

Fourth Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Thompson	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On a matter of House business, Madam Speaker, given the current weather conditions Manitoba's experience and following consultation with the Speaker's office and the Clerk of the Assembly and in consideration of the ability for staff to be able to both get home and access the building, potentially, I have a series of leave requests.

Could you please canvass the House for leave: (1) for the House to rise today at the conclusion of routine proceedings; (2) for the notice filing deadline today to be the hour of adjournment, not 5 p.m.; and (3) for the House to not sit tomorrow: Thursday, April 14th, 2022?

For clarity, if this is agreed to, this would mean that when the House adjourns today it will stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 19th, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the House to rise today at the conclusion of routine proceedings; for the

notice filing deadline today to be the hour of adjournment, not 5 p.m.; for the House to not sit tomorrow: Thursday, April 14th, 2022?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

And for clarity, this means that when the House adjourns today it will stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 19th, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 230—The Budget Impact Reporting Act

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 230, The Budget Impact Reporting Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 230, The Budget Impact Reporting Act.

As we slowly transition into a post-pandemic economic state of affairs, it is imperative to think about sustainable economic prosperity in Manitoba. The government's financial decisions ultimately have a direct impact on the environmental well-being of our province.

Bill 230 will ensure that the Minister of Finance reports on the effects of the government's budget decisions on economic and social inclusion as well as greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba, and I look forward to unanimous support for this bill.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Awareness Day

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I am honoured today to recognize that tomorrow is the Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Awareness Day. This is a day where we can acknowledge the harms done by this crime and work towards raising issue-raising awareness on this issue.

In Canada, publication of intimate images without consent is a crime that affects thousands of individuals each year. In 2021, Cybertip.ca found that there were a 58 per cent increase in non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

The COVID-19 pandemic also magnified these issues of the distribution of non-consensual intimate images, as individuals were forced to live their lives online. This resulted in individuals experiencing heightened levels of vulnerability regarding the distribution of intimate images.

After the first year in the pandemic, Cybertip.ca saw a 106 per cent increase in reports from people who were coerced into sending photos or had their intimate images distributed without their consent.

One of the things that we can collectively do to keep one another safe is understanding consent and what that entails. Consent should be clearly and freely communicated, and free of intimidation or threat, and should happen every time for every type of activity. This includes knowing and respecting a person's own boundaries as well as the boundaries of others.

Creating a culture of consent and normalizing boundaries can help in forming and maintaining healthy relationships online and offline. The Manitoba government website resources on consent—has resources on consent and I encourage everyone to visit those resources.

The distribution of intimate images can have a devastating and lifelong impact on someone's life and can leave those affected feeling violated and humiliated. This includes feelings of social anxiety and isolation, harm to relationships with their partners, friends and family and so much more.

Madam Speaker, no one deserves to experience such a devastating invasion of privacy and the effects of isolation and harm to their personal relationships. That is why in Manitoba, alongside several other provinces such as Saskatchewan, Alberta and Nova Scotia, have worked towards protecting individuals from this disturbing crime through legislative matters.

In 2016, Manitoba passed The Intimate Image Protection Act to help stop the distribution of non-consensual sexual imagery and provide victims more avenues for seeking justice.

Tomorrow's day of awareness was first established in Manitoba in 2020, with Manitoba being one of the first provinces to take action. Our Province is proud to be a leader on this issue. Again, Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to proclaim April 14th, 2020 as the non-consensual distribution of intimate awareness day.

Together, we can create awareness and make necessary changes to protect individuals at risk of this crime. The more we can do individually and collectively to support women and girls and keep everyone safe in the province of Manitoba, the better we all will be in our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): As our lives have become increasingly more virtual, so too do forms of sexual violence. On this 2022 Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Awareness Day, our NDP caucus reaffirms our commitment to combat and condemn the sharing of individuals' personal photos without their consent, Madam Speaker.

This form of sexual violence, so grotesque and so vulnerable, demands a multi-faceted response. There needs to be rigorous legal protections for victims, like the legislation introduced by the Manitoba NDP in 2015 that allows victims of revenge porn to sue those who shared their images.

* (13:40)

But there's still much more work to be done, Madam Speaker. Organizations, in particular post-secondary institutions, need to establish rigorous protocols to deal with the cases of online sexual violence involving all of their collective members. We commend those doing really critical and necessary work in this regard, and in particular the Winnipeg-based REES organization, which stands for Respect, Educate and Empower Survivors.

REES designed an easy-to-use online reporting platform that has partnered with many universities across the country, including all post-secondary institutions in Manitoba. And in recognition of their work, I'd like to enter the—record the—enter into the record the names of REES's employees and Youth Advisory Board into Hansard.

There's also work for all of us to do as individuals. We need to do our part to ensure the culture—and change the culture around image sharing. We need to make it clear there's nothing acceptable about sharing intimate images of others. We need to ensure we have tough conversations when we hear about potentially inappropriate things that our friends, family members or even co-workers are doing or contemplating doing.

In Canada, one in 10 ex-partners has threatened to release sexual images on the Internet. Citizens need to know that we are all collectively against these grotesque threats and actions.

Finally, Madam Speaker, recently, Brittany Roque was awarded \$60,000 in damages when intimate photos of hers were released without her consent. I want to publicly acknowledge Ms. Roque for the incredible strength, determination and courage that it took to go forward and to sue before the Manitoba courts. Today, on this side of the House, and I'm sure on all of our colleagues in the Chamber, we lift her up for the work that she's done and we say miigwech for that important work.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall—*[interjection]* Pardon me.

The member, I believe, had asked for leave to include—*[interjection]*—oh. The member would need to leave as—in a ministerial statement. The member needs to request leave to include those names in Hansard.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

REES employees: Carter Dawson, Chris Derossi, Nicole Leeson, Mary Lobson, Vatineh Magaji, Nell Perry, Dr. Jocelyn Proulx

REES Youth Advisory Board: Samantha Allan, Valeriya Burdeyny, Michaela Cardamone, Tracy Chang, Niko Coady, Reese Estwick, Breanna Laggo, Kate Mullin, Binod Pun, Yufei Qin, Zain Ul Abedin Siddiqui, Jagdeep Singh, Victoria Slipp, Savannah Szocs, Thomas Wright, Yasmin Yanovski

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak virtually to this day of

awareness regarding non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

Madam Speaker, an intimate image can be a picture or a recording where there is an expectation of privacy. This is often considered, however not limited to, where people are engaged in sexual activity or are partially or fully nude.

The distribution—selling, advertising, sharing—of these intimate images or recordings of another individual without consent is completely illegal here in Canada.

We have supports and resources in place for Manitobans who have had their intimate images shared without consent through The Intimate Image Protection Act. To build this awareness it is important that people know of their options to prevent their images and recordings from being shared without consent.

There are steps to take to gain control of the situation. For example, if the image is already online, you can tell the provider of the service that you are a Canadian citizen and do not give consent.

Furthermore, if you have suspicions whether the image has been shared or not, you can write a specific message that is shared by The Intimate Image Protection Act to the person who has the image or recording, and whether you send this message or not, the law allows you to apply to the court for a peace bond. This can set conditions on the person who has the image where they can ultimately be charged if they break the conditions.

For more information about these options, you can call 1-866-484-2846.

Madam Speaker, as legislators, we have a role to play. We need more enforcement. We need to dedicate resources to help support our victims and prosecute offenders, and we need to continue to build this awareness.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Easter

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): This weekend, more than 2 billion people around the world who practise the Christian faith will celebrate Easter. And after two years, when the services, gatherings and traditions of Easter have been interrupted, it'll be a particularly meaningful time for many.

Easter is an especially important time on the Christian calendar, as the foundation of the faith rests upon the belief of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moreover, it is a traditional time to reflect, rest and to look forward to the future with hope and with optimism.

Easter is also a time to be mindful of the things that we have to be grateful for, but it is especially a time to remember and support those who are not as fortunate.

Whether in Ukraine, where the ravages of an unjustifiable war are seen every day, or in our own families and communities, it is easy to find those who can benefit from tangible support, a helping hand, encouragement, sometimes simply a kind word.

It is now regular commentary to say that we live in divided times. Here, the message of Easter offers an opportunity to first heal as we seek to literally and figuratively welcome others to the table. And as we do, it brings us the ability to listen and share in the experiences of others, even in civil disagreement, bringing with it the potential of hope and healing.

There is much to be troubled about in the world in general, and no doubt many feel that within their own lives, as well. Regardless of your individual personal belief, the Easter weekend will hopefully offer a chance to rest and renew. For those of the Christian faith, it is an opportunity to both reconnect with traditions and reflect upon their true meaning.

I wish each of my colleagues in the Legislature today, and all Manitobans, a wonderful Easter weekend.

Willow Tree Action Therapy

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Today, I'm honoured to recognize the all-female team at Willow Tree Action Therapy [*phonetic*], which just opened up at 1050 Main St. in the beautiful community of Point Douglas. Their hands-on, community-focused approach to healing has been amazing for the female and two-spirit Indigenous youth they work with, most of whom are in CFS care.

Walks with Mama Bear Clan, assisting elders and feeding the homeless are just some of the examples of how helping and building their community has made a form of therapy for them. The staff at Willow Tree are even going to be captains of Drag the Red, leading this upcoming season and bringing the youth with them.

This approach is all about growth, learning and connecting with cultural roots. Youth participate in ceremony, learn to make tipis and drums, and gather wood for sweat lodges with elders who are more than happy to pass along the Indigenous traditional knowledge of medicines and ceremony. This confidence-building learning are—also includes everyday life skills like oil changes, or finding a job.

An important key to their philosophy is honest discussions about topics like gangs and sexual exploitation, intergenerational trauma and colonization. It's a critical part of showing the youth that they do have power, and that they can grow and learn self-love. They can change the world with empathy and community activism, and that's exactly what they're doing.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating and uplifting the therapists and some of the youth who are with us here today in the Chamber for their amazing hard work and the work that they do with the incredible youth.

Miigwech.

Team Neufeld Curling Champions

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to recognize Team Neufeld from La Salle, Manitoba, for winning their fourth Manitoba senior men's curling title. They will be representing Manitoba in the 2022 Canadian senior curling-ship championships this fall.

* (13:50)

Team members Randy Neufeld, Dean Moxham, Peter Nicholls and Dale Michie won the Manitoba Senior Provincial titles together in 2015, 2016, 2021 and now 2022. Third for the team, Dean Moxham resides on a farm near Oakville and lead Dale Michie lives in Portage la Prairie.

After winning the 2015 senior-Canadian Senior Championships, the team qualified to represent Canada at the 2016 World Senior Curling Championships in Karlsbad [*phonetic*], Sweden, where they brought home a world silver medal, losing to Sweden in the final. Third Dean Moxham comments that their goal every time that they play in the Senior Championships is to achieve the highest level that they can achieve.

Nationals will be this December, and Dean Moxham says it'll be nice to have some extra time between the events to make it easier to bring along friends and family. While it will be more convenient for families, the members will have to find ways to

stay in their best shape and plan to enter a few events this fall to prepare. The team knows what it takes to compete at this level and are looking forward to the opportunity to represent our province again.

I ask my colleagues to join me to congratulate Team Randy Neufeld for their impressive curling record and wish them all the best at this year's Canadian senior men's curling championships.

Vaisakhi

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I am pleased to rise in the House today and speak about what Vaisakhi means to all those celebrating.

It is a holiday celebrated by millions of people of many faiths all around the world. It began as a spring harvest festival in the region of Punjab, the bread-basket of India. The day is particularly meaningful for agricultural producers who celebrate and re-energize for the next farming season.

Although Vaisakhi has traditionally been a harvest festival in Punjab, the day has a special significance for Sikhs. Sikhs are a vibrant part of Manitoba's society and Vaisakhi is one of the largest Sikh celebrations of the year. Vaisakhi is a festival to celebrate the birth of the Khalsa.

On Vaisakhi in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji created the order of the Khalsa. The Khalsa refers to a collective of practising Sikhs who commit to live their lives in the spirit of service to all, equality and compassion. It was also on Vaisakhi day in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh Ji asked Sikhs to adorn themselves with the five Sikh articles of faith. The Khalsa Panth was created to serve humanity and oppose injustice wherever it may exist.

Madam Speaker, I am saddened to speak about the recent attacks against Sikhs. Three elderly Sikh men have been attacked in New York City over the past 10 days. This comes in the midst of increased violence in New York, including this week's shooting. As different communities celebrate Vaisakhi, we must also recommit ourselves to caring for those around us who are hurting.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members to join me in wishing all those celebrating a very happy Vaisakhi.

Manitoba Islamic Association

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, assalamu alaikum is a greeting in Arabic meaning peace be upon you.

As the MLA for Waverley, I have great pride and the pleasure of representing many groups and individuals from many diverse backgrounds in my constituency of Waverley, including the many ethnic communities within Manitoba's Muslim community who practise their faith at the Winnipeg Grand Mosque.

Today, I have the great pleasure of presenting a private member's statement honouring the Manitoba Islamic Association, MIA. This association has been helping the community to realize important goals with food programs and community engagement. The MIA partnered with the Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force to provide updated information on COVID-19 and offered vaccination clinics at the Grand Mosque and other locations.

Periodically, MIA offered programs that support ongoing learning for hundreds of children and youth. Particularly, Al-Noor school enrolled 190-plus children in weekend classes, 90 children in the Quran program and 11 children in the preschool program. The MIA kids' library provided online resources for the youth.

Since the inception of MIA's zakat and iftaar distribution food bank in December 2020, MIA has supported more than 768 clients with food access issues within the local Muslim community and the larger community.

In the month of Ramadan and Eid, Muslims make a conscious decision to collectively treat others kindly, give to the less advantaged and pray sincerely. The MIA Ramadan food program, in collaboration with other Islamic associations, provided 18,000 iftaar to the people in need.

Also, through the MIA financial assistance program, Takaful, 159 individuals received short-term financial assistance from MIA.

This association provided mental health counselling in English, Urdu and Arabic to the community. In 2021, 258 counselling sessions and 86 individuals were assisted.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honouring the Manitoba Islamic Association for their dedicated service and support to the community.

Thank you. Shukran. *[Thank you.]*

Ramadan Mubarak to our Muslim community, Madam Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget 2022 Government Priorities

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, yesterday's budget was like a bad Pallister repeat. This government brought in a budget and it's one that Brian Pallister would have been proud of: health-care cuts, no plan to grow the economy; really, all the same programs, perhaps a little modification here and there, but again, all Brian Pallister's plan, all Brian Pallister's agenda.

We know those greatest hits from Brian Pallister. We know the mistakes that were made and the damage that was caused to our province.

Why did the Premier repeat the same mistakes as Brian Pallister with her first budget? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, perhaps, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is just jealous because he doesn't have his own plan for a vision for the future of our province.

I'm very proud of the budget yesterday that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) presented here in the Chamber, Madam Speaker, because it does so many things for so many Manitobans. It strengthens our health-care system for Manitobans who need it, it's making life more affordable for many Manitobans, it's building our economy, it's investing in our communities and it's protecting our environment.

We have a plan for a better, brighter future for all Manitobans. Members opposite have no plan whatsoever.

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

Mr. Kinew: They do have a plan, but it's Brian Pallister's plan.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: You see right there, Madam Speaker, I mention Brian Pallister's name and, spontaneously, they burst out into applause. They can't get enough of Brian Pallister's plan. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: On this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we've got a better plan: keep hydro rates affordable, invest in education—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—and fix the damage that the PCs have caused to our health-care system. But unfortunately—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—we haven't seen any of those priorities reflected in this Brian Pallister 2.0 budget. Instead, we saw more of the same when it comes to health care: big announcements that we know are going to be followed by cuts, and no action to help families who are struggling with higher prices at the pump and higher prices at the grocery store.

Will the Premier stop repeating the mistakes of Brian Pallister?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition has a plan, then why doesn't he present that to Manitobans? Why didn't he do an alternate budget, which most opposition parties have done for years and years and years in this Chamber?

The Leader of the Opposition didn't do that, Madam Speaker, because he has no plan. But we do have a plan. We have a plan to make life more affordable for Manitobans, a plan that strengthens health care for Manitobans. It's a plan that's building our economy, it's investing in communities and it's protecting our environment.

We're building a better, brighter future for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, they do have a plan, but it's Brian Pallister's plan. That's the problem. That's why Manitobans don't support this budget and that's why Manitobans are asking for better.

And, of course, our plan is simple. We'll listen to those on the front lines of the health-care system and repair the damage that they've caused over the past six years to our health care.

* (14:00)

And—it comes to affordability, while they keep raising your hydro bills—and I'm sure everyone got an email this week reminding them that hydro was going up—well, we'll keep hydro bills affordable.

It's easy for us to turn the page on Brian Pallister's damaging legacy, but it's difficult for the PCs. Every day they come back to the House to bring pack another

Brian Pallister 'fogram', another Brian Pallister initiative.

Why don't they listen to the message that Manitobans sent them and abandon Brian Pallister's agenda?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I wonder why the Leader of the Opposition is not presenting a plan. What is his hidden agenda?

Perhaps his hidden agenda, Madam Speaker, is to make life 'leff'—less affordable for Manitobans by jacking up taxes and making life less affordable for Manitobans. Perhaps that's hidden agenda—his hidden agenda.

I can tell you that's not what Manitobans are looking for. They want us to strengthen health care, Madam Speaker, and that's exactly what we're going to do. They want us to make life more affordable for Manitobans. Again, they want us to build our economy so there's a better, brighter future for Manitobans. And that's exactly what we're going to deliver on behalf of Manitobans.

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

Health Care—Budget 2022 Funding Level Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Call an election, and we'll see which plan Manitobans prefer. We'll see who Manitobans trust when it comes to health care.

Madam Speaker, who can believe the PCs when it comes to health care? They bring forward a budget, but the amounts that they're talking to—talking about are far below the level of inflation.

You know what that means. That means that it's going to mean cuts in the health-care system. We've seen this year after year from the PCs. *[interjection]* And I'll invite the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) to pay attention because he hasn't been here as long.

Again, every year the PCs announce, announce, announce on budget day and then, for the other 364 days a year, they cut, they cut, they cut.

We've seen the impacts to our health-care system. Health care is getting worse and worse under the PC plan.

Will they please abandon Brian Pallister's agenda—

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

Order. Order.

I was hoping today would be quieter with lesser numbers of people in here, but I'm seeing that that's not happening. I'm asking for everybody—I need to be able to hear.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): The litany, again, of false accusations by the Leader of the Opposition. The facts are that we are investing more than \$1 billion more in health care than the NDP ever did in—when they were in power, Madam Speaker.

We heard loud and clear that Manitobans wanted us to strengthen health care. That's why we're investing more than \$110 million towards surgical and diagnostic backlogs to make sure that Manitobans get the health care that they need when they need it, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the program that the First Minister is referring to, which was a Brian Pallister initiative, to be clear.

Again, they came out under Mr. Pallister and they announced \$50 million. How much of that money has actually been spent to help patients in Manitoba as of this date? Maybe a quarter. They don't even know.

Now they're making another announcement because it's another budget day. What's going to happen this year? It's going to be followed by 364 more days of cuts to the health-care system. They take one day to make the big announcements and try and repair the damage of all the cuts that they've caused during the past year.

Looks like they're at it again, Madam Speaker. We saw this plan fail under Mr. Pallister. It led to closed emergency rooms and fewer nurses working at the bedside.

Will the PCs finally just abandon these miserable health-care cuts?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to not present a plan for Manitobans. He continues to criticize, he continues to make things up on the fly. I can tell you, that's not what Manitobans are looking for.

What they're looking for, Madam Speaker, is for us to strengthen the health-care system. That's exactly

what we're going to do: \$110 million more for surgical—to reduce those surgical and diagnostic backlogs—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —\$17 million more for implementing year 1 of the five-year action plan for mental health and wellness, [*interjection*] almost \$20 million for developing a seniors strategy and \$32 million more for initiatives to implement [*interjection*] all 17 recommendations of the Stevenson review, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

And there's much more, in terms of good news announcements, to come. Stay tuned, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Maybe the table could stop the clock.

I'm just going to ask members—we have young leaders in our gallery today and I think that in order to support them and make them see that democracy can work and that good ideas can work, and that we can do better as leaders ourselves and be good role models. I think that's what the public expects. And democracy will only happen if all of us respect each other in here and bring forward our ideas carefully, listen to them carefully, and whether you like what's being said, doesn't give you the right, if you don't like it, to be shouting across or this incessant heckling that tends to happen here from time to time.

So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation. We've got, you know, a number of people in the gallery, and I especially feel sensitive about this when we have young people in the gallery. We can do better and we should do better and everybody's sort of expecting that or says that and then doesn't behave that way. So I ask everybody, please, to show our guests and all the members that are watching this—and believe it or not, there are more than you think—let's show them that we can make things happen and that we have a good Legislature here in this province.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, again, Madam Speaker, if you take everything the First Minister is talking about, you take everything in the budget, it's not even half of the impact that inflation is going to have on the Department of Health. What that means is cuts at the bedside. Yet again, the PCs bring forward a plan that is going to mean less health care for Manitobans who need it in hospital, in community, in personal-care homes.

We're talking about year seven of a failing plan that isn't just damaging the popular-opinion polls when it comes to the PCs, we're talking about Manitobans lives who are being impacted. We're talking about life and death. We're talking about seniors who die unattended in care homes. That's the impact of these cuts. That's why this plan is shameful.

Will this government finally abandon the plan to decimate health care in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, the litany of false accusations. We are investing more than almost—more than a quarter of a billion dollars more this year over last year alone in health care and mental health and wellness and seniors, Madam Speaker—more than a quarter of a billion dollars more. That's more, not less.

We are making those investments that Manitobans need, want and deserve, Madam Speaker. We are strengthening our health care. We are making life more affordable for Manitobans. We will continue to work with Manitobans to ensure that they get the health care that they need, when they need it, and we will continue to ensure that we make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

Health-Care Funding—Budget 2022 Impact on Front-Line Care

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) said she would be different than Brian Pallister, but nothing has changed. What we saw yesterday was Brian Pallister's budget.

This government is underfunding health care with a de facto cut to hospitals, ERs and front-line workers. With yesterday's budget, it's clear it's more of the same—unfortunately, more of the same—none of the investments that we need to see to help our hospitals.

Why is the minister cutting health care in Manitoba?

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

* (14:10)

Yesterday in the media scrum, the Leader of the Opposition waved the budget speech around in front of the media cameras, and the materials. He thought it was a magic wand and that all the materials would disappear, like their plan has, Madam Speaker.

But our plan is sound and has a commitment of \$7.2 billion for total health care in Budget 2022—\$1 billion more than the previous government ever

invested in health care. Madam Speaker, \$3.1 billion in pandemic supports to protect the lives and livelihoods of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—Manitobans. I know they don't want to hear this.

Madam Speaker, \$630 million to 'stretten' the fight against COVID-19; \$30 million to add—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, health-care funding is below the rate of inflation. That's not going to address the crisis that's happening right now in our hospitals.

Eighteen ICU beds were cut in consolidation. Critical areas of our hospitals are missing staffing from one out of every four positions. Over the last five years, funding for acute care has gone up by just 2.7 per cent. There's 124 less hospital beds in Winnipeg than four years ago. Our loved ones are being sent hundreds of kilometres away from their communities to get care.

Why is this minister cutting front-line health care in Manitoba?

Ms. Gordon: The members opposite have an issue with mathematics. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, adding 28 additional ICU beds, raising our bed baseline up to 100—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—from the current 72; Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force: \$110 million to address the backlog—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please. Maybe the table could stop the clock.

I'm going to have to call the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) to order. I cannot hear the answer. And I've asked everybody—I have asked everybody in here to please be able to listen to the questions and the answers, and I'm asking everybody in the House. *[interjection]*

And as I'm saying this, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) is trying to heckle me. I'm standing.

There shouldn't be anybody saying anything. This is just the utmost disrespect when a leader is—or a Speaker is absolutely trying to have everybody obeying the rules in the House, and showing, I don't know, a better picture to Manitobans that we actually can debate respectfully in here.

And so, when I am standing—I just—I'm stunned that I hear somebody heckling when I'm trying to deliver this kind of message to members here. This is my job, and I'm trying to do what I'm supposed to do. And as I've said before, if you don't like the questions and you don't like the answers, you can feel that way. But that does not give you that opportunity or shouldn't give you that opportunity to try to shout somebody down. And I do—I like passionate debate in here. I like when people passionately ask questions and passionately answer. But you don't have to shout people down if you don't like what you're hearing.

So, I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please. We've seen what happens when I can't hear, and that is not a good thing. I have to be able to hear.

I don't even remember where we were.

The Minister of Health, to conclude her answer.

Ms. Gordon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you so much for your attempts to console the no-plan NDP opposition.

Today's a difficult day for them. Knowing that our government has invested \$7.2 billion, total health care, in Budget 2022 is difficult—\$1 billion more than they ever did here in the province. We will continue to be there for Manitobans—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Asagwara: Nurses and health support workers aren't made with a copying machine. A real plan and proper investment are needed to address this very real crisis and crisis in human resource in our health-care system.

Funding for hospitals, ERs and front-line workers is below the rate of inflation. It's a de facto cut, and one that's going to hurt our recovery from this pandemic and hurt Manitobans accessing health care. Much more is needed but, yet again, the PCs have failed to meet the moment.

Why is the minister continuing Brian Pallister's legacy and continuing to cut health care in Manitoba?

Ms. Gordon: I would like to put some facts on the record.

Our government recently announced \$19.5 million to add 259 additional nurse training seats. This would see seats made available at five post-secondary institutions as part of our larger plan to add close to 400 new nursing education seats. And Budget 2022 adds an additional \$11.6 million to add the next phase, permanently expanding our nursing seats in Manitoba.

On top of these investments, we're hiring 35 more paramedics, looking at our health system human resource plan and building on the work that we've already done.

Manitoba Hydro Rates Cost of Living Concerns

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The cost of living is going up day after day, month after month. Gas is more expensive; milk is more expensive; rent is more expensive; food is more expensive. And unfortunately for Manitobans, nobody on that side of the House is listening to Manitobans on what we need.

This year, in their budget, they will make hydro more expensive with a plan for 5 per cent more a year. That would be hundreds of dollars more per year at the worst possible time for all of us.

Will the PC government change direction and stop raising Manitoba Hydro rates on Manitoba families?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, the member had it partially right when she said that costs are going up on Manitobans. That is exactly why Manitobans need a government that is focused on affordability. And that is exactly what we are focused on.

We heard from over 51,000 people in our prebudget presentation—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: The NDP can try to shout down our record on affordability, but they know it to be true that we've removed thousands of Manitobans, in this budget, from the tax rolls, that we've put almost \$600 in the pockets of all Manitobans and that we'll go even further by creating a new renter's rebate that will give even renters a permanent credit.

We know about affordability. They don't know a thing about allowing Manitobans to keep their own money.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Five per cent inflation is making it harder for Manitobans to get by, Madam Speaker. This year's budget doesn't address their concern.

Everyone in Manitoba knows that their hydro bills went up this winter, and this year's budget locks it in—5 per cent hydro rate increases for years to come. They raised rates before by passing laws to raise hydro rates and now they're back at it.

Why does the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) keep raising Manitoba Hydro rates, and focus on—why doesn't she focus on making life more affordable for Manitobans?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, the member's conflating two things, so maybe they're confused.

The hydro rates are set by the Public Utilities Board, not by the government of Manitoba. And so, the member can go and check the January rate application to see what the Public Utilities Board said about hydro rates.

But back on the subject of affordability, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when the NDP widened the PST, they brought in millions and millions of dollars of additional revenue. We narrowed it and removed whole areas of taxation, saving Manitobans \$100 million.

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

Ms. Fontaine: This year's budget makes a tax hike permanent for thousands of Manitoba renters. And while the Premier forgets about \$31 million, so \$175—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (14:20)

Ms. Fontaine: —may not be much to her or to them, but that's a lot for many Manitoba families trying to put food on the table. And the budget also freezes the minimum wage—second lowest in Canada, nothing to be proud about.

This government is so out of touch with the challenges that regular Manitobans are facing day in and day out under their administration.

Why is the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) making life more expensive for regular Manitobans?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, this is like mathematical acrobatics. Maybe they were holding the budget upside-down.

Madam Speaker, on page 43 of the budget—page 43 describes a new residential renters tax credit that will put \$525 in the pockets of everyone who is actually renting something in Manitoba.

But it goes further—it goes further—because by broadening this tax credit to renters in non-EIA and in social housing, we are including 45,000 additional Manitobans that previously the NDP shut out of the credit. And we will include them.

We are making life more affordable for all—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —Manitobans, even while the NDP try to shout down Manitobans and their—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Budget 2022 Ukrainian Refugee Supports

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Madam Speaker, to say this year's budget was disappointing is an understatement.

Manitobans were expecting much more support for our friends and relatives living in Ukraine. But there's no new money for Ukrainian refugees for settlement, no new money for humanitarian aid and no new money to promote Manitoba as a destination for those leaving Ukraine.

Once again, this moment called for leadership. But once again, the Stefanson government has failed.

Can the minister tell Manitobans why this government refuses to stand with Ukraine?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I'm proud of Budget 2022 and our government's focus on strengthening and building on the immigration system in Manitoba.

Attracting and retaining new immigrants has been identified as a key factor in our post-pandemic economic recovery. As outlined in the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy, we want to grow immigration and align newcomer integration activities with government priorities.

That is why I am pleased that we have committed a total of \$5 million, including \$2 million to support

13 community projects in Budget 2022, projects that will develop community connections and facilitate a network of services and community of care that supports the integration of newcomers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wasyliv: On Monday, it was reported that Canada took in 14,000 Ukrainians. But thus far, not one of them has come to Manitoba through the federal program.

That's absolutely shameful, and it's not an accident.

This government needs to be doing so much more. Instead, this budget included no new money to promote Manitoba as a destination and no new money for humanitarian aid. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: Why was there no new money allocated in the budget to help Ukrainians come to Manitoba?

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, unlike the NDP, we on this side of the House will always put newcomers and immigrants first because the Provincial Nominee Program is a flagship program of a PC government.

Madam Speaker, I don't know if the member is confused in terms of the immigration streams. We know that the federal government has two immigration streams for the Ukrainian government. We know there's a backlog when it comes to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reyes: —the federal streams, in terms of permanent residency. But we will be here to work with the federal government and work with them when we have Ukrainian nationals come to our province.

We are ready, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wasyliv: Manitobans have been extremely generous. They've opened up their wallets. They've prepared to open up their homes. But they can't do this alone. They need help from the provincial government, and they need this government to match their commitment with real action and real resources.

The Finance Minister made a big show of coming down to the Ukrainian community and promising

funding was on the way. Budget comes out, no new funding.

A budget signals a government's priorities, and what this budget signalled to Manitobans is that Ukrainian refugees are not a priority.

Other provinces are doing so much more, and [inaudible] lack of response is insulting.

Why was there no new money to help Ukrainians come to Manitoba in this year's budget?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): The member opposite knows that the federal government is responsible for allocation of those individuals once they arrive in our country, Madam Speaker. We have already stated several times that we will open our arms and welcome as many Ukrainians as possible to Manitoba.

That's why today we announced a central reception centre for Ukrainian refugees that will be located near the airport, Madam Speaker. The Ukrainian Refugee Task Force has been set up and we're working on a whole-of-government approach, working with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and others to ensure that we are well prepared for housing, for health and mental health, for K-to-12 education, for child care, for English language services, for social assistance, for job placements.

We will welcome Ukrainian refugees with open arms to Manitoba. We can't wait for them to arrive here, Madam Speaker.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition Costs for the Year

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, Budget 2022 includes a big increase to tuition fees paid by young people.

Manitoban students are struggling because of the pandemic made worse by this government, because of economic conditions made worse by this government and because of a strike created by this government. What students don't need right now is higher tuition.

Will the minister at least be transparent with Manitoban students and parents and tell them how much more their tuition will increase this coming school year?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago I was pleased to be at Assiniboine Community College to announce two new locations in Otterburne and Morden in addition of the—to the

Arborg location to expand the nursing seat program in Manitoba.

These three rural locations are part of our government's ten—\$19.5-million commitment and \$10.3-million boost in the operating funds this year to reach our goal of graduating 400 new nursing students in Manitoba. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, our government will continue making key investments in post-secondary education in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, the fact is that since 2016 this PC government has cut operating funding for colleges and the universities by millions of dollars.

The PCs have forced students to pay so much more. This year's budget includes an over-\$30-million increase to tuition fees by Manitoban students. This approach of this government simply is doing lasting damage to students in universities and colleges.

Will the minister tell Manitoban students and parents how much more they will be paying for colleges and universities this coming year?

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, as outlined in Budget 2022, our government will be matching a record level of more than \$33 million in the Manitoba Bursary Program to support more than 22,500 students in post-secondary institutions—Manitoba.

And that is why our government introduced the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy with a shared vision and to call to action—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reyes: —to advance 'ecologic' prosperity and positive outcomes for individuals, communities and businesses.

Madam Speaker, we want students to connect to good jobs and stay in Manitoba, unlike the dark days of the NDP where students had to leave the province to get a job.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, this year's budget hurts Manitoba students.

It includes a big hike to tuition. The minister is also proposing that some students pay more, depending on what they study. This is not going to help students. And it's happening at the worst possible time. Inflation is up over 5 per cent. University and college are getting further out of reach for far too many young people.

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

* (14:30)

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, let me repeat myself: as outlined in Manitoba Budget 2022, our government will be matching a record level of more than \$33 million in the Manitoba Bursary Program to support more than 22,500 students in post-secondary institutions in Manitoba.

You know, they jacked up taxes, they increased the PST without consulting a single Manitoban. They feel Manitobans have forgotten about the mess they left back in 2016. That's why we're going to invest in post-secondary institution—education based on Budget 2022, Madam Speaker.

We will take care of students.

Emergency Measures Organization Budget Cut Concerns

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Aside from today's storm, in the last two years we've had a devastating blizzard in October 2019, a one-in-a-thousand-years rain in western Manitoba, massive forest fires to the north and to the east and we've been told to prepare for more—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —extreme weather, develop resilience for climate and other emergencies.

Given all these crises, including a possible flood following today's blizzard, can the Premier explain why the Emergency Measures Organization budget for preparedness and response has been cut this year from 1.72 to 1.66 million dollars?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I want to thank the member opposite for the question, and he will know that, in the budget, that we have set aside more than \$100 million to deal with these emergency situations, Madam Speaker.

I just want to extend to all Manitobans—obviously, we do have a storm that is brewing out there, Madam Speaker, and we know that Manitobans are resilient, we know that they will look after themselves, they'll look after their neighbours, they will help—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Members opposite want to make a joke of this.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: The members opposite seem to want to make a joke of an emergency situation. I don't think that that's what Manitobans want to hear.

The members opposite should be ashamed of themselves. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Blizzard—Flooding Preparedness

Mr. Lamont: Again, we are concerned about the cuts to the Emergency Measures Organization, preparedness and response. And given the outcomes of the pandemic and the response in Manitoba, and the track record of neglect on emergency response is very concerning. We need a strong, effective and independent Emergency Measures Organization—Manitobans can rely on independent experts with a plan.

Can the Premier assure us that the government is prepared for the impact of this blizzard and the flood that may follow, and will the government consider briefing opposition and Manitoba Liberal MLAs on the situation, as other premiers have in the past?

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

Madam Speaker, our preparation team is—with the EMO has worked so hard: dedicated staff that are out round the clock, especially when it comes to floods, the storm right now. They're doing their hardest to make sure that Manitobans are safe, and they will continue doing that.

They're working with municipalities, working with First Nation communities. And they're doing an excellent job, and they should be commended for the work they're doing.

Thank you.

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

International Student Advocacy MAPSS Meeting with Minister

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Earlier today, I met with MAPSS, Manitoba alliance for post-secondary students. Together, we talked about their health-care-has-no-borders campaign and how there's a need for international students to be prioritized. There's a big concern regarding access to health care, discrimination and the ripple effect this will have on our economy.

Since January, MAPSS have reached out to the Minister responsible for Advanced Education nearly 10 times, between emails and phone calls, to arrange a meeting. However, the minister has not had the courtesy to respond. The proposal would save this government \$3.2 million.

So, Madam Speaker, I'm asking the minister responsible today: Will he agree to meet with the group to discuss their proposal before the end of May?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I understand where the member opposite is coming from, but they fail to grasp that—the entirety of the system. All international students are required to have health-care coverage as a component of their student visa, and they are automatically enrolled in health-care coverage plans once they pay their tuition for the year.

This is a unique scenario and it would be doing a 'disindividual'—disservice to discuss specifics on any situation, but I invite the member to come to my office and we can have that discussion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Health-Care Spending Budget 2022

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Budget 2022 saw the most significant health-care investment in the history of our province: \$7.2 billion. That's over \$1 billion over the previous NDP government ever spent.

I am proud to see that Budget '22 has invested over \$30 million to the—to add 28 additional ICU beds, *[interjection]* and \$3.1 billion in pandemic support to protect the lives and live—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: I apologize, Madam Speaker; I couldn't finish with them—

Madam Speaker: Absolutely.

Mr. Khan: Can the Minister of Health please expand on the investments being made to help clear the diagnostic and surgical backlog?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for Fort Whyte for the question. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: Budget 2022 includes an additional \$110 million to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —address the diagnostic and surgical recovery backlog here in the province. That is \$160 million to date to help Manitobans in need. There's also \$10 million to improve private priority procedures and wait times.

And we're making steady progress, Madam Speaker. Since December, we've completed nearly 8,000 CT scans, MRIs and ultrasounds. Since January, we've completed over 11,000 emergent and non-emergent surgeries.

We will continue to get Manitobans the procedures they need.

Municipalities—Budget 2022 Operating Funding

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, a lot has changed in the world over the past few years, but apparently not in this Pallister and Stefanson governments.

For the past—for the seventh year in a row, the PC government is freezing operating funding to Manitoba communities. That means municipalities are dealing with 2022 issues with 2016 dollars. And more than half believe it will take years to financially recover from the economic damage brought on by the pandemic.

Why is this government once again following Brian Pallister's plan and freezing municipalities in this year's budget?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations): I will take no lessons from that side of the aisle when it comes to municipalities.

I have experienced first-hand that their time in government was spent sowing division and creating uncertainty for municipalities by forcing amalgamation on our local communities. In my time as—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Clarke:—Minister of Municipal Relations, one of my main focuses has been on repairing those relationships between municipal governments and the provincial government that was damaged by the NDP when they were in power.

So Madam, I will—Speaker, I'll say once again, I will take no—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Clarke:—lessons from that part of the aisle.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Madam Speaker, the minister defends the Stefanson government's budget and its continuation of Brian Pallister's agenda. Despite calls from AMM communities to be partners with the province in growing Manitoba's economy, the PCs continue to refuse to listen.

Once again, the PCs don't recognize the rising costs for municipalities. Inflation, Madam Speaker, is over 5 per cent. A seven-year freeze in operating funding is forcing harder and harder choices on those

communities, and the people of Manitoba are the ones left paying the price.

Will the minister break with Brian Pallister and her government, and finally undo the seven-year freeze to communities today?

Ms. Clarke: I don't think that, you know, the increases that we're going to be seeing in the Building Sustainable Communities—not only just increased but actually doubled to \$25 million.

And other—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (14:40)

Ms. Clarke:—increases and projects that are going into our communities—we're hearing new hospitals, new schools. The list of advancements and working collaborations with the municipalities is unending. And we have a good working relationship and we will continue that relationship going forward.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Seeing no petitions, then, as decided earlier, then, and approved by the—this House, the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Tuesday, April 19th, at 1:30 p.m.

And I would just say to everybody, please drive carefully, stay safe and happy Easter.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

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