October 26th, so we're proud to announce it as part of this government's plan to make

sure all conservation officers can do their job safely across Manitoba.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member from Swan River, with a final question.

Mr. Wowchuk: Yes, recycling those announcements may eventually run out from our good work.

* (14:20)

However, poaching and night lighting across the province is a threat to human life, livestock and sustainability of our wildlife. Our conservation officers rely on a helicopter equipped with infrared technology to work with officers on the ground to apprehend these offenders.

Will the minister confirm today that he will not be cutting this extremely important service?

Mr. Moses: We value the job that conservation officers do in Manitoba. That's why we're investing in this dispatch service to ensure they can do their jobs safely.

We value our public service. That's why we're giving them a hug and supporting them.

We listen to those people, those experts in our field, so they can do their job on behalf of all Manitobans. Instead of the divisive politics of the former government, we will work together collaboratively to build a Manitoba for all of us.

Provincial Park Infrastructure Capital Investment Inquiry

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Deputy Speaker, hundreds of thousands of Manitobans enjoy our provincial parks each year, but the infrastructure needs continuous upgrading.

The Manitoba Provincial Parks Infrastructure Renewal Strategy was announced this spring, with a capital investment of \$224 million over the next 10 years.

Will the Minister of Environment and Climate Change confirm that her government will honour the commitments made by the Progressive Conservative government in Budget 2023?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to take a moment to begin by just thanking the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the workers that work in our Parks Department.

After years of cuts and austerity, the department has been really slashed 70 per cent—70 per cent from 1999,

when the NDP were in government between—and last year, 70 per cent decrease in our staff.

We are here to listen to public servants. We are going to staff up our department and we are going to get to work.

Provincial Park Cabin Owners MOU with Government

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Manitoba Provincial Parks Cabin Owners Association signed a memorandum of understanding with the provincial government earlier this year to work collaboratively on shared priorities, including the provincial park cottage lease and service-free model.

Will the minister confirm that her government will continue to work with the executive of this association on a fair deal for the owners of over 6,200 cottages across Manitoba?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Yes and, you know, we have a beautiful, lovely province, and Manitobans love to enjoy our natural spaces, including their cottages.

We are absolutely committed to continuing on those conversations, and I look forward to updating the House in the future when we have more to report on the changes to the program.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain, with a final supplementary question.

Provincial Park Passes and Camping Fees Price Increase Concerns

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Deputy Speaker, Manitobans love their provincial parks, and they love the new reservation system that came online under the Progressive Conservative government.

In a mandate letter from the Premier (Mr. Kinew), the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is tasked with—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nesbitt: —protecting and investing in Manitoba parks and keeping them public and affordable for families.

Will the minister commit today to no increases to price of park passes and camping spots and no 'nee'—new fees moving forward?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): As I said before, Manitobans absolutely love their parks, and we are committed to working with Manitobans to keep our parks public, unlike the previous government.

We are going to invest in our parks, we're going to make them sustainable and we're going to keep them affordable for Manitobans to enjoy.

Rural Health-Care Facilities Hours of Operation and Staffing

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Starting tomorrow, hours at the Ste. Anne Hospital are being cut, and obstetric services are being completely shut down.

Can the minister please share with the House when services at Ste. Anne Hospital will return to normal operation?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member opposite for that very important question.

Health care in rural Manitoba is a top priority for our government. I was pleased to be at AMM earlier today and to hear from municipalities in regards to health care and capacity.

Since our first day in government, we've been working tirelessly alongside health-care workers and health-care leaders to make sure that we understand how the cuts done by the previous government have impacted health care in rural Manitoba, and we're working together to address the situations.

Mrs. Cook: Well, I think we know that rural Manitoba is absolutely not a health-care priority for the NDP. The last time they were in power, they permanently closed 16 rural ERs, including ERs in Emerson, Pembina, Manitou, MacGregor, St. Claude, Gladstone, Vita, Erickson, Rossburn, Wawanesa, Birtle, Rivers, Baldur, McCreary, Winnipegosis, Whitemouth and Teulon.

So, it's a simple question: Can the minister provide details today on how they plan to restore services at Ste. Anne Hospital?

MLA Asagwara: I'll remind the member opposite that it was her previous PC government that cut the physician retention and recruitment fund in half, and that part of the reason why Ste. Anne Hospital and other rural health facilities are struggling to keep their hours open and doors open, quite frankly, is due to lack of staffing.

That is a direct result of the mismanagement by the former government. The former government didn't treat health-care workers in rural Manitoba with a shred of respect.

Our government is taking a completely different approach, and we're actively working to enhance capacity in rural Manitoba, including Ste. Anne.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member from Roblin, with a final question.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Deputy Speaker, this closure is happening tomorrow under an NDP government. It's going to take more than a listening tour of one hour in eight health-care facilities to recruit, train and retain staff in Manitoba.

Why has the minister been silent so far on any kind of staffing plan for rural Manitoba?

MLA Asagwara: You know, I have to say, I don't get what it is with the members opposite that they devalue listening to health-care workers repeatedly in this Chamber.

I don't know if they don't realize that health-care workers actually do pay attention to question period. And I've heard from health-care workers that the ongoing disrespect from members opposite has an impact.

Members opposite need to get on board with working together to strengthen health care in Manitoba, and our government is committed to doing just that.

And so, we will be listening to health-care workers, listening to their great solutions, and we've already taken action and implemented several of those solutions to improve capacity in Manitoba thus far.

Increase in Diabetes Rates Request for Plan to Address

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): November is Diabetes Awareness Month. The number of people in Manitoba with diabetes was about 46,000 in the mid-'90s. Today, Diabetes Canada estimates that there are 156,000 Manitobans who were diagnosed with diabetes, and this number continues to grow.

What tangible steps is this government taking to stem the growth of diabetes in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I would like to thank the member for Tyndall Park for once again asking a question on the No. 1 priority for the people of Manitoba, which is health care.

When it comes to diabetes, this is an important priority for our government and it's an important priority for me personally. I have been to too many funerals for people who have died from the complications of diabetes.

And the member opposite should rest assured that we are going to invest in expanding treatment options within the public health-care system for people in all regions who are living with diabetes.

* (14:30)

At the same time, we have asked our ministers across various government departments to work together towards improving prevention initiatives, specifically to prevent juvenile diabetes in the community so that more young people in this province can see their 18th birthday.

We would welcome involvement with the member from Tyndall Park on this initiative if she would like to do so.

Diabetes Medication Insulin Deductible

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Many Manitobans who need insulin require coverage through Manitoba's Pharmacare program. Yet if their deductible is set too high, they will receive little if any coverage at all.

Insulin is a life-saving medication, and rationing insulin—which is what some Manitobans are forced to do—leads to very poor health outcomes that result in more costs for our health-care system.

Can this government explain why a life-saving medication like insulin is subject to a deductible at all?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that question. Diabetes care and treatment of diabetes is a high priority.

Manitoba has disproportionately high rates of diabetes across the province, and certainly juvenile diabetes, the rates in Manitoba have continued to grow in a way that is very concerning. And so, our government is taking a whole-of-government approach to this issue, including evaluating opportunities to improve access to the treatments and supplies that folks need.

But we are working directly with experts locally in Manitoba and beyond that, studying research and evaluating opportunities to, again, strengthen our whole-of-government approach to this health-care issue.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member from Tyndall Park, with a final supplementary question.

School-Age Children with Diabetes Request for Insulin Support Services

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): In Manitoba, school staff are restricted from providing insulin support to children with type 1 diabetes. Now, unless children are using a type of insulin that is out of date and less effective than modern insulin, parents of children must go to their schools every day to assist their children.

Other provinces, like Ontario and BC, have worked out arrangements so children can get help with their insulin in schools.

Will this government commit today to putting a plan in place to help children get the insulin they need while in school?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): When we talk about a whole-of-government approach, it's important for folks who maybe are watching question period or watching our government's actions on health care to know that that means we work across departments in order to figure out ways that we can strengthen and improve health-care outcomes for Manitobans.

And certainly we recognize that educators do a tremendous amount of heavy lifting in our schools, and they provide incredible supports to students and their families. And so, where there are maybe creative ways that we can look at providing enhanced access to care and supports to families, we should do that.

But those conversations are happening across departments. They're happening with community members. And I appreciate the member's feedback on this, and I look forward to ongoing conversations in this area in regards to health care for youth.

Health-Care System Investments Wait Time Reduction and Capacity Initiatives

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): Honourable Deputy Speaker, health care is our government's top priority. We got elected on health care, and we're going to deliver on health care for all Manitobans.

We all know the record of the members opposite: cuts, chaos and disrespect to the front lines. But it's a new day in Manitoba. Since being sworn in just over a month ago, we've seen some real solutions.

Can the minister update the House on the progress they've been making on reducing wait times, increasing capacity and investing in our health-care system?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Like to thank my colleague from Riel for that wonderful question and for being already an outstanding representative for the constituents of Riel.

And, you know, our government really did hit the ground running. Right after being sworn in, we spoke directly to health-care workers and ignited that spark of hope and that togetherness that we need in order to facilitate improving health care across our province.

Our government's taken more steps. We've already reduced the bureaucracy in health care and redirected those resources right to the bedside. We've invested in capacity for surgeries; invested in capacity for community care; we've invested in capacity for health-care workers and we have just gotten started.

It's a new day in Manitoba. Health care's getting better every single day under our government's watch.

Manitoba Accessibility Fund Funding for Programs

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Deputy Speaker, over the last two years, the PC government provided \$2 million in funding through the Manitoba Accessibility Fund for non-profits, businesses and municipalities to promote accessibility and inclusivity for everyone.

As Sunday is International Day of Persons with Disabilities, will the minister commit that all approved projects receive the allocated funding and not be cut by the belt-tightening of this NDP government?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility): Miigwech for the important question on accessibility. Our government, our NDP government, has been working with the department to continue looking at how we can strengthen accessibility here in Manitoba.

In fact, one of the first things I did as Minister responsible for Accessibility was I went to our offices to meet with the very staff, very capable, amazing staff, that are doing work across the province in respect of ensuring that we have accessibility that meets the needs of Manitobans with disabilities.

And I just want to say to them, miigwech for that important work that they do, and let them know that

their minister and their government sees the work that they are doing and the importance of their work.

Mrs. Stone: The Manitoba Accessibility Fund has supported many great projects, from retrofits at Prairie Theatre Exchange to assisting RMs like Russell-Bincarth [*phonetic*] update their accessibility plan.

These projects are incredibly important to ensure Manitobans have access to increased accessibility and inclusion.

Will the minister commit today to extending this program in the spring?

MLA Fontaine: I think the member and I agree on that. It's a very important grant and it does a lot of good work in the communities helping support those organizations and agencies that want to look at their structure, and ensuring that there's accessibility.

I know that I have already reached out to some of the folks that we do provide grants to, and I asked how the grant program was working. And I've worked with some of the folks and spoken directly to them, and we've also heard very, very positive feedback on the accessibility grant.

And I look forward to continuing to work with organizations and agencies, again, to ensure that Manitoba has accessibility for all Manitobans.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Midland, with a final supplementary question.

Accessibility for Manitobans Act Timeline for Annual Review

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): So, there is an ongoing annual review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. This is an important assessment of how we as a province have progressed in implementing this act and toward improving accessibility access throughout Manitoba.

Can the minister confirm when this assessment will be made available to Manitobans?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility): Again, I want to say miigwech to the member for asking that question.

You know, I know that the member would know that we've had about—contribution agreements with about 41 organizations here in Manitoba, and again, that have been doing really good work.

What I can tell the member is this, is that our government, our NDP government, believe in accessibility. We understand the importance of accessibility

for all Manitobans, and we are committed to ensuring that all Manitobans have a Manitoba that is accessible, that meets their needs, that all of us can thrive.

And I think that the member and I can work together on that. I think that we're on the same page with that. I encourage her to reach out, and let's sit down and discuss that together.

Miigwech.

Addiction and Homelessness Request for Plan to Address

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): This last spring, the PC government added an additional \$300,000 in funding to Lighthouse project—Lighthouse Mission renovation project.

This past weekend, the minister was out re-announcing this PC initiative from last spring.

When will this minister stop recycling PC initiatives and give us the NDP plan to address the addictions and homelessness situation we are facing in our province?

* (14:40)

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I want to thank Lighthouse Mission for the work that they're doing. I also want to thank all the front-line workers for the work that they're doing and the compassion that they see and the work that they're doing on the front line.

I want to say shame on this government for the lack of compassion that they've shown for those that are struggling on our streets each and every day.

Our government is taking a different approach. We are actually supporting folks. We are increasing the detox beds. We're actually taking a different approach in terms of supporting folks and getting them housed and getting them the supports that they need, something that this government never did.

That's why they are sitting on that side of the House.

Mrs. Hiebert: I had the opportunity to tour Siloam Mission recently and talk to people working on the front lines in the shelter. They had—they shared that women with children and families were using the shelter this fall more than ever before.

What is this NDP government doing to address homelessness, and when will they release their plan to help those in need of a stable and safe home?

Ms. Smith: This government had seven years to do the work. Thankfully, Manitobans actually sent them packing and put the right government in the space where we are.

We actually have a plan, and we are working with Main Street Project. We are working with Siloam Mission. We are working with Lighthouse Mission. We're working with many organizations. And, in fact, we are working with those folks that are actually houseless, who have told us they are the experts, actually, and are actually sending us in the right direction.

So this government should be shameful because they're talking about the very people that they made homeless. They increased Rent Assist to 30—

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

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mrs. Hiebert: The announcement was made by the minister—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Apologies; time for oral questions has expired.

* * *

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): During my member's statement, I did not request to have the names of the students that were joining us from Shamrock School put into Hansard, and I'd like to do that now.

The Deputy Speaker: Those names will be included in Hansard.

PETITIONS

Hearing Aids

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

(2) People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience

unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

(3) Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

(4) A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released in— an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

(5) Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia and Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

(6) Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

(7) The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say that hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health or a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

(9) Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

(10) The Province of Quebec's hearing device program covers all costs related to hearing aids and

assistive living devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

(11) Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

(12) New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

(13) Manitobans over the age of 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health.

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental and social health and well-being.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Will you please resume address in reply.

THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that we are continuing debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, standing in the name of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain, who has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Again, I'm honoured to be here, to put a few words on these— Throne Speech debate, and I just want to say that when I was talking yesterday, I indicated that I've been—as an MLA for 10 years. Thank my constituents of Turtle Mountain for electing me again for—to carry on for another four more years.

And the thing was, I did come in in opposition when I first started as an MLA, and a lot of people tell me I have a very good memory. And the memory that I had when it comes to opposition of the—when I was in opposition, the NDP was in government, and it's so interesting, all this stuff that they—the shiny stuff they have and the promises that they had on their elections campaign, and what they're putting in their Throne Speech about health care, especially rural health care.

I recall many crises that happened during the time I first became MLA, and I remember the thing was, was a crisis when it come to all the ERs that reduce hours, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the member for—the agricultural minister would also recall that the Health minister would get up every day to talk about all the different closures that we had.

I remember just one day, the mayor of Virden said, we were—and she was on an interview—she said, I was so concerned that our ER was closed for 12 hours. Only 12 hours since we formed government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And that's—the interesting thing was, when we were in opposition, the ER was reduced hours, was 12 hours every day for the whole summer one year. I remember the—Erin Selby, she was the Health minister at the time, coming to me and telling me, hey, we can't find doctors.

* (14:50)

And this is before—this was before pandemic. This is before the baby boomers are retiring. These guys had crises in rural Manitoba, and everywhere in Manitoba when it came to the health-care system, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I remember there was such a crisis in ERs. The wait times were the highest in the country when they were in government. And I'm not quite sure what their magic wand is going to be when it comes to the promises that they've created—have said to Manitobans and fooled Manitobans in this last election.

And I have, you know, I know a lot of health-care workers. And I know a lot of people that are working—major works in the health-care system.

And it was very interesting when the NDP were in such crisis, they actually commissioned the Peachey report, and they spent tens of millions of dollars on that Peachey report. And—but, the thing was, they didn't want to implement it because they were going to disrupt their union members. And that was the reason

why Selinger, at the time, did not want to implement this plan.

And, meanwhile, every other province, every major city in Canada were implementing a plan where they actually have certain ERs. And like I said, I was told by a reliable source that when it comes to ambulance calls, 90 per cent of ambulance calls, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are non-life-threatening.

That means that those 90 per cent of ambulance calls can go to any health-care facility in Winnipeg. That includes Concordia, Seven Oaks and Victoria, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's a lot of calls that can go to these hospitals, because a lot of them are urgent care—the three of them are urgent care centres.

But the 10 per cent that are life-threatening situations, that can be a call that—an ambulance call in rural Manitoba could be, you know, somebody from Melita could be calling that their—that believe that their loved one is having a heart attack.

And that call is the—what nowadays with the paramedics and the ambulance, that person can be triaged right in their living room to determine exactly what kind of care that they require. And then when it comes to that, they can put a EKG on this person and they determine that this person needs to be—having a heart attack; they need to be at St. Boniface as soon as possible. And the thing is, we have the system now that—these are centres of excellence now.

It is going to be the St. Boniface Hospital when it comes to heart attacks; it's going to be the Health Sciences Centre when it comes to trauma and strokes. So this is why the system that we have implemented with the—after this Peachey report, is making sure that Manitobans are taken care of.

Then what happens with Concordia Hospital? It's an urgent care centre, so 90 per cent of ambulance calls can still go to the urgent-care centres. And another thing is, now we've made Concordia as a knee-and-hip-replacement centre now, and there—we're also doing that in Boundary Trails, in Morden-Winkler. We're doing that in Brandon.

So the man—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the thing is, when it came to ER closures, permanent ER closures in ER—in rural Manitoba. I know the NDP went out there. I remember they had their grandstand—I think the member—the Minister for Agriculture actually was the emcee in Virden, Manitoba, to talk about their wonderful—what—they're going to be the magic solution for rural Manitoba.

And meanwhile, they had Virden, back when I was representing that area, the ERs were closed every day, every—for 12 hours a day in the summer of 2014-15. And the thing is, there was no pandemic at that time. And the thing is, there was a shortage of doctors. We did not—and the thing is, the mayor of Virden, which, when on Richard Cloutier's interview, she said, we have eight doctors.

Back in the day of the NDP, they barely had five doctors in Virden at that time.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, it's going to be interesting to see what their solution is when it comes to health care, because at the same time, they closed down Baldur in my constituency. They closed down Manitou in my constituency. They closed down, just two miles north of my constituency, the town of Reston. And they go back and say that we're here, we're going to rescue rural health care.

And really, rural health care has actually improved in—since those days of the dark days of the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So it's very interesting that—how people forget how bad the health-care system was, and the wait times that they had. And this is—again was before a pandemic.

And when it comes to—the other thing I would want to talk about is infrastructure. And I remember when I first became an MLA in opposition, I remember they used to take so much oil revenue from my constituency of Arthur-Virden.

And meanwhile, our infrastructure was deteriorating so badly. There was potholes. We had heavy—we had to do road bans for lot longer than they should've been and shutting down an oil industry and shutting down agriculture industry, and, meanwhile, when we formed government our focus was on making sure that we actually had trade and commerce grids. Becoming minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, we know the importance of rural and when it comes to agriculture products to get into market. It is so vital, too, for the economy of this province.

And we were going to invest basically \$550 million a year in infrastructure alone in roads and bridges. And the thing is, we had, you know, again, the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) indicated about Highway 75; we're getting that done. We're trying to make sure that before, when the NDP—and the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) would know that when it came to infrastructure on the Perimeter Highway, they, instead of putting interchanges on the highway to flow the traffic,

they put traffic lights on the highway, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so this is where we believe that we were—wanted to make sure that the Perimeter Highway was a freeway and it was because the population of Winnipeg was going to grow over 1 million people in the years to come. And so the thing is we do have to invest in our trade corridors, and it's so important because we are a hub here in Manitoba. We do have railways that we're—are part of our hub. We have trucking industry that's so big here.

And if you look at the CentrePort and what we've actually created, and I want to thank my—the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton), the time that he was Economic Development, all—when it comes to CentrePort, how much activity was—you know, the buildings that were growing. So, every warehouse that was being built, every factory that was being built in Winnipeg and especially CentrePort, it just added that many more trucks on the highway, the semi trucks on the highway. And we needed more truck drivers. And the thing is, this is where we focused our economic growth in. And when it came to, instead of, you know, if we can afford all the services, our government focused on grow the economy; that's how we pay for all these services.

So I'm not quite sure what this whole Throne Speech that the NDP has come up with right now—is that they're not focusing and they shut down economic development board committee of Cabinet. And I'm not quite sure where they're going to get the revenues from. This is how we grew the revenues, and we grew them quite nicely with the focus on attracting investment to this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this is why—this is how we paid for these highways, to make sure that they're safe, to make sure that we invest, because at No. 1, the priority when it came to infrastructure was—is highways and the investment in highways to make them safe.

And I actually, when the member—the minister for climate and conservation came up to actually answer questions for the Transportation and Infrastructure Minister, she basically said that, oh, yes, we actually hired 40 retired staff from before to clean our snow.

Well, if you look at Hansard, I—one of my questions—one of my answers in Hansard back last spring is we hired 40 new workers—retired workers to make sure that—and we also had standby for them to be on call.

And so this is so interesting that the NDP is taking credit for what we've done, and they have not—it's not

only in Transportation but everything that we have done right now. So I got to—it's kind of ironic that they criticize us but at the same time they're actually taking our credit for what we had done.

And so the next thing is too is, like, I know when it comes to infrastructure, we're doing St. Mary's, the intersection there, interchange there. We're invested in, you know, making sure that the traffic flows around the city of Winnipeg because, right now, as the city's growing, we want to make sure that we have proper infrastructure for trucking industry.

We also worked with the railway, making sure that there's a possibility of expansions when it comes to more, you know, railway parks, what we did in centre part—port. And so this is where we wanted to be really focused on. You know, and also we invested \$15 million in the airport in Thompson.

We also put another \$5 million; made it a total of \$20 million that the provincial government, our government, put in for Thompson. And I remember one of the nicest announcements I did was one time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I went to Nelson House First Nation, and visited with the community, and they had 10 kilometres of highway that they asked the NDP back in the day, for 17 years, for the—have their—the highway paved. The member from Thompson would understand that because the fact is they were asking for the member before, from Thompson—I guess he was the Transportation minister in the days of the NDP—and they were ignored. And now we made the announcement 10 months after I was—my first initial visit there to actually make announcement that we're going to do that highway.

* (15:00)

And then the thing is, we have it tendered. We actually—now the tender was rewarded before the election. But then the member for Thompson (MLA Redhead) actually went out there and told the chief that the project was cancelled. And there was no indication, a false statement that he did—said to the chief of Nelson House First Nation. And so this is kind of funny now that, you know, that the announcements that we did, now they're going to be taking credit for them.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to wrap this up, and I just want to, again, put a few words on this Throne Speech, and we'll make sure that this NDP government is going to be accountable and—especially when it comes to infrastructure, rural health care, because I'm going to be representing my constituency

of Turtle Mountain and making sure that everything that they promised in our area actually gets done.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): It is such an incredible privilege to stand before you all today to deliver my inaugural address.

I want to begin by thanking Her Honour, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba for her words. After witnessing the PC government fail to do right by Manitobans for nearly a decade, it filled me with great hope to hear our campaign promises announced in the Throne Speech.

With a new government comes a new vision, one that focuses on inclusivity, not division; one that works for the betterment of all Manitobans. Manitobans have given us a mandate and we are prepared to fulfill it.

I also want to use this time to thank the many people who played a large part in my being elected as the MLA for Assiniboia.

Thank you to my sister Jenny and two of my very best friends, Kim and Dylan MacKay. Their encouragement and support gave me the confidence to pursue the nomination in Assiniboia and run in the provincial election.

I would not be standing here today if it were not for my loving husband, who supported me in this journey every step of the way. He was my rock, taking care of the needs of our kids and household while I was on the campaign trail. I cannot express my love and appreciation enough. To my 14-year-old son Ben and my 10-year-old daughter Grace, thank you for being my biggest cheerleaders and helping put up signs and deliver flyers during my campaign. Thank you as well for your patience while I chased my dream and for your optimism. You both inspire and ground me every day.

I would also like to thank my amazing campaign team. They played such a large part in my being elected. Thank you to Dale Edmunds, Bernie Wood, Charlie Mancini and Fiona Shiells; the absolute best campaign team anyone could ever ask for. I will never be able to repay you all for your hard work and dedication in turning Assiniboia orange.

To the many volunteers who spent countless hours speaking to constituents on the phone, canvassing door to door, delivering flyers and putting up signs, I thank you. Seeing your smiling faces every day filled me with so much motivation. I would like to especially thank Dan and Cindy Edmunds,

Larry Friessen, Hannah Peters, Angie and Rennie Saj, Salem Roby, Christina Dyer and Larry Sinclair.

After I secured the nomination for Assiniboia, I was fortunate to meet my colleague, the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), who has become a fantastic friend. I cannot thank him enough for his advice and guidance during my campaign. I am so appreciative of the constant support I received from the NDP caucus while on the campaign trail. I am grateful for every MLA that came out to support me during the election. Your presence alone was enough to keep me going.

To the constituents of Assiniboia, thank you for trusting me to be your voice and represent you in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. For the past 13 years, I have lived just steps away from the Assiniboia constituency. Being elected as your MLA is an honour of a lifetime that I do not take for granted. I am ready to represent the needs of all my constituents and work hard to see everyone in this area of the province thrive.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate all the other newly elected MLAs. I know you share in my excitement to work hard for your communities and improve the lives of all Manitobans.

Understanding who I am requires you to understand where I come from. My grandmother packed up her things and moved with my grandfather from Lebanon to Canada in the early 1900s. Leaving family and friends behind, my dad's parents were set on a new life together. They found land in the Interlake, east of Fisher Branch and became farmers.

My father lived his whole life on the family farm, with my mother joining him when they married. My grandmother lived with my parents and was there to love and help raise us. We were incredibly lucky to have the matriarch of our family live with us until she passed away when I was eight years old.

Observing my family's care for my grandmother was foundational to the formation of my values: hard work, respect for others and myself, family, community, kindness and care for elders. It is these values that I continue to carry in my personal and professional life.

My parents and I had vastly different experiences growing up. My mother grew up in Lebanon in the 1950s and was only afforded the opportunity to attend school until grade 4. My father attended school in a one-room schoolhouse in the 1930s and was only able to complete grade 7 before needing to work on the family farm full-time.

Growing up, I always loved learning and was happy at school. It was a very special and happy place for me. As a child, I watched some of my cousins as they grew up and moved away to pursue higher education. I was able to witness how education transformed their lives and this inspired me to follow in their footsteps.

At the age of 17, I moved away from my family and our farm, and began my time at the University of Winnipeg. Attending university expanded my world view. Not only did I receive an excellent education, but I also had the opportunity to engage with diverse people with varying thoughts and perspectives. It was at the University of Winnipeg where I met many of my lifelong friends.

These women, along with their friendship and support, have been vital to my personal growth and becoming the person I am today. Being trailblazers in their own right, I am so lucky to be surrounded by such strong and wonderful women. To Eleanor MacLean, Carmen Lowe, Karen Rach, Shannon Trapp and Marilyn Zacharias, I thank you for being my soul sisters and always lifting me up.

While I was completing my undergraduate degree at the University of Winnipeg, I had the privilege of being a volunteer crisis counsellor at Klinik. Klinik's ethos, to deliver the best care possible, rang true in many ways. The comprehensive training I received through Klinik provided me with the insights and tools that I continue to use in my advocacy work. My world view became less black and white as I began to understand the complexity of crisis. Through this experience, my compassion for others deepened and my empathy grew.

Being able to pursue education, I was afforded opportunities my grandparents and parents never had. At the first—as the first in my immediate family to attend and graduate university, I thank my family for their unwavering support in my educational endeavours.

After graduating from the University of Winnipeg, I began working at Hope Centre, a non-profit organization that supports adults who live with intellectual disabilities. I had the chance to work with many amazing women—oh, sorry. During my time at Hope Centre, now known as Epic Opportunities, I had the chance to work with many amazing women in leadership positions.

Both Adeline Berg and Jeannette DeLong were instrumental in helping me find my voice as a leader

and as an advocate. I was so fortunate to have both these women as my mentors.

Following my time at Hope Centre, and 16 years ago, I began my career with the Department of Families as an Employment and Income Assistance case counsellor. It was through this position I became a liaison at Sage House.

In my work, I was able to link people with safe housing, financial supports, medical services and addictions treatment. My time working with Sage House exposed me to the realities of addictions, homelessness, mental health and other social justice issues which ignited my passion for advocacy and change.

In 2011, I moved to the Community Living disABILITY Services program within the Department of Families and worked as a community service worker. Every single day, I prioritized working for people and helped them to improve their lives.

Through supporting people living with disabilities, unhoused folks and those experiencing mental health concerns, I was able to develop strong advocacy skills while gaining a deep understanding of how our government systems work and where they fail.

* (15:10)

When the PCs were in government, there was no collaboration between them and Manitobans. Instead, we saw cuts to social programs that negatively impacted the people I was supporting and many other vulnerable Manitobans.

Over the past seven years, classroom sizes got bigger and educators were overworked. Emergency rooms were closed, health-care positions were cut and patients experienced high wait times. Affordable and flexible child-care options became so limited, that some parents have been unable to return to work.

If we want solutions to the challenges Manitobans face in health care, social services and education, we must listen and collaborate with those who work on the front lines.

We will ensure the voices of our seniors and elders are heard and they are provided with dignified care. Families are often the biggest advocates for their elders' care, but what about elders without family? Who advocates for them? We saw far too many seniors fall through the cracks under the PC government, and we will not allow this to continue.

A working health-care system should be responsive to the needs of all patients, providing dignified

services and timely care. I have heard many stories from Manitobans who had to confront the failings of our health-care system, only for their calls to be unanswered. Our seniors helped build this province, and it is now our time to support them.

Our new vision for health care will improve the working conditions for doctors, nurses and allied health-care professionals who work 'tireless' to keep us healthy. They deserve a better work-life balance.

Insufficient funding for health care has truly dire consequences. Being witness to these shortcomings and experiencing them myself, I was compelled to make a 'differench'-difference, which is why I co-founded the Postpartum Depression Association of Manitoba.

My mission as a champion for mental health was to address the gaps created by our underfunded health-care system and advocate for more specialized services and resources for Manitoban families experiencing perinatal mental health issues.

The unfortunate reality is that plenty of people currently feel their mental health needs are not accommodated for by our health-care system. Our new vision of health care will provide reliable support for everyone.

To make sure students are reaching their full potential, we will properly fund schools, promote inclusivity, reduce classroom sizes and hire more support staff, like educational assistants and school psychologists. My children have gone to preschool, daycare and elementary school in Assiniboia and were lucky to have been taught by many incredible educators in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division. Their positive influence has, without a doubt, helped shape my kids into the wonderful people they are today. Our educators deserve to be appreciated and supported, which is what our government has done and will continue to do.

Affordability is a serious concern that will be addressed by this government. The people of Assiniboia are struggling to pay for gas, rent and groceries. I hear from renters who are being priced out of their apartments, many of whom are seniors who are on fixed incomes with limited opportunities to move elsewhere.

It is necessary that we build permanent and inclusive solutions to ensure everyone has an affordable place to live and call home. This means stronger rent controls, as well as putting money towards the community, not out-of-province billionaires.

I hear from families who are looking for high quality, reliable and affordable health care—affordable child care. The people of Assiniboia deserve child care that works when they work. With a commitment to a true \$10-a-day child-care program, I look forward to delivering the constituents of Assiniboia with child-care options that work with them, not against them.

One aspect of the NDP caucus I am enormously proud of is our diversity. This caucus is the most diverse in Manitoban history. We come from all walks of life with different lived experiences that shape our vision for Manitoba's future. While we are all different, our goal is the same: improving the lives of all Manitobans.

As the first Lebanese Canadian elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, I know that my unique perspective and my lived experiences as a mental health advocate and as a public servant will help me use my strong voice to be a champion for the people of Assiniboia.

My dad always said, the NDP are the only party that cares about the everyday person. His words paved the path for me to stand before you today in the House as a member of the NDP.

I want to be a trailblazer for my daughter Grace. I am so fortunate to watch her embody the values I've shared with her. Feeling called to help Winnipeg's unhoused population, she created care packages for folks outside of Siloam Mission last year and intends to continue this work every year when it gets cold outside.

She is just one example of the optimism and drive that young people have in bettering Manitoba. Our young people deserve a government who shares in their vision and will embark on a similar mission: a better future for all Manitobans.

I want to build a Manitoba that my children can take pride in. The people of Assiniboia deserve quality health care and accessible mental health services. Our seniors deserve access to well-resourced 'palliative' and home-care programs which can respond to their needs. Educators deserve to receive the supports they need to teach our children and inspire the next generation of leaders. And our caregivers deserve affordable and accessible child care.

I am so honoured to have been appointed as the legislative assistant to the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine). It's truly a full-circle moment for me to work alongside the minister after spending 16 years with the Department of Families.

I know that I, alongside the NDP caucus, are ready to take on the challenges put before us. The Throne Speech affirms our promises to you, and I am ready to work towards improving the lives of the residents of Assiniboia and all the people of Manitoba.

Thank you, merci, miigwech and shukran.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Again, it is a real privilege to stand up today again in this House to address the Throne Speech.

But before I do that, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to again congratulate all members—elected members of this House, and particularly pay a special congratulations to all the new MLAs from both sides of the House that have joined us down this journey, of course.

We've all had our stories of how we got to this position, this honoured position, and I know my journey—which I'll share a little bit of with our new members, as well—was an exciting one but a challenging one, as I've heard from many members new and, again, members that are coming back in this House.

So again, a congratulations from myself to all members that are here in this House.

I'll start off by, again, thanking all the great constituents of Red River North who gave me a stronger mandate even this year than in 2019, when I had the privilege of getting elected in Red River North, and prior to that, being elected in the—in Gimli in 2016 and serving the fine folks of Gimli.

So, we've had the opportunity of serving Interlake residents pretty much from between Lake Manitoba to Lake Winnipeg and north as far as Hecla Island, right up and down to Winnipeg, where currently, my current riding of Red River North touches into the city of Winnipeg in the RM of East St. Paul.

I want to thank my two—or, two members, constituency councillors and mayors, that work in the RM of St. Clements, and also the RM of East St. Paul, for working with us and working with our government to ensure that we are providing the necessary components of what they need to grow their local economies, but also grow within their RMs to ensure that their constituents get the services that they need and deserve.

I'd also like to take a few moments before we talk a little bit more about the Throne Speech to thank my campaign team. We had a wonderful group of volunteers.

* (15:20)

As I've heard from other members as well, volunteers are really the lifeline of a campaign, and I know how much time it takes to volunteer, and I wanted to extend my congratulations and thank you for taking the time to be there for us during the campaign and beyond, because now a lot of them are serving as board members as well on our community boards with respect to the Red River North community.

And, again, people from St. Clements and also East St. Paul, working to better their communities collectively, so I thank you for the volunteer time.

I will put a few names on the record as well, and I know that they're—they have given me permission to do that, and, again, I'm thanking Gary and Carol Hainsworth, particularly Bob and Maureen Dolyniuk, and also Steve Brennan [*phonetic*], Glen [*phonetic*] and Darlene West [*phonetic*] and a number of other folks that were out helping us during the 2023 campaign. And, again, for—thank you again for all the time that you spent doing that.

And we've heard a lot about family. Well, I can tell you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, my journey started in elected office back in 1994 when I ran for municipal politics back in Winnipeg Beach—

An Honourable Member: When you were 18.

Mr. Wharton: —as a councillor—yes, I was, as my member said—my colleague said, I was probably 18. Thank you for that. I certainly feel a little older than that now, but back in 1994 I was not successful running for councillor.

But in 1998 we ran again and I had the opportunity of serving the constituents of the town of Winnipeg Beach from 1998 to 2002, where I also was deputy mayor in 2000.

What a great experience. Talk about grassroots of politics. I know there are a number of my colleagues that have had the same opportunity to serve at the local level and there's no better way of cutting your teeth for public service and public office than there is at the grassroots level in the municipal level of politics.

And, come 2011, we ran for the RM of Gimli, for the constituency of Gimli. We came very close that time, Honourable Deputy Speaker, but in 2016 we did win Gimli and we turned this whole province around by forming the largest majority government in Manitoba history.

That's correct, Honourable Deputy Speaker. Forty seats were elected—40 Progressive Conservative seats throughout this great province and city of Winnipeg.

And again, in 2019, another huge majority Progressive Conservative government re-elected in 2019 to continue with the great work, which we continue to do and will continue to do on this side of the House until after four years when the current government gets booted out.

I'm going to start talking a little bit more about the Throne Speech and certainly I wish had about two hours, but I'll try to squeeze it in. And I know I want to also yield some time for my colleague from Lakeside too as well, because we're welcoming him to the House for the first time as a newly elected MLA, and I certainly know he has a lot he wants to say about the Throne Speech and the great folks in Lakeside, too, as well.

So I will touch on a couple of areas. I had the privilege of serving as the minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade recently and certainly we did a number of great things, Honourable Deputy Speaker, in the tenure that I had as serving as the minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade.

Some of the areas that I'd wanted to touch on were a very important area, particularly noted in the current minister's—I'll look at it here—here it is. The current minister's mandate letter says that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) would like to grow the economy but there is no plan to do so.

So what I'll do is I'll try to provide the Minister of Economic Development some ideas that were working for Manitobans and working for our economy so that he can go ahead and take these back.

I know that we're talking about a Manitoba critical mineral strategy that we announced last summer, and I'm going to just read a quote, if I may: Manitoba has a mining legacy that's more than a century old, but it's taken the realities of climate change and the demand of critical minerals from the electric vehicle industry from the provincial government to focus real attention and resources on reviving the industry's importance to the provincial economy.

That's correct. The critical mineral strategy is going to be a huge driver of our economy, Mister—pardon me—Deputy Speaker, and let me quote—that was a quote, by the way, from Martin Cash, a Free Press article writer who follows the mining industry and has for many years, and I thank him for that, for

ensuring that he's getting the facts of what our government have been doing when it comes to mining and that sector.

With 29 of 31 critical minerals designated by the federal government known to exist in Manitoba, the Manitoba government, industry officials alike, believe that its time is right now, Honourable Deputy Speaker, to move forward on a critical mineral strategy that we outlined.

I want to provide the member as well some more information about what the strategy does. Essentially, we look at a number of pillars in the strategy. We have six pillars in the strategy. I'll just name them for the record, and then that way the member will have an opportunity to go back into Hansard tomorrow, or even tonight. I'm sure he needs some light reading, and he can read through some of the critical mineral strategies that we're putting through, and particularly the six pillars.

Six pillars of the strategy are (1) raise awareness of Manitoba's significant critical minerals advantage; (2) advance Indigenous partnerships; support geoscience research; streamline regulatory processes; attract value-added processing and manufacturing; and train skilled workers.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what this plan does under these six pillars, and I am hoping that the minister, the current Minister of Economic Development, will take this information back, again, grab it off of Hansard. He can do that tonight. I'm sure he's watching now. I'll just give him a quick salute there if he's watching us. I know he is, because he's paying attention to this very closely.

Also want to talk about another area that we brought forward, which was very important to businesses, and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) talks about supporting business. Well, let me just put this bug in his ear, along with his minister: we talked about a \$50 million new capital for Manitoba First Fund. That's correct, Honourable Deputy Speaker. This venture capital fund leads the province to boost investment, to support opportunities for growth for Manitoba businesses. That's correct. This fund will help businesses coming to Manitoba and—or actually residing in Manitoba, get the capital they need to invest in their corporations, to hire more Manitobans, to ensure that they can put food on those Manitoba workers' tables.

And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this initiative, this venture capital fund, will do that to the tune of over \$50 million. We announced last fall; already

we're using that momentum to inject another \$50 million. So we injected over \$100 million in this fund, the venture capital fund.

And we have heard loud and clear, and we did, and we acted. We're not doing a listening tour, we're actually acting. We're doing action—the business community that the program works. That's why our government was doubling down from \$50 million to investment in over \$100 million in the venture capital fund.

The creation of the capitalization of this Manitoba First Fund also is supporting businesses. And again, I'll give the minister and the Premier an opportunity to jot these down. But, again, it's available on Hansard.

Supports for business communities announced in our budget that—oh, and by the way, I just wanted for the record, the new members as well, it's refreshing to see that in the Throne Speech, and I'll want to quote this because it is in here and it's good that the NDP government recognizes the work that our government has been doing and continues to do as we continue to grow the economy, and essentially they're looking at implementing the footprint of the 2023 fiscal footprint.

So that's a great thing. Implementing that footprint will ensure that investments like \$15 million in Communities Economic Development Fund get done; \$20-million investment in support economic development and investment attraction. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$2-million funding increase to support regional and strategic economic development. Collaboration with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to offer non-traditional lending options through—and this is a really important one for the members opposite—the First Peoples economic development growth fund. That's correct. Working with First Nations to ensure that they have the capital resources and the infrastructure to move forward to grow their economy, business and work together with government. And I'm hoping that the current Premier and the member, the Minister of Economic Development is listening to as well.

And again, \$2.3-million increase to the payroll tax exemption, to \$2.25 million, again, that—those kind of investments in tax initiatives grow the economy. They allow businesses to come to Manitoba and also allow Manitoba businesses to, again, thrive and continue to grow.

Before I, again, yield my time to my colleague, I just wanted to touch base on last night's committee, if I may.

* (15:30)

I want to talk about the gas tax. And there's been a lot of talk this week about the Bill 3 and the gas tax, but let me just be clear, because I know the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) wasn't interested in really hearing what Manitoba-Manitobans were saying last night at committee.

They came there, they took the time to come to committee, they actually drove down here—and thankfully the weather is co-operating, certainly no part of the NDP—but they took the time to come down here to say look, we all agree that a tax relief is important for Manitobans and Manitoba families. We all agree with that. That was said a number of times from both sides last night.

The only concern, the only real concern we have—there are a couple—but the concern I have is communities like Point Douglas, St. Johns, those communities in the core area of Winnipeg that rely more on transit to get around—to get their groceries, to get their kids to the hockey game, to get them to dance lessons—they got to jump on the bus and they got to get them there, and they also have to take them to school.

They don't have the ability or the opportunity to purchase a vehicle, to insure it, to fuel it and take advantage of a 14-cents-a-litre reduction. They don't have that. We're talking hundreds, if not thousands, of Manitobans, Winnipeggers, in core NDP ridings that are not going to benefit from the 14-cents reduction on fuel tax.

I find, and I think my colleagues would agree, this is simply shameful—simply shameful—that here we are trying to provide measures of affordability—

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Wharton:—to Manitobans—and the member from Concordia is saying, hear, hear, because we're not giving any relief to Manitobans that live in the core area of Winnipeg, which, again, is shameful. We believe that this should be opened up even broader.

Let's look at the carbon tax, the federal carbon tax. These folks that live in the core area of Winnipeg actually still have to heat their homes, and they're actually having to pay the federal Liberal-NDP coalition carbon tax, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

And again, if the current government would realize that they're actually pitting Manitobans against each other. They talk about division. They actually talk about division. Well, they're a prime example of division of Manitobans. We're talking about low-income Manitobans that need help today, which our government provided during our mandate, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

This government forgot about where they came from. And a quick lesson for all the new members that I learned. This is not something—I'm not going to stand up like the member from Transcona and try to educate you on this, because you all know this.

One lesson that we all should remember before I sit down: when you are elected and you have the honour and the right to serve in this House, do one thing, and if you do one thing at all, do this: never forget where you came from. That is the most important lesson.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): It'll be tough to follow that up.

It's an honour to rise in this Chamber as the newly elected member for McPhillips. Last week we heard the Lieutenant Governor outline how this government will work together to make life better for all Manitobans.

The Speech from the Throne is an affirmation of the change we've committed to delivering. It's also reflective of the positive campaign we ran to put Manitobans back at the centre of decision making in this province.

The voters gave our government a mandate to begin this work on October 3rd and we're ready take this challenge on. We've got a long road ahead of us, Honourable Speaker, but we're ready for the work ahead of us.

Of course, all of us who are seated in this Chamber are only here because a great many people believe in us and worked tirelessly to make this dream a reality. We've all had a multitude of supporters, volunteers, friends and family, who have walked alongside us.

I'd like to acknowledge those who've been along my side on this journey, and start by thanking every single volunteer and supporter who stepped up to bring about positive change in McPhillips. For all the doors you've knocked, the phone calls you made, the signs you've put up, every bit of it made a difference, and I am sincerely grateful for your support.

To my friends and family, my uncle, cousins, nieces and nephew—too many names to mention in one speech—I'm inspired by your love and your enthusiasm, and I am fortunate to have you by my side.

And to the residents of McPhillips, I am deeply honoured to have the privilege of being your representative in this Legislature. I'm thankful for the trust you've placed in me, and I'm committed to being your strongest advocate in government.

Honourable Speaker, McPhillips is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba. It is also one of the most richly diverse communities in the province. Covering 108 square kilometres, it encompasses older established neighbourhoods like Garden City, Margaret Park and Templeton. It's also home to many newly developments—the newly developed segments that are only a few years old, both inside and outside the Perimeter, particularly in West St. Paul, comprised of both rural and urban areas.

With farms to the north of the riding, and office, parks and shopping malls to the south, McPhillips really is a microcosm of the entire province. In fact, just between 2016 and 2021, McPhillips saw its population grow by over 25 per cent, bringing us up to 28,000 people in the community. This is a significant growth for an area that was largely overlooked by the previous government.

McPhillips is also home to a wide range of industries, manufacturing, agriculture, the service sector, commerce and so on, all of whom are helping drive our province's socioeconomic progress. But instead of supporting this growth, the Progressive Conservative government disinvested from our community. They shut down the emergency room at Seven Oaks hospital and centralized many services in Winnipeg's city centre, far away from our homes. They hampered our efforts to provide service and care to our neighbours in the community, at a time when we should've been providing that support and accommodating that growth.

The Throne Speech laid out the first steps of getting us back on track, and health-care investments are an important part of that plan, particularly at Seven Oaks hospital. We've heard from a number of my fellow MLAs who represent ridings on the outer edges of Winnipeg that our constituents need us to fund services, particularly health-care services, in our communities instead of clustering them in downtown Winnipeg, as the PCs did.

In fact, the MLA for Waverley spoke about this issue yesterday. Throughout the campaign, we saw Manitobans in the south of Winnipeg have been—having the same conversations and the same frustrations as those in the north of Winnipeg, and they all want a change.

Honourable Speaker, we heard a lot of questions from members opposite about where we are going to find health-care workers to staff up and repair our health-care system and a system that was neglected under the previous government.

In talking with residents of McPhillips, especially young people, I know that many people want to enter, or even re-enter, the health-care sector but hesitate because they've been burnt out—burned out, caused by the previous Progressive Conservative government's health-care strategy. They've seen it impact their family members, their communities and themselves.

This government's Throne Speech lays out our commitment to once again make health care a desirable career by creating more favourable working conditions and by forging more respectful and dignified relations with nursing unions and other health-care advocacy organizations.

I'm looking forward to collaborating with the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable) and the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara) to get more folks trained in the health-care profession and excited about working in our public health-care system. For the residents of McPhillips, creating more health-care jobs in the community will be an important first step.

I also know this Throne Speech emphasis on expanding on our capacity—expanding our capacity at K-to-12 schools will come as a relief to families within my community. With record levels of growth in McPhillips comes ballooning class sizes, and the lack of educational support from the previous government over the past several years has threatened to negatively impact students' educational outcomes. Reducing class sizes, particularly in my community, will help get the attention they need to succeed and go on to do great things in our province.

Our government's focus on rebalancing labour relations to ensure fairness for working families and strengthen our economy—will strengthen our economy. In McPhillips we know that the economic horse pulls the social cart and that with so many unique industries in our community, we need to empower neighbours to have a say in their workplaces.

Our plan to grow the Manitoba economy will benefit all Manitobans rather than concentrate wealth at the very top. By ending the MPI strike we've already begun making this new future a reality.

Honourable Speaker, there is also a focus on lowering costs for Manitobans. I know this is a priority issue for my community because I heard about it every day at the doorsteps during the campaign. When seniors, young families and everyday working folks in my constituency do things like filling up on gas, they feel the pinch.

* (15:40)

The pause on the provincial fuel tax and other affordability measures laid out in the Throne Speech are important steps to give Manitobans the help they need. All Manitobans will benefit, whether they work in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, the service sector, education, health, the arts, administration or any other field. As with all growing communities, proper infrastructure is necessary to facilitate progress.

As new communities flourish in McPhillips, building infrastructure to accommodate that growth is crucial in order for us to realize our full economic potential. The Throne Speech unveiled many new tools in our tool box, including the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) business and jobs team. I look forward to collaborating with this new team and with municipalities across the province, and empower businesses to address the needs of our communities.

I have always been, and will continue to be, a champion for more investments in northwest Winnipeg and the surrounding area. Our community must never again be considered an afterthought in the government's plan to build back our health-care system and our economy.

Honourable Speaker, when my father chose to immigrate to—immigrate from his village of Bughipura, Punjab, to Winnipeg as a young man in 1981, he had only a few dollars in his pocket. He left his family and land behind so he could build a better future. Of all the places to go, he chose a city where the temperature sometimes dips down to -40° in the winter, but he had a cousin living here, so he stuck with his choice.

Forty-plus years later, our family roots have deepened in this province. This is where my brother and I have been born and raised, where we went to school and where we started our professional careers. Both my father and my mother worked very hard and made many, many sacrifices to give me and my brother a brighter future.

My father was a taxi owner and operator earlier on, and later went on to work in retail. And my mother has been a leader in the early child-care sector for nearly 30 years. Both have placed a great deal of emphasis on getting a good education and having strong work ethic. The life they built together was a labour of love, honesty and respect. My parents, Bakhtawar Singh and Charanjit Kaur, are the foundation of who I am today. I'm immensely proud to be standing in this Chamber as a product of their perseverance and strength.

Our family's story is not an uncommon one in Manitoba. Throughout the '70s, '80s and '90s, the Punjabi and South Asian community in Manitoba was a small but closely connected one, as it slowly grew. These were largely blue-collar immigrant families who were contributing to our province's thriving culture and economy. Much like the families who arrived here from different parts of Europe following the Second World War, they sought to create a new home in their adopted land.

Second generation Canadians like myself are fortunate to have the opportunity we have today because of the hard work our parents put in, despite the barriers they faced. We are a bridge between the rich cultural traditions they—we inherited and the multicultural societies we live in. It is an experience that certainly comes with its challenges, but is an experience that informs our identity.

Honourable Speaker, our province is shaped by the stories of the people who live here. My path to politics was one that began I really understood my own trajectory. In August of 2012, Manitoba's Sikh community gathered on the steps of this very Legislature for a vigil in the wake of the Oak Creek gurdwara mass shooting in Wisconsin that took the lives of six, later seven, worshippers. It was an event that shook the community worldwide, and hit home for us here in Winnipeg.

I was asked to briefly speak at the vigil in what was my first public speech. Following my remarks, it was Premier Selinger who commended me on my speech. I became involved in the leadership at the Sikh Society of Manitoba around the same time, and was asked to join its board of directors as the youngest director in its history. *[interjection]* Thank you. Eventually I went on to going to serve as its youngest vice-president in its history.

During my 10 years at the organization, I saw first-hand the important advocacy work and the

impact of grassroots engagement. I had the opportunity to develop many meaningful relationships with elected officials across many levels of government and political parties.

Currently—or, sorry—concurrently, I completed my post-secondary degree at the University of Manitoba and began a rewarding career in public and government affairs, where my work continued to revolve around building relationships and lobbying on behalf of organizations that I represented.

Truthfully, that journey from speaking on the front steps of the Legislature during that tragedy to taking my seat in this Chamber has been one full of support, learning and encouragement from those around me along the way. I now have the distinct privilege of serving as the MLA for McPhillips and fully intend on using my knowledge, experience and capabilities to ensure that the residents of McPhillips have a champion in government and that those who have placed their trust and hopes in me know that together we made a long overdue change on October 3rd.

MLA Robert Loiselle, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Honourable Speaker, during the campaign I had the opportunity to meet many wonderful Manitobans living in McPhillips and had positive interactions with them day after day. Many of those conversations stuck with me, but I will recall one interaction that I still remember fondly.

I was walking up to a house from the street after pulling out a few signs from my car for some homeowners that had asked for them while I was on the campaign, and—when a car driving by suddenly came to a halt in the middle of the street. The driver of the car stepped out and shouted, are you the guy? After a brief moment of processing what was happening, I realized he was asking if I was the person whose face was on the signs. I responded and said, yes, I'm the guy, to which he responded by shouting his address out and asking for a sign, stat, with a right on, brother, and a thumbs-up.

That enthusiastic interaction was energizing and was also a reminder that the guy with his face on the signs was doing something worth doing.

Manitobans across the province have spoken, and they believe this government is doing something worth doing. By working together, we can repair the broken systems and heal the division that keep us from drawing on our collective strength as a people.

By working for you, we can rebuild the trust between government and its people so that all Manitobans are lifted up and given a seat at the table.

Thank you.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you for the opportunity to debate the throne 'seech'—the Throne Speech and tell a little bit about myself, Lakeside and how I came to be here and what my goals will be moving forward in my new role.

It's a whole new experience for me. I'm very honoured to be elected to the constituency of Lakeside to an assembly that only 800-plus Manitobans have ever had the privilege to sit in this Chamber at this capacity. I'll let it be known that I am only the third MLA for Lakeside in the last 55 years.

I still remember as a young boy growing interested in politics, and my dad telling me how Premier Douglas Campbell, who was the MLA 50 years prior to that in Lakeside, approached him to run for their party. He was also approached by other political leaders throughout the years to run as well, but he never did. I guess this is the bloodline I was born into and I carried on the leadership role.

My dad attended TUXIS youth parliament in his teens and became an avid leader in our community and in the co-operative movement throughout western Canada. My grandfather was a councillor for 27 years for the municipality of Woodlands, as was my father for a number of years.

In February 2006 my dad passed, and that October I let my name stand and was elected as councillor for the next eight years until 2014. For the next four years, I was elected reeve from 2014 to 2018. In that time, I was also elected to the board of directors for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities from 2010 until 2018 as the Interlake district director.

When I was 18 years old, I also attended a practical politics seminar sponsored by Manitoba Agriculture at the time, which taught me about municipal and provincial levels of government. It was at this time I got to visit the Legislature and meet with various provincial politicians.

I also attended the co-operative leadership camp at Camp Wannakumbac four years in a row in my teens as a junior leader. In grade 12, I was elected student council president at Warren Collegiate by the student body. So, I guess with all of this, I was destined to be a politician.

* (15:50)

Honourable Deputy Deputy Speaker, I feel the critic role our Leader of the Opposition, Heather Stefanson, gave me was fitting, and I will hold the new government accountable to their multi-year funding stated in the Throne Speech. With ongoing—

The Acting Speaker (Robert Loiselle): Order. Order.

Please refer to the member by their constituency, please, or their portfolio. Thank you.

And, I recognize the member for Lakeside.

Mr. King: Again, I feel the critic role our Leader of the Opposition gave me was fitting, and I will hold the new government accountable for the—to the multi-year funding stated in the Throne Speech, with ongoing support of municipal infrastructure funding and partnership with all levels.

Municipalities, both urban and rural, are the grass-roots government in our province, and it's important that we listen and support them, as they play an important role in building not only our communities, but our economy.

In 2018, I stepped back from municipal politics to fulfill some growing responsibilities with my employment with Prairie Roots Consumers Co-op in Marquette, Starbuck and Elm Creek locations.

My role grew to managing three Cardlock locations, along with farm and commercial bulk fuel deliveries to the total of 27 million litres to this day—yearly, with five tandem trucks and three tri-axle pups, managing five drivers, with myself driving a truck when I started 12 years ago. And I was still helping as a driver throughout my 11 years as a manager.

In those years as a driver and a manager, most of our customers were in the great constituency of Lakeside. I got to know the area and the residents well from being on council and doing a job that I really enjoyed.

Lakeside is a very diverse area, with agriculture as its backbone, along with many successful urban and rural businesses, both ag and non-ag related. Lakeside is home to such ag-related businesses like Arrowquip, a worldwide livestock handling manufacturer that I was a huge proponent to attract when I was in—on Woodlands council. It employs over 100 people, and currently are building a subsidiary company called Yakta that manufactures residential commercial mowing equipment.

Another major opportunity that we attracted during my time on council was Topigs Norsvin. Topigs is a hog research facility that researches hog genetics. This is a world-class facility that also has generated jobs and local construction opportunities in our community of Lakeside.

Lakeside is also home to some of the largest dairy, beef, poultry and hog production operations in the province. These also provide hundreds of jobs and opportunities. I found it very disappointing not to hear much about agriculture in the Throne Speech, other than the Crown lands lease reform, which is something that the previous government was already working towards.

Lakeside is also home to 26 Hutterite colonies.

Aquaculture is also an opportunity in Lakeside, where construction has already begun with Sapphire Springs that will produce arctic char in our province. I would encourage our new government to support such an opportunity, as it provides potential for many jobs and local construction opportunities, as well. Also, we need to support other existing aquaculture facilities in our province.

Economic development is something that is a passion of mine and was during my time on council. Attracting economic activity to our province, whether it be agriculture, manufacturing, mining or forestry, we need to work with our 'private', federal, municipal and Indigenous partners to build our local economy where it benefits all levels involved.

Lakeside is also home to some of the best farmland and grazing land in the country. We need to do all we can to protect and support our producers in this province through water management practices and maintenance of road and drainage infrastructure. This Throne Speech made no mention of any of these priorities.

As history will continue to repeat itself, we need to prepare for flood and drought by being proactive and not reactive when it comes to these weather cycles. I spent my whole life on the farm and had experienced all these disasters and know very well how these issues are important to not only producers, but all the residents that can or will be affected.

Lakeside is also an attractive area for many bird and other wildlife hunters, as are many other parts of the province. We need to protect and support the rights of all Manitoba hunters, whether it's for tourism, sport or feeding their families, and support our law-abiding

gun owners that use them for hunting, protecting their livestock.

Support for our conservation officers is also important in these times ahead, keeping them safe to return home to their families after a day's work.

Honourable Deputy Deputy Speaker, as many other constituencies in the province, communities of Lakeside have many recreation facilities that all their residents take great pride in, and many have produced many great athletes and outstanding citizens over many years. Support to all these organizations in our cities and towns are also very important for our community development and programming. This government's Throne Speech failed to mention little support for these organizations and facilities.

My family and my wife's family all grew up and continue to spend time at these facilities with our children and grandchildren through hockey, baseball, curling, social functions and more. These clubs and volunteers are part of what builds and holds a community together.

Child-care facilities, child-care workers are also challenges we see in all our communities throughout the province. We will hold the new government accountable to see through commitments that have been made to fulfil these much-needed spaces in our province.

A seniors advocate was mentioned in the Throne Speech; we encourage that the new government will support our seniors in a way the previous government's seniors strategy was set out to do, supporting the ones who built our province through care and programming and the much-needed personal-care homes in our province.

Honourable Speaker, it was disappointing to me, that I'm sure it was to most Manitobans, not to hear in the Throne Speech that the new government will be advocating to the federal government against the carbon tax on all home heating fuels. When we are in a time of an affordability crisis, it seems evident to me that this carbon tax that is a large part of the reason our economy is struggling.

As we increase the carbon tax on any fuel, it increases the cost of everything else. I think if we did away with the carbon tax we could find other ways of saving the environment and fighting climate change rather than taking more from the 'procket'—pockets, sorry—of hard-working Manitobans.

People are struggling these days, including people who are making a decent wage. Although the Throne

Speech mentions a 14-cent gas tax holiday for Manitobans, which we're—under way now, this does not help the hard-working Manitobans make ends meet that do not even own a vehicle to put gas in.

Concerns me that we're taking away a tax that helps pay for our much-needed infrastructure replacement, repair and maintenance. Although this may relieve some short-term pain for some Manitobans, I am convinced there will be longer term pain for all Manitobans.

Indigenous economic reconciliation is a vital cornerstone for the growth and prosperity of northern and all Manitoba. As the shadow minister for Indigenous Economic Development, I am committed to ensuring that economic reconciliation becomes a reality, recognizing the immense importance of northern transportation corridors and the engagement in Indigenous communities in these developments.

Northern transportation corridors play a pivotal role in connecting Manitoba's vast resources and products to national, international markets. It's not just about moving goods; it's about building sustainable, inclusive economic pathways that benefit all Manitobans.

As part of my role, I will champion the establishment of collaborative frameworks that involve Indigenous communities as true partners in these developments. Their involvement is not only a matter of economic equity, but also a reflection of the deep respect owed to the culture and the historical ties these communities have with the land.

Manitoba's Critical Minerals Strategy, crafted by the previous government, stands as a testament to the province's commitment to harnessing its natural resources responsibly. This strategy is a roadmap for sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of environmentally conscious practices and economic inclusivity. As shadow minister, I will ensure that this strategy is not just a document on paper, but a living, breathing guide for the growth of northern communities.

Implementing the Critical Minerals Strategy is not just a commitment to economic development; it is a commitment to the empowerment of Indigenous communities. By fostering partnerships, collaboration, we can create opportunities for meaningful employment, skills development, community investment. It is about recognizing that the prosperity of Manitoba is intricately tied to the prosperity of all of its residents, particularly those northern and Indigenous communities.

Indigenous economic reconciliation is not only morally imperative, but also essential for the growth of our province. As the shadow minister for Indigenous Economic Development, I will tirelessly advocate for the contributions and robust implementation of Manitoba's Critical Minerals Strategy.

* (16:00)

Through responsible resource development, inclusive economic pathways, in general, and collaboration with Indigenous communities, we can build a future where the prosperity of Manitoba leaves no community behind, fostering a province that truly thrives together.

This is not something I dreamed about doing, but when I was approached about running for the MLA in Lakeside and those telling me my name kept coming up, I thought long and hard about who I would want as my MLA, and the best person I could think of was myself also.

I discussed it thoroughly with my wife Kim of 28 years, my four boys—Colton is 27; Trey, 23; Karson, 19; and Rhet, 14—and with their support, by telling me they thought I was the best man for the job, I thought I'd go for it.

The thoughts of all this just began over a year ago, and here I am today. In no way was I about to do this without the support of my family.

I was born in Stonewall, Manitoba, in 1968 and raised and worked on the family farm. The house on the farm burned in 1973, and my father received a Governor General's Medal of Bravery for saving our family from a burning home in the middle of the night.

A new RTM was moved on in 1974, where I lived 'til I was 21. Then I moved across the road from the farm into a mobile home, which my wife and I and our first two boys lived until the third was on his way. We then renovated and moved into my grandparents' house on the farm, which was built in 1933, when my grandparents settled there.

In 2018, when my mother moved to Lions Manor in Stonewall, we moved into my mom's house, where I grew up, and we now reside there today on the farm. We still have a small enterprise of the family farm, where we make hay and our grain land is rented out to another farmer.

My two oldest boys live next to us in the two previous houses on the farm that we lived in, and the two younger boys still live at home with us.

My wife Kim and I have been volunteers with many organizations in our community of Warren. In my grade 11 year, I joined the RM of Woodlands volunteer fire department. I spent 15 years doing my part in helping protect the people of our community.

Spent time on the Warren hall board, Warren Curling Club and spent all my years on council on our community development corporation and recreation commission.

My wife spent many years managing and being treasurer of minor ball and minor hockey teams. My wife and I have spent 23 years running our boys to hockey and baseball all over the province. Two older boys now play a rec league in Warren. Karson now plays MMJHL in Stonewall after a two-year stint in the Swift Current–Western Hockey League and a short time with the Portage Terriers in the MJHL. Our youngest son Rhet plays AA U15 for the Interlake Lightning.

Colton and his girlfriend Celine have blessed us with a beautiful granddaughter Madelyn, who just turned one year old on the 1st of November.

I came from a musical family where my mom and dad, my older brother and three older sisters and myself all played together in a family band. We lived by the motto: The Family that Plays Together Stays Together. In 1979, at my age of 12, we recorded a family album called Together with the King Family.

My four siblings and most of their families all still live, work and farm in Lakeside, as do my mother and my mother-in-law.

Once I became a teenager, I started my own band and played many clubs, bars, rodeos and fairs across the province and recorded my own CD in 1996 with the Broke 'N' Busted band called If It Ain't Broke Don't Fix It. In 1995, I was nominated by the Manitoba Association of Country Arts for the New Talent Development Award. Music is my stress reliever.

My two oldest boys, Colton, Trey, have now started a band and were just recently nominated for cover band of the year at the Manitoba Country Music Awards at Club Regent. From time to time, I still get on stage and perform with them.

I want to recognize and thank a number of people who helped and supported me throughout my nomination, campaign and the election to assist me, getting me where I am today.

I want to thank my 'campaign' team for all their hard work throughout the election; my campaign

manager John Jones and his wife Lee for their dedication to my campaign, both assisted me in making me come out on top in a very overwhelming win; my official agent Celine Rarick, thanks for your accounting skills and keeping things on track and helping to work on a very frugal budget; Mark Peltz, my constituency president, for riding along to events and announcements and the great conversations we had, just as our dads did when they were on council together; Bryan Myskiw, for the time he spent doing my social media posts, what a fantastic job he did; and Kathy Cockerill, for looking after the campaign office and now taking on the job as my constituency assistant in my office in Stonewall.

Thank you to all my sign crew, which would include all my boys and a number of friends.

I want to thank all the residents of Lakeside that supported me overwhelmingly to become elected. To the generous people—donated to my campaign, you deserve a huge thank you.

Lakeside is a huge area to cover, with the communities of Eli, Cartier, St. Eustache, Springstein, St. François Xavier, Marquette, Meadows, Rosser, Gordon, Grosse Isle, Warren, Woodlands, Lake Francis, Argyle, Balmoral, Stonewall, Stony Mountain, Teulon and Komarno. Also Erinview and, of course, the vast area of economic possibilities with CentrePort, which edges my riding.

It was impossible to get to them all, but I did see many of those constituents.

Honourable Deputy Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you—all the great people of Lakeside that shared their concerns with me throughout the campaign and gave me this opportunity to represent them in this Legislative Assembly to debate such things as this Throne Speech and other important issues on their behalf.

I want to thank retired MLA Ralph Eichler for his continued support throughout my nomination and campaign and congratulate him on his retirement.

Honourable Deputy Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I am honoured to serve as your representative in the Manitoba Legislature for Lakeside. With its history and beauty, deserves a strong advocate, and I am committed to being that voice.

Together, let us work towards a future where every Manitoba can thrive—Manitoban, sorry, can thrive and prosper.

Thank you. May our collected efforts as MLAs lead to a brighter and more prosperous future for all Manitobans.

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Thank you to the honourable members who have spoken before me.

It's truly an honour and a privilege to stand in this place, a place that I could never have imagined would be a place for me.

I want to thank my entire family, given and chosen, but especially my two wonderful children, Connor and Madeleine, who are my pride and joy and inspiration for everything I do; who have supported me rather unconditionally, even agreeing to move across the city with our two kitties to support mom in pursuing her dreams.

And speaking of supportive family, many folks here know that my husband Thomas and I met in this building 13 years ago. He is now the provincial director of the Manitoba Health Coalition. I am exceptionally proud of the work that he does to advocate for evidence-based harm reduction strategies and to fight the toxic drug supply crisis in Manitoba.

Unsurprisingly, we have some interesting conversations at the dinner table. We don't always agree, and we won't always agree, but we will always push each other to do better for Manitobans, and we love each other very much.

I'm also eternally grateful for my extended family, Rory and Karen, for all you've done to help raise our wonderful now-not-so-little boy and how you've embraced our girl as your own. I'm proud of how we work together to co-parent to ensure Connor always comes first, and to ensure he knows that he is loved everywhere he goes. We did that together. Thank you.

They say it take a village to raise a child, and the little village that raised me included grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, great-aunts, great-uncles, family friends, neighbours, coaches and teachers. Each and every one of you have had a positive impact on my life and have helped bring me here.

I want to thank the—my family at The NOW Group. Your unwavering support and encouragement lifted me up every single day, and you made working on our shared project of building a better world one of the greatest joys of my life. The sound of an incoming Teams call will forever remind me of you, so thank you for that.

Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, I'd like to thank my campaign staff, Serina, Ashlee and Jazminn, to all the Southdale NDP executive members and to the countless volunteers who helped knock on doors, put up signs, fundraise, cook meals and deliver leaflets; you did it all, and this win is all thanks to you.

I would like to take a moment here to thank the outgoing member for Southdale, Audrey Gordon. One thing is certain: you were everywhere in the constituency. Everyone knew you and knew you would be at their events. I will strive to do the same. Thank you for your service.

* (16:10)

And in speaking of former members for Southdale, I need to thank former NDP MLA Erin Selby, minister of advanced education and health. Your encouragement and mentorship means the world to me.

And Nancy Allan, who just might be the most powerful force of nature this world has seen. You are a rock star. Thank you for everything.

I'm also grateful for my excellent staff in both my constituency office and here at the Legislative office. Serina, Ellaine, Jade, Priya, Rania, Dale, Jan and Sarah.

Thank you to the Manitoba Métis Federation, and especially members of the Infinity Women Secretariat for reminding me that showing up as me is always enough. I am so proud to stand in this House as one of the five NDP Métis MLAs elected to this 43rd Legislature and to be part of the government that has finally rightfully recognized Louis Riel as the first premier of this province. I feel my ancestors standing with me.

Thank you to my friends in labour for your faith and unwavering support: CUPE, Unifor, MTS, LiUNA, CLC, UFCW 832, MGEU and the MFL.

I am eternally grateful to the staff at the Manitoba NDP provincial office, who doesn't get a lot of love, and in the caucus office. I know how hard you work and your efforts do not go unnoticed or appreciated.

I want to thank the moms of Windsor Park who have welcomed me and my family into the community with open arms, and I can tell you that it truly feels like home.

And to all of the hard-working public servants in the department of advanced education, you are true champions. Thank you for always working for

Manitobans. I look forward to collaborating with you to make education better for our communities.

And in this moment, I must extend my sincere gratitude to the incredible staff at St. Boniface Hospital Emergency and in the Cardiac Care Unit who, just last week, saved the life of my mother-in-law, Donna.

She and my father-in-law, Tony, came to Winnipeg from Saskatoon to witness my first Speech from the Throne as the MLA for Southdale. They have been present for all great events in my family's lives: birthdays, championship games and countless elections.

This election was no different. We couldn't have done it without you, grandma and grandpa. And I'll be forever grateful to the people who saved you at St. B.

We know that nothing matters more than our health and the health of our loved ones, which is why our government has hit the ground running in beginning to fix our health-care system. We will do right by our amazing health-care workers.

Like many folks, this journey to this place, with me sitting in this chair, in this building, at this time, was not linear. The last number of weeks has given me time to reflect on my journey here, and what I hope to accomplish with my time in the Manitoba Legislature.

I remember spending time on the east lawn with my infant son on many sunny summer afternoons. We'd stroll around the grounds, look at the polar bear statues, and stop to chat with Louis Riel. We lived nearby on Colony Street in a rented apartment, and I would often walk him over in his stroller to have a picnic and talk to him about how the future might be for him. And I distinctly remember talking to him about working in this building. Not me, but him.

I said maybe someday you'll work here, in this place. You're such a bright boy. Maybe someday you'll have a job there, where you can help make life better for people, where you can make decisions that will help make the world a bit better.

And I need you to understand that at that moment, I wasn't so sure it was true, but I had to believe it could be, because that's what sparks change: believing that better is possible.

And as I stand here and reflect on that time, I'm so incredibly grateful. It's fitting that my Cabinet posting is directly related to the moment in time I was

given an opportunity that would change the course of my life.

I've been fortunate to tell my story of my post-secondary journey in many circles now, and had I not completed my undergraduate degree and then gone on to pursue additional training, I wouldn't be here, to be frank, because I've had, what I can now lovingly call, an active mind for as long as I could remember.

The folks who have helped me along my journey recognize it as anxiety and depression. And I'm still here to talk about it because I was lucky enough to seek and find help. I will always be a staunch advocate for greater supports for mental health, and will continue to share my own challenges as a message of hope to others who are struggling.

In elementary school, it showed up as tummy aches, nausea and shortness of breath, and by junior high, I had a hard time getting out of bed each day. I wore a lot of black and started experimenting with drugs and alcohol. My late teens and early 20s saw me making a lot of unhealthy decisions. I'm lucky to be here to talk about it.

I felt like I was never enough and always just a little too much in the same breath. And as I get older, I'm learning that this feeling isn't unique to me. Setting the anxiety and depression aside, so many women I know describe feeling overwhelmed by society's expectations. Be a good girl. Sit quietly. Look nice. Don't talk too much. Don't be bossy. Do as you're told.

And I'm so grateful for my fierce little girl, Madeleine, who made me realize how wrong all of that is, because she deserves every single opportunity my son has, full stop. And I hope that by me taking space in this Chamber, she can see that anything is possible.

I want to share an excerpt from one of my favourite poems written by William Blake. To me, it embodies the feeling of hopefulness and wonder, and most of all, potential: To see a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wildflower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour.

The seeds we plant in children are so important. The time we spend, the conversations we have, the community that surrounds them will shape their lives forever.

And that's why it was so painful to bear witness to the awful, divisive, hateful campaign put forth by the PCs over this past election period. I know they

don't want to talk about it anymore, but I feel compelled to put words on the public record.

Because when I went door to door and heard from families who felt sad and angry and, frankly, ashamed that a governing party would use murder victims and their families as campaign props, every member should have spoken out against the division that was put forward. Every member of that caucus should have stood up for Indigenous families in our province, and every member should have recognized that doubling down on hate is never a good idea.

I'm so proud of our positive campaign, and even more proud that Manitobans chose hope and love and positivity.

We ran with a message of unity. Our vision of Manitoba needs all of us working together and caring for one another. Regardless of your background, there is a place for you here in our province. If you haven't felt that way over the past seven years, this new government will make sure there is a seat for you at the table. I'm living proof.

I've been part of countless campaigns in roles big and small, from knocking on doors to organizing picket lines, and I've done this because I believe that we can build a better world. We can create a future for our children that includes a reliable health-care system, appropriately funded education and affordable monthly costs. And when we work together, the weight of the struggles can be less for everyone.

And I can tell you that I personally know how hard the struggles can be. I've been the single mom of a toddler with two restaurant jobs while juggling university.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And I've been the person in tears in the EI office, because I just needed some help piecing a plan together so that my dreams of building a decent life for me and my son could become real. And they did, and I'm grateful. So I want to give back to make sure that others get the same opportunities.

When Connor was little, I joined the board of his daycare and saw how advocacy truly changes lives. I got a job with Erna Braun, the former MLA for Rossmere and minister of Labour, as her assistant. This changed the course of my life. I was a single mom with no experience, but she saw my potential.

In that office, I saw first-hand how government decisions impact our lives every day, how small acts can create big change and how listening can be the

most powerful thing we can do for others. And how a government that respects people can move the needle forward and transform lives.

I will fight to build stronger communities, make life more affordable and invest in our schools, hospitals and public services.

I want to thank Premier Wab Kinew for having the confidence in me to name me to Cabinet. *[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Just a gentle reminder to refer to members by their constituency or their portfolio.

MLA Cable: I want to thank the member from Fort Rouge and the honourable First Minister for having the confidence in me to name me to Cabinet, and specifically for the honour of serving Manitoba families as the Minister of Advanced Education and Training.

* (16:20)

It's a heavy responsibility. Years of cuts and disrespect have left the post-secondary sector battered and bruised. Universities, colleges, students and families are ready for change, and that is exactly what we are going to deliver. We have promised to deliver a government that builds a shared future for our province. This is an ambitious and responsible approach to fix health care, lower costs for families and grow the economy with good jobs and a balanced budget.

In my role, I am responsible for ensuring Manitobans are ready for the careers and challenges of today and tomorrow by providing equitable access to the best training and educational opportunities. Here's how we plan on doing that: we will foster a respectful relationship between the government and universities by respecting them as self-governing institutions and supporting the important role that labour plays in delivering high-quality training across the province.

We will work collaboratively with the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University, Université de Saint-Boniface, Canadian Mennonite University and the University College of the North to deliver high-quality, affordable education to students. We will work with RRC Polytech, Assiniboine Community College and the Manitoba institute for trades and technology to ensure our province's economic needs are met.

There is a shortage of health-care personnel in Manitoba. We will combat this by working with the Department of Health to train more doctors and nurses by expanding the University of Manitoba's Bannatyne campus, creating 10 new doctor training seats for

Brandon and creating a pathway for LPNs to RNs in collaboration with ACC, and working with the other post-secondary intuitions to expand training opportunities.

I want to take a moment to reflect on this mandate, because the points I just worked off of there actually come from the mandate letter addressed to me by the Honourable First Minister. I am struck, in those words, by the repeated emphasis on working with the universities and colleges and communities. Because frankly, respect and collaboration were certainly not in the order of the day under the members opposite. Not in our universities. Not in our schools. And not on the front lines of our health care, in our hospitals and clinics.

We are going to take a different approach; we are going to be a listening government. I wish my friend Becky Barrett was here to guide me. And that my friend and mentor David Woodbury was here to see this day. I'm sure he'd tell us that we've done just fine.

Thank you, maarsii *[thank you]*, merci, miigwech.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): As I stand here today, I just want to congratulate all the newly elected members in the House representing their constituencies.

And I want to express my profound gratitude to my family, whose unwavering support and sacrifice has been my guiding light in this journey; to my friends, whose steadfast belief in me has been a source of strength and encouragement; and most importantly, to the resilient constituents of Swan River, who have entrusted me with the honour and responsibility of representing their voices, their concerns and their aspirations in this esteemed Chamber.

The shadow of past NDP governments known for political favours and ideology over practical policy hangs heavy over us. My constituents remember feeling ignored and sidelined by NDP politics that helped a few but forgot so many. As their MLA, it's my duty to turn this fear into strong opposition and accountability.

The great people of Swan River want and deserve a government that truly listens, acts and brings real results, and not one lost in ideology while ignoring our real-life issues.

The Throne Speech, a supposed beacon of hope and direction for our province, fails to acknowledge the North's critical contributions and needs. Where was the mention of our provincial parks, the lifelines

of our natural heritage? The silence on wildlife and fish conservation echoes through the forests and lakes, a glaring omission that speaks volumes at the NDP disregard for ecological treasures.

And let us not forget the forestry sector and the Conservation Officer Service, pillars of our northern communities unacknowledged, unappreciated.

For 17 years under NDP governance, Manitoba's cherished provincial parks suffered a dark era of severe neglect. Their tenure was marked not by stewardship, by—but by a callous disregard for these natural resources.

Year after year, budgets were slashed, unmercifully exemplified by the staggering \$1.24-million cut in the 2020—or, the 2013-2014 fiscal year alone. This wasn't mere oversight; it was a systemic dismantling of a vital public resource, reflecting a stark display of habitual mismanagement and indifference towards our province's environmental heritage.

The repercussions of this neglect were far-reaching. Our parks, once beacons of natural beauty and community engagement, were reduced to shadows of their former selves. This decline not only damaged the parks' infrastructure, but also the economic viability of local communities that depend on them.

The NDP's short-sighted policies stripped our parks of their ability to contribute to local economy, impacting jobs, tourism and the social fabric of surrounding areas.

Their approach to parks was nothing short of scandalous. From staffing to maintenance, every aspect of park management was subjected to relentless cuts. Grass grew tall, facilities deteriorated and the beauty of our parks was overshadowed by this reckless fiscal policies.

The message was clear: For the NDP, our parks were mere line items in a budget easily disregarded and easily forgotten.

In response to this legacy of neglect, our Progressive Conservative government has taken decisive and visionary action, committing to a historic \$220-million investment planned for revitalization enhancement of our provincial parks. This monumental investment reflects our deep understanding of a park's significance in promoting environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and community well-being.

However, the recent Throne Speech starkly omitted any acknowledgement of this vital area. Their silence and their future are—on the future of our provincial parks is not just an oversight but a continuation

of the legacy of indifference towards one of Manitoba's most valuable resources.

This neglect stands in a stark contrast to what our government's commitment and strategic planning for these treasured spaces.

Honourable Speaker—or, Deputy Speaker, the NDP failed to address a fundamental pillar of Manitoba's economy and community well-being in their Throne Speech; our commercial fishing sector. This isn't merely an oversight; it's a profound display of the disregard for an industry that is instrumental to the livelihoods of countless Manitobans and the economic fabric of our province.

Let's talk about commercial fishing industry in our key lakes: Red Deer Lake, Swan Lake, Lake Winnipegosis. These lakes are vital to Swan River's local economy, as commercial fishing contributes over \$100 million annually.

Yet the NDP, in their Throne Speech, completely ignored this industry. It is appalling, while they remain silent, and Progressive Conservatives—our Progressive Conservatives acting. We've invested significantly in sustaining fishing practices, including \$1.5 million in the sustainable fisheries and eco-certification program, and strategic investments like \$600,000 for fishery field programs, and lobbying for federal support.

Our approach to wildlife conservation, especially management of the moose population in the Duck Mountains, contrasts sharply with the NDP's apparent apathy. We've actively engaged in a scientific research and habitat—research in habitat conservation, recognizing the threat of habitat loss, climate change, and overhunting.

Yet, the NDP's speech failed to mention, let alone acknowledge, any strategy for wildlife conservation. This oversight isn't just irresponsible; it's dangerous, risking the reversal of our progress and the potential endangerment of this iconic species.

Their previous 17-year tenure saw a severe reduction of 40 per cent in conservation officers and the closure of 13 district offices; actions that significantly weakened our province's capacity to protect its natural resources.

Our Progressive Conservative government, in stark contrast, recognized the urgency and importance of this issue. We committed substantial resources to be—to rebuild what had got dismantled, investing \$1.7 million in essential equipment and resources for

conservation officer service, and enhancing their operational budget by \$300,000 annually to address critical issues like night hunting. These steps were a clear demonstration of our dedication to not only restore but enhance capability and effectiveness of this vital service.

* (16:30)

This isn't—this just isn't about policy differences; it's about fundamental approach to governance. The NDP's failure to address the needs of conservation officer service in their Throne Speech speaks volumes about their priorities and lack of commitment to environmental and rural safety concerns of Manitobans.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this silence on these issues in their Throne Speech isn't just a gap in the policy; it's a resounding alarm of the—their incompetence and indifference towards our provincial—province's environmental and economic health. Our Progressive Conservative Party won't let the NDP negligence undo our efforts in preserving our natural heritage.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, it's both startling and disconcerting that the recent Throne Speech has completely disregarded yet another key industry: forestry. This sector is not just a minor part of our economy; it stands as a pillar of economic strength.

Especially in northern Manitoba, and for my constituents, the forestry industry goes beyond mere economic activity. It's a critical provider of jobs and substance for numerous families, integral to social and economic fabric of other—of our communities.

This industry's significance in the North cannot be overstated. It offers not only direct employment in logging and millwork, but bolsters ancillary jobs in transportation, equipment maintenance and administration. The forestry sector stands as a beacon of economic activity sustaining and nurturing the economic fabric of our northern communities.

Moreover, under our Progressive Conservative government, we've taken concrete steps to 'enhance' the vital sector, particularly in strengthening our partnerships with First Nation communities. We signed historic agreements with seven First Nation communities to share the wealth generated by Manitoba's forests, not only advancing economic reconciliation, but also creating new opportunities for economic growth, job creation and community development.

This approach, amounting to over \$3.5 million in timber dues revenue, and additional funding for capacity development, has laid the foundation for a more inclusive forestry sector. However, I stand before you not only to watch in dismay as this new NDP government embarks on a path of economic destruction, 'sensitively' dismantling the foundations of progress we laid.

The NDP's failure to mention their—crucial industry and our significant strides in their Throne Speech is more than just an oversight; it's a signal of their priorities and a worrying indication of what Manitobans can expect during their future tenure—during their tenure: lofty promises with no concrete plans to support them.

This omission speaks volumes about approaches to governments; an approach that seems to disregard the industries that form the backbone of our regional economies. The astonishing silence on this matter is a warning to Manitobans. It suggests a future where critical economic sectors may be sidelined for pie-in-the-sky promises lacking in substance and devoid of actionable plans.

As a representative of my constituencies, I find this neglect unacceptable and a disservice to the hard-working individuals whose livelihoods depend on the forestry sector.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the contrast between our Progressive Conservative government actively supports for this industry and the NDP's current indifference could not be more pronounced. We understand the importance of this sector, and always advocated for growth and sustainability.

Now let's take a look at health. Honourable Speaker, as I stand before you today, it's with a sense of incredulity and indignation at the NDP's Throne Speech, a display so devoid of substance and responsibility that it borders on the absurd.

This isn't just an oversight. It's brazen and deliberate act of deception, an exercise in misleading Manitobans with disregard for the truth. The NDP's failure to present an economic strategy to fund their 'grandiose' health-care promises is nothing short of 'scandalous.'

They dangled a carrot of a health-care reform in front of Manitobans, offering hollow promises during a time when our citizens most critically need reliable life-saving services. This isn't—is not just 'irresponsible'—irresponsible governance, it's mockery of it; an insult

to every Manitoban who depends on these essential services.

Our Progressive Conservative government's track record stands in stark contrast to the NDP's parade of empty promises. We didn't just promise; we delivered with real investments, with tangible improvements in health care. From the expansion of the CancerCare in Russell to the vital CT scan in Swan Valley Health Centre, which we'll probably see as recycling announcements in the near future, okay. And our actions have spoken louder than the NDP's hollow words ever could.

Let's not forget our commitment to health care, that it was backed by a solid economic strategy, attracting over \$24 billion in investments, generating substantial tax revenues and creating thousands of jobs. This is the kind of responsible, forward-thinking government that Manitobans deserve.

In contrast, the NDP Throne Speech, filled with lofty health-care promises, devoid of financial backing, is a slap in the face to Manitobans. It's clear, demonstrations of their lack of foresight, their inability to grasp the complexities of running a government. They present pie-in-the-sky plans with no ground to stand on, offering Manitoba nothing but false hope and unattainable dreams.

As the MLA from Swan River, it is not just my duty, but my solemn vow to hold this government accountable, to ensure that the people of Manitoba, and especially my constituents don't fall prey to their political tricks.

Honourable Speaker, the Throne Speech was not just a disappointment; there was a clarion call to action for us, the vigilant opposition, to stand up for the forgotten, the overlooked and the undervalued. We will not sit idle by while their attempt to write a narrative devoid of reality and practicality. We will fight with every breath and every word to ensure that the true needs of Manitobans are met with actions and not just empty promises.

In conclusion, while the NDP—*[interjection]* Hey, thanks for cheering, thank you. Make sure to watch those fishing regulations.

In conclusion, while the NDP have forgotten the North in their Throne Speech, we in the Progressive Conservative Party have not, and we will tirelessly remind many of the obligations to every corner of the great province. People of Swan River, and, indeed, of Manitoba, deserve a 'governant'—government that is results driven, not ideology blinded.

We'll be the beacon of accountability and the voice of reason in this Legislature, ensuring that the future of Manitoba is not marred by the disastrous policies of the past NDP governments.

Thank you.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): It's my honour to rise in the Chamber today and put a few words on record.

This is a sacred place, and I love it. And I have so much respect for everybody, elected or public servant, in this building, for all the hard work they do every single day to serve Manitobans.

It's a proud moment, having this opportunity to represent Manitobans that I represent. Since 2019, I'm proudly representing my constituents, the people of Burrows.

And when we talk about this building, the sacred space and people's building and its laws, regulations and procedures, it pleases us.

I would start with congratulating you on your appointment as Deputy Speaker.

* (16:40)

And today I think of the day when all of us got together here in this Chamber when our Honourable Speaker was acclaimed. It was beautiful to get together and participate in that democratic process.

And the ceremony that we follow, there is a tradition. I was a bit nervous and scared, too, when our Speaker was being dragged toward the chair. And then I figured out that there is a lot we learn from our history, and there is a lot that has happened in the history, and to all Manitobans who do not know the details of the Speaker, why the Speaker is dragged towards the chair, I would request them to read a bit or google a bit about it.

So, when we talk about our history, we talk about people. We talk about all the good things that have happened in the past, and we talk about all the unfortunate things that might have happened in the past, and we learn from those happenings or the mistakes made.

It pleases me, every single day when we start this Chamber, and its proceedings with a prayer. Isn't that beautiful? We start with a prayer, and then land acknowledgement. We think of respect. We think of land, our motherland. All the resources we are blessed with come from the land.

And we—when we talk about land, we talk about Indigenous people and the traditions and the rich culture. And when we talk about Indigenous people and First Nations people, I want to thank the Lord. I want to say thank you, Creator. Thank you, Waheguru, for blessing this province with Indigenous leadership on October 3rd.

That was long awaited, and it's a positive change that we witnessed. And this means a lot to all of us. It makes me proud to be part of a team where we have two First Nations women at the Cabinet table. Isn't that something to be proud of?

On the weekend, I was participating in an event honouring matriarchs. It was a beautiful, beautiful program celebrating matriarchy. I participated, attended and felt so good about it.

And this is the time to celebrate this positive change in Manitoba. Diversity. When we talk about diversity, we do not just talk about ethnic diversity. We do not just talk about diversity in skin colours, or food, or of our dress or of our language. We also talk about diversity of opinion, which is important.

What if we didn't have any diverse opinions around the table? How would we grow? It would be very hard if everybody thinks the same.

And the question period and the debates, those are the examples where we express the diversity of opinion. And I must not forget, my colleague on my left, age diversity, you know? We should have diversity of age. Next generation. People senior than me. People from the previous generation, they bring different perspectives, and the new generation brings a different perspective.

So when I look at the elected representatives in Manitoba, I respect—I see and respect that diversity that we have been blessed with.

And there is an impact of this diversity. There is an impact. And we have witnessed that impact. We have seen those positive changes reflecting that diversity. First non-binary Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara). That's the impact of diversity.

And we have seen in this Chamber Somali Heritage Week Act passed. That is an example of diversity and its impact on people of Manitoba, and all proud Canadians.

And when we talk about Emancipation Day Act, my friend from St. Vital, due to his leadership, and due to him being part of the government, due to him being elected as one of the Black MLAs in Manitoba.

It's the impact of the diversity that we got that bill passed.

And we got a bill passed which is called Black history month. Again, thank you so much, member from St. Vital. An honourable minister now.

Turban Day Act. That's the impact of diversity.

Before I forget, see the number of women in this Chamber, who Manitobans got elected and sent as their strong voice in this Chamber. That's also an example, an impact of diversity.

And the recent examples are Louis Riel Act and Orange Shirt Day Act. They're on the table now.

So we must celebrate as a team for this positive change in Manitoba. And this is a good start towards positive change. When we talk about people of Manitoba, I want to thank every Manitoban who participated in the democratic process, irrespective of who they supported. But they did participate. But I still think, wouldn't it be great if that 48 per cent, 51 per cent, 57 per cent voter turnout turns to be 82. I don't know how we can make that happen, but I want to see that happen. More the people participate in the democratic process, better representatives we would have.

And I want to thank every Manitoban who participated at the discussions at the door when all of us, we were at the doors talking to people, telling about our policies and asking about their issues. That's how we work together. That's why this document is titled as: working together and working for you.

So, people of Manitoba includes people of Burrows, of course, but I want to especially mention people of Burrows. The constituency I represent, the people I represent, they are regular Manitobans. They're regular Manitobans. A few of them are transit operators. A few of them are truckers. Some work as grocery store clerks. Small business owners. Businesses as small as shoe repair shops.

And other beautiful and great businesses, like Sugar Blooms. I don't know how many of you know Sugar Blooms. I can proudly say that that business is in my constituency, and they have been in news for winning those awards for their cakes and cookies. Congratulations, Sugar Blooms, for your cakes and cookies that you offer to Manitobans.

And we have even tastier cakes and cookies in this document that might suit your needs and appetites. Those cakes and cookies would suit your appetite and your needs.

* (16:50)

So this is a beautiful document. This suits to the needs of people like Bill, who I met when he was sitting in his walking chair on a sidewalk and talking about COVID, talking about seniors' health, talking about affordability. I hear you, Bill, and I have spared another box of masks for you. You can come to my office and pick that up. It's spared for you.

And I thank you, Denise, for coming to my office many times and sharing your experience in health care in Canada and even overseas, and you bring in so much wealth of knowledge and educate me about what is good and bad in health care, and how we can work together to improve it. Thank you, Denise, for all your knowledge, wealth of knowledge that you share with me.

And I know, Denise, you want a seniors' advocate. We would get there. We are working together to make that happen.

When this document was being presented right in this Chamber and we were curiously listening to it, I went back to the parking lot. Before I start driving back home, I just took a look on my phone and there's a message from someone outside Manitoba, a doctor, appreciating our team for free prescription birth control.

That was a compliment, texted right when this document was being delivered in this sacred Chamber.

In the past, my friends on the other side—I appreciate them and their contribution. In the process where we work together to serve Manitobans, and especially, I want to thank all the three ag ministers that I worked with for answering all my questions in the hallway.

And the questions were, how are you? How's Interlake? How's Midland? How's Lakeside? Pretty good. Every single answer, I appreciate.

But I would have liked to see the same in this Chamber during the question period when I stood up for the producers in Manitoba and the ranchers who were struggling with Crown land lease changes brought forward by this PC government.

People from Dauphin, people from Ste. Rose, who had a representative, which is part of government, which was part of government at that time, instead of knocking at their door, they would be calling me. We are not being listened to. We can't afford Crown land rents. Three hundred per cent increase. No one is listening to us. Please help us.

And I tried my best to do that as an elected representative and critic for Agriculture for all those years.

And I welcome the new critic for Agriculture and his passion for agriculture and food production.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to mention this year, I am worried about next generation getting away from land, the next generation not interested in getting their hands dirty while working with plants.

I have two boys. When I talk to them: Do you want to study agriculture? They would be, like, no. And then I twist. Okay, do you want to learn about food production? Yes, dad, that seems interesting.

So we need to find ways to connect the next generation with nature, with the diversity of nature and land. Otherwise, what's the succession plan? Who would be producing food for us? How would we appreciate the blessings of nature?

We eat three times a day, and there are some people—our friends—who can't afford to even once. We need to be worried about them. We need to bring in policies that help us produce food in a sustainable manner, in a resilient manner.

And when we talk about environment, our government secured a commitment from the federal government to work together to help Manitobans switch to geothermal heat pumps, saving families money on their energy bills while lowering emissions.

We need to be creative. We need to work with other levels of government—municipal governments, federal government, First Nations governments—and think, brainstorm to generate pieces of legislation that serve the needs of Manitobans.

I was upset to see Teulon office being closed. While I was working with Manitoba Agriculture for a few years, I used to work from Teulon office a few times a month, but I was based at Arborg. I worked in Beausejour Ag office for some time, but after the PC choices to close these offices, it breaks my heart. Especially Beausejour office. Any one of us can go to Beausejour office today, and you can see the people working behind the doors—glass doors—but you cannot enter. You're not allowed to enter because that's closed. But open.

I don't know how such policies were informed and who were the advisors during that period. And again, I appreciate—I have said it earlier, and I would repeat—I appreciate everyone, all 57 people who have been serving here.

But sometimes, people work hard, but they don't succeed. So this is what happened to my friends on the other side. They did work. Everybody worked together,

but they did not succeed. That's why Manitobans thought that this is the time for a positive change. And here is the change now.

For the last few seconds I have, I want to raise out-migration and immigration issues and international students. I want to thank them for all the human resources and wealth and their contribution to this economy. They are building Manitoba. Thank you so much. You deserve better, and we would get there. That's on the table.

Thank you, one and all.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to thank all my colleagues for that resounding applause to be able to stand today and put a few words on the record—very few words, Honourable Deputy Speaker,

today. And I know that I will have the opportunity to get a little more into my speech tomorrow.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I will be speaking in support of the amendment brought forward by our Leader of the Opposition, the MLA for Tuxedo, and I will be speaking against the Throne Speech brought forward by the NDP leader and the—

* (17:00)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet will have 19 minutes remaining.

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 30, 2023

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