

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 29, 2021

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. We acknowledge part of 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 remain committed to working in partnership with the Indigenous peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration in accordance with their constitutional rights and human rights.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery and the public gallery where we have with us today Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Arlen Dumas; MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee; Manitoba Metis Federation President David Chartrand; Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse; executive director of the Manitoba Inuit Association, Rachel Dutton and Treaty Commissioner Loretta Ross.

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 7—The Police Services Amendment Act
(Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit
Operations)**

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister

for Education, that Bill 7, The Police Services Amendment Act (Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit Operations), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it's important for Manitobans to have confidence in their institutions, and this includes the Independent Investigation Unit. Bill 7, The Police Services Amendment Act, Independent Investigation Unit, will strengthen police oversight and accountability in Manitoba and ensure that our province has the most effective independent police oversight agency in Canada.

This bill contains a new position, a new director of Indigenous and community relations within the IIU that will be responsible for working with communities across Manitoba to enhance communication and to ensure that families and community members are informed about proceedings, investigations that are involving Indigenous and other affected people.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the partnership, for the engagement, for the trust from Indigenous rights holders, organizations, some of whom have their grand chiefs here today, with the Manitoba Metis Federation, with other stakeholders that gets us to this point where we introduce this bill to this House for consideration.

Thank you.

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

Bill 203—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), that Bill 203, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm proud to stand in the House and introduce Bill 203 for a fourth time, Madam Speaker.

The abortion buffer zone—protest buffer zone act establishes buffer zones or safety perimeters around any clinic, hospital or health-care facility offering abortion services. In addition to abortion zones around public schools, this bill prohibits any protests, demonstrations or picketing within these zones to protect

Manitobans alongside health-care providers against harassment, intimidation and persuasion on abortion.

Anti-choice individuals have absolutely no business protesting and harassing citizens accessing abortion services or harassing children outside our schools. This bill will ensure safe access and protection to those seeking the health care they need and the front-line workers as well.

Miigwech.

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

* (13:40)

Bill 204—The Protest Buffer Zone Act (COVID-19 Restrictions)

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), that Bill 204, The Protest Buffer Zone Act (COVID-19 Restrictions), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm proud to introduce Bill 204 for the second time, The Protest Buffer Zone Act (COVID-19 Restrictions), to ensure the safety and well-being of Manitobans seeking care and those health-care providers working tirelessly to provide it.

Not long ago, we saw aggressive acts of 'anti-vaxxer'—anti-vaxxers protesting outside the Health Sciences Centre harassing patients and staff, deterring many from seeking the care that they need. Bill 204 will establish a buffer zone around health-care centres, personal-care homes, schools, child-care centres and post-secondary institutions, following suit with many other provinces across Canada whose governments have brought forward similar legislation.

I look forward to the support of this bill in the House.

Miigwech.

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

Committee reports?

Tabling of reports? The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding). No? No tabling?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health and Seniors Care (Ms. Gordon)—and I would indicate

that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Diabetes Awareness Month

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Madam Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month. In Manitoba, one in 10 people have been diagnosed with diabetes, and many more may be undiagnosed.

While managing diabetes is a daily challenge, living with diabetes also comes with other health risks. Diabetics are three times more likely to be hospitalized with cardiovascular disease, 12 times more likely to be hospitalized with end-stage kidney disease and 20 times more likely to undergo a leg or foot amputation.

But for all of this troubling news, there is hope, Madam Speaker. It is the 100th anniversary of Banting, Best, Collip and Macleod discovering insulin in November 1921. Over the last 100 years, science has made great strides in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diabetes. These advances have saved the lives of millions, and new technologies continue to be developed.

Earlier this year, our government expanded coverage for insulin pumps and added continuous glucose monitors for young Manitobans.

As part of Diabetes Awareness Month, we must encourage Manitobans to learn more about the risk factors, such as controlling sugar intake in our diets and staying physically active, which can prevent adult-onset diabetes. This is especially important for Manitoba children. For those at risk of type 2 diabetes, living a more active life, with a healthier diet, can make all the difference.

For Diabetes Awareness Month, let us all recognize the challenges faced by diabetic Manitobans and commit to learning more and doing more to protect ourselves and our children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Today, the Manitoba NDP acknowledges Manitobans living with diabetes and reiterates our commitment to support them.

Manitobans with diabetes face a number of challenges. Of course, there are medical issues that

accompany the condition, but there also can be stigma that comes from false understandings of the causes of diabetes.

As Diabetes Canada notes, when we discuss diabetes we need to be sure we're not implying that Manitobans give themselves diabetes through unhealthy eating habits. We all need to work against misinformation that can be hurtful to those suffering from this condition.

We also need to do so much more to address the rising toll of diabetes, especially for Indigenous children, who are experiencing disproportionate effects of this disease.

Many Manitobans with diabetes struggle to navigate a health-care system that often fails to offer them the support that they need. For example, while government supports exist to help Manitobans under the age of 25 pay for advanced glucose monitors, Manitobans over the age of 25 fail to qualify. We need to work together as a Legislature to expand coverage for this program to cover more Manitobans.

Too many families don't have what they need to treat this disease. We need to work together for the sake of Manitobans like Frances Matlock, who lost health-care coverage when she was laid off and unexpectedly had to pay for her son's insulin at the pharmacy.

She told CBC that: I had to walk around the grocery store and put back all my groceries in order to pay for it, which made it significantly difficult in that moment, because I almost cried in the middle of a store during the pandemic.

As long as we still have Manitobans like Frances putting back her groceries so that she can afford insulin for her children, we simply have much more work to do than raising awareness.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: A hundred years ago, Banting and Best discovered insulin to treat diabetes, a revolutionary discovery.

Today it is vital to have better awareness of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes, an autoimmune disease, usually starts in childhood. It's not generally considered preventable, although research is looking at

whether sufficient vitamin D given to the mother during pregnancy and early childhood can be preventive.

Improved treatment of diabetes—type 1 diabetes is now possible, particularly with continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps. Coverage of these exists in Manitoba up to age 25 but, in fact, all individuals with type 1 diabetes should be covered on an urgent basis. It is cost-effective. It will reduce emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Type 2 diabetes was considered to be a disease of adults, but thanks to the work of Manitoba's Dr. Heather Dean, we now know that children can get type 2 diabetes. Further, the number of children with type 2 diabetes is increasing. Much of type 2 diabetes can be prevented through lifestyle modifications, including dietary changes, increased physical exercise and reducing excess stress.

The proportion of people over age 18 in Manitoba with type 2 diabetes is approaching 10 per cent. And, currently, more than 20 per cent of Manitobans may have prediabetes, a condition where blood sugar levels, monitored by hemoglobin A_{1c}, are elevated but not sufficiently high to be called diabetes. Much of prediabetes can be addressed so that it doesn't progress to overt type 2 diabetes.

Sadly, the present government has not come—yet come forward with the substantive, province-wide effort needed to reduce diabetes in our province. We look forward to the day when that happens.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

June Letkeman

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity today to recognize June Letkeman, a very special constituent of Borderland, someone who exemplifies the values of volunteerism, commitment and community spirit through a lifetime of service.

June Letkeman has been involved in countless community organizations throughout her life, and she has infused each cause she's taken up with energy, optimism and a sense of purpose, all while maintaining the bubbly, cheerful spirit for which she is well known. June is the kind of person who doesn't seek the limelight, she just finds a need in the community and then steps in to fill it.

June has chaired the Plum Coulee age-friendly committee and served as vice-chairperson for the Plum Coulee elevator museum. She has served as a member of the chamber of commerce, the Plum Coulee Community Foundation, the Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation and the South Central Cancer Resource. June served two terms as councillor for the Town of Plum Coulee and also served as a school board trustee at Garden Valley School Division. In 2018, June became the first female councillor elected in the RM of Rhineland.

Amazingly, June always finds the time to bring a plate of freshly baked cookies or a pie along with her to each meeting she attends, much to the delight of everyone else.

June is a champion for her community of Plum Coulee. She helps organize the Plum Fest every year, and she cooks for the Meals on Wheels program at the manor, something she told me she enjoys very much.

Madam Speaker, southern Manitoba is blessed to have June Letkeman, and I am honoured to be able to recognize her in this small way today.

On behalf of a grateful constituency, June, thank you for your unmatched example of service and for the many ways in which you have touched so many lives in our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Health-Care Staffing Levels

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, we are in a staffing crisis in health care that this PC leader and her PC caucus are either committed to making worse or are so incompetent they have no idea how to fix it.

* (13:50)

To be clear, Madam Speaker, since 2016, every single member of the PC caucus enthusiastically made decisions to prioritize cuts over Manitobans and they did this with the goal to save money on the backs of Manitobans, thinking they could get away with this mistreatment. That includes nurses and allied health-care professionals.

And so, they closed ERs, they cut ICU beds, they froze wages and fired nurses, and they did so while mustering every ounce of disrespect they could along the way. They made those choices even when those same health-care workers warned them that this was a mistake and that Manitobans seeking health care would be the ones to suffer.

Thanks to their cuts before this pandemic, our health-care system couldn't even handle the flu season. And now? Over 136,000 people waiting for surgeries and diagnostics, nursing vacancies of nearly 40 per cent in ERs, seniors being sent over eight hours away from their homes and their loved ones and the list goes on and on.

Instead of fixing their mistakes, the PCs offer nothing but thoughts and prayers and empty commitments. They'll claim that they'll graduate 400 nurses from the University of Manitoba that's currently on strike because this government won't even allow their faculty to negotiate a fair contract.

This Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has learned no lessons from this pandemic and is clearly still taking lessons from Brian Pallister.

Manitobans deserve a government that will listen to them and that understands the importance of quality health care in our province.

Madam Speaker, 2023 can't come soon enough.

Joseph Nesbitt

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): The person I am honouring today is not a household name, and many of you never had the chance to meet him.

My dad passed away unexpectedly on July 13th, 2021. Joseph John Nesbitt-J.J. or Jolly Joe as he was known to many—was born in Treherne, Manitoba on April 16th, 1933. He was the last surviving member of a family of six brothers and five sisters.

Dad grew up on a farm in the Arbroath district north of Treherne. He was forced to leave school after grade 9 to assist on the farm after his father became ill.

Dad married my mom Shirley, a farm girl who grew up in the Matchettville district just south of the Nesbitt farm. They raised three boys and a girl.

Dad retired in 1991 after a 35-year career with the Manitoba Telephone System as a construction foreman. His career took him and his family across Manitoba in the era when cable was being plowed and dial phones were being installed. We lived in Portage la Prairie, Morris, Oakville, McCreary, Dauphin, Swan River, Virden and, finally, Shoal Lake.

We all learned to make friends, leave friends and make friends again. Dad taught us the value of an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, and that if you stayed out late at night you were still expected to get up in the morning.

Dad was a just typical Manitoban: a hard-working man who was very proud of every member of his family. His farm roots and love of agricultural stayed with him his whole life. He loved to show his beloved ponies at local fairs and keep a few head of cattle. There was nothing more relaxing to him than sitting on a tractor baling hay.

Dad wasn't a superhero, but he certainly was a person I looked up to and tried to model my life after. He was always willing to help his children and grandchildren. His outgoing nature made him a favourite in Shoal Lake and area.

Today I want to thank my dad for the values he instilled into our family. We were so lucky to have you on this earth for 88 years. We all miss you.

Thank you.

Repeal of Agriculture Legislation in India

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Madam Speaker, on the holy day of Gurpurab, which is the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, India's Prime Minister announced that his government will repeal the three controversial farm laws after one year of farmers peaceful protesting.

In September 2020, three agricultural reform bills were passed in India's parliament—three bills that impact over 50 per cent of the population. Hundreds of thousands of people from neighbouring states of New Delhi camped out to peacefully protest against the bills that would have leaved farmers at the mercy of the corporations, urging the Indian government to repeal these bills, and farmers won.

The farmers' protest is one of the largest protests. But this protest was not just limited to India: the Punjabi community all around the world were protesting the Indian government's new farm laws.

Throughout this protest, huge community kitchens served food to the public. Makeshift medical camps were established, offering aid to everyone.

This victory belongs to the farmers. It belongs to all those who protested in the streets throughout this harsh winter, through a global pandemic. Over 700 people sacrificed their lives.

Today, I want to honour all those farmers and workers who died while exercising their constitutional right to peacefully protest; those who were met with police brutality; those who were wrongly detained, charged and abused for protesting; all those who will sadly not return home. My neighbour in my village,

Kahan Singh, is one of many who will not be returning home to his family.

I ask all members to join me today in honouring the lives lost and rejoicing in the victory of farmers in India.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Dr. Anju Bajij

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to recognize Dr. Anju Bajij, an educator in our community, who was the recent recipient of the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence, the 2021 Manitoba Certificate of Excellence.

Anju is currently the vice-principal at Holy Cross School, where she's been teaching health education, physical education, science and social studies to students grades 1, 2, 7 and 8.

She's extremely successful with her students as she practises engaging and hands-on learning opportunities, both inside as well as outside the classroom. Anju mentors her students, working with them to develop their intellectual, social, emotional and physical capabilities, while at the same time promoting their leadership potential.

She is an educational innovator as she has established a participatory approach to teaching by using a flipped-classroom model to pre-teach materials where students discover new content from online videos or electronic resources prior to engaging in the lesson. She then further encourages students to pose questions, seek answers, set goals and perform self- and peer-assessments.

Among her innovations as an educator, she believes that injecting art into STEM is an effective means to make it attractive for her students. A prime example of this is her work with art to demonstrate the theory of light and optical illusions, which is not only visually spectacular, but is seen as scientifically fascinating as well.

Dr. Bajij is also a renowned consultant, public speaker and practising research scientist, specializing in cell—at the St. Boniface research centre. Anju's efforts have been recognized over the years with various awards, including the Science Teacher of the Year Award from the Science Teachers Association of Manitoba and Excellence in Education Award from the Manitoba Education and Training,

She is also the founder of and co-founder of the Bison Regional Science Fair, which highlights the amazing scientific talent and knowledge of the students who participate—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to conclude his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Smith: She is also the co-founder and founder of the Bison Regional Science Fair, which highlights an amazing scientific talent and knowledge of the students who participate and compete. Some of her students go on to compete at national, international levels.

Madam Speaker, it is an honour to recognize those, like my friend Dr. Bajij, who lead by example in our community, working with our children and paving the way for a brighter future and better tomorrow.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

New Variant Case of COVID-19 Government Preparedness

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): The emergence of a new variant of concern, omicron, is worrisome to many Manitobans. Now, people want to know that we are prepared for this new variant. Manitobans want to see their government be proactive instead of reactive.

We all know that too many times during this pandemic the Pallister and Stefanson governments have waited and waited instead of taking action.

Ontario announced the discovery of cases of the variant yesterday.

Will the government update the House on what its plans are to fight the spread of this new variant?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Before I respond to the Leader of the Opposition's question, I just want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank Indigenous leadership for their collaboration in developing the language in the formal land acknowledgement that was presented by you today, Madam Speaker.

* (14:00)

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas; Grand Chief Garrison Settee; President David Chartrand; Regional Chief

Cindy Woodhouse; Rachel Dutton, executive director of Manitoba Inuit Association; Loretta Ross, treaty commissioner: thank you to all of you for your advice and input. Thank you for being here today. This means so much. This is a historic moment and you have all been a part of this today.

Thank you for advice and your leadership.

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

COVID-19 and Personal-Care Homes Vaccine Mandate for Workers

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yes, I definitely want to acknowledge the leadership in the building today.

And I want to say this: there is one concrete step this government could take to fight the spread of COVID-19. Today, the NDP is calling on the government and this PC leader to make vaccinations mandatory for people who work in personal-care homes.

Now, Manitoba has the same number of personal-care home outbreaks as Ontario. That has proven to be very tragic. At least 10 Manitobans in personal-care homes have passed away in outbreaks this past month. So there's really no reason not to take this step to protect seniors.

Will the new PC leader immediately require all workers in personal-care homes to be vaccinated?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I thank the member of—the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

Of course, I know the federal government has put restrictions in place prohibiting people coming from South Africa, from different countries coming into Canada. That is a good first step and we acknowledge that. It is the right thing to do, and we thank them for taking those necessary precautions to protect Canadians and, ultimately, protecting Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

What I will say with respect to the Leader of the Opposition's other question with respect to nurses in personal-care homes: it is required, it is mandatory now for nurses to be vaccinated or undergo testing prior to entering those facilities.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we're seeing through the fourth wave that the Pallister government's

approach to protecting personal-care homes is just not working. We continue to see tragic outcomes, and that's why we're calling on this government to go a step further and to mandate vaccinations for everyone who works in a personal-care home.

Now, the PC leader has refused to do so, so far, but this is an important step to take. We all recall the terrible tragedies at Maples and Parkview Place. We all watched with sadness at the ongoing devastation unfolding at seniors-care homes across the province.

Other provinces have done this, and we should do it here. We should do everything we can to protect seniors. And I have to say, if you have to rely on unvaccinated staff to take care of seniors, then you're probably not running the health-care system in an appropriate way.

Will the new PC leader take action? Will the government require vaccines for all workers in personal-care homes now?

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. He will know that Dr. Stevenson came out with a report that required—had 17 recommendations. We have committed to implementing all 17 of those recommendations that will put in place various measures within those personal-care homes to appropriately protect the citizens that live in those homes, Madam Speaker.

So, health-care workers in the system are taking those necessary precautions to ensure that we implement those 17 recommendations. Of course, it is required now for nurses to get vaccinated or get tested. And so, Madam Speaker, we will continue to put measures in place to ensure the protection of our seniors in our personal-care homes.

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

Manitoba Health Regions Funding and Staffing Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): That's a disappointing dodge, Madam Speaker, but unfortunately not surprising from the PC leader who, as Health minister, did not tell the person undertaking the Maples review that Revera lied about staffing on the night in question. And so we see that continued lack of credibility. There was a cover-up with respect to the Maples and now no answers when it comes to personal-care homes.

We also know that, as Health minister, the new PC leader ordered cuts to health authorities province-

wide. In Prairie Mountain, according to documents we are releasing today, the former Health minister ordered \$2.8 million in cuts. That meant, quote, unquote, vacancy management and, quote, unquote, holding vacant positions open.

This shows that the 25 per cent vacancy rate in Prairie Mountain is no accident. It comes because of the orders of this government.

Why did the former Health minister—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —order \$2.8 million in cuts to front-line care in western Manitoba and the Parkland?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is simply wrong. We are putting measures in place to ensure that there are more nursing positions in Manitoba—seats in education.

We're also ensuring that they're—internationally—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —educated nurses are appropriately educated to ensure that they can enter the workforce as well. There are a number of initiatives that we're taking.

Of course, a shortage of nurses is not just something that we're dealing with here in Manitoba, it's something that is happening across the country. I will continue to work with our counterparts across the country and the federal government to ensure that we deal with these very important issues.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, the PC leader—after cutting 500 nursing positions—now has the idea to try and add 400 back. We're still going to be down nurses across Manitoba, and it's because of the actions that she took as Health minister.

We're also releasing documents today that prove that, in addition to the almost \$3 million cut from health care in Brandon, Dauphin and Grandview, that the Pallister-Stefanson government didn't stop there. No, they also ordered \$2.1 million in cuts to front-line health care in the Southern Health region.

That is wrong. The Southern Health region is being devastated during this fourth wave. They need more nurses and doctors in Southern Health and not

less. They certainly don't need more cuts from the Pallister-Stefanson governments.

Will the former Health minister reverse the two-point-million-dollar cut to health care in southern region?

Mrs. Stefanson: I've indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that we recognize that there is a shortage of nurses, not just here in Manitoba, but there is across the country.

We are working with our counterparts to ensure that we get those nurses up and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —training. That's why we have announced that we will have 400 more nursing seats in post-secondary education, Madam Speaker, that will help move us in that one direction. Also, the internationally educated nurses that we want to get up and trained, as well, to get out there in the front line.

We recognize there's a challenge. We recognize there's more work to do, and we're getting the work done.

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

Mr. Kinew: It's the same sort of excuses we used to hear from Brian Pallister. They say they recognize there's a problem, but they don't recognize that they created the problem.

The former Health minister decided to cut front-line supports for health care across Manitoba. They did the same thing in northern Manitoba. As Health minister, the PC leader ordered a \$2.3-million cut this year to the Northern Health Region. That cut, and I quote, physician travel overtime as well as cutting conversions of nursing positions in personal-care homes.

In the middle of a pandemic, this former Health minister cut supports for doctors to travel to the North and she cut supports for nurses in personal-care homes. That's wrong.

Will the new PC leader take a stand and reverse the cuts that she made as Health minister?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the math.

Madam Speaker, \$1.18 billion in 2021 and '22 for COVID-19, \$6.98 billion overall funding. It is the largest funding for health care in the history of our province and \$156 million over last year.

Madam Speaker, \$812 million capital funding for rural and northern health care; \$50 million to address surgical backlogs; \$23 million: cancer treatments; \$2.7 million: dialysis treatment for more than 200 patients. The list goes on and on.

The Leader of the Opposition is absolutely wrong. He should get on board and ensure, like we are, that Manitobans get the health care that they want when they need it.

* (14:10)

COVID-19 and Personal-Care Homes Vaccine Mandate for Workers

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Wave after wave, Manitobans have seen this government be reactive instead of proactive. Failure to listen, cuts after cuts to our health-care system, and now we're seeing a bad repeat play out in our long-term-care homes under this new PC leader.

Ten seniors in personal-care homes have died in this past month, and Manitoba has some of the worst outbreaks in the entire country right now. And yet, we have a minister that's okay with the status quo and a PC leader who won't implement mandatory vaccines for health workers in PCHs and ensure that seniors can be safe and protected in their own homes.

Other provinces have already done it.

With a new variant in Canada, will the minister finally make one right decision and mandate vaccines in personal-care homes immediately?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I would like to start by thanking our First Nations, Inuit and Métis and Indigenous leaders for the exemplary and great work that they have done in terms of helping us to roll out our vaccine campaign. Thank you so much for your leadership and for all the hard work that you have done.

Madam Speaker, the member for Union Station is, once again, very incorrect in stating that we don't want to keep Manitobans living in personal-care homes safe and protected. That is exactly what we've done. We've prioritize dose threes, booster shots for personal-care-home residents and we've done much, much more.

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

Manitoba Health Regions Funding and Staffing Concerns

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, the minister's refusal to act isn't the only concerning thing under the Pallister-Stefanson governments: \$7.1 million has been cut from northern, Southern and Prairie Mountain Health. That's just this year.

Now, this includes conversions of nursing positions in personal-care homes, cuts to physician travel overtime to help people in remote communities and holding vacant positions open—holding vacant positions open—that's a quote of a directive under the former minister of Health, who happens to be the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson).

The staffing crisis in the health-care system is—the staffing crisis the health-care system is experiencing right now is not an accident; it's a direct result of their decision-making.

Will the minister reverse the Pallister-Stefanson governments' cuts immediately?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Madam Speaker, it appears that the Opposition Leader as well as members of his caucus are having difficulties with math these days: \$1.18 billion '21-22 for COVID costs; \$6.98 billion overall funding, an increase of \$156 million—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —from last year—the largest Health budget in Manitoba history; \$812 million capital funding for rural and northern health care. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: The number is increasing, not decreasing, as it did under their administration.

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

Public Health Orders Vaccine Mandate

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, I wonder what thoughts and prayers equals in actual dollars for Manitobans—pretty sure it's zero.

Last week, that's—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —what the Minister of Health had to offer Manitobans who are waiting for surgery and diagnostics, thanks to their decision-making.

And this week, the MLA for Borderland said, and I quote: Vaccine mandates are not fair, moral, legal or right. End quote. That's wrong, Madam Speaker.

And in response to The Globe and Mail article which detailed widespread public health violations at church services, the Minister of Health said, and I quote: Our officers can't be at every single location, which is why we depend on the public to report us—report to us at our tip line. It's unfortunate the reporter wrote an article. End quote.

Madam Speaker, will the minister just apologize for her comments—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the more than 36,000 health-care workers in the province, which represents 99.5 per cent of those workers, who have stepped up and chosen to either get vaccinated or get tested to further help keep Manitobans safe in their workplaces.

Many of these individuals, Madam Speaker, work in personal-care homes, are committed to protecting our seniors, keeping them safe and protected.

Would the member from Union Station please show them some respect and regard for the incredible work they've done during this difficult time of COVID? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Epilepsy Treatment Concerns Neurologist Position Vacancies

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Last year, we saw several neurologists leave Manitoba, resulting in significant impact to services. The government then made promises to recruit more neurologists. But where are we a year later? Nowhere, Madam Speaker. In fact, we're worse than we were a year ago.

There are seven neurologist positions vacant—a 35 per cent vacancy rate. And I will table those documents. And it's all because neurologists are frustrated about this government's refusal to provide them with the resources they need to do their jobs and help Manitobans. It's shameful.

Why is the minister leaving those living with epilepsy behind by failing to address these critical

vacancies and providing doctors with the resources they need?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Madam Speaker, we are very much committed to our epilepsy program and have committed capital dollars to that initiative. And we'll be making more announcements in the next month or so.

So we are showing our commitments through capital investments and will continue to do so as we—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —move forward with ensuring Manitobans have the epileptic supports that they need.

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

Ms. Naylor: This feels like more empty promises, Madam Speaker.

That's what Manitobans suffering with epilepsy always get from this government. Three ministers of Health, including the new PC leader, have done nothing to address these vacancies, nor have they flowed the funds that were promised to neurologists.

Award-winning neurologist, Dr. Serletis, is one of several who have left because this government has failed to fulfill their promises. The result? Thousands of Manitobans, including children, continue to have to leave the province to access life-altering surgeries.

Why is the minister failing to provide Manitobans suffering with epilepsy the services they need here at home?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I know it's been a few months and the memory of the members opposite wanes over time, but in May of this year, \$4 million investment for the adult—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —epilepsy program—I know they don't want to hear any good news from this side of House. It's tough for them to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —handle good news when, in their time, it was all bad news and doom and gloom. But we have invested \$4 million. We're committed to that program, and we will—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —move forward with having an even more robust epileptic program here in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —the province.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, it has been four years since this government received a huge donation to acquire equipment for neurologists to help treat children with epilepsy. Yet four years later, there is still no ROSA machine. Neurologists have left because of the lack of support; remember, a 35 per cent vacancy rate.

Seizure after seizure, children are suffering each and every day in this province. Children are suffering because this government continues to drag their heels.

When will the minister purchase the equipment and provide neurologists with the resources that they need to help Manitoban children get the life-altering care they need here at home?

Ms. Gordon: An announcement, Madam Speaker, seven months ago, and the member is just bringing this forward.

Let me remind them: \$4 million investment to expand the epilepsy—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order. Order, please.

I would ask the table to please stop the clock.

Just a reminder to members that phones are not to be used during oral questions.

The honourable Minister of Health, to—*[interjection]* Order. Order.

* (14:20)

The honourable Minister of Health, to complete her answer.

Ms. Gordon: The investment will expand the adult epilepsy monitoring unit to four beds from two and purchase new, state-of-the-art monitoring equipment, as well as provide technology-related upgrades.

Madam Speaker, this is an investment we take very seriously, and we look forward to rolling it out in a more 'robust'—robust manner in the weeks and months to come.

**Protest Buffer Zones
Request to Support Bill 204**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Today I reintroduced Bill 204, which would create buffer zones to prevent COVID-19 protests around hospitals, testing and vaccination sites, schools and child-care centres to help keep Manitobans safe.

This bill would prevent demonstrations like the terrible anti-vaccine protest that we saw in September outside the Health Sciences Centre. These anti-vaccine, anti-science protests impact on the safety and well-being of health-care workers and patients as they enter and leave health-care facilities. That's simply unacceptable, Madam Speaker.

Will the PC leader support Bill 204, protect health-care workers and vulnerable Manitobans and expedite the passage of Bill 204 today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Our government understands and supports everyone having access to health-care services across this province. Our government understands the importance of keeping people safe.

Madam Speaker, we have supported efforts to keep health-care workers and others safe as they continue to go to and from their workplaces. We know that the vast majority of Manitobans respect this as well, and so that's why we'll continue to stand up. We'll continue to take efforts and create pathways to people having those safe workplaces to work at during COVID and otherwise.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Patients had to cancel their appointments due to the protest outside the Health Sciences Centre. People who needed to access health-care treatments were denied the safe ability to do so by angry, misinformed anti-vaxxers, anti-sciences, and it's this PC leader's duty to ensure that Manitobans have access to health care when they need it, and safely as well.

One way that we could do this is to set up buffer zones outside health-care facilities. So will the PC leader do the right thing, support Bill 204 and immediately pass this bill to set up protest buffer zones outside health-care facilities and schools and child care? She can do so today.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it's a timely question, because it was only a week ago that our government announced that we are advancing the concept of the

institutional safety officer, a unique new designation of security officers that will primarily work at university campuses and hospital settings exactly for the purpose of keeping people safe.

While the NDP, when they were in government, did nothing to enhance safety in health-care settings, we have the support of Manitobans to create this new designation, a new class of officers to keep nurses, to keep doctors, to keep patients and visitors safe.

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

**Abortion Facility Protest Buffer Zone
Request to Support Bill 203**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Anti-choice protestors armed with graphic, assaulting and misleading literature and signs protect—or, protest and harass Manitobans outside abortion clinics, Madam Speaker.

I've introduced Bill 203 four times as of today. This government has made it very clear that they have no intention of protecting reproductive health-care rights. In fact, the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) stated, and I quote: I voted against bill 207 and will never support legislation that silences pro-life voices. End quote.

Safely accessing abortion services is a human right, Madam Speaker.

Will the PC leader finally do the right thing and pass Bill 203 immediately?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, creating and sustaining safe access to health-care services is essential.

I find it peculiar that the member, who is saying exactly these things, cannot voice one element of support for a significant effort to establish a new class of security officers at hospitals who on the—*[interjection]*—and even now while we give an answer, the member is trying to heckle and get back into the game.

So, Madam Speaker, maybe—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —we should cede the floor to allow the member to talk, because she clearly has more things to say.

But the fact of the matter is this, Madam Speaker, we have a class of security officers to keep people safe

in hospitals. We support those measures. It's clear today they don't.

Permanent Paid Sick Leave Request for Manitoba Program

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Temporary federal sick leave provisions are just that: temporary.

Manitoba workers need to know that there's permanent sick leave provisions available to them that they can count on when they need it.

British Columbia has seen the value of introducing paid sick leave.

Will Manitoba do the same thing and introduce permanent paid sick leave mandated by this Province?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our government is very proud of the fact that we are one of the first governments to push for a national sick leave program that the federal government introduced. We did that with an NDP premier. We also introduced first parameters to allow people to take time off, one of the first jurisdictions to do that.

Our program in and itself has helped over fifteen–16,379 employees, and that's over 1,400 businesses have been supported by this program. It's been—very effective program, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Well, Madam Speaker, children also need to stay home if they're sick. But working parents who don't have any kind of paid sick or family leave have to make heart-rendering decisions. Do they send their kids of school when they're sick, or does the parent stay home and not put food on the table because they're not getting paid?

Those are the decisions that workers in this province are forced to make simply because this government won't introduce provincially mandated leave for sick—for families so that workers don't have to make those choices.

Will the minister commit today to introducing leave provisions, paid leave provisions, for Manitoba workers so that they can stay home when they need to?

Mr. Fielding: Our program has been very effective. Over 16,000 employees have taken advantage of this program for the tune of \$4.5 million. As mentioned, over 1,400 employers—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding:—have utilized this program.

And like—unlike the NDP, what we do is before we look at permanent programs, we would consult with labour and business organizations. We know the NDP don't like to consult. We're not going to make those same mistakes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The—*[interjection]* Order.

The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Lindsey: I was saying, Madam Speaker, that answer'd be funny if it wasn't so sad.

Workers, unions in this province have been asking for permanent leave provisions. This minister says they're going to consult. I don't know, maybe he's deaf; he can't hear them telling him that this is what they need in this province.

Manitoba families need it. Manitoba children need it. Manitoba public needs it to protect all of us so that working people and their families are protected going forward to make sure we have permanent paid leave provisions, not temporary, not necessarily funded by the federal government while they take credit, but permanent paid sick leave.

Will the minister commit to doing that today?

Mr. Fielding: What our government has tried to do, not just on this, but other things like labour relations, is take a very balanced approach where you take into consideration employees' plus employers' aspects.

Our program that we introduced, one of the first in the country, to augment—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding:—the federal program has supported more than 16,000 individuals here in Manitoba as a sick leave parameter; 1,400 businesses have been supported.

* (14:30)

We don't just listen to one side. We listen to all sides and make a decision that makes sense for all Manitobans.

Children's Special Allowance Clawback Request to Settle Legal Action

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): From 2005 to 2019, when the Manitoba government seized an Indigenous child or baby from their family, they also confiscated that child's federal benefits—about \$338 million worth.

The addition of a treaty acknowledgement today in the Legislature is a welcome and long-overdue step towards reconciliation, but the theft of this \$338 million is not a harm of the past; it is an open wound. In opposition, the NDP and PCs called this practice immoral, illegal and stealing, but in government, they did it anyway.

Last year, the Families minister said it was putting it behind us. First Nations children are suing to get back what they had taken from them again. That Families minister is now the Premier.

Will she do the right thing, settle the case and return what is owed to Indigenous children?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I thank the member from St. Boniface for the question.

The member will know, of course, that that issue is before the courts right now. What I will say is that is a practice that was initiated by the previous NDP government, and is something that we ended.

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

Treaty Hunting Rights Government Position

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We know the PCs are trying to turn over a new leaf or start a new page, but it's not clear that anyone in Manitoba conservation got the memo.

The previous premier poured fuel on the fire between the Manitoba government and First Nations and Métis groups over traditional hunting and fishing rights. We still keep hearing that Indigenous hunters and fishers who are looking to feed their families are being mistreated by the department and mistreated by conservation officers.

These controversial policies that have been brought in have hurt Indigenous people who fish and hunt to put food on their families' tables.

Are we going to have a change in attitude from this government or—on treaty hunting rights, or will it be more business as usual?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Again, I thank the member for the question, and, of course, we are taking a much more collaborative approach now, working with Indigenous partners across the province. I've had the opportunity to meet with many of those Indigenous leaders who are here with us today.

And we'll continue to have these conversations. We want to ensure that we have a much better collaborative relationship moving forward and we will continue to do that and work very closely with them on these and many other issues.

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

Early Learning and Child Care Pandemic Staffing Support Benefit

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Established child-care facilities in Tyndall Park have shared with me that the pandemic support staffing benefit is not meeting their needs, and some centres are not even qualifying for any of the pandemic support at all.

These challenges have created a reduction in program enrolment and a reduction in hours of operation.

Now, Madam Speaker, the federal government provided Manitoba \$19.2 million for ELCCs. This PC government underspent their pandemic support staffing benefit by \$9.2 million.

When will the PCs increase wages and the pandemic support staffing benefit to properly acknowledge ELCCs and their tremendous work across Manitoba?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I'd like to thank the member for raising this issue, and if she's got certain facilities in her riding that she'd like me to look into, I'd be more than happy to do that.

We know that our child-care centres really suffered greatly, many of them, throughout the pandemic, in keeping their doors open. That is why we established the Pandemic Staffing Support Benefit. That is why it is an ongoing benefit. The intake is still open until the end of this fiscal year and perhaps even longer, depending on where we're going with this pandemic.

That is also why we signed the child-care deal with the federal government, so that we could enhance benefits and make child care accessible to all Manitobans. We're endeavouring to establish 23,000 new spaces in the province as well as enhancing the wages for all those who work in that sector.

Liquor Mart Robberies Controlled Entrance Initiative

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, Manitoba consumers, as well as employees of the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, had their safety

threatened by brazen actions that were taking place in Manitoba Liquor Mart stores.

Our government acted to ensure the safety of Manitoba consumers, as well as protecting MBLL employees. Our government supported Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to enhance security measures in the vast majority of their stores.

Can the Minister of Crown Services inform the Legislature on the success of these efforts to protect all Manitobans, including Manitoba workers?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member from Assiniboia for that great question.

The installation of controlled entrances at Liquor Marts across the province has dramatically reduced the incidence of theft and robberies, and has made for a safer, more comfortable working and shopping environment.

In the sixth months prior to receiving their controlled entrances, the five highest hit Liquor Marts recorded a total of 2,633 thefts. In the six months after their controlled entrances became operational, the combined total of thefts of these locations had dropped to only 66, a decrease of 97.5 per cent.

Madam Speaker, thefts occurring in Liquor Mart controlled entrances are no longer a brazen nature where individuals are stealing large quantities of product and threatening—and often threatening violence. Thefts do still occur, however. Individuals concealing one or—

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

Families Grieving Miscarriage or Stillbirth Request to Support Paid Leave Legislation

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Earlier this year, I brought forward Bill 231—would legislate paid leave for parents grieving a miscarriage or stillbirth. The experience of a miscarriage or stillbirth can be incredibly emotionally and physically traumatizing for the parents involved, and it is crucial that folks are able to access paid time off to care for themselves and to take time to grieve and heal.

We should ensure that all grieving parents have access to a separate and fully funded paid leave.

Will the minister legislate paid leave for parents grieving a miscarriage or 'stillbirt'—stillbirth today?

Ekosi.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our government will 'rerue'—review and evaluate that, and we have a budget process going. We're happy to say that our budget process starts here tonight at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. We want to hear good ideas that are important to Manitobans. This could be one of them.

Ms. Lathlin: During the already traumatic and stressful experience of a miscarriage or stillbirth, parents should not have to stress out about their next paycheque.

In Manitoba there is no full wage replacement available for parents who are grieving a miscarriage or a stillbirth. If a pregnant person miscarries, they can apply for EI at a fraction of their normal wage. This is not a meaningful support for people who shouldn't have to stress about finances during an already devastating time.

I ask again: Will the minister support Bill 231 and legislate paid leave for parents grieving a miscarriage or a stillbirth?

Ekosi.

Mr. Fielding: We are at the beginning of the budget process. That's important information brought forward. We're going to review that. That'll be something of—priorities that we hear from Manitobans.

One thing that I can say is our government is very proud of the fact of the supports we gave to individuals during the pandemic: over \$411 million to—that flowed to Manitobans. That's over 335,000 Manitobans got support during the pandemic.

We're there for Manitobans when they need it most.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Although Ontario, Saskatchewan and Quebec allow women to access a portion of their maternity leave if they miscarry, there is no provincial jurisdiction that provides a full wage replacement for grieving parents. Manitoba has the unique opportunity to lead with compassion on this issue by legislating a paid leave for parents grieving a miscarriage or stillbirth.

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

Ekosi.

Mr. Fielding: It is an extremely important issue. With that, we want to hear what people not just in this Chamber think, but Manitobans overall. That's why we're doing budget consultations, to set priorities for Manitobans, and this is one of the items that we'll review.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

* (14:40)

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: Are there any petitions?

Louise Bridge

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

The background to the—this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

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

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

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

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing

the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

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

(10) The new Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona. The upcoming provincial budget will provide the timely opportunity to budget and announce provincial participation in the building of the new Louise bridge.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In accordance with rule 133-6, the petitions are read, they are deemed to be received by the House.

Any further other petitions?

The honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses)? No, okay.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please resume the debate on the Throne Speech.

THRONE SPEECH
(Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that the House will resume debate on the honourable member of—the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith), and the amendment and the subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member of Tyndall Park, who has 18 minutes remaining.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): It's nice to have the opportunity to finish the remainder of my response to the Throne Speech here in the Chamber. It's such a unique experience, going back to Friday, starting the response to the Throne Speech virtually but being able to come here to these Chambers. And it's much better speaking in these Chambers, I have to admit that. It is very, very difficult to get passionate in front of a screen when you're sitting alone in your office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of things I just want to quickly touch on before I get too far into the response to the Throne Speech. The first is, I want to thank our Indigenous leaders who joined us here in the gallery today. I want to thank them for all the work that they have done and that they continue to do.

I also really want to quickly thank our—not thank—I want to congratulate our new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) here in Manitoba. I do think that is a real time-stamp that our first female Premier was elected or brought into position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's a position that I deeply admire and I want to wish her luck in her new position.

I also want to thank my constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I won't speak too, too much about this because I know I did on Friday, but I am so grateful to have the opportunity to serve and represent the constituents of Tyndall Park.

And, you know, one of the things they say is that time flies when you're having fun, and I have to admit the last five, six years have completely flown by. Did you know that last month was October and that marked two years into our mandate from the last provincial election. We're over halfway through our mandate, and that has just flown by completely.

And as we in opposition hold the government accountable, I also think it's equally important that we as MLAs are held accountable for our constituents. So I want to talk a little bit about that. I want to share a little bit about the work that I have been able to do with the support of those around me, and that's the

caucus staff, that's my constituency staff, my friends and my family.

I want to share a little bit about these past two years. Legislatively, we introduced and passed amendments to bill 47, Early Learning and Child Care Act, ensuring school programming has an approved learning program; also introduced and passed a resolution calling upon the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to recognize the historical, social and economic significance and contributions that Folklorama has made to our province, and commend all past and current volunteers for their promotion of Manitobans' rich cultural heritage and diversity; also introduced and passed amendments to bill 7, the employment standards code and amendment act, by implementing gender neutral language.

We introduced bill 215 that would mandate provincial appointed judges to take a formal course dealing with sexual assault and it would create accountability by calling for annual reporting of this training to the Legislature. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm still working very closely with the Minister for Justice on this legislation and I hope that it will pass in the coming years.

I also want to reflect very closely—and I'll bring it back through this past October—but in 2016, I began calling on this government for the creation of an independent seniors advocate and nor—I've talked quite endlessly in these Chambers about why we need a seniors advocate, everything from home repairs to long-term-care facilities, to senior day programs, to ensuring seniors who need their prescribed medications can have access to them. Talk about transportation for seniors here in the province of Manitoba—and meals, and home-care workers not having to commute from one end of the city to the other end with a 10-minute time frame.

But the reason I bring it up now and the reason I believe it's relevant to these past two years is because last October—sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not last—yes—or last month, the October prior, so about 13 months ago, the NDP decided to support our call for an independent seniors advocate here in the province, and I see that as a very positive step moving forward. I see that as the step—we now have two parties here in the Manitoba Legislature trying to convince the government, and I'm feeling optimistic about it moving forward.

Over the last two years, more recently, we also introduced bill 240, urging the Manitoba government to join the federal government to recognize September 30th as the National Day for Truth and

Reconciliation by declaring the day as a provincial statutory day. This bill has not yet passed, but I'm optimistic because, again, the NDP have—we've all decided to work together and we've now got two pieces of legislation that have been introduced, one is currently on the Order Paper from the NDP, and I am very optimistic that it will pass through this House.

Now, at a constituency level, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my office has had the opportunity through many, many letters—I know at the beginning of the pandemic I feel all I was doing was sitting at the computer for 10 hours a day responding to emails and writing letters—and through all these letters we expanded the Risk Recognition Program. We made it so more people were eligible. We helped Manitoba small businesses and organizations by pushing for additional rounds of the Manitoba Bridge Grant, which also begs the question, what is the government going to be doing now? We're still in a fourth wave. What are they doing to help the small businesses, to help individuals?

* (14:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things I remember thinking at the very beginning of the pandemic is, wow, what am I going to do with this time where I would normally be delegating it to events on the weekend? And so, in working with—in collaboration with all my constituency staff, what we decided to do was create a COVID-19 update. So every day, throughout the pandemic—and I know I've had many of my colleagues here in the House thank me, in one sense, and just congratulate me on sharing this information, and they have since created their own templates as well, which I think is great. We need to be getting this information out there. But the reason we initially implemented it is it was one thing that, as a politician, we could still be doing to stay connected in our communities, and I think it was important information that we be sharing with everyone.

Our office has also been answering thousands of COVID restriction questions throughout the pandemic via email, phone, social media. We've had various town halls on topics. Our next two are going to be on crime and safety and on mental health. We've been pushing for a community development funding which, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand is officially open until January. We're going to be doing this for our Komagata Maru park as well as for the expansion of PCCM, and I have a couple other ideas in Tyndall Park that I'm not ready to quite talk about publicly yet,

but I'm working with the small groups in the community on.

We've also assisted hundreds of constituents with provincial casework and we have continued to urge the provincial government to work with the federal government towards creating a national Pharmacare program to ensure anyone who needs their prescribed medications can have access to them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to share a little bit more about my community in relation to the Throne Speech.

On the topic of justice specifically, crime and safety were not mentioned in the Throne Speech, and I've spoken many times in these chambers about the idea of reinstating youth justice committees.

I've also recently shared about two really neat community groups that patrol and do much more than just patrolling in communities throughout the province, but two specifically in Tyndall Park. A few weeks back, I went out with NorthWest Watchers, and over the course of three hours we covered a lot of ground, got a lot of steps. We patrolled the area, we gathered hazardous objects and we had a great conversation along the way. I really enjoyed the opportunity getting to know so many of the Tyndall Park constituents who I had not yet met, who get together on a weekly basis to patrol and clean up and give back to the community.

The following week my leader, the member from St. Boniface, actually joined me and we went out with Neighborhood Watch, 204, and it was really neat to hear all about their values and the additional ways that the group contributes to our province through blood drives, mental health awareness, fundraisers, education and much more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank all the volunteers for making our community safer, and I want to encourage the government to help these community initiatives in any ways that they can.

I also want to invite the other MLAs out if they ever want to join us NorthWest Watchers, the Bear Clan, Neighborhood Watch, 204. It is a fun experience, it's very hands-on, it's very grassroots and a lot of great exercise, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, on the topic of crime and safety, it causes me to reflect on the great work that NorWest Co-op is doing in trying to set up resources to keep our community safer and ensure that we're communicating about the concerns in the neighbourhood.

Through these meetings that I've been able to have with NorWest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've learnt that there's a lack of structure connection and social belonging in the community: huge increase in food insecurity, increases in unemployment, substance use and mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, and concerns around behaviour, around threats, destruction of property, and so much more, and we need to be doing more on this now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to talk briefly about education and child care. With respect to schools, Tyndall Park has seven schools, one of which my nephews currently attend and two of which I had the opportunity to attend growing up. We have Stanley Knowles, Garden Grove, Prairie Rose, Shaughnessy Park, Meadows West, Tyndall Park, which is in the heart of Tyndall Park, and our newest school is Waterford Springs School.

As you can tell, there are a lot of children in Tyndall Park, which means a lot of I-love-to-read opportunities in February, and I have to admit, I Love to Read Month is probably one of my favourite things to do as an MLA—getting into the schools, speaking with all the children, gathering all their ideas and actually bringing them into this House. I think they have great ideas, and I think the other MLAs really value the ideas that the children in our province bring into these Chambers.

And I know that Sisler High School no longer falls under my constituency. However, many of my constituents attend Sisler High School, and I'm always very honoured to be able to participate in their events, their graduations, football games. The school always makes me feel so proud and like such a Spartan, and I know there's a couple other members in this House—the MLA for Notre Dame and the MLA for Waverley—who are also very proud and true Spartans.

And if you haven't noticed, like high schools, there are no post-secondary facilities in my constituency. However, I have a huge population of students, post-secondary students, who are attending them, and I think it's really important that this government is aware of the harm that they have been causing with post-secondary institutions.

I think about tuition rebates. I remember—and this was about five years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker—sitting in committee listening to students who were at the time studying here in Manitoba explain to the committee the usefulness of post-secondary education rebates. From these presentations, we learned all

about how these rebates were incentives that paid for student loans, down payments on houses and even kick-starting careers that they've been studying years for. And, unfortunately, this government still took away these rebates from students.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government also started charging international students for health-care coverage after they continue to pay three or four times more than what domestic students pay. They have proposed detrimental cuts to universities, and luckily this bill does not pass and, hopefully, it does not come back to surface.

Bill 64—and need I say more on that?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has failed to listen to university groups who advocate for issues that matter to students. Currently, this government has yet to make things right with UMFA.

If we move on to child care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's really disappointing that this government is not doing enough here in Manitoba, especially with all the funds that have been designated for child care. And I guess I should start by just thanking our child-care centres who have reached out to me and have made me aware of how ELCC shortages have impacted facilities in many ways, and I know that they've reached out to all MLAs.

Some of the ways that ELCCs are being affected are through reduction in enrolment programs, reduction in hours of operations, closing cohorts to maintain ratios, asking families to drop off or pick up their children earlier, staffing for screeners at the school entrance prior to children entering the facility to ensure that they are symptom-free and staffing to answer the phone at pickup times and transporting children to meet families at the school entrance. There are ongoing fears that this instability can cause decreased quality in early learning and child-care programs or even for the closing of the facilities temporarily.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this pandemic staffing support grant that I talked about in question period, it is not enough. It's not even scratching the surface. And there are established child-care facilities in my constituency alone—and I'm sure throughout Manitoba—but in my constituency who have reached out to me that are not even qualifying for this grant money. So something is not working, and something needs to be applied immediately.

I want to transition over a little bit, because I'm noticing the time here, and talk just a little bit about

how neat it is that Tyndall Park is such home—is a home to such cultural diversity, and in addition to this such crucial historical points—take, for example, Dr. Jose Rizal monument, which is in Tyndall Park. Dr. Rizal is a national hero of the Philippines who sought to educate his fellow Filipinos in the arts, sciences and trades so that they can be free from 'phrejujite'—prejudice and ignorance, they can participate competently in self-government and become independent. Dr. Rizal sought to prove that difference does not imply inability, and he died believing that justice is the result of education and enlightenment, not violence. That is why he is well known for his phrase, the pen is mightier than the sword.

Tyndall Park is also home to an incredible group of people who have been working towards having a park named after Komagata Maru. Mr. Deputy Speaker, back in 1914, the Komagata Maru ship was forcibly turned away from Canada, sending sick immigrants back to Calcutta.

* (15:00)

The naming of this park is one way to pave some positive steps forward towards healing—and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it makes me so proud that this park will be in Tyndall Park and I'm hoping that this government is going to help with funding for the space, too, with the community 'developing' grant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to sent—spend a moment just saying thank you our health-care workers who have been overworked and mistreated, to our teachers who have never been properly acknowledged or given opportunity to properly prepare; thank you to our businesses and our restaurants who have been patient, accommodating and permitting for so many of us Manitobans to still have things to look forward to. I want to thank students for sacrificing experiences, graduations, being able to study on campus, so forth.

And, lastly, I want to thank everyone who continues to do their part in combatting this pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Economic Development and Jobs): I want to begin by saying it's an honour to speak to the Speech from the Throne this afternoon, and I want to thank the wonderful constituents of Waverley for giving me the opportunity to represent them in the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the member from Tuxedo on becoming the first female

Premier of Manitoba (Mrs. Stefanson). I also wish to recognize the significance of today being the first-ever formal land acknowledgement to take place during our legislative proceedings. Thank you to all the Indigenous leaders for your valued feedback that—we went into creating this formal process, and it was great to see that some of you were able to join us in the gallery today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from day one our priorities have been to safeguard Manitobans and support the economy. As we shift towards recovery, our focus is to help businesses rebound by getting them skilled workers they need and to help Manitobans secure jobs.

Our government is committed to listening and working with the business community, industry, economic development partners and Manitobans to create the conditions required for economic growth. We are investing in skills training to support economic recovery by moving individuals towards employment while addressing current and future labour market needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government recognizes that immigration and a diverse workforce is a key element to a strong and robust Manitoba economy. And I want to congratulate the honourable Premier for mentioning immigration in her first speech as the new Premier of Manitoba. We are increasing our immigration numbers and reducing approval times and—to attract and retain a modern, global workforce.

Our government continues to value the input of our stakeholders and communities as it intends to continue to listen and consult ensure our strategies aligns with the needs of Manitobans.

I am proud of our government's economic relief and recovery programs that have helped thousands of Manitoban businesses and Manitobans weather the pandemic. This includes over \$470 million in non-conditional loans and targeted wage subsidies, among other supports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year we have committed \$45 billion in grants that assist businesses in hiring new workers and bringing their staff back to the workplace. This includes the Healthy Hire Manitoba Program.

Are far thousand—over four thousand applications have been received through these wage support programs. We are committed to getting money in the hands of businesses as soon as possible and have

reduced red tape in our processes to make sure we hold up our end of this promise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hospitality relief sector program provided \$8 million in financial relief to Manitoba's accommodation and tourism sector. Our government has committed \$50 million to support the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce to administer the long-term recovery fund. We are now shifting the focus of the long-term recovery fund to kick-starting the economy. We are committed to investing in employee skills development, the digital economy and rebuilding consumer confidence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the \$15-million digital media initiative has been an overwhelming success and will support digital business transformation, increase productivity and access new markets through digital platforms. The 12-and-a-half-million-dollar Retrain Manitoba program offered under the long-term recovery fund and launched this month through Economic Development Winnipeg will help Manitoba employers train their staff, help businesses expand the skills of their employees and grow the economy. Businesses can receive up to \$2,500 for each employee, up to a maximum of \$75,000 overall.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the long-term recovery fund has also helped small- and medium-sized businesses get through the pandemic. This includes the \$9-million dine-in restaurant relief fund and the \$1.5-million shop local campaign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to share some highlights about the economic indicators of the Manitoba economy. The Conference Board of Canada is forecasting economic growth of 4.8 per cent in Manitoba next year. This is larger-than-expected growth of Canada as a whole and second only to Alberta.

There are also other indicators that underlie our current economic growth. Manitoba currently boasts both the lowest overall and lowest youth unemployment rates in the country. Average weekly earnings saw the second highest increase over the past 12 months, relative to other provinces. And exports to the United States have increased to 10.3 per cent year-to-date and are expected to exceed pre-pandemic numbers by the end of the year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is a four-season tourism destination, anchored by a rich culture and history. We are committed to sharing these experiences with travellers from across the globe. Earlier this year, our government launched the Manitoba

tourism strategy in partnership with Travel Manitoba and the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. The strategy outlines an ambitious target to increase visitor spending to \$2.5 billion by the end of this decade.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to continue to attract investment and jobs in the interactive digital media sector, our government recently made the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit permanent and updated it to reflect the current business requirements.

Our government continues to hear access to venture and seed capital is an issue for Manitoba businesses, especially new and small companies with great potential to grow and create jobs in our province. To ensure Manitoba remains competitive and home of innovative new start-ups, the Throne Speech announced Manitoba will create a new venture capital framework which will be a key pillar of Manitoba's long-term economic growth agenda.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is implementing a single point of contact for investors and businesses exploring expansion and trade opportunities in Manitoba. Our new navigation division will provide a one-stop approach for companies and will work with departments and relevant agencies on their behalf to ensure their needs are being met.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that we have a strong nursing workforce now and into the future. We are taking a whole-of-government approach, including working with our stakeholders, initiatives that will address the provincial nursing shortage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year, we will launch a—we launched a new initiative to support more internationally educated nurses to become licensed to work in Manitoba. We have seen a great response to the portal so far. Currently, there have been over 1,800 applications.

Staff are reviewing applications to determine how we can support their goal of working in the nursing field. This may include language training, support with exams and assessments or gap training. Our government is providing up to \$23,000 to each qualified internationally educated nurse to help ease the financial burden with this process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard from Manitoba businesses how difficult that it has been to attract talent amid a national labour shortage. To address this issue and ensure Manitoba has a skilled workforce to be competitive on the global scene, the Throne Speech reiterated our commitment

to increasing our investments in education and training and leveraging immigration to fill any gaps.

This year alone, our government has committed \$50 million towards upgrading and skills training of the current and future labour force.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, through my department's skills development program, our government has committed \$30 million to training unemployed and low-skilled Manitobans to help them secure sustainable employment and address the acute demand for workers.

We're also assisting businesses to upskill their existing workforce through the Canada-Manitoba Job Grant program and the recently announced Retrain Manitoba program. These are being delivered in partnership with Economic Development Winnipeg as part of our long-term recovery fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, between these two programs, we will invest over \$20 million in employer-driven training initiatives to fill internal skills gaps that may be holding back productivity.

* (15:10)

Our government is also investing in targeted training through the Sector Council Program. This supports organizations in key sectors of the economy to develop and deliver specialized sector specific for workforce training.

These organizations deliver short-term training for existing workers to increase productivity and competitiveness, develop new products and processes and increase access to national and global markets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, sustained economic growth requires innovation, and we are committed to ensuring Manitoba continues to create an environment where entrepreneurs are welcome and valued. This means providing grants to small- and medium-sized businesses through my department's Innovation Growth Program and supports development and commercialization of new, innovative products and services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to invest in companies that show great promise and have long-term potential to stimulate economic growth in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to support the next generation of innovators, our government partnered with organizations such as Futurpreneur Canada, and their start-up program provides direct support to aspiring new businesses—business people and helps address

barriers to succeed faced by many Black, Indigenous and newcomer entrepreneurs.

Manitoba remains committed to supporting the next generation of business leaders and entrepreneurs to reduce barriers of success, and that is why our government has committed \$750,000 over three years to an organization such as entrepreneur—such as Futurpreneur, sorry, to help young entrepreneurs launch and sustain businesses.

A few weeks ago, I had an opportunity to meet some of these Futurpreneur entrepreneurs and learn about their successes. As a former small-business owner myself, I was inspired by the drive and resilience of these young Manitobans.

And, most recently, this past Friday, I went to visit one of these Futurpreneur entrepreneurs, Cru Barber, in Niverville, an Indigenous-owned small business. And because I was there to watch my daughter's basketball game in Niverville, since we were there this past Friday and my son was also—with us, why not support them by getting his hair cut and supporting a local business in the area?

So we were happy to support them, and, of course, the owners, Mitch and Zega, were happy to serve my son.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday afternoon, my family walked with Waverley constituents, Andrew and Katy Wedgwood, in the North End. Andrew is a colonel with the Royal Canadian Air Force and invited my family and I to walk with the Bear Clan as they have—the has—they have walked a number of times with the Bear Clan. And I'm glad he did. It was a humbling and wonderful experience to be with a group and helping those on the street, whether it was handing out snacks, water, toques to keep them warm, or just to have a conversation with them.

I know Andrew as a current member of the Canadian Armed Forces and myself as a veteran, we receive the thank-you-for-your-service from time to time. But being thanked for what we were doing yesterday by volunteering with the Bear Clan was very gratifying, whether it was from people on the street or those in passing vehicles honking the horns in 'acknowledgent.'

I highly recommend to anyone who can take the time to volunteer and help organizations like the Bear Clan out to do so.

Thank you, Andrew and Katy, for inviting us, and thank you to Bear Clan interim executive director, Kevin Walker, for welcoming my family and I.

My Deputy Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today in support of our government's Speech from the Throne, and I'm looking forward to strengthening our provincial economy for all Manitobans as we progress together into our post-pandemic recovery.

And as our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has said, we will need a strong economy to pay for the social services to properly take care of Manitobans who may need those services more than others.

Again, it is, indeed, an honour to rise in the House, to represent my constituency of Waverley as your MLA and as the Minister for Economic Development and Jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I'd like to welcome you back, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's good to see you in good health, able to resume your duties.

I'd also like to acknowledge and congratulate the new Premier for being a first woman to hold this office in Manitoba. This is a milestone that cannot be overlooked. It's also an honour to be here today to hear the—our first Indigenous land acknowledgement. That is indeed something that is long overdue and I'd like to lift up the members of the NDP caucus that made that also possible to occur. It's too bad that it had to wait this long, but, nevertheless, what an occasion today.

It's also, as many members have already mentioned, it is indeed an honour to be here, to represent our constituents and to respond to the Speech from the Throne for this Fourth Session of the 42nd Legislature.

I will tell you, times are tough right now for Manitobans. We are moving into month 21 of the pandemic and it has called on government to be not only unique in its approach but also responsive to the needs of its citizens. And what we've seen here is a haphazard plan that's being put forth in a Throne Speech that really doesn't tackle the issues that are impacting everyday Manitobans and especially my constituents in Transcona.

I can tell you, in Transcona, this is identified by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority as the area with the lowest per capita PCH—personal-care home—beds in the city. Now, there was a plan that was out—

that was developed in 2014-2015 by a committee of citizens here in this constituency that brought a 120-bed facility upgrade to Park Manor to the floor that was going to be constructed, but, as the government changed in 2016, that plan had to be altered.

And so that committee again got to work. And as a matter of fact, during the 2016 campaign, we had a person by the name of Brian Pallister stand right in front of Park Manor personal-care home and commit to building more PCH beds in this part of the city.

What occurred was the plan had to be altered. So the committee got to work again, took that plan—it got it down to a 72-bed facility unit, and, currently, we are still waiting. The area with the highest need for personal-care-home beds still remains, in a Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the highest need area that needed to be—and that needs to be taken care of for the constituents here in Transcona.

In 2016, other challenges were occurring. We had, at that time, three labs where people can access medical lab services, like bloodwork, X-ray, EKGs—three. We are now down to zero in the constituency of Transcona where these lab services can be accessed.

As a matter of fact, now people with mobility issues have to make alternate plans with people that—in their family or friends to get them to a—now a super-site that's located down by Regent and Lagimodière, a real challenge for people, not only with mobility issues but also with the ability to get there, and that is one of the biggest pieces that is—that are impacting our constituents here in Transcona, is the health-care services.

And this can be also broadened to the fact that we lost a CancerCare site at Concordia Hospital. Now, I heard this very same Premier get up today in the House and say Manitobans deserve to get health care close to home when they need it and where they need it.

I will tell you the residents and constituents of Transcona have a hard time hearing that comment, simply because many of these services have been transferred outside of our neighbourhoods, and we are now unable to access those health-care services close to home.

Concordia Hospital had a very unique CancerCare set-up where people were less than 10-minute drive away from quality care. I can tell you, in my own personal experience, mine was—I had my treatment done at St. Boniface Hospital; fantastic,

fantastic place. But as you near the end of those treatments, I will tell you that walk down that long hallway when you're not in prime physical condition, I can tell you, it takes a lot out of you. You know, and that's what I'm thinking about now: all the people that have to make that long walk, right, unnecessarily so.

* (15:20)

And, you know, I am going to advocate strongly that that CancerCare facility be re-established in northeast Winnipeg—coincidentally enough, one of the fastest growing parts of the city of Winnipeg in this metro region—and is now having to ask its citizens to go further to access health care close to home when they need it.

We have another example of this in a—trying to prepare for the fourth wave. One of the solutions to this is to move patients outside of our hospitals here. I have a 'constituent'—a constituent by the name of George, whose 87-year-old wife had to be moved to Killarney, Manitoba. George, of course, who doesn't have a licence anymore and can't drive and can't get support—the support that his loved one needs.

And we know that we had time to plan for this fourth wave. And yet here we are in situations where we're moving our loved ones further away from home, further away from health care where they can actually get it close to home.

When we say that we have to mean it. We have to put in those resources ahead of time so that we can have these spaces in place for people when they need it. Instead, now we're in this fourth wave and we're now making room for patients that have COVID and kicking out people that had that spot in the first place at the hospital. So those are some of the pieces that are really quite challenging when it comes to getting health care close to home.

One of the other pieces, too, that we saw is that we long ago came up with a plan for K-to-12 education that would mitigate the impact of COVID on schools: reducing class sizes, having improved air filtration, having the proper resources in place so that students can access student services in a timely manner.

I can tell you, when I was working in the system three short years ago, before the pandemic hit, many students had difficulty accessing the necessary clinical services like psych assessments, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language services. Those were still a challenge to access, psych assessments that often took 12 to 16 months to

complete. These very same services right now are moving into 24-to-28-month wait-lists for psych assessments for kids.

And we knew that this was going to happen, because when people were able and kids were able to get back into school, that these were going to be challenges. We knew that this was going to come up. And yet, we did not have any extra supports put in place so that we can deal with kids getting back to school, everybody at the same time.

The crush of demand on social work and other student services is overwhelming the system right now. We have kids on wait-lists that are languishing, that need to be seen, that need to have these services in place so that they can flourish and thrive at school. These are the things that are missing right now: a coherent, cohesive plan that puts kids first, and their families first, so that they can access these services.

Another interesting aspect of this is that we could've also—this government could've also have planned for a universal nutrition program available to all schools. Now, you will notice, I would say nutrition program. It's not a breakfast program. But it's having food and food—nutritious food available for kids when they get to school. It's a very important piece that research has shown has direct impact on a child's ability to learn.

But here's the really good piece about having nutrition programs: in my experience, when I was running schools, what it did is that this was a mechanism that we can use to have parents come into the school, parents that typically did not have great experiences themselves when they were kids, when they were at school. This allowed them to come into the school and then, once we were there, were able to build that sense of community. Because it's not just about nutrition. You are also feeding that for community.

So what that did is that it created a place for—and a spring for—a springboard for some parents to then become lunch program supervisors; to then become interested in, say, becoming an educational assistant. So these are some of the 'ancillary' effects that you have when you have something as simple as a nutrition program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because what it does is it allows a person safe access to a place that many probably felt that they didn't feel welcome in.

What an opportunity, right? And when we have that community-school model that we needed to hear in a Throne Speech, that was missing, that would be something that would really improve the lives of

people that didn't have a great experience at school when they were students. And this is one of the very important things that these kind of programs, like a nutrition program, would certainly allow for.

Some of the other pieces that are also very important that were some—that were missing from the Throne Speech is a Housing First strategy. There are many jurisdictions that have shown that when you provide housing first, when you provide the dignity of an address to a person so that they can access services, so that they have something that they can write on an application that says this is where they live, this is their phone number, that opens up a whole different range of opportunities so that they can allow themselves to be part of a contributing member of society.

One of these Housing First strategies right now that's occurring in Finland is something that we can learn from where in 2008, in the city of Helsinki, they had tents throughout their parks. And what the government decided to do is say, okay, you know, we're going to go with a Housing First strategy and provide housing for people. And what it's done is that it is now seen—that country and that area is seen as the world leader in reducing homelessness, not only in Europe but in, like I said earlier, in the entire world—an opportunity to learn.

And we needed to hear that in the Throne Speech and we did not. And these are some of the unique solutions that need to be considered when we're looking to improve the lives of Manitobans, especially when we're in this pandemic, a pandemic that is challenging us to be our very best.

We can't do the same old things anymore. We have to be unique in our solutions but also have the ability to go out there and see what's working and see what other jurisdictions are doing. That's what's demanded. That's what people are demanding of their government.

We need to see some of these unique solutions being brought here to the province of Manitoba so that we can come out of this pandemic not only stronger, but if there is another pandemic coming down the pipe, we're more prepared, more resilient, more ready to tackle the challenges that face citizens and government. These are things that have to be taken seriously and we have to ensure that we have these plans in place.

You know, I do believe in positive intent but I also believe in positive hard work and in doing the

research and in getting out there and hearing things that are uncomfortable to hear.

I will tell you, people really care about public education. Public education in Manitoba is something that was manifested and created through the experience of early settlers in Manitoba—the experience being that you had to co-operate, you had to rely on each other, especially during hard times.

A public education system was created so that everyone could—public can benefit from an education that not only served the economy but also served the citizenry. It's not just about jobs. It's also about how do I contribute to my community; how do I become a better citizen?

*(15:30)

These are democratic ideals that are very much based on the co-operative, supportive model, especially in a winter country and in a winter place like Manitoba, where if you didn't have the support of your neighbour, you were not going to survive. And we have to take that same attitude, that same ethos and apply that to government and go out and have some of those difficult conversations and sometimes listen to some difficult advice that has to come back to us as politicians and take that and move forward with it.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I see in this Throne Speech is an opportunity missed. I want to echo the words of my colleague from Keewatinook, who said this Throne Speech was going to provide an opportunity for a new vision but it's still unfortunately some of the same old, same old. Eighty per cent of what's in this Throne Speech was in 'previouth'—previous government's Throne Speech. That is not changing the channel, that's staying that course, a course that has shown to have failed Manitobans when we needed government the most.

And so with this opportunity missed, it is clear that this current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) will continue down the same path—one that led us in a disastrous second and third wave. And now we're heading into a fourth wave where we have a lack of leadership when we really need it the most. And I will say that this Conservative agenda is not serving the citizens of Manitoba very well, hasn't for the past five years and I don't see it getting any better in the next two.

Manitobans deserve better. The constituents of Transcona deserve better and they're waiting. They're waiting for some real concrete action on a number of important items: health care, education, Housing First,

addictions treatment. These are the things that are going to help the citizens of Manitoba.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the MLA for Transcona, I cannot support this Throne Speech and will not be doing so when the vote comes. I want to thank you for this opportunity to allow me to put a few words on the record and I wish you continued good health.

Thank you.

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): It's good to have you back in good health, Deputy Speaker, and also following the member from Transcona, it's good to see you as well and your healthy condition.

I want to congratulate the member from Tuxedo as the first female First Minister and certainly history in its making. Also, I want to acknowledge all those that helped the land acknowledgement that happened today in this House. Certainly historic times within this Chamber.

Also the table officers, what they do to help each and every one of us as we do our duties—I know, non-partisan staff, but certainly a component of this House that is critically, critically important.

And I also want to thank the folks from Lakeside for the opportunity to represent them. Next year, we'll celebrate 100 years with three MLAs in the history of Lakeside. Surely remarkable.

I want to—and also say it's a opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech and in support of key priorities and opportunities of Agricultural and Resource Development. These priorities are vital to the future of agriculture and natural resource sectors in the province, and to the social, economic well-being of Manitobans.

Each of our priorities represent an important contribution to a stronger, healthier and more inclusive province including single-window permitting for mining, sustainable protein, provincial water management strategy and drought resilience, commercial fishing, eco-certification, Indigenous engagement.

Manitoba has heard from the mining sector the current permitting system is 'detering' company—detering companies from exploring and investing in mining opportunities in Manitoba.

The department is committed to overhauling the permitting system in order to increase efficiency and ensure we have a more attractive—to compete for

investments. The department established a new Programs and Permits Administration Branch—provide a single-window, permanent excess point. This new system will include consistent review process and decision-making process will consider all recommendations in a holistic manner.

Currently, the collection of many acts and regulations govern Manitoba's resource development and management. We are looking at all legislation through the lens of sustainability, of resource development and single-window permitting system.

And we are making progress. We have just launched a new procedure to allow multi-year work permits for mineral exploration on Crown lands to support multi-year mining projects. The process of redesigning a single-window permitting system for mineral exploration has the potential to be adopted for the streamlining of other permits and 'liseens' across government.

My department's next priority is sustainable protein. The Manitoba Protein Advantage, released in 2019, has a vision for Manitoba to become plant and animal global protein supplier of choice. The strategy targets sustainable growth for both plant and animal protein sectors. Since the strategy's release, Manitoba's attracted \$673 million and created 667 new jobs in the protein investment.

Our long-term goal is to accelerate innovation for Manitoba to produce diverse, high-quality sustainable protein.

Manitoba established the Manitoba Protein Consortium in January of 2020 and appointed eight members representing industry, academic, non-profit and government. The consortium is working with industry to implement the strategy. Attracting investment and jobs in sustainable protein will depend on climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy and attractive environment for investment.

Since 2019 the department has invested \$4.7 million to support protein research and innovation. Manitoba also attracted \$44.6 million in investments from Protein Industries Canada, plant protein projects valued at \$143.5 million. The department provided \$100,000 to the University of Manitoba to build a sustainable protein research strategy.

The department has also refocused the Food Development Centre on protein development; \$360,000 in investment to 'supproat' protein innovation and commercialization. These activities will

enable Manitoba to capitalize on untapped market opportunities, strengthen our position as a world leader in protein supply and contribute to food security.

Our third priority is Manitoba's provincial water management strategy and drought resilience. As we know, water's a key resource for Manitobans, their environment and our economy. We must work together to sustainability—manage water while considering the impacts of changing climate and growing economic and social needs.

The last comprehensive provincial water management strategy for Manitoba was completed almost 20 years ago. Water strategy investments not only combat drought but ensure safe water for communities and able more investments.

Although my department leads the provincial water management strategy, we're working with all departments to ensure a whole-of-government approach towards water management. We're engaging with Manitobans, Indigenous communities and other stakeholders throughout the strategy development with guidance provided by an expert advisory council. We have drafted a water strategy framework outlining our vision, guiding principles and focus areas, while incorporating lessons learned from the 2021 drought event.

This strategy also represents a practical and extremely important opportunity for government to demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation. We have extensive engagement activities planned with our Indigenous communities in 2022. We anticipate finishing the strategy next summer.

* (15:40)

Our next priority is commercial fisheries and eco-certification. Manitoba is home to many abundant fisheries. Many of these fisheries are mixed-use and support commercial fishing, recreational angling and First Peoples' 'sustance' harvest.

Recreational angling draws \$600 million annually. Commercial fishing draws \$100 million each year to Manitoba's economy. Our department has a responsibility to manage Manitoba's fisheries for the benefit of the ecosystem, the 'fishies' sector—fishing—fisheries sector and all resource users. Our department has been monitoring fisheries and collecting data to inform fisheries management's decisions.

We recently announced an additional \$600,000 annually to enhance fisheries monitoring. We've also

provided assistance to Manitoba's commercial fisheries in receiving certification to access market opportunities. Waterhen Lake fishery, Canada's first certified fishery and Manitoba's only certified fishery today, received an initial certification in 2014 and recertified in 2020.

Cedar Lake Fisheries has a rich history of shared fisheries and management working with provincial and federal governments for over 25 years to achieve sustainability and is on a path of eco-certification. Recently, my department provide \$20,000 in-kind assistance to support an external certification assessment for the Cedar Lake Fisheries. Results of the certification assessments are expected in early '22.

My department also recent released and conducted engagement of Manitoba's Recreational Angling Strategy. The strategy strives to balance, increase angling opportunities with enhanced protection for fish populations. Looking ahead, the department is pursuing the regulation amendments required to implement the strategy for April 1st of 2023. The 'strategie' positions Manitoba to become leaders in recreational angling management across North America.

Want to anchor the above comments with our critical priority, 'indigewous' engagement. Partnerships and the participation of Manitoba's First Peoples are important keys to unlocking our natural resource potential. This engagement will also ensure the successful achievement of objectives through initiatives such as mining development.

As you know, our government is strongly committed to strengthening the relationship with First Peoples. This is based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnerships. The government is also committed to working with First People governments to promote participation in the resource sectors to ensure communities share in the economic benefits.

The department established a new Integrated Planning Branch. One of its mandates is to support 'indigewous' relations and reconciliation activities. They provide oversight to Crown consultation process and co-ordinate the department's representation on resource management boards.

The 'partment' has supported First Nations forest management projects, including issuing forestry option licence to a group of four First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to explore forest 'develent' led by our First Peoples.

I can share with this House that today, I'm hosting the forest management day—departments right across 'dall' provinces and the federal government and certainly can tell you it's going well. This also includes that 'kipataha' forestry management corporation partnership. This partnership between First Nations and Kraft Paper will help manage 8.7 million hectares of boreal forest in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it certainly has been a pleasure to stand in the House and put a few things on the record regarding our Throne Speech. I'm proud to stand with a government that is committed to moving Manitoba forward in a path to reconciliation.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Times are tough for Manitobans, and I was looking through my last throne speech and I realized I could have given the exact same speech because we are seeing a repeat of the exact same things.

We are seeing a rising cost of living and this PC government isn't addressing it in any way.

I wrote to the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), calling on the government to raise rates for EIA recipients in Manitoba. We've seen the cost of goods rise upwards of 5 per cent, and we've seen fuel go up 30 per cent. This is what Manitobans are dealing with.

In my constituency, northerners are facing the reality of the cost of food going up, as well as the cost of gas going up, meaning a trip to the grocery store now costs even more. In several of the communities I represent, they don't have a grocery store, forcing them to go to Thompson to get groceries, which just adds more cost to get everyday goods. And it is unacceptable that this government just says, it's okay, you don't need the help, we're not going to be there for you.

And this is how northerners are living. This is how people on EIA are receiving—this government is treating them, and that's just unacceptable. They need to know that their government is going to be there and recognize the realities that they're living in, and this government is just not doing that.

People are struggling to make ends meet, and they have to choose—sometimes choose between health-care services they need. Many people in the North are forced to travel to Winnipeg for medical care, and this government makes it harder for them to do that with the cuts to northern patient transport.

I and my colleague from Flin Flon wrote the Health Minister asking for her to have people who need to go to Winnipeg for dialysis treatment covered under northern patient transport, and she simply would not do it.

And that's astonishing when there are people in the North that are forced to go to Winnipeg for upwards of a year to receive dialysis, and to be told, no, we're not going to be there for you, we're not going to provide you with the supports that you need. And you are now have to—you now have to support two households—one in Thompson, or in the North, and one in Winnipeg.

And that is a hard decision for many people and not everybody has the ability or the funds to do that. And this government was like, oh, well, not our problem.

And that's—I am proud to stand with the NDP and stand up for Manitobans, stand up for northerners. We have seen, since this PC government has taken office, massive cuts to northern health care. We've lost birthing services in Flin Flon and The Pas. They've sold off Lifeflight, and the loss of Lifeflight is very concerning, as I have heard from many families that there has been calls for Lifeflight to be sent to communities and no planes were available.

When life—that's unacceptable. When Lifeflight is called, they must show up. People's lives are at risk. I've had families reach out to me, saying that they were left with the decision of waiting and hoping and praying that Lifeflight would show up or take the risk and move their family member themselves to get them to Thompson to get the care they need. That is something a family should not be forced to do.

When Lifeflight is called, it needs to show up, and the fact that the minister and this government seems to think it's okay and they sold off Lifeflight and putting northerners' lives at risk is just unacceptable.

We are now two years into this pandemic and we are still dealing with the same issues and concerns. This government isn't learning from what it's done wrong and learning from best practices. Instead we have seen them crossing their fingers and hoping for the best.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I and my colleagues on this side of the House think Manitobans deserve better. They deserve a government that is going to be there for them and work towards a better access to health care, and not a premier that is just going to should have, could have, would have. That is not

something Manitobans need. They need to know that health care and the services they need are there.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is trying to say they are addressing the nursing crisis that they caused by adding more nursing spots. The truth is we're still going to be short. We've lost 500 nurses. They're only adding 400. That still leaves us short.

She talks about the UCN LPN program, but that is only happening once. It's not permanent. Why not make it permanent? We have heard how nursing in the North is in such crisis. We very easily could have a permanent LPN program.

I almost laughed out loud when they promised and guaranteed everyone who graduates that program a job, like that wasn't already going to happen. I know the PCs aren't very familiar with the North, so I will let them know that anybody that graduates the nursing program at UCN or the teaching program at UCN or the school of social work program at the U of M are hired many times before they graduate.

* (15:50)

The other thing that I found strange was that they were—while we were in the middle of a nursing crisis, the fact that there was a conversation that the people graduating these programs—this program—wasn't going to be hired in the first place. We had a nursing crisis and they weren't going to hire them. Of course, they were all being promised jobs.

Under this government's leadership and including while the Premier was the Health minister, we saw some of our sickest Manitobans shipped out of province because our health-care system wasn't at full capacity. That is unacceptable. Their failure has cost Manitobans their lives.

That doesn't seem to bother this Premier or her minister. And if they want to know what happened, they need to ensure it never happens again, which is why I am proud to be part of a team that is fighting for answers for Manitobans and why we need the inquiry into Manitoba's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic because this government has just fallen short time and time again.

Their cuts to health care has caused havoc in the health-care system in Manitoba. We've seen wait times in ERs go up. We've seen more and more people leaving ERs without even being seen, which is dangerous because if somebody is going to the ER it's not because they're not feeling well; it's because they know they are sick and they need immediate attention.

We have seen surgery wait times go up under this government and the pandemic has only made it worse. This Premier's answer to the backlog while all other provinces were making plans on—and on how to get the surgery backlog is to say, it's okay, we're going to come up with a plan for a plan to deal with it. There is no concrete plan, there's no concrete answer. They're just saying, well, we're going to come up with a plan for a plan for a plan. And some—that's something Manitobans deserve better on. They need to know that their surgeries are going to be done as soon as possible and not when this government comes up with this magical plan that they seem to think they're going to be doing.

The Throne Speech talks about supports for small businesses in the North. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government can do that by unfreezing CEDF and allowing them to give loans again. CEDF has a great track record when it comes to loans being repaid. CEDF plays an important role in businesses in the North. Many businesses were created due to CEDF. CEDF plays an important role for businesses that is needed for capital that they just can't get at traditional banks and they need the funding. The government doesn't need a plan for a plan to support businesses because they could already do that simply by unfreezing CEDF.

The simple fact is they don't want to do this, they just want to do—try and do something and take the credit for it, and create a whole new program and something that is already there. Several northerners have not been able to open businesses because of the government's decision and that is hurting all—not only hurts the North, but it hurts all of Manitobans. We need the North to be thriving and they could do that if they just unfreeze the CEDF funding.

Let's talk again about a minute for the LPM program in Thompson. While the announcement was welcome, it is only a one-time program. This government needs to step up and do more for the North and they need to do better for Manitobans. This is such an important program and it needs to not just happen once.

We know the PCs are desperate to try and change the channel from what the previous premier was doing, and this Premier doesn't seem to be any different. They say, look at—while she's meeting with Indigenous people and says she cares about wanting to build a better relation, all we've seen from this government is talk. They have plans upon plans upon plans, but nothing is different.

Look at the Throne Speech. It talks about reconciliation at the beginning, but when we got down to the bottom and they talked about resource extraction there was no talk about partnering with Indigenous communities; there was no mention about working with communities on—and partnering with them. Whether the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) likes it or not, those resources are on traditional lands and they need to respect that process.

This Premier is talking about how she wants to build a better relationship, but I don't see how she can do that while she's taking Indigenous people to court. They are still taking Indigenous people to court. They could better build the relationship if they just stop taking Indigenous people to court.

This PC government is all talk. They don't actually want to improve relationships with Indigenous people; they just want to say they're wanting to do better. But talk is cheap. They need to show up and actually do the work and listen to Indigenous people. The best way they could do that is by apologizing to Indigenous people for the way her boss treated Indigenous people. She sat there quietly while he made racist comments and blamed Indigenous people for things that were happening in this province, and that is unacceptable.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to me, silence speaks volumes. When you are silent when somebody is racist, that means you agree with them. And that is something I'm not okay with. Which is why I'm part to be—proud to be part of a team that stood up and challenged and called on the premier to make better choices and to apologize. I know that this Premier and her government are trying so hard to pretend like it didn't happen, but the facts are, it did. And them not apologizing to Indigenous people for what Brian Pallister said is not okay.

They are now trying to say they support workers in Manitoba by repealing their wage-freeze bill, but the mandates are still in place, which is hurting workers in this province. They have attacked unions time and time again, and this Premier was silent while her former boss was doing that. She didn't stand up and say, no, you can't do that; that'll hurt workers in this province. Instead, she supported the ending of trying to end the binding arbitration.

They've hurt teachers in the North with provincial-wide bargaining. They've interfered in countless contract and negotiations. They won't introduce permanent paid sick leave for workers, which would make a huge difference for Manitobans so they don't

have to pick between feeding themselves and their families and staying home when they are sick. That is a decision nobody should have to make, which is why we need permanent paid sick leave. And that is something this government just isn't willing to do.

They are trying to champion a temporary program that was brought in with supports from the federal government. Well, we have seen that we need a permanent program, not just during a health crisis like a pandemic. It needs to happen all of the time, because having a paid permanent sick leave program would enable people to get healthier quicker and not have to choose between food and work.

Now, let's talk about what this Premier did as a Cabinet minister. Well, I don't think we can call that a success. As a Families minister, the First Minister failed child care in this province. While she was hosting a press conference saying centres that remained closed would not be punished, she forced the child-care co-ordinators to call centres and say if they close, they wouldn't receive their operating grant. And when that was pointed out to her, she said the NDP made it up, which is not true. We have seen countless proof that, in fact, she did at their—at her direction and they were forced to do it.

She created a failed at-home daycare program that spent less than 1 per cent of its money. She supported the continuing funding freeze, which has had negative impacts on ECEs in this province. We've seen a staffing crisis in child care caused by her government, and she has supported and done nothing to help ECEs in this province, which is hurting families.

Families need to know that there is quality, affordable, accessible child care available to them. I know we have signed on to the federal agreement, but we still don't know what's in it. We're one of the only provinces that have not shared what's in that agreement. So my question to her and her government is, why are they keeping it a secret? What do they have to hide?

Families need child care, and that is so important in this province. They have attacked and have cut funding for children with disabilities. At the end of the day, they have made it harder for families to access the ISP funding, and that hurts children. We have seen cuts to children with disabilities, and that was something she did, and this government is not standing up for children. At the end of the day, this government and her—this government under her leadership is failing and making it harder for families in Manitoba.

While she—while under Housing—she was the Housing minister—they did not build a single unit of housing. However, they did sell off a number of units, and I don't see how that helps Manitobans. They've made it harder for low-income Manitobans to access housing. They have made it harder to get permanent housing. The PCs have offered up short-term announcements for housing, such as warming centres, but there is a need for long-term housing. They are relying on non-profits, and they've made it—they've provided less and less funding for these non-profits.

* (16:00)

We need a real plan to address the homelessness issue in this province, but this government does nothing. All they do is make plans for plans for plans to address issues. Well, they're just kicking the can down the road while—Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They aren't supporting families and Manitobans with addictions. All they are doing—they're not—they are—they've not done a safe consumption site, which we know saves lives. They are talking about the RAAM clinics, but I wonder—pardon me for a moment—excuse me—they are talking about the RAAM clinics, but I wonder if the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her Health Minister know they're only open a few hours a week. Manitobans need addiction supports when they need it, not just a few hours a week. And we know safe consumption sites work; we have seen that they work, and they need to step up and do a better job in Manitoba.

Once again, supports for people with disabilities made it into the Throne Speech, not for the first time, not for the second time, but a third time. There was a bill passed moving income assistance out of EIA into its own program. But the regulations aren't done. They're only just a start in developing a plan for the regulations. Once again, a plan for a plan.

But what concerns me is if it was so important, that it made it into the government's Throne Speech three times, why weren't the regulations not done? Well, it tells me because it's not a real priority. There are still many questions that need to be answered, and it is disappointing that this is not really a priority for this government.

The NDP have been raising concerns around this issue for a while. When is it going to take effect? What is going to happen with people that have short-term relapsing disabilities that won't qualify for the new program? They keep saying that they won't be affected, but the truth of the matter is, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, the change in legislation means they don't qualify. The Premier and her minister are not able to answer that. In fact, over 80 per cent of the commitments in this Throne Speech are just repeats from the Pallister administration. This new leader isn't offering anything new. Instead, she is recycling ideas from a failed premier.

And what is really troubling, because they won't say how Brian Pallister's ideas and plans failed, makes me wonder why they are just doing—they're not doing anything different. The decisions are being made by the same people, at the same—and the same players. It's the same people who didn't stand up to Brian Pallister the first time. In fact, they cheered and celebrated while he hurt Manitobans in Manitoba by raising hydro rates in the dead of night.

This Premier's Throne Speech contains the same broken promises used by Brian Pallister and doesn't seem to have a plan of—themselves. They seem to want—they say they listened to nurses, but if they did, they wouldn't have sent the sickest people out of the province—out of province. They would've made it clear and listened to nurses. We would've had a plan for education and knowing that our children were going to be supported.

My guess is is that this First Minister was trying to just copy-paste and hope nobody would notice. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people noticed. And my guess is the reason why she was hoping people weren't going to notice is she's too busy focusing on other issues that are going on. There is the upcoming court case that is going to be determining if she is, in fact, the premier.

And it's the same old, same old, and that is something that Manitobans deserve better. They aren't making investments in Manitoba. They are—the only investments that are happening are with federal dollars that they are trying to take credit for. They're also trying to take credit for the work of non-profits, and they've made it harder for non-profits. Non-profits have really stepped up and provided the supports that government should. And they're doing this work with less and less funds due to government cuts. Well, their cuts—their funding has been under way and are ensuring that it makes it harder for Manitobans that need non-profits.

This government is ensuring, though, that the richest Manitobans are getting money through tax cuts, and that is not an investment Manitobans need. Manitobans need to know that a government is going to work for them, not just the people that agree with

their—with the government and not just the people that are voting for the government. They need to know that a government is there for them.

Manitobans are also really frustrated and disappointed with this Throne Speech. It doesn't reflect the realities that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): Great to be here. Always a pleasure to be able to stand up in this House and, first off, acknowledge and thank the fine folks from Red River North who I represent on a daily basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and have had that honour since 2019 and, certainly, look forward to continuing to bring their concerns to this Legislature. Once again, I thank them.

The Throne Speech, again, lays out our path, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to progressing forward together. With our new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), our government is embarking with Manitobans on a path in a new direction. We know that. We've heard a lot of that talk over the last couple of days. Our government embraces the values and equality, inclusivity and understanding.

On reconciliation, we have a number of themes, and I can tell you—and I'd like to share, again, with the House, and put on record—that I am very pleased to have the opportunity to serve as Crown Services Minister, and also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have the opportunity to work closely with all Manitobans, including our First Nations friends, partners in the North, particularly with respect to concerns they may have with Manitoba Hydro, or potentially Liquor & Lotteries and casinos and gaming.

And I can certainly share with the House that we've had a number of opportunities over the last several weeks and months, and particularly under the new leadership of Premier Stefanson, that we've had the opportunity to move forward with these talks and we're really looking forward to having an continued dialogue and discussion.

We know that Manitoba has been faced with a drought the last two-plus years. Particularly this summer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that it has had an issue with water flows. We know that that affects not only Manitoba Hydro, it affects our First Nations, as well. And we know that we've had open and frank dialogue and discussion in connecting and making sure that Manitoba Hydro is working with and directly in partnership with our First Nation partners with

respect to the concerns and challenges they have with water.

Also, too, as well, connecting with the federal government, we know that the federal government, particularly on First Nation reserves, has the responsibility to provide drinking water and proper sewer systems for our First Nations partners. And we've been at the table working with our First Nations to ensure that Indigenous Services Canada hold up their part to ensure that Manitoba First Nations are getting the services that they need—services that we all take for granted like water, like good, clean drinking water. Well, I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're at the table with our partners to ensure that the federal government is also at the table and we move forward with that.

Our government is committed to collaboration, co-operation and reconciliation. I've just touched on some very serious issues that we're dealing with right now with respect to that. Our government affirms the commitment of working with Indigenous peoples to advance shared goals and promote truth and reconciliation. Again, having those discussions—not only having those discussions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but acting on them, too, as well. For far too long, there's been a lot of talk but little action, and I'm so pleased today to see, in the lobby—or in the—in the Speaker's booth, today, representatives, of course, grand chiefs, here in support of working together with government, working together with Manitobans to ensure that we get it right.

We must rebuild the relationship on the foundation of meaningful dialogue and engagement with our First Nations. Again, that's what we're talking about, that's what I'm talking about, and have the unique opportunity to do that as Crown Services Minister, and, certainly, there's no—there will be no lack of opportunity to continue that dialogue.

On health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know our province and country are going through the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19. We know there's a new variant that is potentially coming. As a matter of fact, it's here. It's—was discovered in Ottawa yesterday, and we know the federal government is taking steps to ensure that further transmission from outside Canada and the country doesn't come here, too—not only Manitoba, but to the rest of the country. So we thank the federal government for doing that and ensuring that flights are essentially put on hold until we get an understanding what the new COVID variant is all about.

* (16:10)

The difficulties, of course, that this has imposed on our citizens and businesses and governments are unprecedented. We know that—and I'll break it down into, first of all, Manitobans, in particular, families. We—I know a number of my colleagues on both sides of the House are parents and family members, have aunts, uncles, moms and dads, and they certainly have been going through the pain that we all have been suffering with respect to ensuring our families are protected from COVID-19.

And we know that it's been over 20 months, and with the emergence of new variants coming in all the time, we know that we need to ensure that we can live with COVID-19 and understand it to the point where we're, basically, running with the fundamentals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that, you know, we're doing our hand-washing, we're ensuring that we're social distancing, we're wearing our masks when we're—when it's appropriate, of course, and certainly, getting Manitobans vaccinated.

And to that point, I'd like to thank the Manitobans that have been double-vaxxed and some—in some cases, now getting triple-vaxxed with that extra jab to protect themselves and their families on a go-forward.

And great news, again, with our children five to 11 being able to be vaccinated now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Great to see so many young folks—you know, our grandkids and alike and getting out there and getting vaccinated and protecting themselves and being able to enjoy the things that they love to do and go to school and learn and play recess and just hang out with their friends and just do the things that we took for granted two years ago, quite frankly. And we're so happy to see some sense of 'normalacy' coming back to our lives, especially for our children, who have been suffering with mental health issues for sure, not being able to do the things we take for granted. So, great to see the uptick in COVID vaccines.

Certainly, our government is committed to our health-care professionals. These folks—you know, I have family members that one's a nurse and one's a health-care provider as well, and she—I see when I—able to get together, we see that—the stress on her face and some of the challenges she's had to go through. She's been a health nurse and an RN for over 33 years, and certainly, we commend all our front-line staff and our nurses and doctors and health-care providers for the work they've done.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And we know that the last two years—let's hope we never have to go through a pandemic like this again, but it's taken a real toll on our front-line nurses, doctors and health-care professionals, so again, I would like to thank them personally myself. And again, we all have, probably, family members that are touched in the health-care field in some way or another, so I'm sure that everybody in the House would share those sentiments.

Our government is creating, as we know and we heard about in the Throne Speech, a task force to address the surgical diagnostic backlogs. Welcome to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I see the deputy-Deputy Speaker is now in the Chair, so welcome.

Again, this task force, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will address the surgical and diagnostic backlogs—very important. Obviously, we know that COVID, throughout the world, has created unprecedented backlogs in surgery, in hips, in knees. We know that our government has made investments in moving that needle forward. There's more to be done, absolutely, but we're going to continue to work hard with our health-care providers to ensure that we get that done.

And I believe, and we believe, the task force will be a benefit to addressing those surgical diagnostic backlogs on a go-forward basis. Certainly, it can't happen overnight, but with the hard work of our front lines and doctors and nurses and our task force, we're going to move that needle forward on that.

Our nursing strategy will also target the nursing shortage and increase training spaces with—again, as we hear about a lot in this House—400, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 400 additional nursing seats. Great news. Hasn't happened in years. Needs to happen more and it will happen under our government. We know that, and we're looking forward to that.

Manitoba must, again, have the capacity to fill the demand for these nurses, so we're moving forward with that. More nurses to be trained, developing skills and working in institutions again, and ensuring that nurses are getting educated quickly and to the point where they're out in the field serving Manitobans, which they want to do, and protect Manitobans on a daily basis.

As we also know, our government will recognize certain cancers when it—with respect to our fire-fighters, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We—the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was out with an announcement with the Finance Minister last week. And, certainly, we're

looking forward to not only moving forward with the new coverage for many other cancers with our firefighters, we're leading it in Canada.

We're leaders in Canada when it comes to recognizing our front-line firefighters going forward to ensure that they are protected, along with their families. So that's really great to see, and we're moving forward with that. Again, we'll be a leader in Canada, so that's wonderful.

Earlier this year, again, a stand-alone government department was created dedicated to mental health and wellness and recovery. We know, as I mentioned earlier, not only our children but all Manitobans in our families—we all know a family member that has suffered with mental health issues, even pre-pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that the pandemic has made it a lot worse—without getting into detail, a lot worse for many families.

But, the supports are being put in place by our government. There's more to do. Absolutely there's more to do. But, certainly, we'll work together with Manitobans to ensure that we can move through this pandemic but also help with the mental health issues that are going to be the collateral damage of the pandemic. And we need to ensure that Manitobans are protected, kept safe and have the ability to get the help when they need it, and again, when they need it closer to home.

Touching on that, again, mental health leads into family—families' homeless—homelessness. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I—when I'm driving to work every day, we witness bus shelters being used by homeless folks. We need to do more. We need to ensure—and I know the City of Winnipeg is working, and the Province is working collaboratively—to ensure we move that forward.

We also need the federal government at the table as well. And I know our Liberal colleagues will carry that message to their Liberal colleagues in Ottawa. But nobody should be left out in the cold, especially here in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we will continue to work with community partners to develop innovative approaches to meet the needs, again, of folks that are going through these issues. Again, a lot of it stemming from, potentially, substance abuse or mental health issues. But we know we need to put the right wraparound effects in place so that Manitobans have the ability to get better because we want to make sure that they can and they

can live life that we're all accustomed to, and hopefully it'll look better post-pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In education we know that—and I think it's agreed upon that education needs to be addressed. We need to do better for our children, and we will. And we're looking forward to having that dialogue start up again to ensure that we get it right with stakeholders through—right across the province.

To ensure that kindergarten through grade 12 is, basically, improved so that Manitobans' young kids, students, can get the education that they deserve. And, again, led by the stakeholders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that we get it right. And we're looking forward to that dialogue and interaction with our educators, as well, as we go forward.

Economic recovery is another one that we need to talk about today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know I only have six minutes left, but I'm going to try to get this in. We will continue, again, to support businesses so that they can produce the goods and services that Manitobans rely on.

Jobs as well. We know—I know as a small business owner, going through the pandemic and working with my former partner, seeing the challenges that they had were just incredible. Nothing I—in my 40 years as being an entrepreneur in a business, owning my business, starting it from our bedroom in our home to building it to where it was, I can't imagine what we had to go through and what businesses have gone through, other than what we've heard from the business community throughout Manitoba. And throughout the world, quite frankly.

But, certainly, we were proud to be there for them, and we will continue to be there as we continue to grow the economy. We cannot grow the economy without a healthy small- and medium-size business sector in Manitoba, and that's exactly what we're going to focus on as we come out of the pandemic.

* (16:20)

It's very important. It helps us pay for services like health care, social services and education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that they are the engine of our economy, and we will continue to work in collaboration with them to ensure that we—they come out of this stronger than they were going into the pandemic.

We know climate is another very important concern for our government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We see the outcomes of climate change. We know droughts and heavy rain events like in BC are happening—continue to happen—more rapidly, and they're more extreme. We can see that Vancouver and BC is getting hit even harder again by another round of rain.

We know that unless we get moisture over the wintertime, that our farmers are going to be—experience another drought. Our producers and our First Nations, again, will be dealing with low water levels in the North, because Manitoba's drying up, so we need to—not only along with praying—but we need to do the work and the action to ensure that climate change is recognized, and our government is going to ensure that that happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Overall, our government has been listening. We'll continue to listen and build on that listening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that with the support of Manitobans, we'll continue to emerge from this pandemic stronger and better and ready to ensure that Manitoba becomes and is one of the strongest provinces in Canada, led by Premier Stefanson.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would just like to remind all members in the House, when referring to other members in the House, to please use their titles or their constituencies.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'm—yes, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to rise in the House and put some words on the record in response to the Throne Speech.

First I'd like to acknowledge that I'm immensely grateful to have been in the Legislature and to be a part of this Assembly today for the first-ever land acknowledgement in this Legislature. It is an incredible step. It is something that I know nations, Indigenous leaders, the Indigenous MLAs in our own NDP caucus have been pushing for and advocating for for quite some time.

And so, really, really honoured to be able to have been here today for that, and want to thank and congratulate all of the Indigenous peoples who have been fighting for this to happen in our Legislature. It is a testament to those efforts and a step in the right direction.

I'd like to also take this moment to congratulate the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) on her historic achievement. It's important to acknowledge that this Legislature was built with the expressed intent to

never have a woman as Premier, and so her accomplishment is significant. And, you know, the importance of representation in this space cannot be overstated.

I'm really grateful to be back in the Legislature and to be able to advocate on behalf of the constituents I represent in Union Station. I represent a dynamic and beautiful community, and I'm always grateful to be able to stand up here and talk about the issues that they're facing and amplify their voices.

It is—it's really important—it's important to acknowledge and recognize the work of, you know, all the MLAs in this House to represent their constituents. Obviously, I'm very partial to this side of the House, and I'm, you know, I look around at our colleagues and I know how hard they work on a daily basis, and I want to thank our NDP colleagues, you know, my fellow MLAs, for the work that they do on behalf of the folks that they represent, and really, all Manitobans. It's not easy work, and you know, I know they're committed—we're all committed on this side of the House to continuing to stand up and advocate and fight on behalf of citizens in this province.

So I'd like to start off my response to this Throne Speech by talking about the fact that, to be quite blunt, the Throne Speech was similar to the majority of the announcements that the PCs actually make and the majority of the announcements that this Premier has been a part of, certainly before she was Premier and even, quite frankly, since she's been Premier, in that the Throne Speech lacked any significant substance, that, in fact, it was just an announcement of some maybes and sometimes and hopefully and stay tuned, which we know means that this government, unfortunately, doesn't have any actual concrete plans in place to address the needs of the citizens of this great province.

And it—I mean, that's incredibly concerning because the responsibilities that we have as MLAs are tremendous; they are tremendously important. We are in roles and positions that allow for us to provide care, resource, information and answers and sometimes maybe even a little bit of hope to Manitobans. It's all the more reason why the decisions that had been made by this PC government and the lack of any sort of true direction in this Throne Speech are so egregious.

And I'm going to talk a little bit now about something that is important for us all to be reflecting on in this Legislature when this government brings forward their agenda. It is the fact that very recently we had a premier here in Manitoba who, on several occasions—

when I think about it, actually, still, some of the things that he said made me nauseous in this House. And it's not only the decisions that were made by the premier and supported by every single one of his PC MLAs that is so—and was so problematic, it was the disgusting manner in which they were enacted that should sit with every single one of these PC MLAs for as long as they are in this House and continuing to advocate for any decisions to be made.

The racist vitriol that was attached to many of the laws that were introduced by Brian Pallister and supported by his caucus, the racist rhetoric that was espoused in this House and actually celebrated by members opposite, folks in that caucus would actually applaud. Sometimes they would stand up and cheer when the premier said horrifically offensive things in this House and out in the media to Manitobans.

I actually remember a moment in this House—I will probably never forget it—when one of our NDP colleagues actually called out the premier on something racist he had said and the now-Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) sitting beside him, in that moment, did something that, to me, was so telling, more so than them clapping like they usually do or being silent, as they are. She actually turned her back on the member of our caucus who called out the premier for his incredibly racist statements. She sat in her chair and she swung her chair around, crossed her arms and had her back to that member for raising that issue.

Now, I realize that most members on that side of the House have no idea what it's like to experience racism first-hand and so they cannot understand what it means to be in this House and to be inundated by racist comments and actions on a daily basis. But that gesture was so telling that it is—it's critical that it is on the record in Hansard for Manitobans to understand that their new Premier, in a moment where she could've just done what they usually do and be silent—maybe she would've applauded after his answer to the question—she instead chose to turn her chair around and turn her back to somebody who was bravely speaking up against racism in this House that they've endured for years as an MLA.

Now—shameful—now, I'm sure folks are wondering what Uzoma, like, you always—you talk about racism so much and you—why again, you're talking about the racism? Oh, my gosh, why are you talking about Brian Pallister? He's gone.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I'd like to remind—

MLA Asagwara: You kicked him out. Your caucus got rid of him.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Excuse—excuse me. I'd like to remind the member, even when referring to one's self, that it should be done by constituency or—thank you very much.

An Honourable Member: Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

But—so, why am I raising this? Why am I—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member for Union Station. Sorry, I didn't have my microphone on.

* (16:30)

MLA Asagwara: I'm raising this because those ways of thinking impact legislation. They affect laws, they affect policies. And it's because we all know and we can all see the overrepresentation of folks who are living the daily experience of navigating systemic discrimination. We see that overrepresentation in incarceration. We see it in poorer health outcomes. We see it in lack of access to safe and affordable and respectful housing. We see it in terms of food insecurity. We see it in the rates of poverty. That way of thinking, that sort of behaviour directly affects the policies that Manitobans have to live with.

And so, when you drive through Union Station or you walk through or you take the bus in Union Station, and you see who it is that is unsheltered, that is homeless, that is struggling with food insecurity, can't access housing, can't access health care in a timely manner, showing up in emergency rooms incredibly sick because of all the barriers that prevented them from being able to get to the hospital or to a primary-care provider before they were acutely unwell. When you see in the community that I represent who is overrepresented in all of those areas, you understand just how despicable it is to have members of a government not stand up when racist and discriminatory things are said and done in this House. That's why I'm raising it.

And so what I would encourage of members opposite and this new Premier is to genuinely, on this day, first-ever land acknowledgement, genuinely take steps forward to be better, to do better by all Manitobans.

Now—and I recognize as I say that, the new Premier has already done something deeply harmful to many people that we represent across Manitoba. In the midst of being the new Premier, not really being

available to media—some people would say that the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was hiding, I may have said the Premier was hiding, I think that the Premier might have been avoiding media—she made time to meet with a local radio show host who was a known transphobic misogynist.

One of her most important first people to connect with as the new Premier was to sit down and have a conversation with a man who has compared transgender people to dogs, with a man who has routinely dehumanized women. That was our new Premier, Manitoba's new Premier's—one of her first orders of business. That sends not only a clear message to transgender, to queer, to non-binary, to two-spirit Manitobans, it sends a message to all Manitobans.

And again, when you reflect on, if you know the stats—which every member of this House represents transgender, two-spirit, non-binary and queer people so they should all know the stats—that members of those communities are even more overrepresented in terms of food insecurity, houselessness, homelessness, poverty, suicide.

I would encourage the new Premier to apologize for that decision and to make different decisions moving forward, decisions that would show that she's actually committed to leading in a manner that is different than her predecessor.

People maybe don't tune in to all of our proceedings here but people are paying attention to what goes on in this Legislature in a new way. This pandemic has created a level of awareness around the importance of who it is that we elect. People are paying attention. They are listening, they are watching.

I wanted to make sure that in this response—you know, I think about the fact we haven't been here very long, we're only going to be here for, I think, seven or eight days or something like that, unfortunately. It'd be nice to be here much longer and hold, you know, that side of the House to account. But in that short amount of time, there's a lot that we can do to—*[interjection]*

I'm distracted; the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) is chatting with a colleague over there.

And I almost forgot, actually, to include when we talk about the fact that we should be advocating for all communities, the Minister of Justice did introduce a bill just last week that would make it better, easier, for parents who are adopting, going through the adoption

process—it's a terrible summary, but anyhow recognizing the impacts of that process on parents and making sure that their rights are recognized, and what he failed to do, actually, during his debate on that bill was to acknowledge the fact that queer parents are actually parents who've been fighting for this change for quite some time.

And so I think it's really important, again, that we talk about those folks who are gravely impacted by different aspects of legislation. And so I encourage all members of the House—of this House, the Minister of Justice included, to reflect on that and make an effort to ensure that all Manitobans are represented in the legislation and laws brought forward in this House.

Now, in terms of health care, and I'm glad he's still talking because this is the guy, the Minister of Justice now—if anybody here remembers what happened in the first wave and the second wave and then 'weenother—the failed minister of Health is now the Minister of Justice. I don't know. I hope—I hope—that our new Minister of Health and the Premier, who was formerly the minister of Health—there's been so many—has an opportunity to really think about the fact that this government's decision making during each and every one of the waves was so reactive that we had some of the worst outcomes in North America, in Canada, and that moving forward, this government has an opportunity to do better. This government has an opportunity to make sure that folks in long-term-care homes, personal-care homes are protected, are safe, that the outcomes that we see are not ones characterized or construed as inevitable; that, in fact, there's proactive planning being done to make sure that Manitobans have the best health-care outcomes possible.

The last couple of things that I'll say, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, is that this Throne Speech was an opportunity to instill much-needed hope in Manitobans. This was an opportunity to show Manitobans that the PCs actually have a plan, have actually set goals, have targets, they can measure this, it's achievable. There are outcomes that we're looking forward to as a province. And, unfortunately, the Throne Speech lacked any of that.

Unfortunately, the Throne Speech repeated old, empty, unfulfilled announcements. The Throne Speech was a stay tuned, maybe, thoughts and prayers. That is not the Throne Speech that Manitobans needed to hear. And it is not a throne speech that reflects a government that is prepared and

equipped to work on behalf of all Manitobans, having the best outcomes possible.

The constituents I represent in Union Station need a plan around housing; affordable housing. They need a plan in terms of how the surgical and diagnostic backlog is going to be addressed immediately. They haven't even heard yet who's going to be on this task force that this government announced so long ago, how that \$50 million that was announced so long ago is going to be used to address that backlog. The constituents I represent want to know how their lives are going to be more affordable as it's become so increasingly unaffordable under this government.

The constituents I represent want to know who it is in that PC caucus that's going to champion basic human rights being addressed across our province and all citizens knowing that they are important, that they are valued and they are seen and celebrated by their government. The constituents of Union Station need for the members of that side of the House to not only think of them when they drive here to get to work.

* (16:40)

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I am very, very grateful to have been able to put some words on the record. I think it's pretty clear that, as the MLA for Union Station, I cannot support this Throne Speech, because this Throne Speech does not support the constituents that I represent and, more broadly, it doesn't support Manitobans across the board.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So with that, I am going to conclude my remarks and hope that, in the midst of the PC MLAs laughing and, you know, heckling and all of those things, that maybe they paid attention just enough and cared just a little and took even one or two things out of what I had to say that might influence their decision making and make the lives of the constituents of Union Station and across our entire province even just a little bit better.

Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it certainly is good to see you back in person in—and healthy.

It is an honour to represent the Midland constituency and to respond to our government's Speech from the Throne: a path to progressing forward.

First of all, I thank the Lieutenant Governor as she finishes out her term. Her grace and integrity in a role will always be acknowledged by all Manitobans.

And I congratulate Madam Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) assuming her new position, and this Throne Speech represents her vision of the consultation and reconciliation our government will take to serve the people of Manitoba while rebuilding our economy from the effects of the pandemic and the previous NDP government.

This is certainly in contrast to the opposition who, on last Wednesday alone, referenced former premier Pallister 48 times—48 times. It is obvious they are struggling for speaking notes and show Manitobans there is nothing new about the NDP.

But also very disturbing was the remarks or address from the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) last week—I believe it was Thursday—and I'll quote. Quote: "You can't even get on the Leg. grounds without going through a security guard. We now have armed guards, at huge expense to the Manitoba people, stationed at our front door. We have overzealous security officers who are hassling MLAs about whether or not they deserve to be in this building—shameful, absolutely shameful." End of quote.

I believe that the only thing shameful is the member for Fort Garry. We need to do everything we can to support our security staff in the Leg. They deserve our support—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station, on a point of order.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I—the member seems to be implying that what the MLA for Union—for Fort Garry was false, and I'd like to put on the record that, in fact, as an MLA entering this building, I have had those negative experiences, unfortunately.

I'm a great proponent of this building being safe. The security guards here are incredible. They work very hard. But it's incredibly important for us to recognize that as security gets heightened, as you have armed people working at the front doors, there are opportunities for people who are disproportionately affected by enhanced security to come into negative contact with those very entities.

And so I raise this point of order to recognize the fact that, if we are to take very seriously these measures and to trust that they're being applied equitably and that people aren't going to have the negative experiences, one of which—actually, more than one of which I have, unfortunately, experienced myself as an MLA who works in this building—it is important to not diminish when a colleague raises this issue and tries to make sure that it's meaningfully addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The same point of order—the honourable Minister of Justice, on the same point of order.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On the same point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise on this point. We've just had the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) reading back into the record from Hansard remarks made by the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), criticizing our front-line Protective Services officers.

Now, the member is doing nothing more but reading back from Hansard the direct statements made by the member for Fort Garry, and the NDP members get up; they don't want to hear this—*[interjection]* It's no wonder that, right now, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) is chirping from their seat. It was no more than two months ago where that member came into the Committee of Supply of this Legislature and accused Protective Services of somehow using new security protocols as a means to be able to actually discriminate against people in this Legislature.

That is a direct indictment of the people who take a sacred oath to protect us. This member reflects—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: *[interjection]* Yes. Points of order are not for debate.

Mr. Friesen: On the point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: But on the point of order, the honourable Minister for Justice, to conclude your remarks.

Mr. Friesen: The member for St. Johns from her seat says that we should be ashamed of ourselves. But, indeed, this is one of—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —those many occasions where the member should be ashamed of herself. To allege that our security forces—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —are working to try to discriminate against people who come to this building when the members of our side thank them for their service in difficult times, and if they could find their voice, what they should do is thank them.

I thank the member for St. Johns for yelling because it only makes me more certain that I'm on the right path when it comes to this point of order.

Will that member apologize for her disgraceful behaviour, to allege that senior civil servants are working to somehow subvert democracy. It is a sad day—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. It's starting to get out of hand here, and right now, if I get everybody to calm down and the thing is, on the point of order, it's not a breach of a rule but, at the same time, we're going into debate here.

So if you have the respect for each other, and we'll continue with the debate for the Throne Speech by the honourable member for Midland.

* * *

Mr. Pedersen: And I will just say that we need to show support to all our public service staff and our government will continue to support and ensure the safety of all employees and all members of the Legislature.

This Throne Speech is about improving and enriching the lives of my constituents of Midland and for all Manitobans. I thank my constituents for their ongoing support of our government. All of us, as MLAs, have faced differing views in terms of the pandemic, which is fair in a democracy, but it is always heartwarming when a constituent relays a message of support, both to myself and to our government.

COVID has had a negative impact on families, on communities, on workers, on businesses, on every single person in Manitoba. One year ago, we were in the second wave of the pandemic, facing 400-plus daily case numbers. With the vaccines and Manitobans stepping up to be vaccinated, which now includes my seven-year-old granddaughter who got her shot last week, and very proud of it, and by Manitobans following the fundamentals, to date, we have not seen a repeat of those case numbers.

Last year, Manitobans were asked to limit their Christmas activities, which they did, and we hope that this will not be necessary this year.

Thank you to everyone who has persevered and we look forward to some semblance of normalcy in the near future.

Midland constituency is a mix of agriculture, industry and urban residences. The impact of the third year of drought highlights the need for a water strategy as noted in the Throne Speech. Water retention plays a huge role in both drought and flood proofing. There is an urgent need for potable water, water for irrigation and industrial use for further processing of ag products.

* (16:50)

The success of companies like Maple Leaf Foods, HyLife, Roquette, Simplot, McCain, Merit Functional Foods, to name just a few, is based on a reliable feed source and water plays a critical role in all facets from production to further processing.

Industry in Midland constituency has fared well throughout the pandemic. There are supply chain issues, but this is not unique to local industry. Our government has provided over \$407 million in business supports thus far. I spoke with one of our industries in Rosenort the other day and he has more orders than they can possibly take in right now and his biggest problem is getting raw materials for it; so it bodes well for that industry.

The education tax rebate was welcomed by Manitobans, contrary to the position of the NDP who continue to oppose any tax relief. Our government has also indexed the basic personal exemption, taking thousands of low-income Manitobans off the tax roll, something the NDP never did and continued to not support.

One of our biggest challenges for employers continues to be attracting and retaining a labour force. Again, not unique to our area, but this issue is also addressed in the Throne Speech. Post-pandemic, we need the co-operation of the federal government to increase immigration for our Provincial Nominee Program. Our service, hospitality and tourism sectors in Midland continue to feel the effects of the pandemic with business slowly beginning to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Health care affects everyone. Thank you to our health-care workers who have faced incredible challenges during the pandemic, and it is far from over.

From personal experience, I can attest to the outstanding work done every day in our health system. As outlined in the Throne Speech, I look forward to our very capable Health Minister putting a plan into action for increasing our nursing staff and reducing the surgical backlog in the very near future.

Certainly, a highlight for our area was the grand opening of the Boyne Care Holdings, the new personal-care home in Carman. This has been a five-community effort featuring a new concept in creating a home-like atmosphere for our senior residents.

Our school students and staff will have stories to tell future generations of attending school during a pandemic. Let us use these experiences to improve and capture opportunities to better equip our students to enter the workforce in the future.

This Throne Speech also commits to continue infrastructure spending at unprecedented amounts. Our roads, bridges, ditches, water and wastewater facilities are vital to meet not only today's needs, but also tomorrow's needs to build a Manitoba economy competitive with anywhere in the world.

There is still a lot of work to do to repair the damage caused by the NDP to Manitoba. I'm reminded of this every day when I see the west-side waste line, otherwise known as Bipole III; the billions of dollars wasted on a longer, less efficient line. Line loss alone would light the city of Brandon. This serves the daily reminder of the NDP incompetence, and now Manitobans are faced with paying for this NDP incompetence in higher rates which proportionately will cause even more hardship to rural and northern Manitobans—Manitobans who do not have access to natural gas.

This Throne Speech by our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is a message of hope and reconciliation and a path forward for all Manitobans. Manitoba is the home of hope, and as Manitobans rebuild their lives from a global pandemic, they will be confident their PC government is doing everything possible to help them realize their dreams and aspirations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech is a path forward and I look forward to supporting this Throne Speech.

Thank you very much for the time and I certainly want to reiterate my support for all our public service staff and the terrific job that they've done. No matter what field they are working in for our government,

they are doing their utmost and we appreciate all that they do.

So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Today is a historic day. We all witnessed Indigenous land acknowledgement in this Chamber. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all Canadians on this Indigenous land acknowledgement that started today in the Manitoba Legislature.

History is created in Manitoba with the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) being the first woman to assume the office of the Premier. Congratulations to the Premier and congratulations to all Manitobans for creating this milestone of gender equity.

Miles to go, my friends. I can't wait to see similar milestones when a member of the gender non-conforming community assumes this office, or a member of the BIPOC community, transgender or two-spirited community assumes this office in the future years. Those would be next steps towards social justice, gender equity and inclusiveness.

I would also like to mention that history is created today in India when controversial farm laws have been repealed in the parliament of India. It's more of a remembrance than celebration because, during the protest, over 700 lives have been lost. Salute to those warriors who laid their lives to make this happen.

And I would also like to mention that those who lost their lives there, according to a recent study by one of the universities there, they were small and marginal farmers and landless labourers, and the average land holding for those people was less than three acres.

I want to say thank you to my NDP caucus colleagues who stood in solidarity with these farmers, and I want thank every Manitoban who stood in solidarity and extended their support to this protest. And I would also like to mention that none of the members opposite uttered a single word in this protest who is getting support from all corners of this world. We need to remember this, too.

As I already mentioned, we got the first woman Premier in Manitoba. When something like this happens, people have high hopes, but during these few weeks of her in office, people have started feeling that we need a woman premier like the women in our NDP caucus who dare to stand up for Manitobans.

Let's talk about the first Throne Speech under the first woman Premier of Manitoba. This Throne Speech—that's a missed opportunity for the Premier to send some positive vibes—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Burrows will have 16 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 29, 2021

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		COVID-19 and Personal-Care Homes	
		Asagwara	128
		Gordon	128
Bill 7—The Police Services Amendment Act (Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit Operations)		Manitoba Health Regions	
Friesen	121	Asagwara	129
		Gordon	129
Bill 203—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act		Public Health Orders	
Fontaine	121	Asagwara	129
		Gordon	129
Bill 204—The Protest Buffer Zone Act (COVID-19 Restrictions)		Epilepsy Treatment Concerns	
Fontaine	122	Naylor	129
		Gordon	130
Ministerial Statements		Protest Buffer Zones	
Diabetes Awareness Month		Fontaine	131
Gordon	122	Friesen	131
Asagwara	122		
Gerrard	123	Abortion Facility Protest Buffer Zone	
		Fontaine	131
		Friesen	131
Members' Statements		Permanent Paid Sick Leave	
June Letkeman		Lindsey	132
Guenter	123	Fielding	132
Health-Care Staffing Levels		Children's Special Allowance Clawback	
Asagwara	124	Lamont	132
Joseph Nesbitt		Stefanson	133
Nesbitt	124		
Repeal of Agriculture Legislation in India		Treaty Hunting Rights	
Sandhu	125	Lamont	133
		Stefanson	133
Dr. Anju Bajij		Early Learning and Child Care	
A. Smith	125	Lamoureux	133
		Squires	133
Oral Questions		Liquor Mart Robberies	
New Variant Case of COVID-19		Johnston	133
Kinew	126	Wharton	134
Stefanson	126		
COVID-19 and Personal-Care Homes		Families Grieving Miscarriage or Stillbirth	
Kinew	126	Lathlin	134
Stefanson	126	Fielding	134
Manitoba Health Regions		Petitions	
Kinew	127	Louise Bridge	
Stefanson	127	Maloway	135

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Throne Speech
(Fourth Day of Debate)

Lamoureux	136
Reyes	139
Altomare	142
Eichler	145
Adams	147
Wharton	151
Asagwara	154
Pedersen	157
Brar	160

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

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