

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	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, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James, Hon.	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>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

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.

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 29—The Life Leases Amendment Act

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the Minister for Seniors and Long-Term Care, that The Life Leases Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les baux viagers, be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the honourable member—the honourable Minister for Seniors and Long-Term Care, that Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, our government is proposing changes that align with the priorities of improving consumer protection while also promoting a greater understanding and transparency, all in alignment with stakeholder feedback.

This bill will require landlords to conduct regular reserve fund studies. It'll also ensure that tenants' interests are guarded in a change of ownership caused by an exceptional circumstance like a mortgage sale, tax sale or foreclosure, and it will also ensure that audits, financial statements prepared by the landlord are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Thank you.

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

Bill 21—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the minister of Government Services, that Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce amendments to Bill 21. This bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to improve road safety by strengthening the safety oversight by—for heavy commercial vehicle operators.

This bill addresses recommendations from the 2019 Office of the Auditor General report by enabling stronger enforcement actions to be taken against unsafe heavy vehicle operators, including operators who are shut down or reopened under a new company name to avoid complying with the safety regulations, Madam Speaker.

This bill will help to put the stop to this behaviour by targetting the unsafe and fraudulent operators that put all Manitoba road users at risk.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 22—The Emergency Measures Amendment Act

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Khan), that Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act. This bill will change the name of Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization, as known as EMO, to the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization. This will better reflect the role of EMO plays in the overall management emergencies, from plain-planning and preparedness and to response to—and recovery. It is also consistent to similar organizations in other provinces.

This bill will also align emergency preparedness requirements for provincial government departments with standards for other non-government organizations. As well, the amendment recognized that not all government departments require the same degree of emergency planning and preparedness.

We will provide EMO with greater flexibility to determine which emergency planning and preparedness steps are needed in each department, Madam Speaker.

Finally, this bill will provide government with the ability clearly to define critical service providers to include sectors of industry and classes, and groups of organizations, entities and individuals.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 13—The Wildlife Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 13, The Wildlife Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Nesbitt: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce The Wildlife Amendment Act. The purpose of this bill is to put forward statutory amendments that modernize and align residency definitions for the hunting and angling public.

This bill will align the definitions of Manitoba residents, Canadian residents and non-Canadian residents in The Wildlife Act with those already in place under Manitoba's fishing regulations.

This will simplify the process for all hunters and anglers when they are purchasing Manitoba licences, thus enhancing the licence purchase experience.

This bill also removes an outdated prohibition on Sunday hunting. Hunting on a Sunday has occurred in Manitoba for many decades through regulatory exemptions. By removing this redundant provision, Sunday hunting can continue for decades to come.

Thank you.

* (13:40)

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

Bill 225—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines)

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I move, seconded by the MLA for Point Douglas, that Bill 225, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 225, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines). Currently, under provincial guidelines, personal-care homes must provide each resident with a minimum of 3.6 hours of paid care each day, which we know is inadequate, Madam Speaker.

The hours of paid care include time that is not spent providing direct care to the residents of a personal-care home. Bill 225 will require the minister to report on the average number of hours of direct care provided in personal-care homes. In addition, if these hours are not at least four hours per day, the minister must explain why that was the case and how the care provided adequately—and how the care provided is adequate for the health, safety and comfort of the residents.

I look forward to unanimous support to Bill 225 in this House.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the CEDF quarterly financial statement for the '22-23 fiscal year.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable of Minister of Families, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

International Women's Day

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I rise today to acknowledge that today, March 8th, is International Women's Day. This day is a global tribute to women's achievements and the continuing pursuit of gender equality. And I want to start off by saying happy International Women's Day to you, Madam Speaker, and to all my female colleagues in the Manitoba Legislature.

This year's International Women's Day theme is centred on working towards embracing equity. Equity ensures that the necessary resources and opportunities are allocated to an individual so that they can reach an equal outcome. Equity can have a significant impact once achieved for women and girls in society. Sadly, it does not take a lot of imagination or awareness to see that women and girls still have many barriers to overcome, many ceilings to break and many sticky floors to become unstuck from.

Gender-based violence, sexism and discrimination still exists, and in many facets of society, women have not achieved anything close to parity in crucial sectors such as finance, science, media, technology and, of course, right here in politics.

Yet it is important to recognize the strides that have been made. And right in this Chamber there is living proof of the many strides that women in this province and in this country have made towards achieving leadership equity. But we all know that until all of us have made it, none of us have made it.

That is why the Manitoba government is dedicated to working towards embracing equity and creating an equal future for all in Manitoba. In the last few years we have doubled the funding that goes towards the Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat. We have modernized our family violence prevention shelters.

We have invested in proactive measures to prevent misogyny and gender-based violence. We have signed on to the gender-based violence national action plan, and today we announced an additional \$2 million for our women's resource centres. These are women on the front lines of racism—or sexism and

misogyny each and every day. They are angels on earth, and the work that they do is to be commended, and I'm very pleased that we were able to announce this funding today.

We realize that more work needs to be done, and we will continue until all of us have an opportunity to achieve our full destiny in society.

Madam Speaker, together we can make change happen in ensuring an equitable future for women and girls within the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Happy International Women's Day.

I'm honoured to be participating in this year's United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. It's already been a very busy and full three days. Global delegates have gathered for the first time since the pandemic to discuss, strategize and bring strength to one another regarding gender equity.

We are raising our voices to point out that the gender equity divide is growing ever wider and ever deeper. We know that it's quite obvious. Afghanistan, Ukraine, Iran, Yemen, Syria and the women of South Pacific are on the minds of delegates and how these disparities are felt across our world.

Given these global factors, achieving gender equity is estimated to be 300 years away. Issues such as violence against women and girls, lack of access to education, lack of gender and pay equity in the private sector, the lack of women in designing artificial intelligence and in STEM and more, are all contributing to unequal distribution of economic opportunities, health and wellness for all.

For example, if we look at economic prosperity as a measure of success, it's important to know and appreciate, in Canada, economists have calculated violence against women and girls cost approximately \$7.4 billion a year. And yet, while there are—is a business case to invest in solutions, flexible feminist funding is a concept that is constantly challenged by patriarchal institutions and issued like charity.

In Manitoba, gender equity is happening in situations such as the inability to get sexual assault—

Madam Speaker: Just a note to the member for St. Johns that her computer froze there for a moment and—I think what we're going to do, we'll allow the member to come back to complete her statement.

In the meantime, we'll move forward with the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Over the years, I have learned how much I really love and appreciate celebrating International Women's Day. And this year, I attribute this to my very goofy friends—who have been engaging with Beyoncé and girls who run the world, that song, all day long, Madam Speaker—and my family and my colleagues, as I am exceptionally lucky to be surrounded by people who really help me feel empowered on this special day.

And in the spirit of International Women's Day, I'm going to share about two specific women who I had breakfast with this morning.

The first is Shandi Strong. I have known Shandi for eight years and she's exceptionally driven, knowledgeable and she has this remarkable talent of always making people feel accepted. Shandi is my biggest encourager as a woman in politics and she has always demonstrated how powerful it can be when women support others through never putting other women down. In fact, she takes this a step further. She is always the first to interject and stand up for a person who may be under attack. Shandi is a protector, a characteristic that I strive for.

The second woman who I had the honour of getting to know over this past year, and I'm so grateful to have in my life, is Rhonda Nichol. Rhonda is the kindest, hardest—has the kindest heart that a woman could possibly have, and she's exceptionally intelligent, determined and driven to contribute to our province in making health care better for all Manitobans. Rhonda really inspires me and encourages me to be myself. She reminds me it's okay to wear your heart on your sleeve and that we, as women, are resilient and strong.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I want to wish everyone a very happy International Women's Day and I can't wait to celebrate this weekend with AWOW.

Madam Speaker: We have been able to connect with the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), who has 41 seconds remaining.

The honourable member for St. Johns. The member needs to unmute.

* (13:50)

MLA Fontaine: I apologize.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

MLA Fontaine: I'm not sure what happened, but let me just finalize my statement. On this International Women's Day, I want to lift up all of the grassroots groups and advocates working tirelessly to advance gender equity. This is exhausting work filled with burnout and frustration and, without you, our circumstances would be so dire. And so, today and every day, I stand with you.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements? The Honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Khan), and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2). Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Holi Festival of Colours

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): It is my honour and privilege as the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to rise before the House and deliver my first ministerial statement to recognize the Hindu communities of Manitoba and wish them all a very happy Holi to those celebrating the Festival of Colours on March 8th of this year.

Holi is an ancient spring celebration that recognizes the quality of all people and the triumph of good over evil. On the eve of the festival, bonfires are sometimes lit, with rituals that include the addition of wood, dried leaves and the twigs to ward off evil.

On the day of Holi, people gather to throw brightly coloured powder and spray water on one another—friends, family and strangers participating in this playful celebration. Now I, myself, was going to bring some brightly coloured powder and throw it on everyone, but after understanding that it will not allow protocol and the fact that I would have to clean it, I decided to pass.

This is all followed by meals and the distribution of sweets to neighbours and friends. In Manitoba, our cultural diversity is a source of great pride. We are privileged to live in a province that welcomes and celebrates many cultures. We have a great community spirit and we regularly demonstrate it as we join together to help our neighbours through difficult times.

Madam Speaker, today it is more important than ever to support each other as we work together against

the many continuing and emerging challenges we all share locally, nationally and with countries around the world. Holi is an important opportunity to focus on the positive forces in our community and connections that make our province a welcoming and inclusive place.

While spring in Manitoba is still a few weeks away, I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing all Manitobans and my friends here in the viewing gallery celebrating Holi, a vibrant festival filled with joy, good health and prosperity.

Happy Holi to everyone.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I wish happy Holi to you and everyone listening, and I welcome my friends, community members sitting in the gallery today.

Today, Hindu communities in Manitoba and around the world will celebrate Holi, also known as the Festival of Colours.

This festival is also celebrated by people from various cultures and religions across the world, which is a symbol of love and harmony across cultures.

Holi marks the end of winter and the arrival of spring, and the timing of the festival is determined by the last full moon of the winter. It was traditionally celebrated in northern India, but is now popular across the whole country and throughout the rest of the world as well. It is a time when families and friends gather to share food, light bonfires, sing and dance and spray each other with brightly coloured powders and dyes. There are many sweets and dishes that are prepared for Holi.

Holi is an opportunity to celebrate peace, renew and strengthen our relationships and look forward to the year ahead with hope and joy. The festival is an important reminder of the ultimate triumph of light over darkness and invites us to remain optimistic in our daily lives and celebrate the enduring power of hope and peace. One of the most celebrated festivals in South Asia and in South Asian communities across the world, this festival is a joyous and highly anticipated time of the year for many who celebrate.

Holi is also an opportunity for all of us to recognize the many contributions that people of Hindu faith have made and continue to make in Manitoba.

We thank you for everything you do for your communities and for our province. I wish all Manitobans who celebrate Holi a very joyous and wonderful festival with their loved ones.

Keep well and stay safe. Holi Hai.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I seek leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: Around the world, at the end of winter, spring offers a time of new life and rebirth.

For the Hindu community here in Manitoba and, of course, for millions around the world, it marks the coming of spring with Holi, a bright, beautiful and colourful celebration marking the triumph of good over evil and a time of forgiveness when the social barriers of caste, gender and status are all set aside as people come together to forgive each other, dance, play and feast together.

That includes the playful rite of pelting each other with a perfumed, coloured powder called Gulal, using water pistols and water balloons to make the powder stick. The god Krishna is sometimes said to have thrown coloured water at people when he was a boy. Krishna is represented by the blue powder, while red is for love, and yellow is like turmeric, a spice, of course, used in lots and lots of Indian cooking and associated with healing.

For those of us who wish to join, the Hindu Society of Manitoba will be celebrating the festival of Holi at both their temples on Sunday, March 12th, 2023rd; at the Hindu Temple and the Dr. Raj Pandey centre, at 999 St. Anne's Rd., from 1:30–1 to 2:30 p.m., and at the Hindu Society of Manitoba and cultural centre at 854 Ellice Ave. at 1 p.m. It's on their website. They also kindly reminded us to set our clocks forward an hour on March 12th, 2023, daylight saving time, so nobody misses it.

To all our friends in the Hindu community, we send you our warmest greetings. May this Holi bring joy, love and harmony to all.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: And I think this might be a good time to introduce the guests that we have with us in the public gallery.

We have with us Manohar Mennon, the Malayali Association of Manitoba; Kamta Roy Singh, the Manitoba Cricket Association; Priyanka Singh, vice-president of India Association of Manitoba; Kirit Thakrar, president of the Hindu Society of Manitoba; Bhadresh Bhatt, Manitoba Hindu Seniors; Amandeep Singh Plaha, community leader;

Adam Bhagria, community leader; Vivek Bhagria, community leader; Sheeraj Patel, community leader; and Pardeep Singh Plaha, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Khan).

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Emma Marie Renee Dutiaume

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, today being International Women's Day, I am honoured to recognize a Métis elder constituent of mine, a 'centarian' who celebrated her birthday September of last year, Emma Marie Renee Dutiaume.

Emma is currently a resident at Villa Youville in Ste. Anne, Manitoba, where she has settled in and has become a welcome part of the community.

Mrs. Dutiaume was born on September 8th, 1922. She spent her early childhood years in Marquette, Manitoba, where she met her late husband Albert, who was serving with the Winnipeg rifles during World War II. They married on January 18th, 1947, and soon after started their family.

Emma is the mother of 13 and grandmother of 41 grandchildren, 50 great-grandchildren, 11 great-great-grandchildren and counting.

Emma and Albert relocated to Richer, Manitoba, in 1964. Emma was first and fourth most a mother, but Emma and Albert were also amazing musicians. Emma played the piano as well as the lap steel guitar, and Albert played the fiddle and guitar, and together they raised a family of musicians. Not only were they all exceptional musicians but they were also teachers, mentors and inspirations to the Métis and Indigenous musicians in Manitoba and across Canada.

* (14:00)

On November 5th, 2022, she celebrated a very special evening with her four youngest sons, The Younger Brothers—Clint, Tom, Keith and Jim Dutiaume—at their—as they were inducted into the Manitoba Country Music Hall of Fame.

In memory of her son, Clint, and to honour his legacy, Emma was invited to drop the puck at the March 4th Winnipeg Jets game.

Emma was born in the Roaring Twenties when the automobiles were a novelty and television did not exist. She was young lady—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

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

Mr. Lagassé: She was a young lady during the Great Depression and World War II.

Emma is joining us in the gallery today. Please join me in honouring the legacy of Emma Dutiaume.

Northern Health Services

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Yesterday's PC budget will not support the needs of northern Manitobans. This is especially true when it comes to health care.

This government has cut funding to health-care services in the North over and over again. Hospitals have even been without hot water due to this government's incompetence. Nursing positions are sitting vacant. Health-care centres have been forced to close. People are being transferred to different communities to give birth because 'obstetric' services were cut.

The government's privatization of Lifeflight has resulted in slower transport times and less service. Their refusal to expand the SANE program means victims of sexual assault are 'fosed'—are forced to travel to Winnipeg just for an examination.

And there is no—and there is an acute doctor shortage in northern communities, meaning the health-care providers who stay are forced to do more and more with less and less. And yet, this budget from the PC government does nothing to reverse these cuts.

Northern Manitobans deserve access to the health-care services they need, when they need them.

Northern Manitobans are also suffering from the lack of mental health supports, especially for our children. We know that so many children and youth are suffering, and yet this government refuses to take action over and over again.

Recently, the Health Minister claimed that my colleagues and I do not understand northern health-care issues. But we are from the North. We have seen and lived these problems first-hand, Madam Speaker. We know that there is a health-care crisis in the North. We have experienced the last seven years of this PC government's failure to give northern communities

the resources they need to have health-care services that they deserve. And so, we know that this budget will do nothing to help the health-care crisis in the North.

So, it's time to step up—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: I heard a request for leave.

Is there leave to allow the member to complete her statement?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Niverville Waste Water Treatment Facility

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): One of the largest contributors to the level of health we enjoy in our modern world is a supply of fresh water—clean drinking water. It allows us to keep our drinking water clean and pure and prevent the spread of diseases like 'chlora' and E. coli.

Our government is committed to increasing water treatment and safety, with this summer alone providing over \$110 million in federal-provincial-civic funding to a waste water treatment facility in Niverville. This facility will service the RMs of Niverville, Ritchot, Taché and Hanover.

Today, I want to highlight another project that will continue to help increase our water treatment abilities in the communities of Springfield, Niverville and Ritchot. This commitment of over \$11 million of funding from our government and the municipal government is for the design and construction of a new joint water treatment plant for the communities of Dugald and Oakbank to provide treatment capacity for future growth in Springfield.

This will include a new groundwater-supplying water treatment plant, which will address regulatory issues such as treating excessive fluoride levels to below the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality. As well, this new facility will address fire protection with a new reservoir designed to accommodate storage requirements.

I am happy to see our government contribute to the growth of our community this way. The communities of Springfield, Niverville and Ritchot have grown exponentially in the past few years, with

Niverville in particular becoming the fastest growing municipality in Manitoba and the fifth fastest growing municipality in Canada.

With these increases in water treatment throughout our communities, we will continue to see the sustainable growth continue.

Community Safety and Justice Services

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, families deserve to feel safe in their communities, but years of the Stefanson government's cuts have been making things worse.

Over two terms of PCs cuts, property crime, violent crime and homicides have risen across the province, and people just don't trust this government to deliver on safety—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —in their communities.

Their record speaks for itself, Madam Speaker. The PCs have cut funding—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —and programs for crime prevention, community corrections, rehabilitation services, family resolution services, as well as funding to municipalities that have directly led to cuts to police services across our province.

We also know that the root causes of crime need to be addressed, such as addictions, poverty, mental health issues. Yet, the PCs have refused to establish a supervised consumption site; they've sold off hundreds of units of affordable housing; and have left the minimum wage in Manitoba to fall to one of the lowest of any province across the country.

These PC cuts have had tragic consequences. The rising rate of homicide and violent crime in our province is devastating to families and communities, and it hits poor and marginalized communities the hardest and disproportionately impacts women in those communities. Winnipeg has one the highest rate of homicide in Canada, with over 50 homicides in 2022 alone.

Tragically, this week, we saw a number of violence incidents again, including several involving guns, and a 15-year old boy was killed and his 17-year-old brother wounded in a St. James neighbourhood. It's heartbreaking to see youth subject to such violence, and I want to extend my condolences on behalf of this Legislature to the family.

Manitobans want a government that prioritizes citizens, community safety and justice services. And after seven years of failures, nobody trusts this government to fix the problems they created. That's why our NDP team is committed to tackling the issue of public safety head-on and with compassion, Madam Speaker, while addressing the root causes of crime.

Thank you very much.

Westman Volt Hockey League

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): The game of junior hockey can be a great way for our youth to gain lifelong benefits associated with playing the game. Hockey allows our youth to learn responsibility, teamwork and respect for others.

But what about kids with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy or other forms of disabilities? Unfortunately, many children with disabilities often participate in sporting events only as a spectator, as they are forced to watch from the sideline. They get regulated to the stands to cheer on their favourite athletes and their favourite teams.

Madam Speaker, I am extremely pleased to say, not anymore.

Thanks to Michelle and Chad Wallin, along with their twin boys, Sawyer and Zander, the dream of playing hockey for those with disabilities is now a reality in Brandon. Zander, who joins us in the gallery today with his dad, Chad, and a very dedicated volunteer by the name of Chris Low, is a sports fanatic who, just prior to his second birthday, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. His dream of moving from the sideline to being a participant in the game of hockey became a reality when his parents' desire to provide an opportunity for children with disabilities came true with the introduction of Volt Hockey.

The Westman Volt Hockey league is currently running introduction to Volt programs to introduce participants, parents and support workers to the game. For those who are unfamiliar, Volt is played as a three-on-three on an indoor court or gym, using specially designed hockey sport chairs. The chairs are battery operated and are controlled with a joystick. This allows virtually any person living with mobility limitations the ability to play the sport of hockey independently.

Thanks to the Wallins, the introduction of the sport in Brandon has taken off in leaps and bounds. With both the corporate world and abundance of

volunteers like Chris, this program is seeing growth well beyond expectations.

Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing the Wallin family for creating such an incredible opportunity for those who experience so many limitations to sport.

Thank you.

* (14:10)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: And prior to oral questions, we have another guest that has joined us. In the loge to my left, we have the former member for Assiniboia, Steven Fletcher, and we'd like to welcome him back to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health System Reform Government Record

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Happy International Women's Day, Madam Speaker, and I want to give a special shout-out to all the sisters who are here in the gallery today from the labour movement. Thank you for being union strong.

Brian Pallister did a lot of damage to the health-care system while all the PC MLAs supported him, and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) supported him every step of the way as the deputy premier and as his failed Health minister.

On this side of the House, we know that closing ERs and cutting health care and cutting CancerCare was wrong. But we still haven't heard a statement clearly from that side of the House. I guess that's why no one trusts the Premier and no one trusts the PCs.

This being an election year, of course, they're trying to change the channel, but I just don't think anyone believes them.

Will the Premier finally set the record straight and let the people of Manitoba know whether she thinks Brian Pallister was bad for health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): Appreciate a chance to talk about health care and all the money that we're going to invest in health care in this year's budget, Madam Speaker.

This year alone, we set aside \$7.9 billion for health care. Madam Speaker, that is \$668 million more this year in this budget than last year. That represents a 9.2 per cent increase to health care in Manitoba.

Manitobans have asked us to invest in health care in Manitoba and that is exactly what we're doing. We will hope the opposition will come forward and vote for this budget so we can invest \$7.9 billion in health care.

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

Mr. Kinew: No, Madam Speaker. They're just saying that because it's an election year.

You just can't believe them when it comes to health care. We know what they've done with health care—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—ever since they took office in Manitoba.

They all supported Brian Pallister when he closed emergency rooms—three of the biggest emergency rooms in the province. Every single one of them, except for maybe the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), supported Brian Pallister when he cut CancerCare. Every single one of them supported Brian Pallister when he cut the number of nurses here in the province.

Now, of course, it's an election—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—year. They want to change the channel. They want Manitobans to forget. But I just don't think anyone trusts them on health care anymore.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) finally admit that her and Brian Pallister's cuts to health care were wrong?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, here we go again. Opposition members putting false information on the floor of the House.

Madam Speaker, under our government—2016, we have increased health-care spending year over year over year. In fact, since—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen:—2016, a 22 per cent increase in health-care funding by this government.

Madam Speaker, we know there's more work to do. Manitobans have asked us to do more work. That's why we're investing in this year's budget \$120 million just to retain and attract more health-care workers in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I would say the NDP should cut their losses and vote for this legislation, this bill, and then we will get the job done on behalf of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I think the Finance Minister was trying to say they're going to cut their losses and vote NDP, which is what more and more people are saying each and every day.

I guess that's why he's quitting shortly after bringing forward this budget, Madam Speaker. But until we get to that election day, this PC government needs to explain—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—why they supported the Brian Pallister plan, continued under the Stefanson government, to cut health care—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—here in Manitoba. They've got their talking points, but when a Manitoban goes to the emergency room at the Concordia Hospital, it's just not there anymore.

When they go to the CancerCare facility at the same hospital, it's just not there anymore. When they go to emergency rooms all across rural Manitoba, those health-care services just aren't there and it's because of the cuts under this PC government.

Will the PCs finally, as part of their election year desperation gambit, admit that Mr. Pallister and the Stefanson government's cuts to health care—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Cullen: Let's talk about trust. When the NDP were in office, they closed permanently close to 20 ERs. Right from Teulon, Whitemouth, Winnipegosis, McCreary, Baldur, Rivers, Myrtle, Wawanesa, Rosburn, Erickson, Vita, Gladstone, St. Claude, McGregor, Manitou and Emerson.

Madam Speaker, we have made record investments in health care, to the tune of 22 per cent more since we've—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen:—taken office. This year alone, a 9.2 per cent increase, \$668 million more for health care.

We are committed to healing health care in Manitoba. Let's hope the opposition gets onside and votes for that investment in health care for Manitobans.

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

**Long-Term Care and Mental Health
Funding in Budget 2023**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the reason the health-care system needs healing is because of the cuts made by the PCs. We know that it's an election year and so they're going to make all sorts of announcements and promise to pave the roads in front of every Manitoban's—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —front door, but their actions speak louder than words. When you look at this government's own budget, they're cutting \$27 million from long-term care and mental health. That's according to this government's own financial statements, Madam Speaker. Why does the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) of Manitoba thinks it's okay to cut \$27 million from long-term care and mental health?

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

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I—we just wanted to correct the Leader of the Opposition in support of long-term care and seniors in this province. This government, for the first time in the history of this government, has created—created—the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care and, as a matter of fact, in this budget, it got a 72 per cent increase, Madam Speaker—72 per cent increase.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, even though there may be a new department, apparently, the minister has not read this government's budget. I guess that's the ultimate testament that nobody believes the PCs when it comes to health care.

So I'll tell you what I'll do, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —I'll table the budget documents, the specific page which shows that under this minister, and under this Premier, long-term care and mental health has been cut a combined \$27 million. Again, Madam Speaker, it's no wonder that there are fewer

long-term-care beds in Manitoba today than there was when they took office.

* (14:20)

But that's just another broken PC health-care promise—2016 they promised 1,200 new beds; instead, we lost them. This election year, they want to make all sorts of announcements, but nobody believes them.

Will the Premier finally admit that cutting long-term care and mental health is wrong?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I'd like to say that our budget yesterday put more supports in place for mental health and community wellness.

In our second year of our five-year road map, we are investing more in access, education, well-being, chronic disease prevention and are opening up our seventh RAAM clinic to assist individuals with Aboriginal health RAAM services.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, it's no surprise that a government that needs more than two Finance ministers to put together this year's budget also needs multiple ministers to try and answer these questions.

The fact of the matter is that \$27 million was cut from long-term care. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kinew: Well, you know what they say about the PCs: Look to your left, look to your right. If neither one of those people are quitting, that means you're quitting this year during the election year.

And it's no wonder. Nobody believes the PCs when it comes to health care in Manitoba.

After seven years of cuts, will they finally stand in their place and admit that Brian Pallister and the Stefanson government's cuts to health care in Manitoba were wrong?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Budget 2023 includes nearly \$8 billion in historic investment into our health-care system, providing \$668 million more to strengthen health care for Manitobans.

But, Madam Speaker, I just want to put on the record some information about the dark days of the NDP. Question period, April 28, 2014, this was said: In the Virden ER, there were two doctors that have left to go to another jurisdiction within Manitoba. It means

we cannot keep that ER open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We just don't have the staff there right now to do it.

Who said that, Madam Speaker? Erin Selby, former NDP Health minister. That is their record.

We will put our record up against—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Order, please. Order. Order.

I hope I don't have to remind members about treating each other respectfully in this gallery. I know we've got a lot of guests in the gallery. I'm hoping that members here will show respect and listen to questions and listen to answers. That would be the proper way to show that we respect democracy and the democratic process in Manitoba. So, I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

We do have guests in the gallery, and I would like everybody to show them that we can actually have debate here in a civil manner without heckling and yelling across the way.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program Request to Address Staffing Shortage

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program at the Health Sciences Centre provides critical supports to sexual assault survivors and helps collect evidence for survivors to get justice. Yet, staff vacancies and failing to listen to the expert advice of the nurses who keep that program running is threatening the ability of the program to support survivors.

The PCs promised to listen to these nurses and fix the staffing issues nearly a year ago, but they haven't done anything and, in fact, things have gotten much worse.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain why she's broken her promise and she's failing sexual assault survivors?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): This is a very, very serious issue for our government and we recognize it is difficult for anyone who's undergone a trauma of this nature.

And our government, as I said previously, takes it seriously. That is why our government is attempting to roll back the dark days of the NDP, when there was just casual staff in the program. Madam Speaker, by investing \$640,000, we created the forensic nurse examiner program.

Madam Speaker, staff have been hired into the unit; we have a manager in place and we are going to continue to do what needs to be done to assist victims of sexual assault.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, it's those very same casual nurses working to keep that program afloat who are telling us that the PCs have broken their promise to sexual assault survivors.

They promised they'd fix the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program by addressing those staffing issues back in April of 2022, and they would expand access to the program. Yet, nearly a year later, the issues persist and things are getting worse.

The result is that survivors are being sent home with the instruction not to wipe themselves or shower until they can return when nurses are available to provide those examinations. That is wrong, Madam Speaker, it's beyond wrong.

Will the Premier finally fulfill her promise to assist—to survivors, listen to those expert nurses and fix the program—fix the problems at SANE?

Ms. Gordon: We recognize that more work needs to be done in the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program. We want to ensure services are there for each and every individual who comes forward who has undergone such a tragic and horrible trauma.

Madam Speaker, that is why we are rolling back the dark days of the NDP and correcting all the errors they made with that program. We have hired seven—three—there are seven nursing positions within the program; three are working, three are in training.

And we are going to continue to make record investments to ensure that that program is fully staffed and that proper management, which was not available under the NDP, is available under our government.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the dark days of that program are right now. They are right now.

Survivors are not getting the care that they need because this government has failed them and has broken their promises to the staff who run that program and survivors who depend on it. There were 21 shifts without adequate coverage in February, including a 46-hour stretch where there were no nurses available.

During this 46-hour stretch, a child tried to access the SANE program. A SANE nurse says that she does not know if the patient, who is a little girl, got the help that she needed. The dark days of the program are right now, under this government.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain to Manitobans why she's failing survivors and failing children?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, it truly saddens me that a child has had to experience a horrible trauma such as this. My heart goes out to that child and their entire family.

I also want to say to the member for Union Station that they are able to look at this issue through rose-tinted glasses because they were not a part of the NDP during those dark days, when the program was mismanaged and underfunded, Madam Speaker, when there was only casual staff available.

Our government is rolling back those dark days again, Madam Speaker, by investing \$640,000, by adding more staff, adding a manager. We have dedicated space at HSC for this program and we will continue to respond to the needs of individuals who have experienced this type of horrible, horrible trauma.

* (14:30)

Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Proclamation Timeline for Bill 213

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): In 2021, the PCs supported Bill 213, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act. Bill 213 requires the government to report annually on the number of health professionals with special training to examine children who have been sexually assaulted.

Yet, nearly two years later, the PCs still haven't proclaimed the bill, meaning that it hasn't come into force and nothing has changed.

Will the PCs do the right thing and support child sexual assault survivors, and finally proclaim two-bill 213 today?

Ekosi.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government recognizes that women and children and survivors need the support wherever they are throughout the entire province. And we certainly did appreciate the member bringing forward that issue to the Manitoba Legislature with the piece of legislation that

we all unanimously supported. And my understanding is, is that there is work under way.

We do agree that people need to get the services that they need in the communities in which they live, and that is why there are—there's training initiatives happening up in the North and we are working towards ensuring that there's a full complement in the North so that survivors can get the services that they need close to home.

Ms. Lathlin: In 2021, the PCs supported bill 213, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act. This bill requires the government to report annually on the number of health professionals with special training to examine children who have been sexually assaulted, and it also requires annual reporting on sexual assault evidence kit 'inventory'.

Yet the PCs still haven't proclaimed bill 213, without explanation.

Will the PCs do the right thing, support child sexual assault survivors and finally proclaim bill 213 today?

Ms. Squires: Of course, our government is supporting child survivors of sexual assault and other traumatic incidents, and that is why we supported the legislation. And I certainly encourage that House—that side's House leader to take the issue up with our House leader. And we certainly do look forward to moving forward with this initiative.

On the aspect of training, though, that work is under way, and I want to thank the nurses that have come forward and have taken this training already. And we look forward to more nurses becoming trained.

These are all dollars—this training is occurring by dollars that have been put forward in last year's budget—which the NDP, I would like to remind the House, voted against.

The question this year is: Will they vote in favour of training for nurses to do sexual assault nurse examinations?

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

Ms. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, the PCs' refusal to proclaim 213 raises the question of whether they only passed the bill to appear as though they are taking action to support child sexual assault survivors.

Yet, it's been nearly two years, Madam Speaker. Two years. Imagine how many predators have gotten

away during that two years. We can't afford to wait any longer.

We know the PCs have failed to bolster supports for child sexual assault survivors in rural and northern areas since taking office. Bill 213 will hold them accountable for their failures.

Will the PCs do the right thing, support child sexual assault survivors and finally proclaim bill 213 today?

Ekosi.

Ms. Squires: It saddens me to see this member play gutter politics with something that is so important to so many people in the province of Manitoba.

We're standing on the side with supporting sexual assault survivors, something that we've done in each of our budgets. And when we've brought forward more money for families, more money for social supports, more money for health care, more money for training for those sexual assault nurses—every time, the members opposite have voted against. They voted against budgets that have brought forward more money for survivors.

The question remains, is: this year, there's money in this budget that will help survivors of sexual violence recover; will they vote in favour of it?

Women's Health and Maternity Care Funding for Services

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The women of Manitoba know that they can't trust this PC government, nor the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), with their family—with their No. 1 priority, which is health care.

The government's cut to lactation consultants continue to hurt new mothers who are learning to breastfeed their children. Slashing budgets for hospitals over the past six years meant postpartum mothers now have to go without mesh underwear, blankets or pads while they recover from labour.

Can the minister explain why these essential health-care services specific were—for women were cut?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I know members opposite don't want Manitobans to hear about the record investments that we are making in Budget 2023. Again, Madam Speaker, nearly \$8 billion is—which is a historic investment into the health-care system, providing \$668 million more to strengthen health care for Manitobans. That includes women, children, seniors.

And again, as the Minister of Families said, I want to ask the exact same question: will the members opposite 'fote' in favour of those supports for women or against?

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

Mrs. Smith: Manitobans haven't forgot about the devastation that's been caused by this government with their reckless cuts to health care.

Women who relied on the Mature Women's Centre are going without specialized treatment for their reproductive health service—health issues.

Will the minister apologize to women in Manitoba for their health-care cuts and the needed health-care services that they can no longer access here in Manitoba because of this PC government?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to remind the member that it is this government that expanded services for reproductive health for all women to achieve access to reproductive health services wherever they live. And that is something that that member, who's chirping now, voted against.

It's a shameful record that they didn't make those investments in women's health when they were in office, and then when they're in opposition, they vote against.

They voted against ending period poverty in the province of Manitoba. That's another thing that that opposition—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —has not supported.

We are moving forward to advance the lives of women and girls in this province by ending period poverty, doubling the money for the Status of Women Secretariat and the women's family violence resource centres, investing in women's health like never before. And each and every time, that member who chirps voted against it.

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

Mrs. Smith: All we get is talk, talk, talk from this government and no action whatsoever—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —whether it's from the minister or the Premier. She's failing at her job, just like the premier

is before her, and like all of her colleagues on that side, who happily supported Pallister's health cuts.

Today is International Women's Day. Will this minister do the right thing and reinstate all of the cuts, the six years of funding cuts that they put in place for women in this province, today?

Ms. Squires: Last year, our government invested \$5 million in our Family Violence Prevention Program. These are direct supports for women who are fleeing domestic violence and ensuring that they get the supports when they need it. The members opposite voted against \$5 million towards family violence prevention last year. They voted against that.

This year, today we announced \$2 million for nine women's resource centres in the province of Manitoba. These women's resource centres are on the front lines helping women get the services that they need so that they can achieve their destiny and turn their lives around. And I certainly hope that the members opposite will vote in favour of \$2 million for women's resource centres today.

Home-Care Services Funding and Staff Retention

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, women in Manitoba know that they can't trust this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her PC government with their families' No. 1 priority, which is health care, especially as it relates to home care. This government's failure to adequately fund home care leaves our elders struggling at home without needed support and assistance.

Care-sector workers are mostly women, and with an ongoing vacancy rate of nearly 20 per cent.

* (14:40)

How does this minister justify their failure to attract and retain home-care workers?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): As I'd indicated many times in the House, this government is committed to finding solutions to problems, and the budget that we've just presented certainly supports that initiative, Madam Speaker.

This government is working very hard to find solutions. We've just announced the \$12.6-million self-and-family-care support. As I've indicated, this government is working towards a revitalized and revamped home-care system that we will be presenting very shortly with the supports behind it.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, Manitobans haven't forgotten the devastation caused by PC efforts to privatize home-care service delivery.

Families are struggling to get the help they need for their aging loved ones. The health system is so stretched that seniors are threatened with discharge to downtown shelters for proper care.

Women are often the primary caregivers—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —both for their children and their parents.

Will this minister apologize to women in Manitoba for their health-care cuts?

Will the minister apologize for his government's failure to provide home care for Manitoba families?

Mr. Johnston: The only apologize—apology that's necessary right now is the member's fear mongering to the people of Manitoba. That's what needs to be addressed.

As I'd indicated, this government's putting its money where its mouth is, based on the budget that we just brought forward to support seniors in Manitoba, and we will continue to do that.

We are finding solutions, and the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) has made a commitment of—a \$200-million commitment to bring forward more support to retrain and train and recruit, and, certainly, our government's doing what it needs to do.

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

MLA Marcelino: It's certainly not fear mongering, Ms.—Madam Speaker.

If you take a look at the documents—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —that were tabled by the Opposition Leader, page 7—the Budget 2023 Summary Budget and Financial Updates—\$24 million in cuts for this year for the actual—what was spent for Seniors and Long-Term Care. That is not fear mongering; that is right there in the documents that were presented to us yesterday.

Madam Speaker, today is International Women's Day, and all we get is bluster and no action from this minister. We know that Manitoba's health-care workers, who are primarily women, have struggled under this government to deliver quality care for our aging population.

Will this minister do the right thing today and apologize for all of the past—

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

There must be a full moon.

Mr. Johnston: I thought I was the only one that raised my voice in this House. But, obviously, I appreciate the member's passion.

And I understand the position that the opposition is in, based on the budget we're—we just brought forward. I mean, they've got to rant—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnston: —and rave and try to draw attention away from the realities of this government supporting the people of Manitoba.

And this department will—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnston: —continue to do what we need to do. As I mentioned, the budget of Seniors increased by 72 per cent, Madam Speaker.

Recruitment of Nurses from the Philippines Immigration and Resettlement Supports

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We've heard from many Manitoba nurses who are concerned about the PCs' Philippines nursing recruitment 'schleme.'

As these documents that I tabled show, that the program is virtually identical to one launched in 1999 by the PCs. The same cities and towns were visited. Four hundred nurses were promised; three years later, only 65 had arrived, which included 22 who were hired despite failing their exams. As my colleague from Tyndall Park mentioned yesterday, the government doesn't even have health workers as a priority for PNP immigration to Manitoba, and the budget for retention is frozen.

How can the PCs promise nurses with no plan to get them here, and no money to keep them here?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I won't apologize for travelling to the Philippines to be with health-care workers.

We travelled eight hours away to attend the information sessions and interviews.

My parents were given the opportunity to come to this beautiful province. Why is the member denying people from the Philippines to come to Manitoba? Why is he against immigration, Madam Speaker?

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

Neurological Procedure Backlog Recruitment of MRI Technologists

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): My mother's an immigrant—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Lamont: That's a shameful response, Madam Speaker. My mother's an immigrant.

We're still hearing that people who are waiting for surgery, who are facing waits that may take years. I spoke to someone this morning who were told they'd have to wait two years for the operation they need.

Now, on page 45 of the budget document, which I tabled, it shows that there's been virtually no improvement in backlogs in neurosurgery, gynecology, general surgeries and no improvement whatsoever in pediatrics. In May 2022, Shared Health stated they need 15 to 16 additional MRI technologists to drive down wait times, and starting wages in Manitoba are currently 12 per cent behind Saskatchewan.

And the technologists haven't had a contract in five, going on six years.

How can we hope to attract, to retain MRI technologists to Manitoba working at 2017 wages?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): It's quite evident to me today that the member for St. Boniface doesn't spend any time talking to his Liberal cousin in the federal government; the Member of Parliament for Winnipeg North actually had the opportunity last week to congratulate me and our team in person for the incredible results that we have achieved with the Philippine mission, Madam Speaker.

I invite the member for St. Boniface to call the MP for Winnipeg North and have a conversation. Madam Speaker, our government is investing, in Budget 2023, \$130 million for the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force. That money will go a long way to assisting with MRIs. They—I would like—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

\$10-a-Day Child Care Accessibility of Program

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Since the budget, I've spoken with child-care centres and parents, and I'm disappointed to learn that the \$10-a-day child care is not actually a reality for many Manitoba families.

While yesterday's budget paints the picture that all Manitobans would be eligible, this is not the case for those enrolled in extended child care, for in-service days and for school holidays.

Can the minister please explain if and when the government plans to make \$10-a-day child care a reality for all Manitobans.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'd like to thank my Liberal colleague for the question.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and I clearly stated just last Friday, with some of her federal cousins, that Manitoba is going above and beyond our commitment by maximizing all parent fees to \$10 a day for children 12 and under for regular hours of care. And we are achieving this historic goal three years ahead of time.

So, as far as the date goes: April 2nd.

Clan Mothers Healing Village Construction Sector Council Initiative

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, we have so much to celebrate this International Women's Day; a female Lieutenant Governor, Premier and clerk of Executive Council, as well as yourself.

What's most impressive are the actions our government has taken to support the advancement of women's rights. Aside from the monumental introduction and passing of both bill 40, Clare's Law and 43 this past fall, can the minister continue to elaborate on what she's done to protect and support women here in Manitoba.

* (14:50)

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I'd like to thank my friend for asking that wonderful question.

And, since I've already updated the House on the good work that our government has done, including doubling the funding for the Status of Women Secretariat, investing in family violence prevention and signing on to the national framework for ending

gender-based violence, I do want to use my time that I have here to pay tribute to an amazing organization, the Clan Mothers, and to talk about an initiative: a \$1.5-million initiative with the Clan Mothers Healing Village and the Manitoba Construction Sector Council to train 20 Indigenous women over a 36-week period.

They're going to have cultural and land-based teaching and healing. And upon completion of this program, all these participants will be working in an all-woman construction company.

I want to salute the Clan Mothers and the Indigenous women that are participating in this program. We lift them up and we honour them—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

We've lost some time in oral questions today, because of extended applause and because of disorder that has occurred. I'm going to allow the next opposition member to ask one question.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program Request to Address Staffing Shortage

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program is meant to support sexual assault survivors and help collect evidence for criminal action. Yet, thanks to this government's incompetence, the SANE program is having to turn away survivors due to a lack of permanent nurse 3 staff.

The PCs said they'd fix this staffing issue, but they didn't, and then they hired a manager who lives in Alberta.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) apologize and fix this mess right away to help protect Manitoba women and girls, and support the SANE program in a comprehensive manner?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Again, my heart goes out to all the individuals that have experienced sexual assault. This is a very important issue for our government; we take it very seriously. We certainly won't play politics with anyone's experience of sexual assault, Madam Speaker.

Our government has invested \$640,000 into the program. We created the forensic nurse examiner program, and we're committed to ensuring that it is fully staffed with a manager and staff that can provide the services that these individuals need, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Community Living disABILITY Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Currently, adults with specific or non-specific disabilities, or a combination of disabilities, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory or language processing disorders and/or non-verbal learning disabilities, will be denied access to services under the Province of Manitoba's community living and disability services, CLDS, if their IQ is above 80.

People with these or other borderline cognitive functioning issues also have extremely low adaptive skills and are not able to live independently without supports.

Recently, it's become widely recognized that access to CLDS should not be based solely on IQ, which is only a measure of a person's ability to answer questions verbally or in writing in relation to mathematics, science or material which is read.

Very often, persons with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities have specific needs related to their executive function for support when they are adults or are transitioning to adulthood, which are not necessarily connected to their IQ.

Executive function is the learned ability to do the normal activities of life, including being organized, being able to plan and to carry out plans and adapt to changing conditions.

Those who have major defects in executive function have a learning disability requiring assistance under CLDS to be able to make a contribution to society and to be self-sustaining.

Provision of CLDS services to individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities or executive function disability, would free them from being dependent on Employment and Income Assistance and have the potential to make an important change in the person's life.

Newfoundland and Labrador have now recognized that access to services should be based on the nature of the disability and the person's needs, rather than on IQ.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to change the requirements for accessing community living and disability services so that these requirements are based on the needs of individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities, including executive function or a combination of disabilities, rather than solely on the basis of their IQ.

Signed by Don Repal, Leata Goulet, Mike Dagohoy and many, many others.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Provincial Road 224

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

(2) The road has been in poor condition for years and has numerous potholes, uneven driving surfaces and extremely narrow shoulders.

(3) Due to recent population growth in this area, there has been increased vehicle and pedestrian use of Provincial Road 224.

(4) Without repair, provincial 224 will continue to pose a hazard to the many Manitobans who use it on a regular basis.

(5) Concerned Manitobans are requesting that Provincial Road 224 be assessed and repaired urgently to improve safety for its users.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to complete an assessment of Provincial Road 224 and implement the appropriate repairs using public funds as quickly as possible.

This petition has been signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

Ekosi.

Security System Incentive Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

(1) Cities across Canada and the United States, including Chicago; Washington, DC; Salinas, California; and Orillia, Ontario, are offering home security rebate programs that enhance public safety and allow for more efficient use of their policing resources.

(2) Home security surveillance systems protect homes and businesses by potentially deterring burglaries.

(3) Whole neighbourhoods benefit when more homes and businesses have these security systems.

(4) A 2022 Angus Reid Institute poll found 70 per cent of Winnipeggers surveyed believed crime had increased over the last five years, the highest percentage found among cities in Canada.

(5) The same survey reported half of Winnipeggers polled do not feel safe walking alone at night, and almost 20 per cent of them said they were a victim of a police-reported crime in the last two years.

(6) Although the public understands what the criminologists and community advocates point to as the main drivers of crime, namely the larger issues of lack of food, addictions and poverty, they support rebate programs like these as they help the most vulnerable in our community by removing financial barriers for personal protection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to work with municipalities to establish a province-wide tax rebate or other incentive program to encourage residents and businesses to purchase approved home and business security protection systems.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

* (15:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions?

Orders of the day; government business. The honourable minister—oh. *[interjection]*

The honourable minister of—*[interjection]* Yes, you don't have to call it. *[interjection]* Okay, we can do it that way too.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Derek Johnson (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you please commence the debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE

(Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: By all means, we will resume debate on the budget.

And the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on the proposed motion—*[interjection]*—on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We all know from parliamentary procedure that the budget vote is a confidence vote. And I do not have confidence in this government.

For seven years, they've cut everything in Manitoba. They cut health care, closed emergency rooms. They cut and underfunded the education system. They've cut law enforcement. There are fewer conservation officers working today in Manitoba because of their cuts.

And now, all of a sudden, there's an election year, and they want to come around and try to change the channel. Interestingly, you'll know that almost all of these PC MLAs were elected under Brian Pallister. And what are the two words that none of them will say in the year 2023? Brian Pallister. They've backed him up on every single one of his cuts and every single one of his closures.

They stood and they clapped and they said it's great that we're closing the Concordia ER; it's awesome that we're closing the Victoria ER; why don't we close the Seven Oaks ER and the Misericordia urgent care as well? They kept standing and applauding for Brian Pallister right 'til the very day that they chased him out of the building.

And now that it's an election year, they don't want to talk about Brian Pallister's cuts to health care, even though they continue them under this Stefanson government.

So Manitobans know that they just can't trust the PCs when it comes to health care. In education, day after day, we see another school division stepping up and telling us how many teachers they're going to have to cut, which music program is going to be ended, which enrichment program or additional clinical service has been cut as a result of the chronic underfunding of this government. And, of course, just because it's an election year, they're coming around with their talking points again.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

But here's the problem with their talking points, Madam Speaker: All they have are lines that have been cooked up by political consultants. Meanwhile, in the real day-to-day lives, in the actual communities where Manitobans make their lives, they see the impact of these PC cuts. There's no more emergency room there in the community where it used to be. There are fewer teachers in the school than there once was.

And in issue after issue and program after program, Manitobans are paying more under the PCs and getting less. Manitobans know that they just can't trust this PC government.

Of course, we know that they're also playing politics with the important issue of affordability. If they wanted to do something on affordability, they should do it right now. Not make it an election-year announcement and then delay action until some future date. Because Manitobans know exactly which version of the PCs they'll get, should they get another term in office. It won't be this election-year PC charm offensive, it'll be the same PC government that made cuts for year after year after year.

They cut health care under Brian Pallister. They continue to cut health care under the Stefanson government. And if you just look at the services that have been cut, I mean, it is quite a long list: CancerCare, emergency rooms, urgent care, physiotherapy. We're talking about some of the programs that Manitobans rely on. We're talking about allied health professionals without a contract. We're talking about 500 fewer nurses working at the bedside.

Physicians leaving not only the Manitoba Clinic, but physicians leaving the province. When we're talking about people leaving the province, let's talk about young people leaving the province: provincial outmigration higher than it's been in a generation, all because of the cuts that the PCs have made.

Our approach is different. We say, let's help Manitobans right now. Let's give a freeze on the

hydro bills that people pay each and every month. Let's help Manitobans with the utility bills that keep piling up and grinding people down. When it comes to health care, why don't we empower the local leaders, cut through the PC bureaucracy and empower the local leaders in our health-care system who know the solutions at the bedside.

They've spent seven years hiring out-of-province consultants, lining the bank accounts of people who work on Bay Street and who work in downtown Toronto. How about somebody who's going to stand up for the working person in Manitoba? That's what we're about, right here, on this side of the House.

And all of our families have been through something very trying with the pandemic. Some of our family members have borne the ultimate price. Seniors certainly experienced the tremendous impacts throughout the pandemic. But let's not forget the young people have missed out on so much: education, socialization, athletics, those bonding experiences that all of us call some of our favourite memories in life.

It's our firm belief on this side of the House that we have to make this up to the young people of Manitoba. And we're just not going to get that with the chronic underfunding under the PCs. Instead, we need to invest in our schools, and we need to do so year after year because kids aren't just going to school in election years; they're going to school each and every year. So why don't we respect educators along the way too?

No one believes the PCs when it comes to health care, education, affordability or these important issues. In fact, they don't even believe the PCs when it comes to these issues. That's why fully one third of their caucus is quitting in this election year.

In fact, not only did the Finance minister who was supposed to table this budget quit, but the new guy that they brought in, he's also quitting, too. Even the Finance Minister doesn't believe the PCs and their election year Hail Mary promises.

We need a sustainable, committed, common-sense and pragmatic approach to government in this province, and that's one that you'll get with the Manitoba NDP.

So the budget vote is a confidence vote, and I do not have confidence in this government, and we look forward to being able to put our plan in front of you, the people of Manitoba and earning your support this election year.

So, I move, seconded by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:

therefore regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) breaking Manitobans' trust for seven years through supporting Brian Pallister and making deep cuts to health care, including closing emergency rooms, cutting cancer care and firing nurses, cutting education, including teachers and EAs, supporting and seconding bill 64 and ignoring local community voices, raising the cost of living by raising rent and hydro bills by hundreds of dollars at the Cabinet table, sending money to billionaires, as well as failing Manitobans in many other ways, while failing to be responsible and failing to balance the budget, despite record revenue increases, increased federal transfers and funds from Manitoba Hydro, failing to properly address health care and also reverse cuts to roads and highways in rural and northern Manitoba, and failing to apologize for years of underspending and annual cuts, including failing to address homelessness in local communities.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

* (15:10)

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable member for Union Station,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:

therefore regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) breaking Manitobans' trust for seven years through supporting Brian Pallister and making deep cuts to health care, including closing emergency rooms, cutting cancer care and firing nurses, cutting education, including teachers and EAs, supporting and seconding bill 64 and ignoring local community voices, raising the cost of living by raising rent and hydro bills by hundreds of dollars at the Cabinet table, sending money to billionaires, as well as failing Manitobans in

many other ways, while failing to be responsible and failing to balance the budget, despite record revenue increases, increased federal transfers and funds from Manitoba Hydro, failing to properly address health care and also reverse cuts to roads and highways in rural and northern Manitoba, and failing to apologize for years of underspending and annual cuts, including failing to address homelessness in local communities.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

The amendment is in order. The floor is open for debate.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, it's an honour to rise in the Chamber today to put a few words on the record that speak to Budget 2023 and to highlight some of the excellent work our government has put forward within it.

But before I begin, Madam Speaker, I do want to wish you a happy, happy International Women's Day, as well as all the women on both sides of the Chamber. In particular, I want to pause to recognize someone who is here in the gallery today with us. Her name is Luda, and she has fled the war in Ukraine and has left her entire family behind in Ukraine and has made Manitoba her home.

And so I invited her to join me here today in the gallery on International Women's Day because she is an example of someone who has persevered against a horrible situation, Madam Speaker, and has been able to come to Manitoba and resume her profession that she was involved with in Ukraine.

And, again, we wish Luda and her entire family all the best. I hope very much that you will be united with your family very soon. Happy International Women's Day.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to stand behind Budget 2023, which includes the historic investment of nearly \$8 billion to strengthen our health-care system—an 8.8 per cent increase over last year—and \$668 million of additional investments.

Health care has always been a top priority of this government. The budget affirms our commitment to health care by improving health care and making it more sustainable for all Manitobans, not just today, Madam Speaker, but in the years to come.

It is no surprise that the most important part of Manitoba's health-care system are the 50,000 people who work within it. That is why our government works closely with health-care staff, leadership, unions and post-secondary institutions to create a comprehensive health-human resource action plan designed to support our front lines when and where they need it most.

Budget 2023 invests \$200 million to retain, train and recruit 2,000 health-care staff in order to move towards ending mandated overtime.

Madam Speaker, this is the largest single health-care announcement in the history of our province, and it means more doctors, more nurses, more paramedics and more health-allied health professionals in our system, helping to treat Manitobans.

I'm pleased to put on the record some of the robust investments that Budget 2023 has made possible: \$123 million for nine nurse incentives; a new hourly premium for nurses who work weekend hours; up to \$10,000 for nurses who hold the equivalent of a full-time position as this helps to build more stability in the workforce; \$8.4 million to reimburse the costs of nurses' professional licensing fees; up to \$10,000 for nurses who are eligible to retire but choose to remain in the workforce for up to an additional two years to retain valued expertise and building capacity as new nurses are recruited into the workforce.

An incentive, as well, Madam Speaker, for nurses who have previously left the profession but choose to return to the workforce—a new refer-a-nurse program for current nurses who refer a prospective nurse to a Manitoba employer; a provincial float pool to support nurse staffing needs across the province; a travel nurse incentive, which will provide an additional hourly premium for nurses who travel to work in remote locations, and a wellness incentive, which adds additional funds to the health spending account of full- and part-time nurses to help to cover the cost of eligible expenses.

And then for families and pediatric physicians, we have extended billings for patient hours for their clinics. We have invested \$450,000—excuse me—for physician mental health supports through the peer support program, and \$5 million to implement the new emergency care services vectors to virtually support patient transfers.

We invested \$8 million to recruit additional paramedics and have increased new physician training seats by 80: forty undergraduate physician seats,

10 international medical graduate seats, 30 two-year postgrad medical seats for internationally educated medical students.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2023 also sees large investments in recruiting new health-care professionals to Manitoba. Shared Health and all five regional health authorities a few weeks ago completed a very successful nurse recruitment mission to the Philippines. The delegation had one message: Manitoba's—is a destination of choice for trained health-care providers from around the world.

The response was overwhelmingly positive—350 letters of intent to already-trained health-care professionals, including 190 registered nurses, 50 licensed practical nurse equivalents, and 110 health-care aides. This significantly exceeded our goal and expectations, and I look forward to welcoming those health-care professionals into our health-care system.

Manitoba now stands as a national leader in recruiting internationally trained health-care professionals, and we accomplished this by creating a welcoming, streamlined and reasonable process that includes paying for three months of accommodation; allowing spouses and families to accompany them to the province; paying for licensing fees, immigration fees and travel costs; allowing an earn-and-learn program to integrate nurses into the system while they take any bridging courses, ensuring they have immediate employment.

We are also working here in Manitoba to support and invest in the internationally educated nurses who already live in our province. This includes paying \$23,000 of financial aid for each internationally educated nurse applicant to help with fees to obtain their licensure. It also includes working with the College of Registered Nurses to modernize their pathways for licensure, including the English language component.

We are taking action here in Manitoba to strengthen our health system. That includes investing \$130 million in funding dedicated to reducing the surgical and diagnostic backlog.

With these substantial investments, the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Taskforce to date has ensured 22,335 additional Manitoba patients have received their procedures through the taskforce's request for service agreements. In the last year, we have completed 89,378 MRIs, 264,849 CT scans, 126 cardiac surgeries, 2,182 orthopedic hip surgeries, 2,878 orthopedic knee replacements.

The pandemic backlog for cataract surgery has now been fully eliminated. Madam Speaker, 15,251 completed procedures. We have halved the pandemic backlog for ultrasounds from almost 4,500 procedures to under 2,000. The Maples gynecology program has provided dozens of successful procedures to Manitoba women. St. Boniface general hospital has added an additional eight outpatient cases a week and will be reducing the endoscopy backlog by 416 cases per year.

* (15:20)

FIT tests continue to reduce the endoscopy waiting list; 1,055 patients have been diverted from the waiting list, exceeding our goal of 1,000 patients for the year.

Budget 2023 sees the largest health capital investment in the province's history at \$1.2 billion, covering expansions, renovations and new multi-year bills.

We're increasing the capacity of Manitoba's health system by investing \$4.9 million for a fifth operating room at Concordia Hospital to increase orthopedic surgery capacity by 1,000 procedures a year. We are tripling the size of the St. Boniface emergency room by investing \$141 million and increasing Health Sciences Centre's surgical capacity by 25 per cent with a \$50-million investment in Operation Excellence.

This is the largest among these investments, Madam Speaker, is \$812 million for the clinical preventative services plan to build, expand and fix our health-care facilities in all regions of our province.

This will see 38 projects across the province funded, including \$283 million for a 90-bed new hospital in Portage la Prairie; \$127 million for a 60-bed new hospital in Neepawa; \$7 million to enhance and add 30 additional beds at the Brandon Regional Health Centre; \$32 million to enhance and add 23 additional beds at Steinbach's Bethesda hospital; \$64.4 million to enhance and add 24 beds at Boundary Trails; \$31.6 million to enhance and add 30 additional beds at the Selkirk Regional Health Centre; \$5 million for a new ER in Dauphin; \$10.8 million, Madam Speaker, to enhance and add 12 additional beds at the Lakeshore General Hospital in Ashern.

Another substantial portion of Budget 2023 is the \$115.6 million, the largest ever increase in the provincial drug budget, so that we can continue to keep up with the rising cost of pharmaceutical treatments.

I'm happy to announce that, as part of this investment and for the first time in the province's history,

our government will be providing coverage for all eligible Manitobans, regardless of age, with diabetes insulin pumps and glucose monitors. This, Madam Speaker, now makes Manitoba the national leader in providing diabetes coverage.

I could go on for hours, Madam Speaker, on all of the initiatives that our government is working towards, but I just wanted to share some of the health highlights in Budget 2023 with the Chamber today. Our government is committed to strengthening health-care infrastructure, investing in health-care professionals and building our health human resource capacity here in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): It—on this International Women's Day, I would just like to take the time to recognize the important women in my life.

I like to say thank you to my daughter Kira, who has provided support to me her entire life; my sisters Teresa and Vanda who are—have been incredible role models for my children and our family; my mother, Maria, who immigrated to this country as an 18-year-old back in 1963. Imagine that, Madam Speaker. An 18-year-old coming to a country full of passion and vigour and wanting to make a life here in Canada.

And finally, I'd like to acknowledge my wife, Barb. I would like to say that not only for the support, but just the incredible partner she has been these past years that we've had the—I've had the pleasure of being with her. And it means a lot to me, Madam Speaker.

Now on to the budget. You know, Madam Speaker, after seven years of freezes and cuts to education, health care and other crucial government services, this House has lost confidence in this government.

Suddenly, Madam Speaker, they're attempting to change the channel. But Manitobans won't be fooled. Not only is this budget terrible policy, it is the feast-and-famine approach that's taken with budgeting that has really impacted the lives of everyday Manitobans.

And mostly what we've been exposed to, Madam Speaker, is a famine approach. And that's not one that a complex organization like a provincial government uses to plan its fiscal policy. It flies in the face of the pragmatism of Manitobans. They expect their government to fund their services that are crucial to running this province consistently, fairly and with predictability—all of which has been missing these past seven years.

Madam Speaker, seven years of austerity has done considerable damage to our health-care system, public education and to our other cherished public services. For the public education system, these past seven years of PC austerity has left school divisions with impossible decisions of what to cut next, of which teaching positions to remove, number of EAs to lay off, the clinical services to reduce—or outright eliminate, in certain school divisions—and which student-support services to cancel—student-support services, Madam Speaker, that are absolutely crucial in the post-pandemic period, one where mental health supports have to be provided on the consistent and predictable basis. And we haven't seen that at all. As a matter of fact, it's not even mentioned in the budget document.

At every budget consultation for school divisions, Madam Speaker, the meetings have taken place with an air of real trepidation. Every time a budget chair opens up a meeting, it's about what services will be cut next, especially in this budget season.

School divisions have been challenged by the ravages of inflation and the pandemic. But, Madam Speaker, what is perhaps their biggest obstacle and their biggest challenge is this particular PC government right here. They haven't provided near the support that's necessary, especially after years of a pandemic. And they're feeling it right now. This PC government and this Cabinet has made decisions that have—detrimental to students, families and school divisions throughout the province.

And what is most troubling, Madam Speaker, is that during the Finance Minister's speech, there was nary a mention of child poverty, nary a mention of a strategy that would begin the very important work of lifting children out of poverty in this province. The absolute scourge of our province here in Manitoba: 20 per cent of our young people living in poverty, and nary a mention of that in the budget speech yesterday.

A missed opportunity, but one that needed to be risen to as a challenge. And we never saw that. How troubling is that? And we know the impacts of poverty on children, on their families, on learning, on schools and all the other services. This is something that needed be risen to, and it was not, Madam Speaker. And that is troubling.

Instead, they doubled down on a terrible policy of providing cheques to billionaires and billion-dollar corporations, much of that money which will leave the province—hard-earned Manitoba tax dollars that Manitobans pay into for their cherished public

services leaving the province. Gone and forgotten. Paid as dividends to shareholders that—many of which don't even live in this province, Madam Speaker.

An absolutely terrible policy, and one that they've doubled down on, and really shows where their priorities are; because they certainly aren't with the people of Manitoba. And we saw that in that document yesterday. That is truly shameful, and again a missed opportunity.

* (15:30)

The other glaring omission, Madam Speaker, was a plan or strategy to provide nutrition programs for every Manitoba school. Another missed opportunity; one that really required a government to rise to the challenge, and we didn't see that.

Instead, like I said earlier, doubling down on policies that reward their friends, that reward billion-dollar corporations, that reward billionaires instead of their very own citizens here in Manitoba, and our most vulnerable in Manitoba.

Again, a missed opportunity. Doubled down on a terrible policy, and one that they need to be reminded of, because this is what Manitobans have been telling them, Madam Speaker. They have been telling them that they need to invest in public education system. They need to invest in our cherished public services that will make a difference to everyday Manitobans, not to the well-off people that leave the province for three months at a time.

This is the problem with their policies. I just want to continue on nutrition programming and something that—very important here in Manitoba. According to the Child Nutrition Council, that out of 700 schools, 325 of them have some form of nutrition programming, Madam Speaker.

April 15th is the deadline for applications and what they're seeing is that there are 29 schools that are currently on the wait list and probably as of April 15th, they're going to see 21 more in this application cycle. So this called again for a government to rise to the challenge to completely eliminate that wait list, Madam Speaker.

That is something that most people in this province would have seen as great public policy. To feed our kids so that they're ready to learn and to be at school. Many know that these programs act as an attraction and keep kids in school, getting them ready to be contributing members of our society later on

when they become adults and have jobs. This is something that was missed.

Madam Speaker, kids and families in our schools are presenting with more and more profound needs every day. Nutrition programs and—are especially challenged because of the inflationary pressures. Again, they needed help. They didn't get it. What they needed to hear yesterday is that their provincial government was going to eliminate the wait list and provide support for all the applicants to the Child Nutrition Council.

Instead, nothing from this government regarding a crucial support for kids and families. With the funding for education announcement last month, Madam Speaker, a number of divisions have revealed that the funding allocated to them does not match increasing enrolment, let alone the soaring cost of inflation or future salary increases.

Madam Speaker, the crisis of years of persistent underfunding has wreaked havoc on our cherished public education system. School boards are left with difficult and impossible decisions: cut programming or cut teachers or other human resources. These are crucial human resources that are there to support our learners and families, many who are marginalized and vulnerable.

This government continues to miss an opportunity to fully fund, like I said earlier, nutrition programs; to fund increased mental health supports; provide greater supports for children in care. And all of these things, by the way, Madam Speaker, that were recommended in the—own Department of Education's policy that was released a couple of weeks ago on childhood 'poverty'. All recommended and not acted upon in any tangible fashion in yesterday's speech or budget. Again, a missed opportunity.

I'd like to move on to the impact of years of austerity on my own constituency. Madam Speaker, we've seen lab services that have been greatly reduced. These are lab services lets—such as blood collection and X-ray in Transcona.

Back in 2019, there were three labs in Transcona that provided services of blood collection and X-ray. Right now in Transcona—in the constituency of Transcona, Madam Speaker, zero labs are remaining.

Instead, people are forced to go to a super centre, located at Regent and Lagimodiere; well outside the boundaries of Transcona and really difficult to reach with people with mobility issues; with people that then are now required, Madam Speaker, to get a ride,

to get other support to make sure that they get to their diagnostic service, services that they were easily able to walk to as little as three years ago have now been completely removed.

And that takes away the dignity of a person who was able to get there by themselves and now having to rely on other people to get them there. Because not only is that location in a very busy spot, Madam Speaker, it's also exceedingly dangerous because of the volume of traffic and the inability of people to access that area without having to park further away, causing more issues for people that have mobility issues to get to that particular test.

The other piece that our particular constituency has been impacted by is a lack of personal-care-home space. Well documented that in northeast Winnipeg, one of the lowest per capita areas of PCH space in the province.

We had a plan; the plan was done. Madam Speaker, 2016, we were supposed to see the expansion. What happened: the very first thing that this government did in 2016 was cancel the expansion of Park Manor Personal Care Home. They took down the sign and they left up the sticks. And they're still there, and how insulting that was to our constituents is still a matter of great conversation in my constituency.

The other piece, of course, is the community IV program, which has yet to be restored. And we all know the impacts that that have, right, because what ends up happening is that when workers are short supply, they then have to drive further, causing further delays to people, Madam Speaker, that require that service.

So, after seven years, we've had consistently difficult times, not only in our constituency, but also the province of Manitoba due to this particular Conservative government.

And as I wrap up my remarks, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the constituents of Transcona who continue to show their support for me, and continue to always be there when called upon. I also want to ensure that everybody here in this House knows that on this side of the House, we will not be supporting this budget.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It's always an honour to stand up and put words on the record following the

doom and gloom of my friend from Transcona, Madam Speaker.

But before I get into all of that, Madam Speaker, I, as well, would like to wish you and all the great women in this great province and country of ours, a happy International Women's Day, especially to my wife, Tracey, today; my mom and my mother-in-law, Lydia *[phonetic]* and Sylvia *[phonetic]*; of course, my sisters-in-law, Monique *[phonetic]* and Cheryl *[phonetic]*; and just want to shout out to them that they are my rocks as I continue to move forward in this great honour and privilege to serve the constituents of Lac du Bonnet.

So, with that, Madam Speaker, hopefully you enjoy not only this day, but each and every day as we continue to move forward.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2023: Historic Help for Manitobans. We look outside; people of Manitoba woke up this morning to bright blue skies, thrilled with yesterday's budget. Safer streets, healing health care, stronger communities and of course, opportunities ahead.

As we heard from the doom and gloom, from my friend, the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare), unfortunately, he didn't take a whole lot of time talking about Education and Early Childhood Learning—which I would like to congratulate him on the move into the critic role of the Early Childhood Learning section, as well—but as you noticed in his speech, he failed to mention all the good things that are going on in education and in early childhood learning.

* (15:40)

So, I'm going to take the few minutes that I have this afternoon to highlight a though—a lot of those key points not only that are in the budget, Madam Speaker, but are going to continue moving forward because of the hard work of not only myself and my great department, but my predecessors, as well, who have served in this role for Early Childhood Education plus, of course, Education in its entirety.

Madam Speaker, \$100-million increase in the K-to-12 system for schools—announcement demonstrating our ongoing commitment getting the best outcomes and supporting the over 200,000 students in our K-to-12 system, which is a 6.1 per cent increase. This is the largest—some might say astronomical—increase since over—well over 25 years. And this is building upon the historic investments that have—that we have been doing in education year after year after year since we formed government.

The problem that my friend, the member from Transcona, who is a teacher himself—part of the problem is, is that he's—doesn't want to give credit where credit is due, Madam Speaker. The fact is, is that the former NDP government actually took our students in Manitoba from third in numeracy and literacy and then—in 2003, and then they added science shortly thereafter—they took those students to dead last. Dead last; 10th in all three categories, and further behind ninth each and every year. The member from Transcona doesn't want to stand up and talk about their record.

Well, Madam Speaker, Manitobans do not want to go back to the dark days of the NDP, where they underfunded education and they did not get the results that parents and guardians and kids deserved.

We on this side of the House came forward with the K-to-12 commission, where well over 30,000 Manitobans chimed in. Then we came forward with the K-to-12 action plan; Mamāhtawisiwin, which talks about Indigenous inclusion in education.

Did the NDP ever have any plans, Madam Speaker? Absolutely not. No plans. They were fine with the old status quo.

And so, today, I'm also going to highlight some additional things that we're doing.

So, what did we do on top of the \$100 million, Madam Speaker? We also annualized the \$106 million which we brought forward last year in Education. This is something that the K-to-12 system has asked for. They want to see that annualized funding continue to move on and on and on. *[interjection]*

And I hear the member from Transcona talking from his seat, but he decided to sit down a little early, Madam Speaker, so, unfortunately, he didn't use his time wisely.

So, at this time, what we know is that those funding—that funding that we have provided the K-to-12 system, Madam Speaker, are going to be used in operating their school divisions, but also increasing their special needs budgets, as well. Matter of fact, in the last three years, we have increased special needs funding to the tune of \$17 million above the operating grants.

So, I don't know how the member from Transcona will, once again, stand in his place and vote against investments in our kids' future, Madam Speaker. It is absolutely—it's frustrating and it's disheartening, but I

know—deep down—the member from Transcona has a heart of gold, and he will see the—see those blue skies outside in Manitoba, and he might even try to turn around his team's mentality over there on the NDP side. But I've got a story about his teammates over there in a short—a little bit of time.

So, also in this budget: \$260 million in capital funding for school divisions, 'whilch' will help achieve our promises of building 20 new schools across the province by 2027, Madam Speaker. Well, this can't be done one—by one individual by themselves, of course. With the strong backing and the hard work of our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), the MLA for Tuxedo, plus the hard work of the—my good friend and colleague, the member from Brandon West, as well, who put in a lot of time and effort into making sure that we can get these promises done on time—

An Honourable Member: Ahead of time.

Mr. Ewasko: —ahead of time—and probably, no doubt, on budget, Madam Speaker, which is very important, which I know is a myth, a mystery to those that are on the NDP side. They don't know nothing about any type of budgeting and bringing in anything either at budget or under budget.

So, in addition to that, we increased annualized funding—funding for the elders and knowledge keepers in schools, bringing a program which brings it to a total of \$2.2 million. This program helps students feel more welcome in the classroom by giving them the cultural supports they need.

I know the member from Transcona talked about nutrition. I had the pleasure of being part of an announcement with my friend and colleague, who is now the Minister of Advanced Education, that saw the government's contribution to the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba. We more than doubled their funding.

It was originated in 2006 under the NDP. The NDP felt that they would put in \$1.2 million. They froze that amount for years and years and years and years. And today, the member from Transcona stands up and says, they want to see funding for nutrition. Well, we're getting it done, Madam Speaker. We more than doubled the funding to Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba to a tune of 2.5 total—2.5 million total dollars.

So, of course, we've got \$1.4 million to support the implementation of our new provincial student information system that provides data on Manitoba students with an overall investment of \$3 million.

As announced in the Throne Speech, we will be creating an independent oversight body to handle teacher misconduct. Budget 2023 earmarks \$1.4 million to help to implement this change and will help keep our students safe.

Madam Speaker, a lot of the things that we've been doing on this side of the government had been shining a spotlight on those unfortunate situations, with adults dealing with our students. And whether that's through sports or just each-and-every-day conduct, we know that there was many stories brought up from the early 2000s and now are coming to a light.

We're shining a light. We're educating Manitobans. We're educating parents and guardians. We're educating students. We're educating all Manitobans to make sure that this is a reality and that we're all aware of what's happening.

Matter of fact, I took it upon myself and my good friend, the MLA for Southdale—

An Honourable Member: No, Lagimodière.

Mr. Ewasko: For Lagimodière, yes. And actually, the good work of the—of my friend and colleague from the—the MLA for Southdale as well, took it upon ourselves to actually invite the MLA for Transcona to participate because I know personally that he is an educator himself, so I invited him to our office to share some of his wisdom in how we can better protect kids, and, unfortunately, his colleagues, the wannabe leader of the NDP, the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) and the member from St. Vital had actually asked for a meeting, but they didn't include the member from Transcona.

I don't quite understand why they would not include an educator within their own caucus, Madam Speaker. But you know what, I took it upon myself because I really strongly feel that protecting kids is a non-partisan issue, and so we felt that it is very important to invite the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) in to have those conversations. *[interjection]* There's no team on the NDP side.

Madam Speaker, investing in accessible, high-quality, affordable early learning and child care. January of 2022, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) had amalgamated the K-to-12 system with the early childhood learning sector, and I thought that was an incredible, incredible move and helps with the transitions of our students, our kids, from zero to the ages of 18, 19, and I know that we have made leaps and bounds—moves—in order to make sure that that early childhood

learning sector is feeling valued and honoured because each and every day, they work hard.

And, really, Manitoba can't work unless child care works, so we, on this side of the House, are working hard to make sure that we're increasing spaces; we're increasing wages; we're doing many things to make sure that we're retaining and training; and, of course, we're keeping those child-care fees more than affordable, Madam Speaker. We're actually making sure that the allocated—we've allocated—\$75 million had been allocated for reducing parent fees, three years ahead of schedule, to \$10 a day for a regular day of child care for all licensed, funded spaces in centres and homes in this great province of ours.

* (15:50)

In 2023, we included \$250 million where we were advancing accessible, high-quality and affordable early learning and child care, Madam Speaker. We are making sure that we're recruiting and retaining ECEs and encouraging CCAs to carry on and get their training and become ECEs. So what have we done? We've increased the tuition rebates of \$5,000 per student per year of education, so they can upskill and stay in the early childhood education field. A great initiative, and I know that it's going to continue for years and years and years, because we are providing sustainable funding.

Oh, Madam Speaker, just to let you know, the partnerships with our education partners—not only in municipal, not only provincial, but also federal, and that's one thing that I know that the early childhood education child-care sector was screaming for well over 20 years.

Why? Because the former NDP government had no idea of partnering. They didn't want to get together and talk to the grassroots individuals who are providing these cares—this care to our most precious resources. We've taken it upon ourselves to make sure that the doors are open. We're listening, we're learning, we're making things better, not only for the child-care providers, Madam Speaker, the sector, but also making sure that those parents and guardians are seeing more and more affordable, high-quality care right here in this great province of ours.

Madam Speaker, I also want to talk about a couple other partnerships that we are having. We're having partnerships with municipalities and rural and northern Manitoba. We have announced within the last couple months—and, actually, within the last few weeks—23 new child-care centres that we're partnering

with municipalities to bring almost 1,700 brand-new child-care spaces right here to Manitoba, all across this great province.

And, in addition, what we're doing is we've also—increasing the wages for child-care assistants and early childhood educators in 2023, building on already the increases that we've increased from 2022.

Work is also under way, Madam Speaker, to work closely—something that was a mystery to those on the NDP side—work closely with our post-secondary institutions to be able to offer more training, recruitment and retention opportunities to the ELCC workforce strategy.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I am definitely going to be supporting Budget 2023. This provides historic investments for Manitobans that has been long overdue, far past any numbers that the NDP ever, ever did, whilst we're keeping the amount of deficit at bay. We've also promised to make sure that we're going to balance the books in the next few years.

I encourage all members of the NDP—I encourage my friend, the MLA for Transcona, to turn that frown in upside down and make sure that he supports Budget 2023, because it is a good day for Manitoba and it will continue to be even better days for Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's a pleasure to put some words on the record.

You know, I think it was H.L. Mencken who said, whenever he picked up a newspaper, he picked it up with a sense of—never picked it up without a sense of optimism and never put it down without a sense of disappointment. And that's a bit like how I feel with this particular budget.

I don't know if it's growing inflation, but there's certainly lots of overstatement and plenty of chutzpah in this budget. And I just want to say—and I want to start because in—even in the introductory letter from the Finance Minister's speech, he talks about truth and reconciliation, and right now, there's a billion-dollar case against this government because the courts found that from 2006 to 2019, the NDP and the PCs alike took \$338 million, and in the budget and in—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: And while the—and the PCs, they actually had a—they actually had an opportunity to

have a moral victory. They could've given the money back, but they didn't. They didn't give the money back. They didn't give that \$338 million.

Instead, in the budget, they cancelled every single court case. They said this—*[interjection]* You know, it's—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Lamont: This is not a matter of opinion; this was what was in the budget at the time, and this is the court case that they lost. And the fact is that CFS—they're still—if you look at The Link, The Link says that you're taking care of over 10,000 families, over 80 per cent are Indigenous.

We have still have thousands and thousands of children in care who have been horribly treated and abused by this government and the government before it. If you look at the people who are homeless on the streets of this city, over half were in the custody of CFS at one point or another. We're still having babies being taken away at birth; it hasn't stopped.

And this is the first—again, the first five recommendations of 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are dedicated to dealing with children in care because of—because CFS is the new residential schools, except there are far more children in CFS in Manitoba than there ever were in a single year in residential schools. There were more children in the custody of CFS in Manitoba, at one point, at its peak, than there were First Nations children in residential schools all across Canada at their peak. That's the kind of damage we're talking about.

And this—and I'm—and the other thing is this government talks about how homelessness, addiction and mental illness lead to petty crime. That's an—absolutely outrageous. And I heard the same thing being echoed by the NDP. Mental illness—people who are mentally ill are much more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators of crime.

Being an addict, having an addiction, a substance-use problem, is not a crime, and being homeless is not a crime. To link these three together is absolutely shameful. That's not the root cause. The root cause of crime is desperation.

But there are also lots of people who are organized criminals, violent gangs. It's not because they're homeless or they're addicted or they have mental illness—they prey on those people and they prey on people in CFS. They prey on Indigenous

people in CFS. They're driven into sex trafficking. It's terrible.

And those are the sorts of things that, if we're really talking about reconciliation, we need to be talking about, but we're not.

And, you know, this—the claim, even on bail reform and cracking down on violent crime because of bail reform—you know, there's a professor from the University of Manitoba who said the Winnipeg police are misinterpreting the law. They don't have to be releasing people.

So one of the things that this government does over and over is blame everybody else for their problems: it's the pandemic's fault, the federal government's fault. Well, what about—what were they—who's been running this government for seven years? Who were making the choices? It wasn't the pandemic that are—broke our health-care system, it was being run by this government.

And, you know, I talked about the over-exaggerations. One of the things is when they talk about what the average family will earn—will save. That—there is no average family. The reality is that there are people—people make different amounts of money.

So, again, this is a repeat in the basic personal income. Is it good that people at the bottom of the—at the bottom of—lower- and middle-class people are going to be able to save some money? Yes. Are they going to be saving what they're—are they the average families? No, they're not. Because the bulk of those savings are all going to be earned by—are going to be made by people at the top of the income scale.

So, this isn't—this is not progressive. There's nothing progressive. These are completely regressive measures. It's regressive conservatism.

And even when they talk about working to make downtown Winnipeg a safe place for visitors and businesses, what about the people who live there? Why aren't we talking about the people who actually live downtown and not just the people—not just visitors?

* (16:00)

And then when you see claims like, last year we implemented the first increase through Employment and Income Assistance basic needs rate in nearly 20 years—well, this is also a government that reduced it. They pulled it back. The meal allowance for rural and northern MLAs is more than what people get—than what people on welfare get for an entire month for all of their costs.

And the same thing go—and again, when they talk about preventing tragedies and drug addiction through—by focusing on recovery. Where's the focus on prevention? What are we doing to actually prevent people from dying? There isn't any.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And when it comes to health care, there's no denying we're in a crisis. I sat with Eric De Schepper while he explained what happened to his wife, how he was completely ignored by the W-R-H-N home care until he ended up having to go to the media, and then he was contacted.

And I hear these tragic stories all the time, people who are struggling on EIA, people who are homeless, people who can't get help from this government. And if you just look on page 45, you look at the backlog for surgical and wait times. This is the government that didn't even consult with the people who actually provide diagnostic services which let doctors and 'nustres' do their jobs. Pediatrics, neurology, gynecology, general surgery, bone density tests, thoracic vascular surgery, ear, nose and throat—none of those have substantially improved.

But the whole thing has been a shell game, anyway, because the reality is, when you talk about the wait times, the government chose to just say, well, we're going to start in March 2020, before the pandemic, when those wait times had already been getting worse for three years straight.

In January 2020, we told this government, based on what the Manitoba Nurses Union had told us, that there was no surgical capacity left in the system. There was no room for anything. And two and a half months later, a global pandemic hit because this government deleted positions. They went out of their way to drive people out of the system to save money at a time where—and then they created these shortages.

So, part of this is we live in a government—sorry, we live in a country where, you know, responsible government is supposed to be a thing and democracy is supposed to depend on accountability. But there is no accountability here. It's all someone else's fault. They want to take credit for everything and blame for nothing. Well, you can't take one and not the other.

It's deeply frustrating; it's deeply frustrating, because honestly, this is more of the same. This is just like—I mean, people talk about this being like the 1990s and being like 1999. That's when Gary Doer—or, sorry, Gary Filmon—all of a said—all of a sudden said, well, look, we're going to spend \$1 billion after

years and years of brutal cuts, and hoping, you know, that it's like *Men in Black*. You'll just flash something and everybody's going to forget the last few years.

Well, I can't forget. The people who've lost loved ones can't forget. The people who are 'strill' struggling can't forget. And the reality is, in record times of inflation, these increases, in many cases, aren't enough. We're still not where we need to be. There are still school divisions who are going to face cuts, who are having to dip into their savings because this government is not doing what it takes. Because they—you know, it's like saying I'm not going to feed you for a week and then giving somebody a bowl of cereal and saying look, this is the most food I've given you in a week, and boasting about it. It's really shameful.

And I'll say, look, are there a few things that are in it that are worthwhile? They're all won—the—there are a few things that have been—my caucus colleagues have championed. One is we fought and argued very hard for type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes supports. Will that actually materialize? We don't know because there are people who will still—even if these are made accessible, will only be—may only be able to access them if they pay deductibles that cost thousands and thousands of dollars. It may not be possible unless the people actually have the private health insurance.

And you'll—and again, in the budget, they're talk—they're still talking about upcoming agreements to send people out of Manitoba to the University of California San Francisco and the Mayo Clinic. We're still talking—is it—this is a government.

Again, British Columbia, after May 2020, when they knew COVID had swept through and had caused backlogs, immediately they started planning for their backlogs to start dealing with surgical and diagnostic backlogs.

It took until Doctors Manitoba said, look, there are 150,000 diagnostic appointments and surgeries that are delayed, that are on the wait-list, to actually step up and plead with the government—say, look, this is a crisis.

And it still took months after that for them to announce a task force, and that task force didn't even talk to, again, the people who actually deliver diagnostic services. So, we have people who can't get MRIs, we have people who can't get tests, and there's been no movement whatsoever—no movement whatsoever—on clearing the backlog for pediatrics.

What are we going to do? What does that mean for the children? What does that mean for the children

and their families who are having to wait because nothing has gotten better under this government? Because they fixed the easy stuff and they're still not fixing the hard stuff. And it's the hard stuff that really needs to change.

So, with that, I will move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (a) the following clauses:

- (b) failing to recognize that a budget full of big promises will not make up for seven years of cuts and freezes to all areas of government, and failing to stand up for people in need; and
- (c) failing to recognize the important that increased federal transfers have had to strengthen Manitoba's fiscal outlook; and
- (d) failing to mention Indigenous reconciliation in the budget, even just once, which depicts an utter lack of inclusivity in a budget document it touted as historic help for Manitobans; and
- (e) failing to ensure that provincial revenues as a result of increased rebates from the education property tax are fully replaced with additional yearly increments which are sufficient to ensure Manitoba's education system continues to be well funded; and
- (f) failing to recognize that the provincial government's commitment to nursing seat increases is only a drop in the bucket for the needs of Manitoba's health-care system, and further, makes no commitment or mention of a retention strategy of these professionals; and
- (g) failing to increase funding for physician recruitment and retention initiatives, despite a dire need of family and specialist physicians province-wide, especially in rural and northern Manitoba; and
- (h) failing to make meaningful progress on the retention and recruitment of allied health-care professionals who are critical to the provision of health care but not even making mention of contract renegotiations with allied health professionals, which have not been renewed for five years; and
- (i) failing to sufficiently reverse course from the disastrous NDP health policy of hallway

medicine to avoid preventative deaths in Manitoba emergency rooms; and

- (j) failing to increase the number of long-term-care beds in Manitoba; and
- (k) failing to sufficiently support home-care and palliative-care services to keep people at home, which has contributed the disastrous bottleneck of patients in hospital hallways; and
- (l) failing to recognize that IQ should not be the sole determinant of eligibility for CLDS funding, and that many individuals with a normal or higher IQ who have a learning disability or an executive function defect are in need of support as well; and
- (m) failing to recognize the urgency of addressing climate change and in assisting Manitoba industries to adapt to the changes of moving away from fossil fuels and towards increased electricity use.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Boniface, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights,

THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense? Okay, I need to ask if there—the subamendment is in order, however, I need leave because the member diverted from the text of the subamendment in a—*[interjection]*

So, is there leave to consider it as printed? *[Agreed]*

THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (a) the following clauses:

- b) *failing to recognize that a budget full of big promises will not make up for seven years of cuts and freezes to all areas of government and failing to stand up for people in need; and*
- c) *failing to recognize the importance that increased federal transfers have had to strengthen Manitoba's fiscal outlook; and*
- d) *failing to mention Indigenous Reconciliation even just once, which depicts an utter lack of inclusivity in a budget document touted as 'Historic Help for Manitobans'; and*

- e) *failing to ensure that provincial revenues as a result of increased rebates from the education property tax are fully replaced with additional yearly increments which are sufficient to ensure Manitoba's education system continues to be well funded; and*
- f) *failing to recognize that the Provincial Government's commitment to nursing seat increases is only a drop in the bucket for the needs of Manitoba's healthcare system, and further, makes no commitment nor mention of a retention strategy of these professionals; and*
- g) *failing to increase funding for physician recruitment and retention initiatives, despite a dire need of family and specialist physicians province-wide, especially in rural and northern Manitoba; and*
- h) *failing to make meaningful progress on the retention and recruitment of allied healthcare professionals who are critical to the provision of health care by not even making mention of contract renegotiations with Allied Health professionals which has not been renewed for five years; and*
- i) *failing to sufficiently reverse course from the disastrous NDP health policy of hallway medicine to avoid preventative deaths in Manitoba Emergency Rooms; and*
- j) *failing to increase the number of long term care beds in Manitoba; and*
- k) *failing to sufficiently support home care and palliative care services to keep people at home, which has contributed to the disastrous bottleneck of patients in hospital hallways; and*
- l) *failing to recognize that IQ should not be the sole determinant of eligibility for CLDS funding, and that many individuals with a normal or higher IQ who have a learning disability or an executive function defect are in need of support as well; and*
- m) *failing to recognize the urgency of addressing climate change and in assisting Manitoba industries to adapt to the changes of moving away from fossil fuels and towards increased electricity use.*

Okay, that makes things easier for a number of people, so. The subamendment is in order.

The floor is now open for debate on said subamendment.

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Municipal Relations): It's an honour to rise today.

First, of course, I wish everyone a happy International Women's Day, and happy Holi. I know that many millions of people around the world are celebrating Holi today. Last night I had a chance to attend an event, the ritual of Holika Dahan at the Hindu temple on St. Anne's Road. I know another—members from the House were there yesterday, as well, and it's a great opportunity—it's the first time, actually, since COVID that we had such a great crowd last night.

So, again, happy Holi to all my friends in the Hindu community and anyone celebrating it here in Manitoba and, of course, right around the world. It's—looking forward to it, I believe, on Sunday there's going to be an event celebrating Holi, which is the ability for us to play—or throw colour, coloured paint and coloured powder at each other. It's quite an event.

* (16:10)

Again, I know it hasn't really happened, and I think last year was the first year since COVID that it was able to happen. They sure are expecting a huge crowd. I know myself and a number of colleagues here in the House—on this side of the House—will be there to help celebrate and to enjoy the event.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say, of course—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Just real quick, a friendly reminder: please keep the volume to a respectable minimum, if at all possible. Thank you.

Mr. Smith: I wanted to just talk about the great things that our government is doing for 'municipalities' right across the province here, Madam—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to highlight, of course, just a few weeks ago, our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) went out and announced a \$47-million increase in operational funding for municipalities right across Manitoba. That represents a 28 per cent increase in operational funding for municipalities. That's a \$17-million increase for the City of Winnipeg, and a \$2.3-million increase for the City of Brandon.

Within that, we know there's a \$13-million increase from the Province of Manitoba to the City of Winnipeg for transit funding. And, of course, our recent budget just yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker—we all heard the

great news that came from our Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen)—but \$23.4 million is going to be given extra to the municipalities, right across the province, for capital.

Increase in capital funding right across the province. Unconditional basket funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that it's received a lot of support from the municipalities. The municipalities have shown their support. Association of municipality—of Manitoba municipalities has been very supportive of this.

I know that it was the AMM president, Kam Blight, who said, as inflation has significantly impacted municipal budgets, and municipalities are not permitted to run deficits, this historic—again, historic—municipal funding announcement will help local councils respond to current financial pressures, build stronger communities, and finalize local budgets with certainty, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to say another quote here: A strong Manitoba depends on a strong Winnipeg, so I'm grateful for the Manitoba government has recognized the need for more funding to support transit and other essential city services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was Mayor Scott Gillingham who said that. Lots of support, again, from municipalities, not only the association of municipalities, other municipalities. I will talk about the great and glowing reference we got from Mayor Jeff Fawcett, the new mayor of the City of Brandon.

The City of Brandon is thrilled with today's announcement—he said thrilled, Mr. Deputy Speaker. From the Manitoba government: we commend the Manitoba government for taking this important step to support municipalities, and that was before the budget.

So we know that good things have come from our government, and good things will continue, because the increase in funding—that \$47-million increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker—it's going to be permanent: \$47 million permanent as base funding, unconditional base funding.

When the NDP were in power, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they were government, what did they say? What did they do? They forced amalgamations on municipalities. And what happened when those municipalities opposed it? They called them—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: —howling coyotes. That's what they said—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: —Mr. Deputy Speaker. Showed no respect to municipalities. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: This government is not only a listening government, this government is acting. This government is making sure municipalities are well funded and help going forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having that constant and consistent funding; making sure municipalities are funded and well looked after by the Province.

And I wish all the relatively new—in many cases—relatively new mayors and councils, Reeves and that, right across the province, all the best as they continue on with this new funding. And I expect much more meetings and much more time to discuss the priorities that mutually benefit both Manitobans—and of course, to municipalities that Manitobans have—and those representatives that have been elected by Manitobans from across all parts of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know that our budget yesterday has highlighted a number of important initiatives. And I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that the increase in the basic personal exemption to \$15,000: that's incredible. Astronomical, in fact.

That removes an additional over 31,000 low-income taxpayers from the tax rolls in 2023. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's an historic tax break for Manitobans. Of course, we've increased the personal income tax thresholds to \$47,000 and \$100,000 in 2024. These changes to personal income tax and the basic personal amount add up to over \$1,200 in savings for the average two-income family.

That's what this government's doing: it's putting money back in the pockets of Manitobans. While the NDP and their Liberal friends, Justin Trudeau, want to tax and spend, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's not forget that the NDP and the Liberals have made a coalition to—with respect to the carbon tax. Members opposite support a carbon tax. It's a Liberal-NDP tax, and we're trying, at this end, on this side of the House, to make sure Manitobans have more money in the pocket. Members opposite want to take money out of their pocket. And that's the stark difference going forward.

Manitobans know there's a difference. We stand for Manitobans. We stand for the hard-working entrepreneurs, the hard-working business owners that make this economy run, that make sure that they and their

families have more money in their pockets to re-invest in our province. Unlike the members opposite, who take money out of the pockets of Manitobans and put it on the Cabinet table, we do the opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I hear a member opposite from the NDP caucus chirping away. I'm—I can only imagine they're saying how many good things that this budget has provided. I saw yesterday during the presentation of this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could see the frowns on their faces, because they know that this government's not only giving Manitobans what they want, they—we are giving Manitobans what they need in this budget.

We know that we are listening. We are giving money back to Manitobans and we are reinvesting in our communities, from the north to the south to the east to the west.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about some of the great things going on in my community of Lagimodière. I know that right now, our government has announced two additional schools in Lagimodière, one for the DSFM and one school for Louis Riel School Division; a new school—two new schools in Sage Creek. That's the kind of investment and that's part of a greater strategy that this government has of building 20 new schools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the NDP administration, how many schools did they build?

An Honourable Member: None.

Mr. Smith: Exactly. None.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House are playing catch-up for the inaction of the NDP government, for the 17 dark years of NDP government. We are building 20 new schools, including in many, many growing communities across Winnipeg—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: —and across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I talk about Lagimodière, Sage Creek, a very fast-growing community. We've got other parts of the community that are growing as well.

Bonavista as a case in point. There have—young families moving in here. Most families, or many families are actually new Canadians moving into the area and need capacities in schools, and we are delivering on that, something the NDP never did.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the school was finally built in Sage Creek—the first school built under the direction of the previous government—it was built under capacity—under capacity. That was the record of the NDP. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: This government, building two new schools in my community, 20 new schools across Manitoba. And that is a record I know we can stand on and I have—very comfortable to stand beside—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: —Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know—I will talk about now, as the Minister of Municipal Relations, Building Sustainable Communities fund. It's a great investment tool for municipalities right across this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know we doubled the amount for it, and we know that communities need it. Communities have applied. We've seen record investments in our communities because of the Building Sustainable Communities fund.

Likewise, and I want to talk about the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund, \$100 million invested into the communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: I know members opposite are chirping away—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: They don't understand the fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: That program is \$100 million. Where—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: —NDP members and the NDP government of the past left tens of millions of dollars of deferred maintenance costs in that sector on the table—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: —this government is investing in that sector, investing in our communities. Building Sustainable Communities fund. We've simplified the way we fund communities in the province of Manitoba.

That's the record of our government, Mr. Deputy Speaker: investing in arts, sport and culture.

And they can chirp all they want—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith:—Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they know our record is a record to be proud of. Theirs is a record of failure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So, there have been times in the last—[*interjection*] There have been times in the last little while where government benches have been rather exuberant, and also times where opposition benches have been too loud.

* (16:20)

So, I'm calling all members, please, to be mindful of decorum, of volume and to respect whomever it is that is speaking. Everybody gets their turn, and I will do all I can to afford equal respect to each member regardless of which side on the House.

I believe the minister has finished his speech.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'm thrilled to stand up on the too-loud side of the House and advocate on behalf of Manitobans and their health care in response to a PC budget that I know Manitobans see right through.

It's incredible to me that this government would use the same talking points to talk about a budget that they're trying to herald as they have been using throughout some of the most devastating health-care experiences that Manitobans are facing and having to experience because of their cuts.

So—but I think I'd like to start my remarks with talking about why I chose to run in the first place. So, as we are in an election year, we just had Black History Month, I Love to Read Month, I was able to be out and about in the community talking to a lot of kids, and a question that I was asked often was why I chose to run for politics.

And my answer has always been pretty simple. My answer always comes down to the fact that I care about people. I'm an activist, someone who believes that together we can make our province a place which leads the country, quite frankly, in policies, in laws, and in social agreements and understandings which leave no member of our communities behind.

I'm also a nurse. I am still a registered psychiatric nurse who understands that the power of pursuing equity in health, that pursuing health equity is not actually some sort of, you know, faraway notion or

hopeless endeavour, but it's one that actually changes health outcomes for the better because that pursuit is rooted in compassion, in justice, and the vision that every child, every family, senior and community in Manitoba deserves a fair shot at living a full and healthy life.

And so when I talk to Manitobans of all ages, be it in Union Station or across the province when we're doing our outreach as a team, you know, whether it's in schools or daycares or workplaces or boardrooms—could be at The Forks or at Wesmen basketball games or volleyball games in the community, what I hear from Manitobans consistently is that health care is what matters most to them right now. And you can trust me when I say that now, more than ever, Manitobans have a heightened understanding of how their political choices and who they vote for matter and how the political decision making of governments matter.

Since 2016, under the leadership of Brian Pallister and now continuing under the former failed minister of Health, Premier Stefanson, health care has been treated as some sort of a political whim—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Members cannot say Premier Stefanson—[*interjection*]—okay. We should all refer to members by portfolio or constituency. So, the honourable member for Union Station.

MLA Asagwara: Thank you for that.

So, since 2016, first under the leadership of now-disgraced former premier Brian Pallister, and it's continued under the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), health care has been treated as some sort of a political whim. It's been treated as something that is almost—you would see flippant decision making almost by PC MLAs who do not appreciate nor understand the lived realities of everyday Manitobans.

Manitobans have watched as Brian Pallister, with the full support of his failed former minister of Health, who is now the Premier, and the entire PC caucus, fired hundreds of nurses, forced them into tunnels to compete with their colleagues for jobs. They've watched this government attack doctors who are advocating for Manitobans to get better health care. And they won't even talk about the physician shortage that we're facing in our province right now because this government has neglected to adequately recruit or invest in this area since 2016.

We have all watched in our province as this government rushed to close emergency rooms even though morale in our health-care system amongst

health-care workers was at a record—an all-time low. Even though experts pleaded with this government to choose differently, they still could not close ERs fast enough. They were so eager to execute Brian Pallister's visions, they went ahead and closed emergency rooms despite everybody else telling them that was a bad idea at that time.

They rushed to close ICU beds, which we would unfortunately learn, not long after, would cost Manitobans their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women across our province have watched as Brian Pallister and this new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and this caucus have attacked women's health care in our province with a level of callous disregard for the well-being of women in our province that we have never seen before.

Manitobans have been living with the impacts of the privatization of lab services, Lifeflight, home care, hospital security, pharmacies, nursing, diagnostic surgeries all while Brian Pallister and the current Premier froze health-care workers' wages, all while for years they have denied allied health-care professionals a fair contract.

This Premier has been consistent at one thing; I'll give her that. She has consistently shown a commitment to treating health-care workers in our province with a level of disrespect so egregious that people are leaving the careers and the jobs that they love in order to preserve their well-being, protect their licences, get a work-life balance that has been denied to them by this government.

The relationships with health-care workers in our province has been broken by this government. There is no trust. That trust has been eroded entirely. And this budget—if you've read through the health-care aspect of the budget, you see pretty clearly this government doesn't want to even acknowledge that, because they know they've damaged that relationship. There's no mention of what they're going to do to repair it in this budget.

Now, the Premier has come out, members of this caucus come out, and they're tweeting about how great this budget is, but they know that this budget isn't going to repair any of the damage. Just a few things that I've outlined won't repair any of the damage that they've done. It will not repair the current Premier's decision to stand by Brian Pallister as he not only made racist comments in this Chamber and out in the

media, as he made anti-Indigenous remarks and created racist policies like cutting international student health care—stood by, and throughout the entire process.

She stood by as Brian Pallister blamed, predominantly at that point, BIPOC Manitobans, who were victims of COVID, fighting for their lives in ICU beds—blamed them for not accessing a vaccine they could not access because they weren't yet eligible for it because this government, despite having that data, refused to make it readily available for those vulnerable Manitobans. She stood by him during that.

And while I won't repeat any of the horrifying comments, offensive remarks made by the former premier, Brian Pallister, I want to make very clear that every single time, the current Premier stood beside him, sat beside him and clapped and applauded and endorsed it.

So, when the Premier and her caucus talk about this budget being progressive on social issues, literally all I can do, Deputy Speaker, is laugh. It's laughable. She expects us to believe that she, a Premier who stood by openly white nationalist convoy occupiers, a Premier who did not walk in the Pride parade despite promising that she would, a Premier who's made those kinds of decisions very recently, has suddenly found her progressive social values? Like, come on, that's silly. It's silly. Manitobans don't buy that.

* (16:30)

This is the Premier who, as minister of Health, didn't demand that reproductive health care be put back under her portfolio, since it had been removed because anti-choice members of her caucus, predecessors as ministers of Health, didn't want to talk about reproductive health care.

Really, this is the person we're supposed to believe is bringing forward a budget that is socially progressive, recognizes the importance of social issues? That's—it's ludicrous, Deputy Speaker. The math isn't mathing on that.

The Premier whose budget makes no mention, in terms of health care, of equity, the Premier whose health-care funding in this budget doesn't talk about anti-racism, doesn't talk about addressing poverty in health care, doesn't talk about the social determinants of health, a Premier whose budget doesn't talk about how they're going to remedy this overdose crisis that's facing our province? The highest rates of child poverty are here in Manitoba under this government.

The highest rates of HIV in the country are here in this province under this government, and growing, disproportionately affecting Indigenous women. And, shamefully, the highest rates of congenital syphilis, an entirely preventable disease, is happening under this government.

And they would have us believe that this budget is supposed to be socially progressive? It doesn't make any sense. It is not true; it is not the case. Their budget makes that clear. And that is why absolutely no one believes the PCs.

You know, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has been incredibly transparent on one thing, and that is that, you know, they're going out and making these supposed record announcements on health-care funding during an election year, months away from an election. I mean, that is incredibly transparent. You could not—I mean, every single person I talk to and who reaches out to me makes it explicitly clear they know that this Premier is simply trying to buy their vote, but they don't believe this Premier's actually going to deliver on anything she's saying, because she hasn't.

And, you know, announcing these health-care dollars doesn't actually translate into addressing the health-care issues that this government has created. I believe the Premier doesn't really understand what resonates with Manitobans, quite frankly, because she doesn't live in the same world most Manitobans do. Most Manitobans don't have \$31 million they can forget to report. Most Manitobans, their first inclination when they hear about a tragedy of a mother losing her life because we lost ICU bed capacity during the pandemic, during the time when the Premier was the minister of Health, most people don't stand up and talk about their kid's hockey game.

Like, the Premier is completely out of touch with the lived realities of Manitobans. And we see that reflected in the budget. You would be hard-pressed to find anyone in our province who hasn't been negatively impacted by this government's approach to health care, the austerity-driven agenda of their decision making in health care. Our province is facing some of the greatest health-care challenges of our generation, and those challenges must be met by leadership that cares about people, not leadership that simply cares about maintaining power.

The challenges we're facing as a province can only be met and addressed by leadership that understands that by putting people first, Manitoba will

become a province that everyone can be proud of. Manitobans need to know that their government is accountable, collaborative, has a vision for our province where families can get to see their doctor in their community, where kids can get one-on-one attention at school in classroom sizes that are reasonable, where families have access to food that is secure and stable and where working full-time means that you can pay your bills and that maybe you can take your kids to the movies too.

Manitoba seniors need to know that their government will make sure they can age in their homes with quality home care, go for walks downtown in their neighbourhood without fear of being unsafe because they know that their government has invested in making sure that the needs of their neighbours and their community members are met, that basic needs are being addressed and that communities are funded in a way that allows them to be well.

So, Deputy Speaker, all of what I'm talking about does speak to values. It speaks to whether or not a government truly understands the needs of the people that it represents.

This budget tells us—it shows us very plainly—that this government, this Premier does not understand the needs of Manitobans. This government doesn't know how to prioritize the well-being of Manitobans. This is a government that, from day one, has been solely concerned with itself, and that focus has had devastating consequences in our health-care system.

So, I think now, Deputy Speaker, that when people approach me and they reach out and they ask me why I'm running again, I think my answer will be a little bit different. I think that I'll probably say to people that I'm running not just because I care about people, but I'm running again because I'm part of an NDP team, a team that cares about people, a team that understands our diverse and dynamic and welcoming province deserves leadership that invests in their health care each and every year, not just makes empty announcements during an election year.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we all know Manitobans don't trust this government, can't trust this government, will never trust this Premier, they can absolutely trust me on the fact that our team has their backs and is going to ensure that health care in Manitoba is rebuilt stronger than ever before under a future NDP government.

Thank you.

Hon. Kevin E. Klein (Minister of Environment and Climate): You know, I've been known to be quite vocal about how governments spend money and how accountable they are, and was for many years as a city councillor. I am very honoured to be a part of this team and a part of this historic budget for Manitobans.

Members opposite have been obsessed with the idea of trust this week. So I give you this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can Manitobans trust a leader—an—the NDP, when they said raising the PST was ridiculous, and only months later raised the PST? How can you trust a government like that?

How can you trust the fact that, in 2003, the NDP ignored a recommendation from the clean environment committee to build a new North End treatment plant in Winnipeg immediately? Instead, they ignored that, because, at that time, it would have cost less than \$300,000. They ignored it, granted extensions, granted extensions, granted extensions, granted extensions, granted extensions, all while polluting Lake Winnipeg more.

And let's remember: how can you trust a—how can you trust members opposite when, in 2014, Lake Winnipeg was listed as the world's most endangered freshwater lake? That was under the NDP. How can we trust when they ignored that fact and that reality for years, and then, while being the most endangered freshwater lake in the world, dumped potash into several ports of Lake Winnipeg? Shame. Very shameful.

I want to take a moment as I—before I get into further about the budget, and I want to recognize International Women's Day. I've been very fortunate to have wonderful women in my life: my wife Heather, our daughters Tiffany [*phonetic*], Jessica [*phonetic*], Jazz [*phonetic*] and our granddaughter, Ella [*phonetic*]. I'm amazed by their efforts and their work and their passion every day.

I had never been more blessed than to have the mother that I had for the short time that I did. My mother, Joanne, was murdered by a man who had a record of domestic abuse. But I lost her only months after she went back to school to do the impossible back then: go back to school and become a nurse.

* (16:40)

I have been affected by violent crime in my life. I understand the pain that comes with violent crimes. And as my time as the chair of the Winnipeg Police Board, I witnessed the pain that a violent crime causes people in our community and our province.

Violent crime has, indeed, taken over our streets. But I'm proud of the fact that, on this side of the House, we are fighting for bail reform that the other side will not support, and we need to get violent criminals off the street. Imagine where my mom would be today had we dealt with a domestic abuser properly then instead of waiting.

I'm sure many Manitobans like myself understand or know somebody who's been impacted by a crime. Budget '23–2023 includes an historic investment into Winnipeg and Manitoba to make it a safer place to live. And I can tell you, it is long overdue and it was neglected for years and years and years.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the members of law enforcement and apologize on behalf of elected officials who stood outside wanting to defund the police. The very people that they would call 911 on in a heartbeat to come save them, they wanted to get rid of—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$334.6 million—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: I'm really—I don't understand, I—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: —thought we were adults, but I'm understanding that—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: —there's not.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: Are we done? Are we ready to be adults? Can we proceed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$34.6 million this year, 51.8, including last year, to address violent crime in this province and our city. This will help in—support in initiatives like the violent offender apprehension unit that is desperately needed.

An Honourable Member: Were you the chair?

MLA Klein: I was the chair, thank you very much, and we made sure that we fought to get criminals behind bars. But, unfortunately, with the bail reform that the NDP and Liberal coalition put in, they just

decided to set everybody free. And that's when crime started to rise.

I spent over 20—over a quarter of a century in the media, and I know fake news when I hear it. And I hear it every day in this House. Bringing a balanced-budget approach to this will address the root causes of crime, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will address the root causes of crime, and we will make sure we have programs in place. That's what this government is doing, because when I talk to residents in Winnipeg, when I talk to real people, they tell me crime is an issue. They're afraid to go downtown.

This government is taking action. This government will work tirelessly to get violent criminals put back in jail that have been let out on the streets.

I'm also very proud to be on this side of the floor, because I work tirelessly with Homes For Heroes, a program that will help homeless veterans in this city and throughout our country, a program that is working in every province that they've established themselves thus far. And it is programs like that that have all of the resources circled around them that will help Manitobans, especially those that stood on guard for us.

They stood on guard for us, and they came back and they start to have difficulties reintegrating into society. We've left them alone. We've left them behind.

Programs like Homes For Heroes will bring them and pick them up, and I'm proud that our government is supporting that, but also investing over \$50 million in a comprehensive homeless strategy which will increase funding for overnight shelters, transitional housing and rent subsidies.

Our funding for mental health, which is something that we hear about a lot, that we talk about, and because of what happened to my mother, I'm not embarrassed now to talk about how I have had problems with post-traumatic stress disorder. I've spent a night or two in a shelter.

Funding for mental health, under this government, is increasing, and I can't tell you how hard it is and how difficult it is to spend a night in a shelter and know nobody's listening. Our government is listening. Our government is taking real action—not words, not creating a fallacy, not creating a false story, but real action; funding a—for year two of our mental health five-year road map, \$17.3 million provides \$9.4 million for 1,000 new addiction spaces. And I'm proud of that.

As the Minister of Environment and Climate, I couldn't be more honoured to be a part of this team who created this budget because the environment is something that's been very important to me. I moved the historical motion at the City of Winnipeg that they had to add 1,000 acres of new green and park space into their 25-year plan—that passed unanimously—and that I worked with—diligently with members of the council, including Councillor Brian Mayes, who—he and I worked on several environmental projects together.

I'm happy to share that Budget 2023 includes \$1.6-million investment to implement the Province's—province-wide, sorry, water strategy, the first one since 2003.

As water is our most precious resource, the coming water strategy will ensure that every drop counts, is safe and is protected. This includes further investments into the Watershed Districts Program to support new municipal members and important infrastructure projects.

We're going to enhance support for drinking water safety in our province, including two new full-time drinking water officer positions and further resources to—for effective drainage enforcement right here in Manitoba. Enhanced water quality and beach monitoring is also increasing under our watch in this historical budget.

In addition, Manitoba's investments will help municipalities be climate resilient and competitive in a low-carbon economy, not for today and tomorrow, but for the future as well, creating good-quality, clean environments for their residents to live, work and play, but most importantly, for our grandkids and their grandkids.

Budget 2023 includes funding to assist municipalities with zero-emission vehicle infrastructure needs and funding innovative measures to reduce emissions and promote economic growth through green investments such as the Conservation and Climate Fund, that is working.

Under the Mobilizing Municipalities initiative, the budget includes over \$500,000 to work with partners to support green transportation transitions such as rolling out more infrastructure for zero-emission vehicle charging stations. Further, over \$200,000 has been budgeted for additional work on a green transportation initiative throughout the entire province.

This budget will also provide money, funding, to promote hydrogen. We're hearing more and more

about hydrogen. We—the world evolves every day, and now we're evolving into hydrogen, and Manitoba is uniquely positioned to 'blee' the global leader in hydrogen—*[interjection]* And—clean hydrogen, thank you, thank you. Clean hydrogen.

And we're putting in over \$400,000 to promote innovations that will build on that hydrogen opportunity. Our clean electricity supports making Manitoba the centre of excellence for hydrogen, and hydrogen will be what Europe depends on in the future—not fossil fuels, not batteries, but hydrogen. This additional funding, combined with our already 99.6 per cent clean energy will make Manitoba a leader in the green economy for years and decades to come.

I became known as a city councillor in my area, protecting taxpayer dollars, ensuring that we didn't raise rates for water or on property taxes. Residents wanted me, and they told me during this recent election, to fight for budgets that are focused on their priorities, not somebody else's. They wanted it to focus on their priorities, and this government has done that.

* (16:50)

These are the facts, and they're irrefutable. And I can tell you why: residents told me crime is out of control in our community and province, and we need somebody to take it seriously and take action. We're doing that. That's what residents are telling me. Residents told me that seniors need more help; the quality of life for seniors is getting worse every day in our country, all across North America.

We have an aging society. This government and this budget recognizes that we have an aging society, and actually cares about them. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: And we're investing more than we ever have in a seniors strategy. Residents told me that they were ignored—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein:—for years—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein:—and that they wanted to have a sustainable budget, not a one-time investment. Sustainable budget: something the members across the floor probably don't understand. Sustainable budgeting. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: They want a reasonable approach and strong investments into health care. Again, I'll say it as I said earlier: being—spending the time that I did in the media, I recognize fake news. And I recognize the heckles as fake news. I get that; I understand that entirely.

So let's look again at the facts. Residents want a reasonable approach and strong investments into health care. They want that; they're getting that. Not only are they getting it in this budget, they've gotten that for years. And I will turn to our very own Grace Hospital. The Grace Hospital has had investments into their emergency room. We upgraded it. We doubled its size.

And in this budget, the Grace Hospital will also see its ICU unit be doubled in size. And in a meeting that I had with doctors at the Grace Hospital, one of them being the chief medical officer, they were telling me how happy they were with the changes at the emergency room for the Grace, and how excited they were to know that the ICU was going to be expanded under their watch by this government.

Those are the facts. They're irrefutable. We listened and we got to work. We provided a budget that is reasonable, realistic, and reasonable. And that's why people would fight against it. They're afraid of it. They're afraid that they know Manitobans want this budget.

They're afraid because they know that Manitobans see the value in this budget. They're afraid that Manitobans will see that life is more affordable under our government. That's what creates the need for developing stories and fake news; that's how that all begins.

The result of this budget is strong collaboration with residents, with leaders and front-line workers. And that's why I'm proud to be on this side of the House. This budget is simply a launching pad. A launching pad for a sustainable future in Manitoba, which will ensure that we are the most desirable province in Canada to live, work and play.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. All members need to respect the member speaking or standing to speak. Heckling is acceptable, but within some boundaries.

So, I'm just—I'm asking all members to show the same respect that you would like to receive when it is

your turn. The honourable member for St. James has the floor.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Desperate times have led this PC government to take some very desperate measures.

After seven years of hammering Manitobans with devastating cuts to health care, to education, to our municipalities, to every single corner of government, they've brought forward a budget that's focused on trying to convince Manitobans that they've turned a new leaf; that they're no longer the hard-core Attila-the-Hun Conservatives that they acted like for the last seven years. And they're now the new, softer version: the Progressive Conservatives.

In essence, they're asking Manitobans to trust us with this budget. They're asking us to trust that they've changed, to trust that they're going to fix the mess that they created, to trust that they're going to fix the chaos that they're responsible for creating and to trust that they're actually—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —going to follow through on the commitments that they've made in this budget.

But after seven years, seven long—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —years of PC governance, Manitobans know we have very few reasons to have any trust in this government. Making a bunch of big promises seven months away from an election is a desperate and self-serving move, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Desperate.

Manitobans are smart. They can see what this government's up to, they can see right through what this government is trying to do here. Everyone in Manitoba can see that. We can see that this is a desperate move, a Hail-Mary attempt at trying to save their political future.

And I think it's important we're clear on this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This budget and the spending commitments it contains are not being brought forward because they're the right investments to make. It's not being brought forward because it's the right thing to do.

The investments that they're outlining and proposing in this budget are being brought forward for one reason and one reason alone, and that's to help them save their jobs. It's not about Manitobans, it's about them. That's why this budget was brought forward, and this ridiculous attempt at trying to shape-

shift and suggest that they're somehow a new party. It's a desperate move, it's self-serving and we can see right through it.

It's been a very long seven years in Manitoba. Everyone in this Chamber knows this. That side of the House, they're not willing to admit it, but people know it's been a very difficult seven years for Manitobans.

If we look at health care and the chaos and devastation that this government has created in our health-care system, in our ERs: a 25 per cent overall nursing vacancy rate; a 40-something per cent nursing vacancy rate in the ER in the Grace Hospital in my community; people trying to access home care living through nightmares trying to get the supports that they need for their family.

In education, seven years of cuts have left a huge number of kids without the help that they need and they deserve, to succeed, seven years of cuts and a failure of this government to do anything for low-income students so that they can succeed, and ensure that they can have full stomachs so that they can learn. They failed to take action on that. And kids going without the EA supports they need, without the counselling supports, and we know many kids are going years waiting to get access to psychologist supports in our school system.

And on affordability, this government's failure to act has caused untold suffering for a huge number of Manitobans. Their failure to do anything over the last many years has caused an incredible amount of challenges, especially for seniors, low-income people, and people with disabilities and folks on fixed incomes. That's the reality of the impacts on the last seven years on Manitobans.

And the reality is if this government actually cared, if the members opposite actually cared—as they're pretending to, with this budget—they would have taken action many years ago. They would've acted many years ago but they didn't. They didn't do anything—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: They've all sat around and just seven months out from an election, they're bringing forward a budget that's trying to convince Manitobans they've changed. People see through that.

Manitobans desperately need and want investments in health care, in education, in social services that we depend on. We know we desperately need those investments. But the roller-coaster ride that this

government is taking Manitobans on with this proposed budget, after seven years of hammering us with devastating cuts, is completely and totally irresponsible. It's totally and completely irresponsible.

We want those steady investments. We need steady, responsible investments in the services that we depend on.

But the approach being used by the PCs here, with seven years of famine and then a big feast, is no way to govern and it's a reckless approach to managing the public purse.

Because we now not only need to make up for the incredible funding shortfalls that this government created in every single department—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) will have 14 minutes remaining.

This House is adjourned and—the hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow at—*[interjection]*—1:30 p.m.—just needed to check that.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

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