



Second 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
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	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, Hon.	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, Hon.	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, Hon.	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
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 25, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, 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 that we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory, 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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 210—The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): I move, seconded by the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, that Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Pankratz: Today, I rise to introduce Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act.

Honouring Manitoba veterans is such an integral part of celebrating the freedoms that we have in this country. And Indigenous peoples have bravely served in the Canadian military for many years but have not always received the recognition that they deserve for their contributions.

And by commemorating Indigenous veterans day, we are recognizing the unique struggles of First Nation, Inuit and Red River Métis service members and honouring the stories of veterans.

The Speaker: No further introduction of bills?

Committee report—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

The motion is accordingly passed.

Committee reports?

Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I am honoured to rise today in recognition of Manitoba Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week.

Today and always, we recognize the heart work of health-care professionals, front-line organizations and everyday Manitobans who support our loved ones who are struggling with substances or have substance use disorder.

Each year, Manitoba Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week provides us with an opportunity to gather and learn about the harms caused by substance use and addictions. The theme for Manitoba Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week this year is Forging Connections, which reminds us of the importance of collaboration in the field of addictions.

We are a government that listens to the experts, the expert advice of health-care professionals and front-line organizations so our relatives across the province have the supports that they need. Our government wants all communities in Manitoba to be safe and healthy places to live and grow. We are committed to a harm reduction approach in response to the overdose crisis and the rise of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections.

As we help Manitobans in need, we also have a shared responsibility to ensure that our efforts to support 'people'—people struggling with addictions also serve—also makes our communities safer and healthier. This is why we are requiring that regional health authorities develop comprehensive disposal and cleanup

plans as a condition for provincial funding for harm reduction activities. We are providing \$30,000 in new funding to each rural health authority to help develop cleanup and safety plans so that our efforts to help people make healthier choices also keep our communities healthy.

Our government is also increasing capacity to help people struggling with addictions by investing in the community addictions treatment expansion, CATE, which also has added 1,121 new beds and spaces across the province. We have funded more clinicians for youth mental health services alongside wrap-around addictions supports, including 140 more spaces for youth to access counselling supports.

We've opened the first Indigenous-led and culturally informed Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine, RAAM, clinic, and we are working with the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre to establish the first Indigenous-led supervised consumption site in all of the country. We have continued to support the life-saving work of Sunshine House's Mobile Overdose Prevention Site, which connects Manitobans with addictions services and supports, and we have invested nearly a half a million dollars in drug-checking services.

These addictions services empower Manitobans to make more informed and healthier decisions while providing more opportunities for our relatives to connect with their community resources that they need.

The addictions crisis in our province is unsettling for all of us. Responding to this crisis requires a government that cares about the well-being of all Manitobans while listening to the advice of the public health experts.

On this Manitoba use-Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week, I once again want to say miigwech and thank you to all of the front-line health-care professionals, organizations and Manitobans who are dedicated to supporting our relatives on their healing journeys.

Miigwech. We see you, we support you, and we thank you for your work that you do each and every day on behalf of Manitobans.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Today I rise to acknowledge National Addictions week-Awareness Week, an important time to highlight solutions that address the harms associated with alcohol and other drug use.

National Addictions Awareness Week runs from November 24 to November 30 and offers Manitobans a valuable opportunity to learn about prevention, treatment and recovery, while also discussing ways to drive meaningful change. This year's theme, Forging Connections, as outlined by the Canadian centre for substance use and addiction, reminds us of the powerful—the power of building supportive connections to combat addiction.

Stigma remains one of the greatest barriers to effective treatment.

* (13:40)

Research shows that individuals facing stigma are less likely to seek out help they need, often due to fears of judgment, losing relationships or jeopardizing their jobs.

Tragically, many Canadians suffer in silence. This isolation can significantly increase the risks of overdose, which are often fatal.

As we confront the growing complexity of addiction in Manitoba, it is more crucial than ever that we come together as a community to support those at risk.

Those struggling with addiction could be anyone—a neighbour, a friend or even a family member.

I personally understand addiction. Addiction can—does not care who you are or where you come from. We need to support a—recovery and treatment for all folks in Manitoba. We need—we all need to support each other and our loved ones. I want to thank all front-line support workers and all those that provide support. You are so appreciated.

To conclude, it is essential that we come together to raise awareness about addiction and, most importantly, to look toward eradicating the stigma that hinders healing and recovery.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Just before we move on to members' statements, I have some guests in the gallery.

We have seated with us in the public gallery from Linden Christian School 42 grade 9 students under the direction of Jason Smoker. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

We welcome you here today.

Further, I would like to draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Tod Lacey, Colleen Lacey, Easton Lacey, Nancy Lacey, Jeff Mackay, Jeannette Clarke, Azaria Sweeting, who are guests of the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson).

And we welcome you here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Tunngasugit Inuit Resource Centre

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Today, I would like to recognize Tunngasugit Inuit resource centre for their role in supporting the Inuit community.

They were formed in 2007 when Nikki was approached by her foster parents, Jackie and Steve Massey. The Inuit community here in Winnipeg approached them, saying that there needed to be more supports to help overcome barriers to help Inuit transition to urban life.

Since then, Nikki and Max and the entire team at Tunngasugit has been working hard to advocate for change and reduce barriers to urban Inuit. They work to keep Inuit connected to their community and culture, while providing essential services as they transition to life in the south.

Since their founding, they have only expanded their efforts. They now have a space of over 18,000 feet where they regularly bring community together for gatherings, workshops and a place to connect. Their staff has since grown from one person to a full team, and they now serve over 1,200 Inuit in Winnipeg and the surrounding area.

I know that they will continue to break down barriers for their community in the future. They want to see the Inuit here in Winnipeg flourish by creating a space in which Inuit can continue to take up space and celebrate their culture.

After seeing that the—seeing the work that they have done to break down barriers for their community, I know that they will continue to do their good work. I am eager to see where the next year will take them as they continue to serve Inuit across Winnipeg.

I would like to ask that the House join me in saying *miigwech* to Nikki and Tunngasugit Inuit resource centre for their effort in fostering the Inuit community here in Winnipeg.

It's an absolute honour to have them here in the gallery with us today.

I wish you all the best as you continue to serve your community and—with love and open arms. Thank you for the beautiful work that you do to serve the Inuit community.

Swan Valley Health Centre—Public Safety

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to share the concerns of my constituents on the increasing crime rate in Swan Valley and the effects on public safety and safety of medical staff at the Swan Valley Health Centre.

This concern about public safety has continued to escalate, with staff and patients at the health centre worried about their safety. It is no secret that rising threat is due to the rampant drug use in the community, which in turn triggers criminal and violent behaviours.

Honourable Speaker, fueling individuals by handing out needles like candy is not the solution. The Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness has not, to date, shared any plan for rehabilitation of additional—or, addicted persons.

Swan River has always been a vibrant community where people want to move to work and retire; however, continuing risk to public safety by the inaction of this minister and this NDP government is causing these people to have second thoughts.

The rising crime rate has hampered the recruitment, retention of medical staff. Physical and verbal abuse towards staff at the hospital, as well as drug deals on hospital property, are regular occurrences.

Area residents are concerned their family members, who have lived their entire lives in the Swan Valley area and now require medical attention, are being sent to medical facilities further away, while most beds at the Swan Valley Health Centre are occupied by individuals suffering from drug abuse.

And Honourable Speaker, with the arrival of winter, the dirty needles continue to be discarded, posing a health risk to our children and grandchildren who play in the school yards and playgrounds where these needles are hidden under the fresh snow.

The nurses, health-care aides, residents and businesses in my community are pleading for help. It's time for the NDP to go beyond committees, listening exercises and summits and act immediately to address the serious problems in the Swan Valley—not next week, not tomorrow, but today.

Thank you.

Windsor Park Nordic Centre

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Well, Honourable Speaker, it's snowing outside and today I'd like to honour the Cross Country Ski Association of Manitoba who, since the year 2000, operates the Windsor Park Nordic Centre here in St. Boniface. The Windsor Park Nordic Centre provides high-quality ski trails to benefit competitive and recreational skiers every year, right here in the middle of the city.

The Nordic Centre is a volunteer-run non-profit that provides accessible, affordable and healthy Nordic skiing activities for all. Three different ski clubs operate their programs at the facility, as well as programs for inner city schools, disabled skiing and public lessons for skiers of all abilities, which helps people to experience a healthy outdoor activity during the winters that we are so famous for.

The CCSAM was founded in 1972 and since then has been fostering athletic excellence, achievement and leadership through the Nordic Centre. Currently, the CCSAM consists of 24 ski clubs and 2,000 members across Manitoba.

This past weekend marks a huge milestone for the Nordic Centre, the ski association and for skiers in Manitoba, with the construction of a 2.5-kilometre ski trail of artificial snow. This endeavour represents the culmination of an over 15-year vision to have the ability to guarantee reliable skiing against the reality of climate change.

Hats off to the many volunteers, businesses and supporters who have contributed to the Nordic Centre ongoing success and this momentous achievement.

During the '22-23 season, skiers visited the Nordic Centre an amazing 65,000 times to enjoy the park's lighted trails day and night, some of which have been extended up to 10 kilometres long.

In the gallery we have Lori Penton, Nordic Centre GM; Karin McSweeney [*phonetic*]-McSherry, sorry-CCSAM ED; and Steve Scoles, downtown Nordic director.

I ask that the House please join me in recognizing the excellence of all volunteers, directors and patrons of the Nordic Centre and CCSAM.

Miigwech, merci and thank you.

Business Recognition Awards

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Honourable Speaker, earlier this fall, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce held its annual Business Recognition

Awards for years of operation in our community and I am pleased to highlight two Brandon North Hill businesses that received recognition.

Lakeview Inn and Suites proudly opened its doors on July 5, 1999, welcoming guests visiting the Wheat City to an exceptional hospitality experience.

After a strong soft opening, the hotel continued to innovate, becoming one of the first in Brandon to offer mini fridges, microwaves and other in-room amenities that have since become standard practice across the hotel industry.

Locally owned and operated here in Manitoba, the Lakeview takes great pride in its strong partnerships with local organizations like Brandon First, the Brandon Riverbank Discovery Centre, Westman Accommodations Group, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, United Way and many others.

For 25 years, they have been an excellent community partner in Brandon. Congratulations on this milestone in business.

* (13:50)

Advantage Auto and Trailer Sales is a family-owned and -operated business on Brandon's North Hill, run by Tod and Nancy Lacey. Founded 35 years ago with small beginnings by Tod, and father Ron Lacey, the business has evolved into one of Westman's largest and most trusted dealerships, expanding from vehicle sales to include trailer leasing, financing and rentals.

Built from strong family values, teamwork and an unwavering commitment to hard work, their success lies in their ability to adapt and grow, shaping the company into the respected name it is today. With a legacy of excellence and passion for customer service, this fourth-generation family business is a true Westman success story.

It is my sincere pleasure to have guests from both these fine Spruce Woods constituency businesses here today.

Please join me in congratulating them on these significant milestones in our business community.

Parent Advisory Councils in River Heights

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): Honourable Speaker, I rise today in tribute to the invaluable contributions made by the dedicated volunteers involved with the many school parent advisory councils in my constituency of River Heights.

As well as providing a platform for parents to engage with and help shape their children's education, parent advisory councils serve to build stronger communities, encouraging parents to work together to ensure a brighter future for all students.

I'm deeply impressed by the many accomplishments of the volunteers in River Heights schools. From historically establishing nutrition programs that enabled children to focus on learning, to helping teachers fill class-room wish lists, to the fundraising that ensures all children are able to share in the unique educational experiences regardless of circumstances.

In so doing, they're not only fostering school spirit and community engagement, they're helping teach their children the value and importance of community service.

One recent highlight in River Heights is the tremendous work done by the Rockwood School PAC who, along with their school leadership team, organized a mural to commemorate the school's anniversary, strengthening its sense of pride in the community.

Honourable Speaker, parent advisory committees are an example of the greater River Heights community spirit and its willingness to come together for the common good. I'm humbled to have been given the honour of representing that spirit both here in the Legislature and at the Cabinet table.

Please join me in thanking all those who dedicate their time and energy—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just remind the minister that you cannot be commenting on government initiatives while you're doing a member's statement.

MLA Moroz: Energy to parent advisory councils, not just in River Heights but across our great province. Their contributions make an immeasurable difference in the lives of our children and in the strength of our communities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: And now, I suppose we must.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government's Justice Strategy Community Safety Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Honourable Speaker, happy Monday to you, as well.

Almost a dozen 7-Eleven stores have closed because of violent, ongoing theft, including a Starbucks right in the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) own constituency.

The head of the transit union has described travel on transit as the Wild West. Medical professionals spend hours stitching up victim after victim to address life-altering injuries. Business owners facing guns and machetes say that it's never been any worse. And now, in the span of one weekend, two police officers have been attacked, Honourable Speaker.

If the very police assigned to protect Manitobans aren't safe under this Kinew government, who is?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): You know, on this side of the House, we recognize that public safety is not a partisan issue. All Manitobans, no matter where they live, deserve to be safe in their communities, which is why we've taken real steps to address public safety, including releasing just a couple of weeks ago, a comprehensive public health safety strategy.

We have a tremendous amount of respect for the front-line officers who provide care and security and safety across our province. And I want to, from our team, say to the WPS, we thank them for their service and that we're thinking about those officers who have been injured. We wish them well in their recovery, and we can't thank them enough, on behalf of all Manitobans, for what they do to keep our communities safe.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), under this Premier, has broken the NDP's promise to Manitobans to end violent crime.

The retail theft initiative was supposed to reduce the crime and violence plaguing our communities under the NDP. Our thoughts and prayers, Honourable Speaker, are with the officer and his family as they begin the road to recovery.

Police-involved shootings, which have increased under the NDP, reinforced the need for an enhanced independent investigation unit. That legislation passed under our government, and yet the NDP are in no hurry to proclaim the bill.

How many more shootings have to occur before the NDP wake up to the need of the enhanced independent investigation unit, Honourable Speaker?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I want to express, really and truly, that our entire team, the whole of government, sends the best of care and wishes and is thinking about this officer and their family.

The events that folks are hearing about are tragic circumstances, and we take the role and responsibility of enhancing public safety with the utmost of seriousness as government, which is why our Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has been working incredibly hard from day one to pull together stakeholders from across Manitoba to take real action.

And we recognize that over seven and a half years of a previous PC government, a lot of damage was done to the ability to provide safety and security. But we're cleaning up that mess. We're making our province safer day by day, and we're going to work with our partners to continue to move that in the right direction.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, and the same minister stood up in opposition and voted to defund the Winnipeg police in regards to all other police in the province of Manitoba as well.

Manitobans are losing faith in the Kinew government's justice strategy, Honourable Speaker. Store owners face robberies hourly. Transit users are violently attacked. Nurses are finding screwdrivers hidden in rooms. Students are forced to miss classes as knife-wielding 'preople' roam their campus. Police getting stabbed on duty.

Honourable Speaker, all Manitobans are losing faith in this Kinew government. The NDP have failed on ending violent crime. The NDP have failed on keeping Manitobans safe in our communities. Manitobans are asking when.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) needs to stand in his place and finally answer some questions in regards to community safety, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Asagwara: Manitobans would be shocked to know that not only for seven and a half years under the previous Heather Stefanson government were there no visible actions taken to make our communities safer, but on the back end of things, in government, the previous failed Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson governments did nothing, took no action to make our community safer.

In fact, they did the opposite. They cut the services that made our communities safer and got people connected to the care that they need. We saw, year over year, crime go up under the previous government and they did less than nothing; they made things worse.

On this side of the House, we've taken real action. We recognize that it's going to take years—years—to address these concerns. But we are committed to working with our partners at all levels of—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Health-Care System Government Record

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Last week, the Premier, when the cameras were off him, shouted across the floor at me that when we hold him to account on behalf of Manitobans for his government's failures in health care, he's, quote, winning.

Can the minister explain how skyrocketing diagnostic wait times, now over 56 weeks at HSC, represent a win? Are they winning now that hip and knee surgery wait times are the worst they've been in over five years? Or were they winning when they failed to deliver fully staffed beds to the Grace Hospital as they promised? Is it winning to completely ignore the cries of crisis coming from the ER in Brandon, instead offering only excuses?

* (14:00)

How is any of that a win for Manitobans?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, what our Premier did ask that member opposite and every single member opposite was to account for seven and a half years of cutting health care, disrespecting health-care workers, doing incredible amounts of damage to a system that Manitobans and their families count on. That member opposite stands at her place each and every day and does not offer an apology to Manitobans for the damage that her previous failed PC administration did.

On this side of the House, we are focused on one thing—that is making services across this province and health care better for Manitobans. We're adding capacity, not cutting it like they did. And we're working with our partners, not working against them like they did for seven and a half years.

We'll take no lessons from that member or any member—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, how can this government claim to be winning on health care when cataract surgeries for hundreds of Manitobans were cancelled this summer because this government cut contracts with private providers, when nurses across the province are raising red flags about inadequate security, fearing for their safety and that of their patients, when ER wait times at the Grace Hospital have shot up to a median of 5.5 hours, with some patients waiting over 11 hours for care. And those numbers continue to climb.

How is it winning that they're breaking their promise to the people of Carberry, leaving their emergency department unreliable and closed more often than it's open.

Can the minister please tell me where exactly is the win for Manitobans in all of these failures?

MLA Asagwara: Well, Honourable Speaker, I would offer that member that the win for Manitobans is finally having a government that cares about health care in our province. That's a good start.

Honourable Speaker, I would argue that the win for Manitobans is having a government who adds a net new number of health-care workers—873—not a net loss, like under the previous PC government. Or how about net new beds being added to the health-care system. Under the previous administration, they cut over 500 beds. We've added over 180-plus beds to the front lines of health care, with more on the way.

Honourable Speaker, we recognize they did a lot of damage. It's going to take us years to clean up their mess. But guess what—Manitobans finally have a government who cares to do the work and get—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Cook: I think it's important for you, the people of Manitoba, to understand exactly what this NDP Premier's (Mr. Kinew) priority is. You're waiting longer for health care. Nurses are scared to come in to work and scared to speak out, and all this Premier cares about is winning political points in question period. And that's why we on this side of the House will continue to hold this NDP government to account for their failures.

When will this NDP—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —government get its priorities straight and worry more about patients and less about their re-election?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the member opposite is wrong. The member opposite continues to stand up and put information that is wholly incorrect on the record.

We for the first time in our province's history have spine programs, we have surgical capacity more than we've ever had in our province before. We are doing more surgeries here in our own province than we ever did under the previous government. We're doing more diagnostics than we ever have. We're hiring more staff than we ever did under their failed approach.

Honourable Speaker, yes, it is going to take us time to fix the tremendous damage done under the previous Heather Stefanson government, but that member needs to stand up in her place today and be honest with Manitobans.

Why are we where we are today—it's their fault. Who's cleaning up their mess and fixing it—it's us.

Crime on University Campus Student Safety Concerns

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, a Brandon University student was seriously injured in a violent robbery near campus on Saturday night. This is the latest incident in a disturbing trend of attacks targeting students.

Just last month, a convicted sex offender attacked a University of Manitoba student sleeping in her dorm. Last week, reports of a man wielding a weapon forced the university into lockdown.

Campus communities are losing their confidence in their safety under this NDP government.

Can the Minister of Advanced Education explain why crime on campus is escalating on her watch, and what she is doing to address this crisis?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I thank the honourable member for the question, and just want to extend my heartfelt—*[interjection]*

I'm just going to wait until the members opposite stop heckling me. It's a regular occurrence in this House that when women stand up, the men talk over

them. So I'm going to give it a minute and, hopefully, they'll stop talking. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Cable: I can stand here all day. Forty-five seconds, at least. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training has the floor.

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Minister's time has expired.

The honourable member for Selkirk, on a—
[interjection]

Order, please. Order, please.

I would ask members to not be heckling when the Speaker is trying to speak.

Mr. Perchotte: Under this minister's watch, student safety, campus security have deteriorated to unprecedented levels. Criminals have easy access not only to our schools but to their digital infrastructure. This minister has refused to disclose who orchestrated the massive cyberattack on the University of Winnipeg last spring, leaving students and faculty in the dark.

Why does this minister continue to neglect her responsibility to get tough on crime and provide the university with the resources they need to strengthen security both on campus and online?

MLA Cable: I'd like to—and this is public information in case anybody would like to know—read the members opposite some details from today's Brandon Sun. The VP of administration and finance Peter Hickey said, because of years of successive budget cuts and not replacing staff who retired, there are critical administrative deficiencies across the campus.

So the member stands up and points fingers and claims that there was a problem created under this administration. I can tell you that this administration is working to clean up the mess of the members opposite. Seven and a half years of frozen and cut funding, seven and a half years of terrible relationships with institutions, seven and a half years of doing nothing to enhance post-secondary education in this province—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Assault, sexual violence, cybercrimes, political protests. Students of Manitoba are facing escalating threats on multiple forums under this government. If we were in power we would address it. Yet this minister refuses to answer critical questions or take decisive—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Perchotte:—action to protect students.

Will she continue to ignore these dangers until a tragedy strikes, or will she finally stand up, take responsibility for her and her government today and commit to a plan to keep Manitoba students safe?

MLA Cable: I need everybody in this Chamber to know, and folks across Manitoba, that this government since day one has been working to rebuild trust, to rebuild relationships and to fix the massive problems caused by the previous administration.

I'm not only the Minister of Advanced Education and Training, I have a student in my own family who is a testing—attending post-secondary. So please know that this issue for me is not only part of my everyday work, it is personal, and I am doing everything in my power as Minister of Advanced Education and Training to support our institutions, to ensure that they have the supports that they need, but also to support students who are experiencing challenges—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Provincial Finances Balanced Budget Inquiry

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Last week I pointed out to the Minister of Finance that the gross debt and liabilities in this province is soaring to almost \$76 billion. That is over \$50,000 of debt for every single person in Manitoba. Yet this minister chose—suppose an almost billion-dollar deficit this year, and add a \$700-million special warrant for new additional spending. He's ignoring S&P's advice to balance in 2025. There is barely a paragraph in his own budget about returning to balance.

* (14:10)

Where is the minister's plan to balance and start reducing Manitoba's debt so that every child in Manitoba can have a prosperous future and not be burdened by the increased taxes and debt by this NDP government?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): We know how important fiscal responsibility is on this side of the House, and we know that's important because you

can't deliver on improving health care, making life more affordable, investing in child care and doing all the great things that members of this team are doing without ensuring a focus on fiscal responsibility.

That's very different than what Manitobans experienced over seven and a half years under their leadership, when they took us into the ditch and left Manitobans with a \$2-billion deficit, Honourable Speaker.

They left us a massive hole to dig out of. We're going to do that work because we know how important it is to Manitobans. We're going to deliver on that balanced budget commitment in the last year of our mandate and we're going to keep working to make life more affordable.

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

Mrs. Stone: Again, I appreciate the opportunity to set the record straight because the former PC government left this NDP \$373-million surplus while making record investments in health care, families and education.

The Selinger NDP grew the debt exponentially the last time the NDP were in power. Now this minister is following in Greg Selinger's footsteps by increasing spending, increasing borrowing and increasing taxes on homeowners and Manitobans and future generations.

So why is this minister planning years of deficit and debt when the S&P said that they could return to balance in 2025?

MLA Sala: I'd like to remind the member opposite and all members opposite of their record.

Again, they left us a \$2-billion hole, and they don't have to take my word for it. We had an independent auditor, a respected accounting firm, MNP. It appears that the members opposite don't think MNP is an independent organization. Okay, maybe they do.

They delivered an audit, which looked at the financial decision making of the members opposite during that last year. And what did they find? They found a pattern of risky decision making, a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability; things that we know the last government did over and over again. We saw that with the car rental disaster there, within their own party. They cannot be trusted to manage the government's finances.

Manitobans—they can trust us. We're going to keep doing that good work because we know we need to—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Stone: This minister will be receiving almost a billion dollars more in federal transfer from the Trudeau Liberals. I expect he'll soon receive another notice informing him of further growth in transfers and equalization payments, yet this minister continues to increase borrowing and increase debt on the backs of Manitobans: \$76 billion in gross debt and liabilities; \$2.2 billion in debt servicing costs; \$6.2 billion in additional borrowing and \$50,000 of debt for every single Manitoban in this province. Record and concerning numbers, yet this minister has no plan to return to balance.

Will the minister commit to putting additional federal transfer and equalization dollars to eliminate deficits and start paying down Manitoba's debt so it doesn't continue on the backs of our future generations?

MLA Sala: I'll take the member the back again to July 28, before the last election, when they came to Manitobans and they gave them a fiscal report that was not representative of the fiscal reality. And that's something that MNP said in black and white: they came forward to Manitobans and they presented a false picture of our fiscal situation.

That showed their lack of transparency, their lack of accountability; exactly the opposite of how Manitobans expect their government to govern.

We're doing the opposite. We're going to deliver transparency, accountability, fiscal responsibility, good budgeting because we know Manitobans care and we're going to keep doing that work every single day, Honourable Speaker.

Education Requirements for Teachers Request to Reverse Policy Changes

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Honourable Speaker, last week when MLAs started reading petitions on the NDP's changes to the education system and requirements for teacher training, the NDP government laughed out loud. But these petitions were written by educators and—who deliver teachable subject areas like math, science, geography and English, and signed by those educators and parents and students, as well as post-secondary students who are training to become teachers themselves.

So why does this NDP government think the concerns of those teachers, educators and parents are a joke?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Honourable Speaker, I can assure Manitobans that educational outcomes in this province are of the highest priority for our government. We are listening to educators. We are listening to parents. We are listening to school divisions. And that's why we have introduced these changes.

That's also why we had, in our first year of government, added more than 630 new educators into our system so that students have more one-on-one time with their educators. That's also why we have banned cellphones in classrooms, something the previous government failed to do.

We are going to give kids the tools and the freedom that they need to be able to learn in their classrooms.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: Educators, including those at the post-secondary level, have been clear that this government should be focusing on incentivizing teachers with better incentives, better supports in the classrooms to come into the sector, not by lowering standards. And this minister touts the fact of that number that she just put on the record of a number of teachers she's hired before these changes were made.

So what is the real reason? If they've had such a success of hiring teachers in the first year of their government, what is the real reason that they're lowering the standards for teacher training in the province going forward?

MLA Schmidt: As I said in my first answer, we are listening to educators; we are listening to school divisions.

And I would like to read for the member opposite an opinion piece written by Thomas Falkenberg just today in the Free Press, Honourable Speaker. Professor of education at the University of Manitoba, quote: The way in which K-to-8 teachers need to know K-to-8 math is qualitatively different from the way in which the same math topics are understood at university. There is a burgeoning area of research in mathematics education that focuses on mathematics for teaching, which is about the understanding of math content as it is relevant to the teaching of math. The notion that knowing pedagogy can be separated from knowing

the subject to be taught does not hold water in light of the research.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: You note that just like this minister, in every answer to every question I've posed on this topic, that editorial fails to actually provide any of the research to defend their assertions. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jackson: And that is the failure of this acting Education Minister and this entire NDP government. They're failing educators. They're failing post-secondary institutions. They're failing students.

Will this minister get up and reverse her failed education policy today?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, the truth of the matter is, under the failed Heather Stefanson government, we saw educators leaving the system. We saw students suffering. Thank goodness, Manitobans had the good sense to elect a new government full of a caucus of educators that understand the education system.

The truth is we had teacher shortages under the failed leadership of Heather Stefanson's government. We're seeing teacher shortages in the western region, Brandon, Sunrise School Division, Frontier School Division. The teacher shortage was described as desperate. In January of 2023, it was reported that some rural Manitoba school divisions are advertising substitute teacher positions where a teaching degree or certificate is not required, in an attempt to address the shortfall. That was their idea—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

North End Water Treatment Plant Upgrade Costs Request for Government Funding Commitment

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, we recently heard from Mayor Gillingham that Winnipeg is in a waste water treatment crisis. The cost to complete phase 2 of the North End water treatment plant upgrades have doubled to over \$1 billion. The City cannot fund this on its own without drastic increases to sewer rates and taxes.

I ask the minister how much of the over \$500-million shortfall their government will be covering.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House and talk about the safety and protection of our waterways and the partnerships that we have with municipalities across Manitoba. We are so excited that the AMM has opened their conference just today. We look forward to working with municipal leaders at the City of Winnipeg and municipalities all across Manitoba as we work to address the water and waste water infrastructure issues.

* (14:20)

I was very pleased to hear Councillor Jeff Browaty on the radio this morning, the councillor for my area, Rossmere, who was praising the Province for finally coming to the table and working with the City of Winnipeg on this exact project. I'm so happy to continue those discussions with Councillor Browaty and Mayor Gillingham and finally get it done, what the previous government could not and would not do.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, the City of Winnipeg is not yet aware of the cost to complete phase 3 of the water treatment plant upgrade. The phase 3 nutrient removal project may be the most important part in regards to the health of Lake Winnipeg and all downstream waterways.

Will the minister commit now to funding the North End water treatment plant upgrades in their totality, or is two thirds of a plant sufficient?

MLA Schmidt: To answer the member's question: absolutely. We are going to work with the City of Winnipeg to finally get the North End waste pollution control centre built, a project that has been in the works for decades and that the previous government did not complete.

We are happy to work with our municipal partners. We know that water and waste water infrastructure is of top of mind at the AMM. I'm very excited. I have meetings later today and tomorrow to meet with leaders from across the province.

We're going to get it done. Where they failed, we—Manitobans can trust us to get it done.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, this government has ostensibly committed to the health of Lake Winnipeg.

The City of Winnipeg has another very important waste water project under way: the replacement of combined sewers. When these sewers overflow, they release untreated sewage into our waterways: 27,000 megalitres alone in 2022. This project is estimated to cost \$2.3 billion. Lake Winnipeg may not have that much time left, and the residents of Winnipeg certainly don't have the money to go it alone.

Will this government commit to a comprehensive plan to protect Lake Winnipeg by funding the combined sewer replacement project?

MLA Schmidt: Again, water and waste water infrastructure is of the highest priority for our government. We're going to get NEWPCC done. We're going to get combined sewer overflow off the ground, something that they couldn't do.

We—and we need to—want to talk about a comprehensive policy. We have made investments. We have introduced a nutrient target regulation, the first of its kind in Manitoba, that is going to make sure that Lake Winnipeg and the four main tributaries that feed into Lake Winnipeg are protected.

Let's talk about their record, Honourable Speaker. In 2019, the PC government told the City of Winnipeg to redirect \$34 million of funds previously allocated to NEWPCC to other projects. That was reported in the CBC.

The PCs withheld funds for much-needed upgrades to NEWPCC in an attempt at bullying the City of Winnipeg—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Innovation and New Technology Mandate of New Department

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Honourable Speaker, I'm thrilled to rise today to put the first-ever question on the record for the first-ever Minister of Innovation and New Technology.

For years, we had a government that wasn't interested in working towards a prosperous, shared future and economic freedom for all Manitobans.

Will the minister tell the House about his department's mandate to unlock the potential of Manitobans?

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that question.

And I'm excited to rise for the first time in the House as Minister of Innovation and New Technology. I'm incredibly honoured to have been asked by the Premier (Mr. Kinew) to lead this portfolio, and it's going to help our government continue to grow the economy, create new, good jobs and make it easier for Manitobans to access government services.

Manitoba is home to an incredible tech industry that hasn't, in the past, been supported by previous governments. As a listening government, I've already heard that the previous government simply didn't understand—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Child-Care Facilities—Inspection Reports Request for Public Disclosure

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, the NDP like to talk a big game about transparency. However, if you ask them to actually be transparent, you get silence, vague future dates and spokespersons.

Parents deserve to know if the child-care facility they are using or may wish to use have issues or deficiencies.

Why is this minister taking a secretive approach to the oversight of child-care facilities as described by the media, which I table today for you, Honourable Minister?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): On this side of the House, we absolutely recognize that many families in Manitoba face significant barriers in meeting their child-care needs. And that is because of seven and a half years of neglect and inaction and failed leadership under the Heather Stefanson government.

The previous government was simply out of touch with regular, average Manitoba families and what they need. On this side of the House, we have already added thousands of child-care spaces across the province. We will add thousands more.

We recognize that there is much work to do but we are rolling up our sleeves and doing the hard work that Manitobans sent us here to do.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, when parents drop their children off at the daycare facility, they are leaving their most precious cargo in care of this government.

But if that parent wishes to ensure that the government facility is—has appropriate supervision, the required staff-to-child ratios or meets the health standards, the information is not publicly available.

As noted by the ethics experts at the U of M, parents, I quote, should have more information about places they are taking their—that are taking care of their kids than places making our pizza.

What is this minister hiding when—that she puts pizza ahead of our children?

MLA Schmidt: I don't mean to laugh, Honourable Speaker, just the tone of that question has just left me a little bit flabbergasted.

On this side of the House, we absolutely are here to listen to Manitobans, to work with the sector and ensure that Manitoba families have all of the information that they need.

There is no issue with transparency on this side of the House. That's why Manitoba sent—Manitobans sent us here, because they know that they can trust the Manitoba NDP when it comes to child care and early childhood education here in Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, the minister refuses to discuss the tracking of child—the child-care deficiencies. The minister refuses to advise how many facilities are on her deficiencies list. The minister refuses to say how she will stop hiding this information.

Parents deserve better, child care—children deserve better and child-care staff deserve better.

Will this minister today commit to making child-care inspection reports public?

MLA Schmidt: The suggestion that we are being anything but transparent is absolutely false. That being said, we are absolutely happy to work with families, to work with the sector to ensure that, if there are deficiencies, that they will absolutely be addressed.

But speaking of deficiencies, Honourable Speaker, seven and a half years of failed leadership under Heather Stefanson's PC government have left this province in a child-care mess. There is no doubt at all that we are playing catch-up. There is a heck of a lot of work to do, both when it comes to creating spaces, when it comes to restoring faith in the sector, a sector

that the previous government had absolutely no faith in and absolutely disregarded.

But on this side of the House—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Levels of Intimate Partner Violence Proclamation Timeline for Legislation

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Manitoba has the highest level of intimate partner violence in Canada. And despite the MLA for St. Johns declaring then that, I quote, vulnerable Manitobans need access to information immediately, she has failed to do so.

* (14:30)

In 2022, Manitoba's MLAs unanimously passed Clare's Law to let people learn whether their partner has a history of domestic or sexual violence, but in 2024, the NDP have yet to take action. I table a document to remind members opposite.

Why is this Kinew government more interested in hiding predators than protecting the vulnerable Manitobans?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Miigwech to the member opposite for the very important question. It allows me to get up in the House, finally, and relay to Manitobans that we actually just had on Friday a really important historical announcement in respect of a new strategy in the uplifting and empowerment of Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse folks.

I was so proud to officially unveil our provincial strategy called Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag, which translates into all women doing well. It is our comprehensive strategy attached with a \$20-million budget that is putting in place—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Diane Redsky, executive director of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, an Indigenous-led family resource centre in Winnipeg, noted at the time of passage that quote: We all know that knowledge is power.

While the bill itself is enabling legislation, the NDP have had more than enough time to consult on the necessary regulations.

Why are the NDP putting more women at risk of intimate partner violence?

MLA Fontaine: I want to remind the House and everybody watching here that actually, members opposite spend day after day, week after week standing in the way of actually passing that piece of legislation, that very important piece of legislation.

I also want to remind members opposite that our Justice Minister just recently introduced it, and we're looking forward to debating that bill. We're also looking forward to members opposite putting their money where their mouth is and allowing it to go to second reading.

Thank you members—Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for La Vérendrye. *[interjection]*

Order, please.

Just for clarification, it's the NDP question next.

Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative Increased Funding for Indigenous Students

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): Manitobans have given us a clear mandate to restore and repair the cuts made by the former PC government to our universities and colleges.

We have a passionate minister and team working every day to support faculty and students. While the previous government froze funding for seven and a half years, phased out tuition rebates, clashed with faculty and interfered with collective bargaining, costing Manitobans millions.

We take a different approach. Manitobans have the right team in charge to fix the mess and stand up for students.

Can the Minister of Advanced Education, Training update the House on increases to the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative and the good work that our government is doing to support students?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Honourable Speaker, I am so proud to stand up today to talk about the enhancements that we're making to the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative.

In Budget 2024, we allocated an additional \$500,000 specifically earmarked for Indigenous students to ensure their success in post-secondary programs. Because of this, there are 400 students receiving the award this year, which is a hundred per cent increase over last year.

When we think about the future that we want to live in in Manitoba, it's a future where every student has the opportunity to be successful and where all of our workplaces are representative of the communities that we live in.

So proud to be part of a government that gets that.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Phoenix School

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Phoenix School, a kindergarten to grade 5 school located in Headingley, has experienced consistent enrolment growth over the last several years. Enrolment is expected to reach 275 students in the next two years.

Because the school is now over capacity, the school division has had to install portable classrooms on site as of fall 2024.

For several consecutive years, the top capital priority of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division has been the renovation and expansion of Phoenix School.

In 2022, the Phoenix School expansion and renovation project was approved to proceed to the design phase. The project included, among other amenities, a new gymnasium, two new classrooms, a multi-purpose room and room for 74 child-care spaces.

In June 2024, the school division received notice from the provincial government that the project has been deferred. There is no guarantee if, or when, the project will move forward.

There are currently hundreds of children on a wait-list for child care in Headingley. The daycare operator in Phoenix School has been told that they will continue to have space within the school for the 2024-2025 school year only, that further expansion of child-care space within the school is not possible and that space may be reduced moving forward due to the shortage of classrooms. If new space is not constructed as planned, many families may be left without child care.

It is critical that the expansion and renovation of Phoenix School proceed as planned in order to support

the needs of students, teachers and families in the growing community of Headingley.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to proceed with the planned renovation and expansion of Phoenix School without further delay.

And this petition is signed by Emma Filion, Joe Filion, Rachel Decerby and many, many other Manitobans.

Teaching Certification

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early and middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early and middle years credit requirements for specific subjects including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas,

thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students deserve—receive, pardon me.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification, and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early and middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition has been signed by Félix Mathieu, Igal Press, Mira Koop and many other fine Manitobans.

* (14:40)

Provincial Road 210

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) Provincial Road 210, PR 210, is a 117.3-kilometre or 72.8-mile highway in the Eastman region of Manitoba that connects the towns and communities of Woodridge, Marchand, La Broquerie, Ste. Anne, Landmark, Linden, Ile des Chênes and St. Adolphe.

(2) A significant portion of PR 210 also runs through the constituency of La Vérendrye.

(3) PR 210 is a significant commuting route for Eastman families and is also notably used by those in the agriculture, tourism, trade and commerce industries.

(4) The condition of PR 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 is in an unacceptable state of disrepair.

(5) The planned pavement upgrade was promised more than 20 years ago when it was constructed with a flat surface suitable for pavement but has yet to be completed.

(6) The condition of PR 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 is in such bad shape that firefighters,

police and paramedic services are severely delayed when responding to emergencies.

(7) The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure as well as the Premier have the duty to respond to infrastructure needs identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to prioritize the reconstruction of Provincial Road 210; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to include the stretch of Provincial Road 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 in its reconstruction plans.

This petition has been signed by Jackie Klassen, Mack [*phonetic*] Masson, Adam Bergman and many, many other Manitobans.

The Speaker: No further petitions?

We will then move on to orders of the day, government business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Fourth Day of Debate)

The Speaker: And we will now resume debate on the motion moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton) for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Boniface, who has nine minutes remaining.

The floor is now open for debate, the honourable member for St. Boniface.

MLA Robert Loiseau (St. Boniface): L'Honorable Président, nos priorités sont claires. Les Manitobains font face à certains défis, mais notre gouvernement est déterminé à faire – à aider tous les Manitobains à mener une vie enrichissante.

Nous avons réalisé des progrès significatifs en seulement un an de service aux Manitobains. Nous avons embauché 870 nouveaux travailleurs de la santé, et nous facilitons l'accès aux médecins avec de nouvelles cliniques.

Les familles commencent à ressentir du soulagement grâce aux actions que nous avons entreprises pour réduire les coûts et créer davantage d'emplois. Nous avons immédiatement supprimé la taxe sur l'essence,

ce qui nous – vous permet d'économiser de l'argent à la pompe et de réduire l'inflation au Manitoba, la plaçant ainsi au niveau le plus bas au Canada.

Chaque enfant a de la nourriture à l'école pour qu'il puisse se concentrer sur son apprentissage.

Les services de santé progressent avec notre gouvernement, et cela inclut les cartes de santé des Manitobains. Nous avançons avec la nouvelle carte en plastique illuminée par le design gagnant, « Aurores boréales ». Les Manitobains pourront faire une demande en décembre.

Nous avons aussi embauché 630 nouveaux éducateurs qui aideront les enfants à apprendre. En renforçant notre système éducatif, nous nous assurons que nos enfants reçoivent l'attention dont ils ont besoin pour mieux apprendre.

Nous mettons à jour les programmes de sciences, établissons des résultats clairs pour l'éducation, l'enseignement de la lecture, et incluons une unité dédiée à la littéracie financière en neuvième année pour préparer les élèves à la vie après l'école.

Nous continuerons nos progrès pour améliorer l'éducation en français au Manitoba, guidés par la réintroduction du Bureau de l'éducation française. Nous allons également raviver le Secrétariat de la diversité culturelle et améliorons le service en français pour mieux servir nos communautés diverses.

Translation

Honourable Speaker, our priorities are clear. Manitobans face some challenges, but our government is committed to helping all Manitobans lead rewarding lives.

We have made significant progress in just one year of serving Manitobans. We have hired 870 new health-care workers, and we are providing easier access to doctors with new clinics.

Families are starting to feel relief thanks to the actions we have taken to cut costs and create more jobs. We immediately eliminated the gas tax, saving you money at the pump and reducing inflation in Manitoba to the lowest level in Canada.

Every child is provided with food at school so they can concentrate on their learning.

Health services are moving forward with our government, and that includes health cards for Manitobans. We are moving forward with the new plastic card illuminated by the winning northern

lights design. Manitobans will be able to apply in December.

We have also hired 630 new educators to help children learn. By strengthening our education system, we are ensuring that our children receive the attention they need to learn better.

We are updating the science curriculum, setting clear outcomes for education and the teaching of reading, and including a dedicated financial literacy unit in grade 9 to prepare students for life after school.

We will continue our progress to improve French-language education in Manitoba, guided by the reintroduction of the Bureau de l'éducation française. We will also revive the Cultural Diversity Secretariat and improve French-language service to better serve our diverse communities.

English

Finally, Honourable Speaker, one of the greatest highlights for me, personally, during the Throne Speech was when a group of small children entered the Chamber to sing O Canada in Ojibwe—in Anishinaabemowin.

And, Honourable Speaker, the light, the joy and the love which they brought into that—into this Chamber that day—no level of arrogance, ignorance or points of privilege could diminish the love, the joy and the light that is still present in this Chamber. And that is what our government plans on doing—continuing with the hard work that it takes to bring one Manitoba together.

Merci. Miigwech. Thank you.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): It is indeed a privilege to rise once again in this Chamber to put some words on the record in using my voice to relay the views and concerns and challenges facing the good people of Spruce Woods constituency in Westman, which is—I know we all have opinions on this—but is certainly, in my humble opinion, the best part of this great province. And so it's a privilege and an honour to be their voice here and to undertake this work of—as a legislator on their behalf.

Throne Speech 2024—you know, I think all Manitobans had hope, certainly. And I—from what I've read and heard in now a week since the Throne Speech was delivered—or, a week tomorrow—having been back in my constituency over the weekend, speaking with constituents once—when we got out of session—that they have serious concerns; particularly, not so much in what was said in the Throne Speech

but what was left out—completely left out—of the Throne Speech or vaguely mentioned in a sentence or two—some of the issues, certainly, that are most pressing to my constituents and I think most of us who represent rural areas and those who represent areas that are more than a 30-minute drive away from the Perimeter Highway.

So a couple of those items to discuss, you know. I think the biggest one would be the complete absence of a discussion on rural crime specific to rural Manitoba. You know, there was a brief mention of a committee set up specifically for Swan River. And listen, I'm very glad if that committee proves to be anything other than words and somehow gets them some results. I—we have questions and a healthy degree of skepticism about whether that will end up delivering any real results for the community of Swan River, but nonetheless, we're happy for them that at least they managed to get a mention or a shout-out from this government.

But overall, talking about the issues that myself and many others have raised about increasing property crime on farm properties and other rural acreages and in small towns where, you know, I've raised this before: police presence—and it impacts even just the different parts of my constituency.

My Brandon north constituents don't complain about never seeing the police. The Brandon city police do a great job of being visible in the community. They're in a tight geographic area, so I never hear from Brandon constituents that they don't see enough police presence in their communities.

But I hear it all the time from rural communities who maybe see an RCMP car drive through once a week, once every couple of days—maybe. And yet, there are crimes going on increasingly more frequently in all of these communities.

* (14:50)

And by the way, this is no fault to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who do an excellent job. They're facing severe staffing pressures for a number of different reasons.

But this government needs to support their work in hiring more officers in our rural areas, specific to our rural areas, and, I would argue, specific to western Manitoba.

There was no mention of police presence in this Throne Speech. There was no mention of rural crime

rates or property theft going on at increasing levels in rural Manitoba. It was completely absent.

And so, you know, that's a big concern, because the NDP government can't claim that they aren't aware of the issue. It's been raised when they're sitting here listening to it, day after day, week after week, by our Justice critic and many others. So they know that it's going on. But they haven't done anything about it, and they couldn't even be bothered to put a sentence into their 30-minute Throne Speech about it.

So we have a problem with that. We have a very big problem with that, and our constituents do as well. And so, you know, they're going to keep hearing about it until they start addressing it. *[interjection]*

And I know the Minister for Justice seems to have a lot to say now. I—didn't look like he had a whole lot of say in what was written into the Throne Speech, which is a shame, because he has a very important Cabinet position. Whether he takes it seriously or not is another question entirely. But it is an important position, and it's unfortunate that the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) team didn't work more of the issues that Manitobans are raising with respect to Justice into the Throne Speech. So, nonetheless, that's a big concern for us, and we'll continue holding this government to account on it.

With respect to Westman in particular, I'm not even sure the word Westman came into the Throne Speech. I know the Brandon Sun counted it up and Brandon was only mentioned three times. We can see the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) gets a lot of say in writing the Throne Speech as well, clearly.

And, you know, there was a few funny—not so funny, actually, for Brandon residents and Westman residents, but funny in a sad way—things that were missing; things that this government's talked about before that, all of a sudden, disappeared in the second Throne Speech of their mandate.

I'm thinking, of course, Honourable Speaker, specifically with respect to the medical school that they're allegedly creating at Brandon University, something that I think basically had unanimous community consent and support, and yet now it didn't even bother to get a mention in their second Throne Speech. They don't talk about it much, either, in any of their public communications when they're talking about how wonderful they think their record is on health care or anything else; they don't talk about that medical school.

So we have constituents—those of us that represent western Manitoba—who are saying how serious was this NDP government if they campaigned on this issue, put it in their first Throne Speech, have done absolutely nothing to get it off the ground in the 12 months since, and then it just—oh, didn't make the cut for the Throne Speech this time around. How serious were they about it?

Of course, we don't have any answers to that, Honourable Speaker, but we're going to continue asking the question until the Health Minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) come clean about whether or not they actually intend to keep that election promise. I have my doubts, but we'll see.

It's certainly the right thing to do for western Manitoba, for medical recruitment to our rural communities, as well as the city of Brandon and Brandon's very important regional hub medical facility.

And so we strongly encourage this government to get on with the work of building that training program in conjunction with updating the science facility at Brandon University to ensure that this is the premier place to get your medical degree and get into our rural Westman hospitals.

No mention of it from the NDP in this Throne Speech. I guess, Honourable Speaker, we'll watch and see whether it makes the next one.

Another thing that wasn't mentioned by this NDP government is Assiniboine College, recently branded—rebranded from Assiniboine Community College—a significant provincial asset in my constituency of Spruce Woods with their North Hill campus residing within my constituency's borders. Didn't get a mention at all. Not a single thing.

And I would note, Honourable Speaker, that that institution has some pretty significant things going on right now. They received the largest capital private donation in the college's history within the last 12 months, which the Minister for Advanced Education was there for that. They are rapidly fundraising at levels that have—are pretty historic in term—in western Manitoba standards, to build a new school of business and the Edwards school of agriculture and the environment to be the premier facility in those two subject areas in western Manitoba.

Where was the NDP on that? No mention, nothing going on at ACC and—for the them to see or talk about or support, I guess; very disappointing, on behalf of the college and everybody who supports their work, which is pretty much everybody in Westman.

So I'm not—we're not sure, if the NDP can't even recognize good things that the community is doing without them, why—why—can't they put those into the Throne Speech? We don't know. So, no mention of Brandon University and their new medical school, no mention of ACC and the very important and innovative programming going on there at all.

Another really interesting piece, Honourable Speaker, no mention of the Park Community Centre. What is the Park Community Centre, you might ask? Well, it is a facility that was in need of significant, significant renovation—in the Brandon East constituency, I might add, something that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) went door to door to door to door in Brandon and said, I've been nominated by this future Premier to be his candidate and I will get funding for this facility.

Where is that? Where is that funding, Honourable Speaker? The member for Brandon East, as well as the former minister of Municipal Relations have been absolutely silent on the Park Community Centre for the last 12 months of this administration, said absolutely nothing about it.

So maybe now, the new Minister of Municipal Relations, who is the member for Brandon East, can rumble around in his budget, hash it out with the Finance Minister and get some funding in Budget 2025 for that facility, but he couldn't get it done at the Cabinet table before.

And I think Brandon East constituents have a lot of questions for the member for Brandon East about why he made promises that it seems to be he's made no effort, no effort to deliver on for his constituency. And I'll say, he wasn't the Minister of Municipal Relations for any more than five days before the Throne Speech; he was still at the Cabinet table, though, and so he's just as culpable for not standing up for the issues and election promises that he made to his constituents—and, in fact, all Brandon residents—regardless of what Cabinet portfolio he held.

So, couldn't get it mentioned in the Throne Speech. No idea where this is at, although the Premier had said during his campaign at all the events in Brandon that he was going to get this done—we'll see, Honourable Speaker, we'll see whether they can deliver on that one or not, but I know Brandon residents are watching and I would hope the member for Brandon East decides to make that a priority now that he is in the department responsible for that area.

You might ask, well, you only talked about ACC that's in your constituency, and rural crime rates of course—no mention of the Sportsplex, either. Sportsplex is the premier recreation facility in Brandon north, which is part of Spruce Woods constituency, in serious need of investment in terms of their ice hockey rink plant and many other upgrades that are needed to that facility built for the Pan Am Games, you know—or, the Canada Games, pardon me. I was hoping, obviously; certainly been advocating for that facility to see some provincial investment—absolutely silent in terms of that.

And we know that the NDP have rolled out this massive change to education standards for those pursuing a career in education; no mention of that in the Throne Speech. No defence, none of the research provided that the minister talked about in question period today, defending their government's decision, not even a peep about this situation.

And so, Honourable Speaker, we know that the NDP have taken some very bad advice on this. And that happens, but they shouldn't be afraid to come out and walk this decision back, because it's in the best interests of Manitoba students and their futures for this government to do so. We will continue to—calling on the NDP government to do just that, and we hope that they will see the light and reverse this decision.

* (15:00)

In terms of further education issues, Honourable Speaker, you know, the NDP had this ridiculous line in the Throne Speech about they're going to build schools that are owned by folks down the street, not folks on Bay Street. *[interjection]* Yes, they're clapping. They're clapping, and I'm glad they're so proud of this initiative.

I'll tell you, Honourable Speaker, do you know what that means? It means that instead of using an innovative, publicly funded but privately built model to build Manitoba schools faster, to address smaller class sizes, which they campaigned on—instead of that, they're going to borrow the money to build them the traditional way.

And do you know where they borrow that money from, Honourable Speaker? It's not Main Street, it's not Bay Street in Toronto, it's Wall Street in New York when the minister flies there every year and says, gosh, we've just got to run another \$800-million deficit every quarter for this fiscal year, which is what they've done the first year that they've been in government.

So they're not borrowing from Canadian institutions, they're not building Manitoba schools with Manitoba companies or Canadian companies. They're borrowing money from Americans on Wall Street to finance the unsustainable level of financing that this NDP government just can't help themselves from doing.

So you're right, they're not supporting Canadian companies. They're absolutely right in the Throne Speech. They're not supporting Canadian companies who have a record of building schools across the country faster and on budget. They're not supporting Manitoba companies. There's no situation—they don't own the money that they borrow from Wall Street. These schools that they're financing with money from Wall Street aren't going to be owned. That debt is owned by brokers on Wall Street. And these folks have to pay that money back. They own that debt.

And this government is taking on a record, record level of it, and now they're adding on, doing it on the backs of Manitoba students and their education. We think that is absolutely shameful.

And we strongly encourage this NDP government to get to work and start building schools but to make sure they do it in a financially responsible way so that those students who maybe get to go through those schools and maybe don't, don't have to spend the next 65 or 70 years of their life paying off the NDP's debt for badly managing these projects, borrowing their futures away and failing to spend and control their budgets in a meaningful matter.

And so, Honourable Speaker, this Throne Speech gets an F. And we hope that the Education Minister, the acting Education Minister, the Finance Minister and whoever else had a hand in writing this, it doesn't look like very many of their Cabinet ministers had much of a say, because their departments barely get mentioned.

But whoever else had a hand in writing this, we strongly encourage them to go back to the drawing board, revert, rewrite, reintroduce and let's see if they can get it right the second time that they bring it back forward for Manitobans to consider. Because my constituents and those of many, many others in this Chamber are not satisfied that this NDP government is hearing them or proceeding with the priorities that matter the most to them.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): It's with 'greep'—a deep gratitude and unrelenting sense of

responsibility that I rise in this Chamber to respond to the Throne Speech.

Representing Kildonan-River East, my home, my roots and my community, is an honour I carry with profound respect and determination. Before I begin, I want to take a moment to honour a remarkable leader, mentor and friend, the recent late Harry Schellenberg, former MLA for Rossmere, who sadly passed away on November 20, 2024, at home, surrounded by family.

Harry dedicated his life to serving the people of our community with integrity, compassion and a tireless commitment to public service. His work as an MLA and an educator touched countless lives and left a legacy that continues to guide us.

Harry was more than a public servant. He was a mentor who believed in the power of community and the importance of lifting others up. Personally, I will deeply miss his wise counsel, and I know that fellow colleagues in this Chamber and, as mentioned, the Premier (Mr. Kinew), were—to benefit from his mentorship. His encouragement and his quiet but unwavering belief in the potential of those around him, his example of leadership inspires me daily, and I will strive to carry forward the values he embodied.

To Harry's family I extend my deepest condolences. Please know that his contributions to northeast Winnipeg and Manitoba at large will never be forgotten, and his memory will forever be a source of strength and inspiration to us all.

I also want to acknowledge another leader who paved the way in northeast Winnipeg, a woman I walk past every day on the wall as I come into this Chamber. Bonnie Mitchelson, who served our community in northeast Winnipeg for 30 years, the former MLA for River East, whose dedication to our community left an indelible mark.

Even though she's what my kids call the blue team, and I'm what is called the orange team to them, growing up in such a conservative community like North Kildonan and seeing a woman representative when I was a young girl in our community, I knew that I could grow up to see myself in this building, potentially, and in our—representing our community and serving one day.

The path they carved for us makes it possible for me to stand here today on behalf of you and your family and building upon their vision for Kildonan-River East.

Over the past year, I've walked alongside you, listened to your stories and witnessed the strength of our community. From the resilience of our seniors to the optimism of our youth, Kildonan-River East embodies what it means to face challenges and build a future filled with hope.

Let's not forget why we're here today: because Manitobans chose hope and action over the neglect of the past PC failed government. We inherited systems that were broken by years of cuts and mismanagement, particularly in health care, but we are rebuilding together as one Manitoba.

I am reminded of my own upbringing in North Kildonan, where my values were shaped at Donwood School, in community hubs like the Gateway community centre. These places taught me that success is borne from teamwork, and that our shared values of fairness and care for one another must guide us every day.

Today I live in Fraser's Grove with my family. Like many parents in our community, I face the same balancing act: juggling work, family and the challenges of modern life. When I meet you at your doorsteps or in neighbourhood hubs, I hear stories that mirror my own. Whether it's a parent trying to find affordable child care or a senior worrying about health-care access, these struggles fuel my commitment to work tirelessly for solutions.

Kildonan-River East is a place of extraordinary people, and we have all seen what happens when we come together. The Moberg family's difficult time, for example, taught us the true meaning of community, when neighbours, first responders and volunteers came together in their time of need. Earl Moberg's story reflects the compassion and determination that define us—who we are.

Seniors like Earl Moberg are at the heart of our community. They built the province we cherish today and they deserve to age with dignity and support. During the pandemic, I was at times one of the designated caregivers for my grandmother in her long-term care home. I saw the care provided by these dedicated workers, but I also witnessed the systematic gaps under the PCs that left families feeling helpless and seniors without the security they deserve.

This year, our government created Manitoba's first ever seniors advocate. This office will ensure that seniors and their families have someone in their corner, addressing concerns and fighting for their rights. We are also building our first new personal-care home in

Lac du Bonnet; expanding home care so seniors can age in place; and supporting inclusive spaces like the Place of Pride campus for 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors in Winnipeg.

Health care is another priority that touches every corner of our community, whether at Concordia Hospital here in northeast Winnipeg, or in conversations at coffee shops, I have heard your concerns about long wait times, rural-care shortages and the strain on health-care workers.

Under the previous PC Stefanson-Pallister government, our health-care system was weakened by years of cuts and shortages and closures. Manitobans were left waiting too long for care, and health-care workers were left feeling unsupported.

But in just over one year we've started to rebuild; much accomplished, more to do. We're—we've hired 870 net new health-care workers and begun work on new ERs at the Victoria and Eriksdale hospitals. These actions mean more Manitobans can access the care they need closer to home.

* (15:10)

Health-care workers are the backbone of our system, and we're making sure that they have the resources and respect they need. With 105 new institutional safety officers, improved work-life balance initiatives and mentorship opportunities, we've created an environment where health-care professionals can thrive.

Education is equally vital to our province's future. Growing up at Donwood School, I experienced first-hand how education can shape, not a child's mind, but their sense of purpose and community also. I still remember our school song from my elementary years at Donwood. Be the best that you can be, the spirit of Donwood.

That's why I was so proud to return to Donwood this year to announce Manitoba's universal school nutrition program. No child should have to learn on an empty stomach. This program is about more than just meals; it's about levelling the playing field so every student has the chance to succeed. Parents in Kildonan-River East have shared with me the difference it is already making in their child's lives.

We've also invested in hiring 630 new educators, updating science curriculum and introducing financial literacy in grade 9. These changes ensure our students are prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

And we're working to improve access to education for everyone, from Indigenous language programs, like the amazing Ojibwe bilingual program here in Kildonan-River East at Riverbend School. Some of these amazing—amazing students you had a chance to meet from Seven Oaks School Division just this past week during the Throne Speech, who sang our national anthem right here in the Chamber.

And I had the chance to connect with these students this morning at Riverbend School, bring a thank-you card on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and bring them little pins and visit with them in their classroom. And so I'm just so thrilled and honoured to represent one of those schools that offers this Indigenous language program.

As a working mother, I understand the critical importance of affordable child care. I know what it feels like to struggle with finding reliable care. I still remember vividly, standing in Superstore with my children in the shopping cart and getting the call that I was off the waiting list for a child-care space.

Not everyone, of course, has had that opportunity to get that call yet, but that is why so many of us are working so hard on both sides of this Chamber to make sure that more families will get those kinds of calls, to make sure that we can have affordable child care for everyone that needs it in Manitoba.

I know what it feels like to struggle finding, like I said, reliable care, to worry about making it home—making it to work on time and to wish for just a bit more support. Many parents in Kildonan-River East have shared similar stories with me and I want you to know that I hear you.

That's why we've introduced true \$10-a-day child care and created thousands of new spaces. We've raised wages for early childhood educators, recognizing their essential role in supporting families and shaping young minds. These actions mean parents can return to work with peace of mind, knowing their children are in good hands.

Affordability is a theme that resonates deeply with everyone in our province. Families are struggling with the rising cost of groceries, gas and housing. Seniors on fixed incomes are feeling the squeeze and young people worrying about their futures.

We acted quickly to eliminate the gas tax, saving Manitobans 14 cents per litre every time they fill up. We've introduced \$1,500—a homeowners' affordability tax credit to help families manage housing costs. And we're building a sustainable future through

initiatives like the electric vehicle rebate program and our affordable energy plan.

Manitobans in a rich—a province rich in resources and potential, our green energy and natural landscapes are gifts that we must protect for generations to come. That's why we've committed to protecting 30 per cent of our green space by 2030, signed the Seal River Watershed agreement and taken steps to modernize our Environment Act to hold polluters accountable.

The Throne Speech reflects a vision for Manitoba that I believe in. A province where families thrive, seniors are respected and children have every opportunity to succeed. It's a vision rooted in the values of Kildonan-River East: resilience, compassion and fairness. In our community, I see these values every day. I see them in the seniors gathering at Good Neighbours Active Living Centre, in the parents cheering on their kids at Gateway Community Club, Red River Community Centre and the workers who keep Concordia Hospital running smoothly.

As we move forward, I promise to continue listening, to advocate fiercely for your needs and to ensure that no one in our community is left behind. Together, we will build a Manitoba that reflects the very best of who we are.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): It is a privilege and honour that I get to stand to respond to the Throne Speech again this year—or not again this year but for the second time—and represent the great people of my constituency in Agassiz.

I'm pleased to stand in support of the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member from Lac du Bonnet. And I just also want to, you know, comment in—how important it is as we navigate through these challenging times, it's imperative to reflect on the pressing needs of all our communities and the great people that we represent in those communities.

Today, I want to take a moment to reflect on this past year. I've had the privilege of meeting many new people and establishing new working relationships with constituents as well as many stakeholders outside of Agassiz and, of course, within those boundaries as well. These interactions have allowed me to forge new bonds and gain deeper insight to not just local issues but many of the challenges that we see right across our province.

And many of those are families that are faced with these challenges, organizations, newcomers, health-care

professionals, educators, business owners, newcomers and also those that are dealing with mental health challenges and, of course, the medical issues that go along with that as well.

There's numerous issues at hand, and these challenges highlight a few of the urgent matters we all face in our constituency and right here in—and across Manitoba.

Unfortunately, I must express my disappointment that the Throne Speech fell short in addressing many of the needs across our province. It missed the mark on serving all Manitobans, particularly with regard to agriculture and support of Manitoba agriculture producers. This oversight is particularly concerning, given the importance of agriculture in our province's economy and the livelihoods that it supports.

The NDP's Throne Speech missed the mark again, especially for the families of Manitoba who are really feeling the incredible challenges that were faced. They are left feeling abandoned. This includes our most vulnerable populations.

The so-called gas tax holiday did little to alleviate the burdens faced by many of those who are struggling and those that need the assistance most. There was no acknowledgement of the urgent needs of the people who are struggling today and, unfortunately, it's only expected to get worse. Especially with the holidays—it's going to be a hard time for a lot of families to come up with extra cash to accommodate for extra grocery costs and perhaps gifts.

And more than ever, Manitoba families are struggling, and it's starkly evident in the unprecedented levels of food bank usage across our province. The statistics are alarming. I visited Harvest Manitoba this past week, and they've reported that there's record numbers of individuals seeking assistance, with a staggering 30 per cent increase in—since last year.

Over 50,000 Manitobans now rely on food banks every month—a figure that is both unacceptable and deeply concerning. And I see this increase in local food banks in my own constituency—I have visited several—and just in the past year, they've reported running out of supplies before they could meet the rising demand. Simultaneously, these organizations have had to distribute less food than usual to avoid depletion.

There is a critical need for collaboration between food banks and government entities to address the pressing issue of poverty and food insecurity. This

includes the urgent development of a comprehensive food security strategy for our province, yet the NDP's government's Throne Speech has failed to acknowledge the record-breaking demand for food banks or the issue facing our communities.

* (15:20)

The Premier's (Mr. Kinew) plan to remove restrictive covenants does not help those that are in need now, that are struggling to make the—to pay for their groceries and their bills. It gives false hope and certainly no guarantee in a drop in food prices. It's not a plan that's going to help Manitobans today that are going through these issues.

Moreover, the government's neglected to introduce any initiatives at reducing this poverty. They—Manitoba boasts some of the highest childhood poverty rates in the nation, and the Throne Speech, again, did not outline any tangible steps to alleviate this dire situation for Manitobans. We cannot turn a blind eye to the reality that families are facing.

Again, the needs of many have been overlooked, particularly when it comes to enhancing accessibility and equity for Manitobans living with disabilities. The government's promises to listen and engage fall short of addressing the urgent demands for support from these communities. We need to recognize that there's more that needs to be done to enhance accessibility throughout our province and ensuring that Manitobans can thrive regardless of their circumstances. And this NDP government has failed to recognize that in this Throne Speech.

The NDP cut funding to Green Teams, and we saw the negative impact of that just this past summer. This impacted many, many organizations and community programs in communities. I heard from many of those affected by this in my own constituency and what it meant for not just their organization or business, but the young people.

It was this side of the House, it was us over here, that brought light to this and raised the concern, and it was only then that the attention was brought the matter. So I raise the questions here again: Where is the Green Team funding in this Throne Speech? And if it's there, how will it be distributed? What do these organizations need to prepare for moving forward into their next hiring season?

So constituents in my area are wondering, are they going to be able to apply for Green Team funding next year. It's imperative in many businesses if they have that projection.

Furthermore, it's disheartening to see a lack of concrete plan to care for the—for and house our most vulnerable citizens. Demand for shelter services continues to exceed capacity, yet support for our vital shelter organizations was absent from this Throne Speech, and our most vulnerable deserve better. They deserve a government that prioritizes their needs and provides adequate support.

Another significant omission in the Throne Speech was the acknowledgement of overcrowding in our schools. The fact that we now have hallway classrooms under this NDP government is concerning. There was no mention of their plan to replace or repair schools that require urgent work, nor was there any acknowledgement of the nine schools that they have cut.

As I know first-hand—from first-hand experience, the substantial growth in the town of Neepawa, it has increased the student population, placing immense pressure on our existing educational infrastructure. Beautiful Plains School Division is one of the fastest growing school divisions, percentage-wise, in the province, and this trend shows no sign of slowing down. With class sizes forecasted to grow rapidly in the coming year and no additional spaces available, we need to ask: What is the plan for this community and the new school in Neepawa? How will we accommodate the rapid growth in these schools?

Portables are not a long-term solution. They are merely a band-aid to a much larger problem. We urgently need to build this school in Neepawa, and yet there is no mention of school 'infrastructure' in the Throne Speech.

Rural Manitoba is also not isolated from the increasing crime rates that plague not just the city of Winnipeg. It is troubling that there was no mention of rural crime in the Throne Speech. This omission indicates a recognition that the government cannot effectively deliver on justice in this province, particularly in rural areas.

Crime is increasing across our province, and this NDP government continues to fail implementing safety measures and a crime reduction strategy. What is the plan to protect Manitobans?

We see the impact in our communities, like those in Swan River. My colleague, MLA for Swan River, can attest to the impact this has, especially on the health-care professionals in the facilities in that area.

Let's take a moment and look at the health-care plan across our province or there lack of here in Manitoba.

This government campaigned on fixing health care, but yet there's been no significant changes indicating it's going in that direction, Honourable Speaker.

The expansion of health-care facilities in Selkirk was a great initiative and driven by the PC government in 2021 and 2022. This allowed for the completion of 800 surgeries. This achievement highlights the importance of infrastructure investment in improving health-care access and reducing wait times for patients.

However, despite this progress, there are concerns about the ongoing challenges in attracting and retaining health-care professionals. The NDP government has yet to outline a robust plan that matches the recruitment and retention incentives offered by other provincial health authorities, which is crucial for sustaining these operations and ensuring quality care.

Let's look at the emergency wait time strategy. Wait times have become a pressing issue across Manitoba, with the Grace Hospital reporting median wait times approaching five and a half hours. This indicates a significant strain on emergency services.

The alarming reports from emergency room doctors about hallway medicine reflect a situation where patients are being treated in non-designated areas due to overcrowding. Look at the rural emergency rooms. The challenges faced by rural emergency rooms, including intermittent closures, have 'compounded' the difficulties in accessing timely medical care for residents in these areas.

The situation at the Carberry emergency room is a stark reminder of the vulnerabilities in the health-care system, particularly for those living outside urban centres. Rural residents often face longer travel times to access emergency services, making the availability of local health care critical.

Listening to health-care workers. The narrative of the NDP government, listening to health-care workers, is contradicted by the recent statements from Manitoba Nurses Union. The MNU has called for increased safety measures in health-care settings, indicating that front-line workers feel their concerns are not being adequately addressed.

The ongoing issues of mandated overtime and burnout among nurses highlights systemic problems within the health-care workforce that require immediate attention. The reliance on agency nurses also raises questions about the stability and continuity of patient care.

I also noted the glaring absence of any mention regarding the provision of essential medical equipment for new rural hospitals. The need for diagnostic equipment in these facilities is not merely an add-on; it is a fundamental requirement for delivering quality health care. Access to timely and accurate diagnostics can mean the difference between life and death. It impacts the ability of health-care professionals to make informed decisions, ensure that patients receive the right treatment promptly and ultimately contributes to better health outcomes.

Rural hospitals often face unique challenges, including limited resources and higher patient-to-provider ratios. With the necessary diagnostic tools, these facilities are at a disadvantage, struggling to provide the level of care that urban hospitals can offer. The situation not only affects the health-care providers, but also places an undue burden on patients who may have to travel long distances for necessary tests and treatments.

Allocating funds and resources for advanced diagnostic tools should be a priority, ensuring that every community, regardless of its geographical location, has access to these services that it deserves. Delivering on these tools later on just drives up the cost and leaves patients' health compromised with increasing wait times.

I've heard from constituents and local doctors how imperative medical equipment is in the functioning of these new spaces. We've heard from the health-care professionals and the residents in Portage, where the hospital will need an MRI, and hearing it from the professionals and residents in Neepawa, where the new hospital will need a new CT scanner.

The NDP's Throne Speech has left Manitoba families feeling disappointed and unheard. We call upon this government to take decisive action to truly listen to the voices of our communities and to address the critical issues of food insecurity, poverty, accessibility and support for our vulnerable population. We need real solutions and a renewed commitment to the well-being of all Manitobans.

And what is the plan? This Throne Speech delivered nothing but empty promises and missed opportunities. A lot of this Throne Speech material does not meet the needs of everyday Manitobans and the challenges faced by many in our province. There is no substance or plan that shows actionable solutions with tangible improvements.

* (15:30)

On this side of the House, Honourable Speaker, we have a strong team, and we won't lose sight of the challenges, and we will continue to hold this government accountable.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for the Burrows—

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: —and just before I—before the honourable member begins his speech, there's some guests in the gallery that I'd like to take a moment to introduce.

We have with us seated in the public gallery 10 members of—from Latinas Manitoba, and they are guests of the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott)

We welcome you here today.

* * *

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Honourable Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to speak to our second Speech from the Throne, which has substance and which has a plan.

Before I start, I want to share a few good things, a few positive vibes. In honour of the sacred land we stand on and of the ancestors who once walked on it, I want to say a few words in my mother tongue, Punjabi.

Punjabi spoken.

And I would like to provide the translation for this right away.

I want to say, translating what I said in Punjabi, let's acknowledge that the land which we have gathered on is located on the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota, Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations and on the homeland of the Métis nation.

We respect the treaties that were made on these territories. We acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past, and we dedicate ourselves to move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Punjabi community of Winnipeg, settlers on Treaty 1 territory, acknowledge that this land was colonized and we come from a land that was also colonized. Keeping these shared experiences in mind, our community is taking time, energy and space to learn about the ongoing colonization of the territory

we reside on in order to justly walk on the path of reconciliation.

Honourable Speaker, I noticed this language-specific land acknowledgement at a few events organized by the Punjabi community, and I noticed that many people who listened to this and who did not belong to Punjabi community appreciated this a lot, and I felt good about it.

Why I did this in the Chamber today? We already do this land acknowledgement. Why I chose to do this in my mother language, Punjabi, and translated in English; there are a few reasons.

I want to reflect the pride I feel speaking my language in this Chamber. And I also want to reflect the beauty of this workplace that welcomes a diverse range of languages and cultures with honour and dignity. I wish we have a translation infrastructure for various ethnic languages soon in this Chamber.

And my most important reason to share this is to honour those children who were deprived of the right to speak their language in residential schools, who were teased and bullied for wearing long hair, who were taken away from their parents and families and never made it home.

I was not born in Manitoba. I was neither born in Canada. I was born in Punjab, the land of five rivers, and I'm proud of my first language, Punjabi, and my Punjabi heritage. I equally love English, which is my language at the workplace. I also love French no less than these two; however, I didn't get a chance to learn it yet—which is also my workplace language.

If you're wondering why I'm talking about languages, it's because I strongly feel that language pride is uniquely powerful to strengthen yourself and your connection with people around you. Since I got elected for the first time in 2019, I started learning a few words of Tagalog and Ukrainian that some of my constituents speak.

I have met many Filipino kababayans who have been continuously advocating for their language through Filipino bilingual program in Seven Oaks School Division and Winnipeg School Division in my constituency, Burrows, and beyond. I want to specially mention Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers Incorporated, MAFTI, for their hard work and advocacy to preserve their language and heritage.

I want to mention leaders like Mary Jane Napolitano and Genalyn Tan for their work. I want to

thank Winnipeg School Division superintendent Matt Henderson; Stanley Knowles School principal and vice-principal, both Andreas; staff, Amandeep Jaura and Jashan for the leadership for starting the Punjabi bilingual program. This is the first school in Winnipeg School Division to start a Punjabi bilingual program.

Before this, Seven Oaks School Division former superintendent Brian O'Leary and current superintendent Tony Kreml worked with us to start a Punjabi bilingual program at Amber Trails school. Over 90 students expressed interest against 60 seats available when the program started. A big shout-out to principal Ms. Navjeet Kambo and her staff for this initiative.

My colleagues from the 2019 class read petitions demanding Punjabi bilingual programs in 2021 and 2022. So thank you, my friends.

Our NDP government's second Speech from the Throne is a beautiful document. I want to specially mention the decision to commission a bison and baby bison statue on the front lawns of the Legislature. Looking at the bison would remind us all about our great province, Manitoba, and the baby bison would remind us about family ties that were harmed during the residential school era.

Honourable Speaker, we know we can't go back and change the past; however, we can make some good choices in our present to create a future that our families and kids deserve.

* (15:40)

Mistakes have been made in the past, but we can correct them today. We, on both sides of the aisle, represent far over 1 million Manitobans who voted us in. For what? As I understand, to serve them, to make their lives better. To honour and thank them for the opportunity to serve them.

Let's remind ourselves again that it is a privilege to serve Manitobans in this sacred Chamber. How generous those people would be who blessed us with privileged lives and handsome packages while their own kids do not have a playground and play structures they deserve.

How kind and big-hearted they are who voted you in to enjoy this beautiful workplace while they themselves work precarious jobs or minimum wage jobs to make both ends meet.

We cannot waste this great opportunity, blaming each other and politicizing almost every moment in this Chamber. We cannot heckle their trust away. We cannot dramatize defending their rights. My friends,

we have to get to work together; we have to find solutions to their problems while playing on opposite teams and maintaining mutual respect.

Look into the mirror and ask yourself how much time you spend serving your constituents versus the time spent on your political priorities. You know the answer.

Let's stand up for the people you represent. Political success will follow. And listen this: it's raining past mid-November in Manitoba. Is it because NDP is in government, or is it because Stefanson and Pallister were in power? No, none of the above. It's because of the climate change. We need to get together and address climate change.

Let's salute and learn from everyday heroes like Elwick Community School principal Stephanie Luna and staff, who walk door to door late evenings to feed hungry kids, along with Bear Clan patrol on their safety walks headed by Barb and Garry Alejo.

By the way, Garry Alejo ran against me in 2023. I appreciate his community work.

Let's salute O.V. Jewitt school principal Ms. Tannis, celebrating Diwali along with her school students, staff and parents wearing beautiful Punjabi dresses at the school event.

Let's salute 204 volunteers Leila and Rene Castro, Denny, Evo, Tek and their team, who take care of the streets and parks in our neighbourhood, collecting garbage and sharps. Let's salute Elwick Village and Resource Centre staff, who collect clothes and toys for the families in my constituency. Thanks to the generous donors as well.

Let's salute people like Tommy Douglas and grow up to match their personalities. Let's gather some courage and stop by a member opposite to ask, how's your family and kids?

We are part of this big machine called democracy. Let's oil it well. Let's use good, clean fuel to manage its carbon footprint. Let's get it serviced regularly, look at the owner's manual and follow it. If it says premium, only use premium only. Do not fill with regular; you would save a couple of bucks today, but eventually you would seize the engine and regret later.

Back to Burrows. I want to mention a business, a few businesses, like VC Cuevas bakery, Sugar Blooms, Kusina Express and Four Crowns restaurant in my constituency. They mean a lot for the community I represent, and they all keep doing great things for our people, including social work.

Dear Manitobans, I represent a very diverse constituency of Burrows. I'm not just talking about culture diversity; I'm talking about the diverse range of activities like fall and spring cleaning. These campaigns are handled by kababayans at the Filipino United Community Church in Burrows on Pritchard. I'm talking about the Ukrainian community and the congregation on weekends that brings three generations together to celebrate their heritage through language, food and friendship.

Talking about food, let's talk about delicious choley bhaturey and poori choley by Sharma Ji's restaurant on McPhillips. I invite you to go and try good food there. Try their aloo parantha at least once. Go to Punjabi Chaap Corner on Mandalay Drive and try their spring rolls and mango lassi.

I'm so proud of all these small businesses in Burrows who are making a positive impact on our economy and society as a whole.

Dear Burrows residents, I want to say this to you: Your government is hard at work for you. A few gentle reminders about our progress within one year in office are: We are fixing health care. We have hired 870 health-care professionals of the 1,000 promised under our first budget.

We have imposed a cellphone ban in schools to impact your kids' learning in a positive way, fully focused and without distraction. We have hired 630 educators in our schools to address the staffing shortages. A universally available school nutrition program is in place to help your kids feed themselves before their everyday learning experience. We want to make sure no kid goes to school hungry.

Orange Shirt Day is a stat holiday now. You can get together with your family and children and participate in events and discussions to learn about the harms done by residential schools and truth and reconciliation.

We have started the second session of the 43rd Legislature with our new Throne Speech that commits to many positive steps to make Manitoba better. We will bring a new mobile MRI to Thompson. A new seniors advocate office will protect you and your loved ones. A new plastic health-care card is coming; you can apply as early as December this year.

Under our administration, it will be easier to join a union. That means more respect and better pay for workers. And, yes, I can't miss this one: We will open two new Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation offices next year. Our focus is more police presence

on our streets. We are hiring more mental health workers so police can focus on violent crime.

Honourable Speaker, while our NDP team is in lift-people-up mode, unfortunately some members in this Chamber are still in send-them-back mode, and that breaks my heart. I am referring to those hard-working trucking professionals, many of them from my community, Punjabi community. They have been attacked by one of the members saying send them back.

I want to ask such members to educate themselves and stop spreading hate in our society. People voted us in to fight against racism, bigotry, stereotyping and hate. Spreading hate at a time we should be mourning the loss of lives is not leadership. Stop or else Manitoba voters would send them back in 2027.

My dear friends, please note, this is not your land. You have been allowed to settle by the great people of the Turtle Island because of their generosity, kindness and love for humankind. Grow up, please.

* (15:50)

Looking forward to continue serving Manitobans in light of the vision shown in our Throne Speech in question.

Thank you, merci, miigwech, shukria and Sat Sri Akal, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I am always happy to rise. I think the role of being elected as MLA, especially for the constituency of Selkirk, every day I get up with such tremendous pride that I represent that community and the community that I call home has chosen to allow me the opportunity to come here.

I think here, as legislatures—legislatives representing our community, we have a tremendous opportunity ahead of us. We have the ability to stand in this Chamber on a daily basis and ask questions and bring the current government to account to try to get answers for our constituents on the things that matter, to try to bring ideas forward that we've been asked to bring on behalf of the people who have elected us and even the ones who haven't elected us, to represent them as respectfully and as diligently as we can.

We have an opportunity to learn when we come here, and every day I learn something. Prior to being elected, I didn't know how laws worked. Prior to being elected, I didn't know the steps that it takes or the amount of influence certain stakeholders could have by simply talking to you about the importance of what they would like to see. And sometimes, items that you

didn't know about become vitally important to you when you see in the true light of what happens.

And when you have a Throne Speech, you would hope that it would cover all of the things that you've been sent here to represent. It would cover all of the hopes and dreams for a better future for the citizens of your constituency.

And as I come here, I'm educated all the time. Two years ago, I never had heard of Holodomor, and yet that goes back almost 92 years, and yet I didn't know anything about it. And I think that we need to educate people around our province of the importance of things in the past.

I never heard of the Trans Day of Remembrance prior to being here. Last year was the first time, and yet it's been around since 1999. And when we have opportunities to remove hatred or showcase the devastation that hatred could have on our society, we need to take that up.

As the critic for culture, heritage and tourism, I have the—not only the ability, but I have the desire and want to attend many different celebrations in our province, lot of cultural celebrations that I never had attended prior to being elected.

The—attending Diwali, as an example; showing a culture celebrating who they are and what their spirit is about was uplifting. To see everybody in their formal dress and attire, to walk around the booths and the trade areas and see the products on display and talk to a lot of the members, to listen to the speeches and engage with the members of that community is very humbling. It's very reassuring that we're heading in the right direction as a province.

And on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, when I attended in Selkirk Park and I met with the people, many of who I knew already, from the Selkirk Friendship Centre, who put on that celebratory day. They had the calls to action up on the—Selkirk park on the dike, and I walked up and down those calls to action, stopping and reading them, and they seem—they're—like they're attainable. They're something that we can strive to do as a government and as people that respect the rights and the will of other people.

I attended the Mino-Pimatisiwin event that was held at our largest arena here in Winnipeg. That event had representation from all Indigenous groups. It was a phenomenal event. And if anybody in attendance didn't leave there with heart and hope—their heart

filled with hope and emotion and love, they were not paying attention.

And for that, I am grateful for the people of Selkirk and the RM of St. Andrews for sending me here. And I believe it's our responsibility to come here and bring forward new ideas, bring forward all the important things that your community wants, not just for themselves but for their future and for the future generations to come.

What I'm very disappointed in is the amount of plagiarism that goes on in this House—the amount of bills brought forward by one of the parties which it's stolen from another party. The number of times I have sat here and witnessed it—I just thought, this has got to be a one-off. This has got to be something that happens on occasion—when somebody's desperate, they can't come up with something good, so it happens.

But—so when you see somebody like the member from Tyndall Park, who brings forward a bill that was known as Keira's Law, and that bill went through first reading, it went through second reading, and then it should have been sent forward to final reading and eventually got royal ascension. It was stopped. It was refused a call forward until the NDP could create their own bill to put their name on it, to say: Look what we did. But, in fact, it isn't what they did. It is taking other ideas.

And according to the Merrinian-Webster [*phonetic*] online dictionary, to plagiarize means to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own, to use another's production without crediting the source, to commit literary—literally theft, to present as new and original an idea or product delivered from an existing source.

Now, the NDP did not come forward and say, we're adding to the member from Tyndall Park's idea—we're going to put something which I've called before weasel words in there to try to make them their own.

So it says, all the following are considered plagiarism, but one of the most important: copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work whether you give the credit or not. Now, they did ask the member from Tyndall Park to second the bill, but it's only seconding a bill, not giving the credit for writing the bill. And the member across is beating his chest to say he did the right thing. That is not the right thing, taking somebody else's work.

So formally, I'm going to let this House know that any bills I bring forward, I'm claiming a copyright to them, and we may legally go forward from that point.

So when I was in the public sector, I worked with other organizations. I sat on the board of directors for many companies: Manitoba Aerospace was one of them; the Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association; the Agriculture Manufacturers of Canada.

* (16:00)

And one of the things we always did is we looked to the future. We didn't steal or plagiarize people's ideas. We worked together to enhance them and move them forward.

One of the things you need to do in order on these organizations to look to the future, is to figure out where the future is going to come from. Where is your workforce going to come from? Where is your industry going to get its sales? What are their barriers and the market conditions that you're going to face?

But what we are seeing from the NDP side, they fail to look forward to that.

And I'll give a classic example. They were giving themselves high fives in here for announcing that in Selkirk they're going to do hip and knee surgeries—800 a year, I may add. And when I speak to the surgeons in Selkirk and I talk to the health-care professionals who work for their surgeons and they said, how? At what expense is this going to happen? How are they going to achieve 800 surgeries when we already are scrambling for more theatre operation time?

So the operating rooms in Selkirk, and there's a few of them, are at the max right now. And in fact, the surgeons in Selkirk are very disappointed that some of their time that they should have gets allotted to Winnipeg surgeons that come out there and perform surgeries. They want to get that time back.

But the NDP government did not build any more operating theatres. They didn't add any more beds for hip and knee surgeries. They didn't add any more staff to take care of that. So that's going to come at the expense of somebody. Is it going to be the expense of the worker from Gerdau who's working daily in the steel industry, who is desperate for his colonoscopy because he's worried about cancer? Is that going to have him slip through the cracks? As he sits there anxiously awaiting a date for a surgery to determine if he has cancer or not, he may lose that spot because the NDP ideology.

Now, their ideology goes far beyond what people would think is normal. They've added to a program that the PC government was starting to initiate called

the surgical wait information system, the SWIM program. Now the SWIM program, it sounds like a great idea. Let's find out where people are in the queue, find out how long it takes them to get through the system. Great idea. We can find out what's going to happen, how long does it take, where do we need to spend our time and our resources to focus on to get people into the surgeries they need faster.

But do they go to the current EMR program systems that the doctors and front-line staff are using? No. Do they go to these ER systems and say, can you add some programming to your system so we'll be able to monitor what's happening now, and can we get that transferred over to the government or to the hospitals to make sure that we can get this done in a relatively painless fashion without creating a bunch of work for the front-line staff? The answer, Honourable Speaker, is no.

They've created a second, duplicate system that all the front-line staff that work in the surgical centres around our province are now forced to do double the work. Where is the time coming from? The people in this industry are at their max capacity. They're seeing growing wait-lists for all types of surgeries, many of them very important for the quality of life that people have, or even sustaining life. They need to make sure they focus on that, not do a redundant double-entry system.

So when the government takes a look at the programs to offer, they need to take a look at the experts out there that are currently conducting those, not just throw an idea forward just to say, look at my new idea—which is somebody else's idea. Plagiarizing yet again, but without having the ability to finish the task.

The people in Selkirk are getting burnt out trying to figure out a system that doesn't work and duplicates what they're already doing. A simple conversation with the programmers would have concluded a different result, would have had the expected outcomes that one would have hoped, not create another bureaucratic system that this NDP government is keen on doing.

I've got literally another 150 pages that I'd like to go through and talk about the failures of this government, but unfortunately, I don't think I have the time. I want more of my members to get up here and please speak to this.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): It's an honour—*[interjection]* Oh, thank you.

It is an honour to stand before you, not only as the elected MLA for Kirkfield Park, but also as someone deeply committed to the future and well-being of our children in our communities.

Before I was elected, my journey was profoundly influenced by my time working as a correctional officer and juvenile counsellor at the Manitoba Youth Centre. And in these roles, I came face to face with the harsh realities many young people endure. I saw neglect; I saw lack of support and the overwhelming feeling of being abandoned.

These experiences were eye-opening and heart-wrenching, revealing the critical flaws in our support systems and the urgent need for change. It is one of the reasons why I entered into politics.

One of the most painful realizations was understanding how impossible it is for a child to learn and thrive on an empty stomach. The lack of basic nutrition is a barrier that no child should face, yet it's a reality for many. This basic human need became a focal point of my commitment as I entered public service.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

One year ago, our NDP government pledged to make life better for all Manitobans, and today I am deeply proud to share the remarkable progress we have made in fulfilling that promise. We've taken significant steps to ensure that every child in Manitoba has the resources and the support they need to succeed and grow up healthy and happy.

First and foremost, education is the cornerstone of a fulfilling and prosperous life. Every child deserves access to quality education that can inform and guide them throughout their lives. This year, in a significant stride toward improving our education system, we hired more than 630 teachers across the province. This initiative was not just about increasing numbers, but transforming the educational experience for our students. With more teachers, we've been able to reduce class sizes, allowing for more individualized attention and support for each student.

Smaller class sizes create a more conducive learning environment where students can engage more actively and receive the encouragement that they need to excel. Recognizing the importance of focus and concentration in the learning process, we also made the decision to ban cellphones in classrooms. While

technology has undeniable benefits, in the classroom it often serves as a distraction. By removing cellphones, we are ensuring that students can focus better and engage more deeply with their studies.

However, education extends beyond the classroom; it encompasses the overall well-being and health of our children. Every child in Manitoba deserves the resources necessary to grow up healthy, happy and ready to take on life's challenges. This belief led to the launch of a universally accessible school nutrition program and initiative that is incredibly close to my heart.

I have seen first-hand the devastating impact that hunger can have on a child's ability to learn, hope and dream. Our nutrition program ensures that no child in Manitoba goes hungry. This program provides nutritious meals and snacks to children, addressing their immediate needs and laying the foundation for a lifetime of great health.

Children who are well-nourished are more likely to perform better academically, socially and emotionally. By ensuring that every child has access to healthy food, we are taking a fundamental step towards levelling the playing field for all children, regardless of their background or their circumstances.

This initiative brings broader benefits to our community. By making nutritious meals available to students, we're not only supporting our children's health and education, but we're also easing the financial burden on families.

* (16:10)

Parents can now rest a little easier knowing that their children will receive healthy meals at school, which alleviates some of that economic pressure that families are facing. And we know we can take every penny that we can get these days.

The introduction of a universal food program for children in schools can have significant implications for public safety. And this relationship can be explored through several key perspectives. And I'd like to go through those perspectives with you folks.

With nutritional and health outcomes, a universal food program ensures that all children have access to nutritious meals which can lead to improved health outcomes. Good nutrition is crucial for physical and cognitive development, reducing the incidence of childhood obesity, malnutrition and related health issues. Healthier children are less likely to suffer from diseases that might strain public health, resources or contribute to broader public safety concerns.

And we can look at educational performance as another indicator: proper nutrition directly affects a child's ability to learn and excel academically. When children are well nourished, they tend to have better concentration, memory and behavioural regulation, which can lead to improved educational outcomes. Higher educational attainment correlates with reduced crime rates and increased civic engagement, contributing overall to public safety.

So a reduction in food insecurity—this is an important one. Implementing a universal food program can help alleviate food insecurity among children and families. Reducing food insecurity minimizes stress and its associated negative psychological effects, which can decrease the likelihood of juvenile delinquency and violence, thereby enhancing community safety.

And we have social cohesion and equity: a universal food program promotes equity by ensuring that all children, regardless of socio-economic background receive the same level of support and nourishment. This can foster a sense of community, it can reduce stigma and encourage social cohesion, all of which contribute to a safer and more stable society.

We can even see how food nutrition can work alongside with emergency preparedness and resilience. When children receive consistent nutritious meals, they're better equipped to handle emergencies such as natural disasters or even economic stresses. This resilience contributes to overall community stability and public safety.

Schools that implement universal food programs can also serve as community hubs offering resources and supports for families. This can include nutrition education and opportunities for community engagement programs, reinforcing the social fabric and indirectly enhancing public safety.

So, in summary, a universal food program for children in schools can lead to better health outcomes, educational successes and social equity, all of which are cornerstones of public safety. By addressing the nutritional needs of children, communities can foster a safer, healthier environment for future generations.

Our progress over the past year is a testament to our unwavering commitment to the well-being of Manitoba's children and the community. We have made significant strides, but our work is far from over. We must continue to build on these achievements, assuring that the needs of our most vulnerable citizens are met and every child has the opportunity to thrive.

There's also encouraging developments in our health-care system aimed at improving the lives of residents of my constituency in Kirkfield Park. Our commitment to making health care more accessible and efficient has led to the opening of several minor injury–illness and injury clinics across the province, including in key locations such as Misericordia, ACCESS Winnipeg West and downtown Brandon. These clinics are a testament to our ongoing efforts to reduce emergency wait times and provide timely care for minor health issues.

Specifically, in our constituency—my constituency of Kirkfield Park—the Grace Hospital and ACCESS Winnipeg West have been at the forefront of this transformative initiative. By extending the operating hours at our primary-care clinics both at the Grace Hospital and at ACCESS Winnipeg West, we are ensuring that more residents can receive medical attention without the long waits typically associated with emergency rooms. This extension of hours is crucial because it means that patients with non-emergency conditions can be seen promptly, thus alleviating the pressure on emergency departments.

These changes are not just procedural updates, they are a significant improvement that have real impact on our community. By streamlining the process for treating minor illnesses and injuries, we're making health care more accessible and efficient for everyone. Reduced wait times mean that patients can return to their daily lives quicker without the prolonged anxiety of waiting for care, and these initiatives are making noticeable difference in our community.

Families can now access care more conveniently, and our emergency services can focus on those in critical need. This holistic approach to health care ensures that everyone in Kirkfield Park and across the province can look forward to a healthier, more responsive medical system.

Our dedication to improving health care is unwavering. Together, we continue to build a community where health-care needs are met promptly and thoroughly, ensuring a brighter, healthier future for all.

Miigwech, merci, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you for the opportunity to provide this House and the people of Manitoba my response to the future shown and highlighted by this NDP government in the past year

and also through the message that they've provided in the most recent Throne Speech.

Last year, I stood up to deliver a speech hopeful of political collaboration that would move Manitoba forward together. And these are the messages that we were hearing from the newly elected NDP government. I spent a significant amount of my time letting Manitobans know who I am and who I represent in last year's response to the Throne Speech.

I, at that point, left 12 years of municipal government representing, and was somewhat naive to thinking that all government, independent of party representation, are here for the betterment of the entire province, and once you get to work, it would be easy to put aside and see through a rational lens without political ideology dragging us in a direction which gives complete disregard to common sense.

Well, now a year later, I was wrong, and instead we have a government that stays true to the political ideologies that drive their political interests. After a year of sitting in this Chamber and seeing what we have seen debated and passed, it is clear to see that the NDP government doesn't have a lot to offer Manitobans.

It is sad, because Manitobans were fooled. They bought the message that was portrayed. They were made to believe that the NDP were going to be quick-acting and repair the issues that were concerning Manitobans and catered to by the NDP.

We can all agree that Manitobans were skeptical on electing an NDP government to manage our finances, but people become complacent and quickly forget the harm done to our economy under previous NDP governments.

It is hard for me to relate to the rationale that makes a person enticed to vote for the NDP government. And that is because of my constituents and the majority of the rest of Manitoba, we know that paying higher taxes and stagnating the economy makes life harder and less affordable for everyone, and that has a direct impact on funding the promises that the NDP have been making.

Our largest concern is that many promises have been made, both in the last election campaign and now through the last year. We've seen two throne speeches and a budget unfold, and yet the promises we aren't seeing come to fruition.

* (16:20)

During the delivery of this year's Throne Speech, my attention was quickly drawn to the points missing

as well as those that are contradicting. I represent one of the, if not the most, progressive regions of Manitoba. Southeast Manitoba has traditionally been very entrepreneurial and progressive. The people of the southeast understand how to make money and contribute to the growth of our economy together.

These people aren't only successful because they know what it takes to make the products that earn the revenue. They also know what it takes for a healthy community to grow and to grow a healthy economy.

When the Premier (Mr. Kinew) was talking about the economic horse that pulls the social cart during his campaign and early into the first year of government, it was something that I could relate to and agree with. The most important thing to realize about that analogy is that one doesn't come without the other, and that it is clear to see that the progressive southern region of Manitoba understands that balance.

The successful communities of the southeast are also guided by faith, which has driven most progressive communities to contribute to the health and wellness of their community in a structured and organized manner.

So when the Premier talks about a balanced approach to economic growth, I welcome him to leave the city of Winnipeg and see how Manitoba is actually run.

The problem that I am starting to see along with the rest of my constituency is that the effects of the NDP government are being seen along with the work that they contribute. My constituency especially, but much of Manitoba, has the mindset that so long as they are being provided the things that government is able to, and they are not, they are able to contribute. They are able to contribute in expanding the wealth of the province, as well as contribute to the tax structure of our government.

The issue right now is that we have a government so fundamentally loyal to their political ideology that they are willing to create undue hardship and harm along the way.

So as we go through the points outlined in the most recent Throne Speech and compare that to the budget rolled out this past year and compare that to what we've seen as far as results in Manitoba, we can grade the NDP on their performance.

The NDP ran a campaign—this past campaign on health care. They were the saviours of health care.

And Manitobans, as I stated earlier, they weren't going to elect an NDP government for fiscal responsibility and lowering taxes and growing the strength of our economy, attracting more people to the province of Manitoba. That's not why they elected an NDP government. They had become complacent and, coming out of a pandemic, had looked at the shortfalls that we have in the health-care system in Manitoba.

So the NDP took advantage of that and had misled the province and the voters of Manitoba, primarily in the capital region, that the health care that they have could be improved and expanded under an NDP government. Moving forward a year, we haven't seen any improvements to the health-care system in Manitoba. Unfortunately, it's gotten considerably worse.

As I say, they fooled Manitobans into believing that they would be the saviour of health care. Although the largest problem is that they are fundamental to their political ideology. And that becomes very dangerous when you are needing to provide health and safety for the people of the province.

And where I'm going with that is: under the previous government, we were able to catch up with procedures like hip and knee replacements. And we were able to catch up with them because of a broad, open-minded approach to the shortcomings that we have within our province.

So we used all resources available to us to provide the care to Manitobans with their tax dollars, and ultimately, while also being mindful of cutting taxes to encourage growth in the province. So while we were cutting taxes, we were able to provide more health-care services to more Manitobans. We were able to invest in the infrastructure needed to deliver those services.

And in the meantime, some procedures were negotiated and delivered outside of the province of Manitoba, where there is additional capacity. So these were people that are willing to contribute to the economy. These are people like those that I represent in the progressive southeast corner of Manitoba that need to go back to their job. They need to go back to their business. There are families relying on them.

It's hard to contribute to the growth of your economy when your knee is limiting your mobility, or your hip. It's much more important to put political ideology aside and access that care to get someone healthy and back into the workforce.

Like I say, many Manitobans, as you can see by the representation in this Chamber, didn't fall for it.

Many Manitobans, luckily, are—the majority of the province, says geography, are represented by Progressive Conservative MLAs. And it's because the communities of rural Manitoba, they can remember the last time that the NDP had control of the health-care system. During that time, the NDP closed 17 rural ERs, leaving communities driving hundreds of extra kilometres. These are communities that contribute and are willing to contribute to the growth and prosperity of our province.

Hip and knee wait times under this NDP government have once again shot up, which is the highest it's been in the past five years. The effects of wait times for hips and knees are due to the cancellation of these negotiated, out-of-province procedures, which was clearing the backlog, while also building the capacity within our province.

I have examples of the detriment that a Manitoba NDP government has to health care in my corner of the province. ERs closed. Access to health care cancelled. A unique example of health-care delivery is the Altru agreement in the far southeast corner of the province where people are hundreds of kilometres away from accessing Manitoba health care and a well-negotiated agreement with the United States is in place.

I have stood before this House and asked the minister to meet with the communities to give them certainty on the health care that they are able to access, without any response whatsoever 'til this day.

Our PC team, though, when—under the former government, put forward \$400 million to recruit, train and retain more health-care workers in Manitoba. This resulted in hiring over 2,000 health-care professionals over just a two-year period.

What do we hear day after day from this NDP government as their plan for fixing health-care fails? We hear 800 new health-care workers. We don't see them. It isn't translating into better health care, because we see the highlights of the news articles every day showcasing the disrepair of the Manitoba health-care system.

So we don't see them, but even if it was to be true, they're still 200 health-care workers behind what was just the norm under the previous NDP government.

* (16:30)

Another area that the NDP fooled Manitobans into electing them was education. Teachers were hammering up election signs: be mindful of education

in your next election and vote a government who cares about education.

Well, under the previous PC government, and I should say under all previous PC governments, that's when infrastructure was actually built in education across our province. If you go to any community outside of the city of Winnipeg and look at a school, ask when it was built, and then pull up your phone and google search which government was in power during that time. The majority of schools built across our province was under the leadership of Progressive Conservative government.

Now, we once again are under an NDP socialist government, which should be protecting education across our province. But no, all of the planned schools moving forward—and I should say these are schools in communities like Grunthal, Manitoba, who is progressive, forward-thinking and rapidly growing, and they need children to be educated in a public school system.

You would think the NDP government could support that. But no, what they've done is they've put a further burden on that school; temporary classroom spaces have been eliminated from that school, and a project that was set to be started this year has been cut, leaving children in hallways, in the music room, in the library and in the basement. Students of the Green Valley School don't even have a library anymore because of the poor planning and fundamental loyalty to political ideology by this NDP government.

It's disappointing to see that they convinced the teachers that if they rallied support for an NDP government, everything would be good, everything would be great, but the only thing that was negotiated was better agreements for the union. So, as the NDP got elected, they paid the unions for their support where the loyalty lies within the unions. Unfortunately, it is at the cost of education to students.

And we further see that now, moving forward, with most recent announcements of teacher stand-ins. So now the NDP are scrambling that they need more teachers in the system—everyone knows that. Unfortunately, they don't understand that you need space for teachers. But, you know, that's another topic. I'll focus on the teachers. It's important that we have the teachers to educate the students, because we are a growing population in Manitoba.

The answer for the NDP has been to cut the credentials for a teacher. So now, we don't know where that's going to end, but right now, we've seen that it's

in lowered math standards and credentials—English. But where it's going to stop, we don't know. You know, how quick are we going to mainstream anybody becoming a teacher, educating our students. And the effects are our students, the future of Manitoba, are going to pay the brunt of the cost.

So those were areas that Manitobans were fooled. The province—or, the NDP party didn't campaign on saving infrastructure and strengthening and building the infrastructure of our province, but it's something that they've said since their last Throne Speech and again in this Throne Speech and through their budget, that they are mindful of the importance of infrastructure in our province.

Unfortunately, the only thing that we've seen is a \$160-million cut to the budget this past year, and \$100 million of that was in water infrastructure. So when I was sitting and listening to this year's Throne Speech, I was—had my ears open to any potential recognition for the importance of infrastructure and the importance that it plays in growing and prospering our province, and the only thing that I heard was a commitment to outlet channels for flood mitigation in the Interlake.

I'm not sure how unorganized the department of Infrastructure is under this NDP government, but the week prior to that during Estimates, the Infrastructure Minister of this NDP government had said that she had called on a pause by the federal government to pause—potentially eliminate that project from the NDP books. So they're contradicting themselves on an important project for Manitobans, and it's leaving great uncertainty for all Manitobans.

So, as I look forward, I'm hopeful that Manitobans are waking up and recognizing the selection that they've made.

Thank you.

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker—[interjection] There you go, Swan River.

It's a privilege to stand before you today in this historic Chamber, representing the voices, aspirations and the determination of the communities we serve. Today, as we embark on a new legislative session, we reaffirm our commitment to building a stronger, healthier and more equitable Manitoba.

As leaders, we are entrusted with the responsibility to not only respond to challenges, but to envision and act upon opportunities. Together, we will

work towards a Manitoba that leaves no one behind, a province where every citizen—no matter their background, postal code—can thrive.

At the heart of our shared vision lies a principle that resonates deeply with all of us: access to quality health care is not a privilege; it's a fundamental right. Yet we must acknowledge the disparities that persist, especially in our rural and northern communities. These disparities affect not only individuals but entire families and communities, forcing people to make difficult choices about their health and well-being.

Our government has heard the concerns, the struggles and the urgency in the voices of Manitobans. That is why I am immensely proud to highlight a transformative step forward: the introduction of a mobile MRI machine for northern Manitoba. This initiative represents more than just cutting-edge technology. It symbolizes a promise to deliver timely life-saving diagnostics to communities that had been underserved for far, far too long.

The mobile MRI will travel to rural and northern Manitoba, bringing care directly to people. No longer will residents have to endure the stress of long-distance travel or wait in extended queues for diagnostic imaging. This program is a game-changer, ensuring that health care follows the patients, not the other way around.

But we must go further. The mobile MRI is just the beginning of a broader strategy to address systemic inequalities. We are expanding health-care infrastructure, investing in primary-care facilities and exploring innovative solutions to recruit and retain health-care professionals in underserved regions, including the North.

Health care is a cornerstone of our agenda but is only—it is only one part of the foundation upon which we will build stronger communities. A healthy Manitoba is also one that offers economic opportunities, safe neighbourhoods and support systems for all its residents.

* (16:40)

We are committing—committed to revitalizing our rural and northern economies by investing in infrastructure projects that create jobs and support local business. And prime example of this is our government put \$30 million toward the Port of Churchill, the rail line, and that's coupled with an additional \$30 million from our federal counterparts. That's a total of \$60-million investment in northern Manitoba,

ensuring that Churchill is the heart of exports for our province to other world economies.

Our government will work closely with Indigenous communities to co-develop economic initiatives that respect the land, culture and traditions. This collaborative approach not only drives economic growth, but fosters reconciliation and mutual understanding.

Education is another critical pillar of our plan. Every child in Manitoba deserves access to high-quality education that prepares them for a future filled with possibilities. We are increasing funding for schools, supporting innovative teaching methods and addressing the gaps in resources for students in remote areas. A well-educated population is key to a thriving Manitoba.

As an Indigenous MLA, I am deeply committed to advocating the—advancing the principles of reconciliation. True reconciliation is more than a symbolic gesture; it requires meaningful action. We will continue to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action by ensuring that policies are informed by the lived experiences of Indigenous people.

The mobile MRI program, for example, is not only a health-care innovation—excuse me—but also a step forward to addressing the health-care inadequate—inadequacies faced by Indigenous communities. It is our responsibility to ensure that all Manitobans—First Nations, Métis, Inuit, non-Indigenous alike—have access to care and opportunities they deserve.

Our commitment to a brighter future includes protecting the environment. We recognize that climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time and we will take bold steps to address it. From investing in clean energy projects to supporting sustainable agriculture, we are laying the groundwork for a greener Manitoba.

Our government is also dedicated to improving public transportation, ensuring that our rural communities are better connected to urban centres. The mobile MRI machine program is a prime example of how mobility can bridge the gap between services and those who need it most.

As we move forward, let us remember that the strength of Manitoba lies in its people. It lies in the resilience of families, the entrepreneurs and dedication of health-care workers and the wisdom of our elders. Together, we can overcome any challenge, any size, every opportunity.

Today, I call on all members in this Chamber to work collaboratively. Let us set aside partisanship and focus on what unites us: the well-being of all Manitobans. By working together, we can build a province that is not only prosperous, but is compassionate and just.

In closing, I want to emphasize that the work we do here is not just about us; it is about the people we represent. It is about ensuring that every Manitoban feels seen, heard, valued. It is about creating a legacy of hope and opportunity for all future generations.

The mobile MRI machine is a symbol of what we can achieve when we put people first. It is a testament to our shared belief that no one should be left behind and that every community deserves access to the tools and resources that enable them to thrive.

Let us move forward with prosperous courage and steadfast commitment to serving the people of Manitoba. Together, we can build a province that reflects the best of who we are and the limitless potential of who we can become.

Ekosi. Thank you.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): It's an honour for me to stand up today to speak to the Throne Speech that was given by the—last week by the NDP government.

I found that there was a lot of things that were lacking, and I believe that we need to address some of those as well as I would like to take the opportunity to speak about how it relates directly to my constituency.

I'm so very proud to represent the constituency of Morden-Winkler. Our community is a—is rural with all the different benefits of having business and industry and jobs available. The community is generous beyond belief, one of the most generous communities across the country, and I couldn't be more proud to call it my home and proud to have it—been elected to the community of Morden-Winkler and the constituency of Morden-Winkler. I hope I never take it for granted and continually work hard to make sure that I represent them to the best of my ability.

That brings me to the province of Manitoba and the current government. Being from a rural community gives me a different perspective, I believe, than many MLAs who are strictly from rural areas—or sorry—yes, who are strictly from city areas.

I have the benefit of being from a rural area, but that may not—but I understand that my constituency has both rural and city both. I have the benefit of

having both conveniences rural, and the conveniences of the city cause me to have experience in many other things such as availability to a lot of services and things that are very city-oriented.

Today I want to emphasize the fundamental principle that is very important, I believe, to the fabric of our great province of Manitoba: the importance of equal representation for both our rural and urban communities.

As we navigate the complexities of 'governance', it's crucial for us to recognize the unique needs and contributions of all Manitobans, regardless of where they call home. Manitoba is a province rich in diversity, with vibrant urban centres like Winnipeg and Brandon, alongside vast rural landscapes that are home to countless communities. Each of these areas has its own distinct character, challenges and opportunities. Urban areas are often seen as economic powerhouses bustling with innovation, culture and diverse populations.

Our rural communities are often—are the backbones of agriculture industry, rich in natural resources and steeped in tradition. Both sectors are—of our—both sectors are very vital to our province's identity and prosperity. My constituency has all of these characteristics, and I am very proud of that.

However, the reality is that rural and urban communities often face different issues. Our rural areas grapple with challenges such as housing affordability, public transportation and access to health-care services. Many have to drive long distances to get seen by specialists and to have the testing that they need. Rural communities may struggle with issues of infrastructure development, access to advanced education like universities and the sustainability of local economies, especially for the smaller communities.

If our government fails to address these disparities, we risk creating a divide that undermines unity and strength of our province. And we want unity in our province, because we're all important to the economic development and health of our province.

It is imperative that the government of Manitoba actively seeks to represent both rural and urban interests equally. This means not only ensuring that policies are inclusive, but also that decision-making processes involve voices from all corners of the province. By fostering open dialogue and collaboration between urban and rural leaders we can create a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges we all face

and work towards solutions that benefit everyone in our province of Manitoba.

* (16:50)

More equal representation fosters a sense of belonging and community. When all Manitobans feel heard and valued, we strengthen the bonds that tie us together. This unity is essential for addressing larger issues: economic development and social equity. These are all important things.

By working together, we can harness the strengths of both urban and rural areas to create a more resilient and prosperous Manitoba. Like the member speaking before me, he said that we can—it's a non-partisan thing. We all need services and we all need support in this whole province, no matter where we live.

I believe that the NDP government can do better and represent all Manitobans. Let us commit to a future where the government of Manitoba is truly represented—represents interests of all citizens in Manitoba. By prioritizing equal representation for both rural and urban communities, we can ensure that every Manitoban has a voice in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

Together we can build a province that is not only inclusive but also thriving, where every community has the opportunity to flourish. We need to ensure all of our province, both north, south, rural and urban, are a priority to every government official.

That brings me to some of the things that I believe we need to work on for my constituency and my area specifically. I want to bring a few current, important issues forward that we need more—that are more desperately needed in our area of rural Manitoba, southern Manitoba. I want to discuss a topic that's often overlooked but is crucial for the prosperity and growth of our communities in southern Manitoba: waste water infrastructure.

As we navigate the challenges of 21st century, it is imperative that we recognize the significance of effective waste water management systems in fostering sustainable development, protecting public health and ensure—enhancing our quality of life.

First, let us consider the role that waste water infrastructure plays in safeguarding public health. I think this is something we often overlook. Properly designed and maintained systems ensure that waste water is treated effectively before it is released back into the environment, as we have seen in the past with Lake Winnipeg.

This is not just a matter of convenience, it is a matter of health and life. Contaminated water can lead to serious health issues, including water-borne diseases that can affect families and communities. We need to invest in robust water infrastructure as we invest for—it will help our citizens, ensuring that everyone has access to safe, clean water.

Also we need to be economically—or, environmentally sustainable. Southern Manitoba is blessed with rich natural resources and rivers and lakes and wetlands, just like the rest of the province. These precious ecosystems are vulnerable to pollution and—from untreated and—in untreated waste water. By 'poritizing' waste water infrastructure, we can protect our environment and maintain natural—the natural beauty and attracting tourists and—into our area.

A clean environment is not only vital for our health but also our economy. In addition to the health and environmental benefits, water infrastructure is a cornerstone of economic development. As our community grows, so does the demand for reliable services. Businesses and industries require efficient water—waste water systems to operate effectively. When companies consider relocating or expanding, one of the key factors they evaluate is the ability—availability of more—modern infrastructure.

By investing in waste water management, we create an—sorry—we create an environment for businesses which in turn generates jobs, stimulates local economies; and a strong water infrastructure is not just a utility, it is a catalyst for economic growth. And currently, southern Manitoba and Morden and Winkler communities are needing support from the current government to advocate for funding for our waste water projects.

So I want to encourage the current government to take a look at that and to please—to support our community in rural Manitoba and help us with our waste water projects.

The resilience of our waste water systems becomes more critical as time goes on. Growth has stopped; we need to continually work towards modernizing our waste water systems to enhance our availability and our ability to continually grow and be the economic driving hub of southern Manitoba that we are.

The importance of waste water infrastructure in southern Manitoba cannot be overstated. It's a critical component of the economic development and social well-being of our area. We look to the future—as we

look to the future, we must commit prioritizing investments in waste water management systems to support our communities for generations to come.

Another critical issue I want to discuss that affects our communities in southern Manitoba, is the importance of a women's shelter, support and transitional housing. Every day, countless women and children face the harsh realities of domestic violence, homelessness and economic instability.

In southern Manitoba, shelters provide a safe haven for those fleeing abusive situations, offering not just a roof over their head but also essential support services. These shelters are lifelines, providing immediate safety, emotional support and access to resources that empower women to reclaim their lives.

Transitional housing plays a vital role in this journey. It bridges the gap between emergency shelter and permanent housing, allowing women to regain their independence at their own pace. This type of housing offers stability, which is crucial for healing and rebuilding lives. It provides a nurturing environment where women can access job training, counselling, child-care services and enables them to develop the skills and confidence they need to thrive.

Moreover, investing in women's shelters and transitional housing is not just a moral obligation, it is an investment in the future of our communities. When women are supported, they can contribute positively to society, fostering healthier families and stronger communities. In southern Manitoba, we must continue to advocate and increase funding and resources for these essential services.

I'm asking the current NDP government to please realize that southern Manitoba is in desperate need of funding for this project. Together, we can create a community where women—where every woman has the opportunity to live free from violence and fear, and where they can build a brighter future for themselves and for their children.

Another top-of-the-mind issue in my area is I want to address the effects of all health care in

Manitoba, but also the current government has the opportunity to enhance—and well-being of every citizen in southern Manitoba and across the province with their health care.

What are they doing? We need action, not listening tours.

First and foremost, we must prioritize funding for our health-care system. Increased investment including in hospitals and clinics and community health services will ensure that we have resources necessary to provide timely and effective care. This includes hiring more health-care professionals, reducing wait times and expanding access to essential services.

Secondly, to focus on mental health and addiction treatment, we can provide care—we need to provide care that addresses the needs of each person—not only improve individual outcomes but also to strengthen our communities.

There are so many things I could speak about today that are really important to both southern Manitoba, to my community, and also to the province of Manitoba.

I want to encourage and—the current government to continually work towards working together with us—working together for the people of our province and to work together to enhance both health care, transitional housing, whatever is that we need in our areas—whether that be in the city or in the country, in the rural areas. I want to encourage that we work together to see all Manitobans and their needs.

Thank you.

* (17:00)

The Deputy Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the debate will be open.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 25, 2024

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