

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-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

Thursday, March 16, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon everybody. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 229—The Farmers' Markets Week Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I move, seconded by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), that The Farmers' Markets Week Act, commemoration of days, weeks, months amended, be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Portage La Prairie, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East, that Bill 229, The Farmers' Markets Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a first time.

Mr. Wishart: This provides us with the opportunity to recognize the value of farmers' markets, not only in the region of Winnipeg but all across the province and how they offer the unique opportunity to connect the consumer and the producer.

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

**Bill 230—The Municipal Councils and
School Boards Elections Amendment Act**

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I move, seconded by the MLA for Dauphin, that Bill 230, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Isleifson: We know in—throughout the country we all care, and especially here in Manitoba, we care about the safety of our families and of our children. And as MLAs and MPs, when we're elected, we disclose any criminal history that we may have. So it's simply creating an environment through the municipal election process and the school board election process that there's some disclosure required for those candidates that wish to run.

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

**Bill 219—The Consumer Protection Amendment
and Farm Machinery and Equipment
Amendment Act (Right to Repair—
Vehicles and Other Equipment)**

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey), that Bill 219, The Consumer Protection Amendment and Farm Machinery and Equipment Amendment Act (Right to Repair—Vehicles and Other Equipment), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Maloway: Consumers want manufacturers to make products that are easy to repair, at a reasonable cost and built to last 10 years minimum. This right to repair legislation empowers Manitoba consumers and fosters the sustainability by requiring the manufacturer to make the parts necessary to maintain and repair its farm equipment, farm machinery, motorized mobility aids, marine pleasure craft and recreational motorized vehicles, including electronic bikes and scooters, available to consumers and repair businesses at a reasonable price. If not, the manufacturer must replace the products at no charge or refund the purchase price when requested to do by the purchaser.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kevin E. Klein (Minister of Environment and Climate): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation 35th Annual Report for 2021 and 2022 for the Department of Environment and Climate.

I am pleased to table the 2020-2021 Climate and Green Plan Annual Report for the Department of Environment and Climate.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families (Ms. Squires)—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.

Human Trafficking Awareness Day

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Today, March 16th, is proclaimed in the province as Manitoba's Human Trafficking Awareness Day, and we honour this day by calling attention and awareness to the presence of forced labour and human trafficking here in Manitoba and all across Canada.

Human trafficking refers to labour that an individual is forced to perform through coercion, violence or threats, and may involve forcible confinement or indentured servitude. Victims often suffer physical, sexual, financial, emotional, psychological abuse and may not know where to turn or how even to turn for support.

Most commonly, victims are trafficked for their physical labour or for the purposes of sexual exploitation, and both cause trauma that may impact a survivor for the rest of their life.

Here in our province, we intentionally recognize Manitoba's Human Trafficking Awareness Day within the Stop Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Week as acknowledgement that child sexual exploitation often involves elements of human trafficking and greatly increases the risk of victims being trafficked in their youth and adulthood.

It is important to understand that anyone can be a victim of human trafficking, but some are at higher risk than others. Women make up 95 per cent of sex-trafficking victims and—with 43 per cent of them being between the ages of 18 and 24.

Sadly, in Canada, our Indigenous community is the most disproportionately impacted, as evidenced through the research of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2S+ community report.

Additionally, our growing newcomer and migrant worker populations are often exploited for physical labour without supports to understand their legal rights and local labour laws.

Human trafficking takes many forms, which means there are many ways that Manitobans can support the work of ending human trafficking in our province.

Madam Speaker, we must work together within government, within our communities and within our families to ensure that Manitoba's vulnerable populations are protected from human trafficking and can live lives free from the trauma that human trafficking begins.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, today is Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, and one of the most pervasive forms of human trafficking is sex trafficking. Hundreds of children, youths and adults are sex trafficked across Manitoba and our cities—and, indeed, across Canada.

Around 400 of those sex-trafficked individuals are among the most vulnerable in our communities—children and youth.

Many of Manitoba's missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited are preyed upon and targeted and were trafficked, Madam Speaker.

A sincere miigwech to those efforts and those folks that are on the front line like Clinic Community Health with their Human Trafficking Hotline and HelpSeeker, an online database that provides helpful resources, including shelter and financial support for trafficked victims here in Winnipeg.

In spite of this, Madam Speaker, more efforts are—we need to make more efforts to make sure that human trafficking supports and services are available and accessible all over Manitoba, particularly in smaller cities and rural communities. Sex trafficking in our province demands a coordinated, all-stakeholders approach.

Last Friday, a sexual exploitation and trafficking awareness conference was held at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon. Speakers highlighted how sex trafficking affects marginalized communities and the need to raise more awareness about the issue, since sex-trafficking victims often do not recognize the signs of trafficking at the initial stages and nor do authorities.

The need for role models and service providers to protect the most vulnerable community members from human trafficking cannot be overstated.

* (13:40)

I call on this government to prioritize funding initiatives preventing the trafficking of Manitobans,

and I also call on organizations and researchers to work together on programs that share resources and services throughout Manitoba—an all-hands-on-deck approach to stop human trafficking in our province and provide supports for trafficked victims.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Prior to recognizing the member for St. Boniface, I would just like to indicate to members in the gallery that there's to be no participation, which means no applauding from the galleries.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I seek leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: Today, we commemorate Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

This day serves as a solemn reminder of the millions of people around the world who have fallen prey to the heinous crime of human trafficking. It's a modern-day form of slavery, a violation of basic human rights and dignity and affects people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. It is a global problem that affects every country, including Canada, and Manitoba.

Victims of human trafficking are often forced into labour, prostitution or other forms of exploitation. They're stripped of their freedom, their dignity, their identity and their ability to make choices for themselves. They suffer from physical and emotional abuse and they live in fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

But despite the enormity of this problem, it is often overlooked or ignored. Human trafficking thrives in the shadows, and it is up to us to shine a light on it and bring it to an end.

That means being willing to be unflinching when it comes to examining it, including in our own province. Every year, hundreds of young people in the custody of Child and Family Services are targeted by predators for exploitation.

We must raise awareness about human trafficking and educate ourselves and our communities on the signs and dangers of this crime. We should support organizations that provide assistance and protection to victims and advocate for stronger laws and policies that prevent trafficking and hold traffickers accountable.

As individuals, we can also make a difference. We can speak out against human trafficking, report suspicious activity to law enforcement, support businesses that are committed to ethical practices.

We can also support survivors by listening to their stories, providing them with resources and opportunities and treating them with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Today, let us come together in solidarity to recognize the gravity of human trafficking and renew our commitment to combating this scourge.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Amy Tung

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to stand in the House today and recognize another amazing resident of Fort Whyte. Today, I am recognizing Amy Tung. Amy is the CEO and founder of the I AM LOVE Project.

Amy started her business in 2018 making bracelets out of consciously sourced materials with a portion of proceeds going towards non-profit organizations. Since then, the business has grown to so much more.

The I AM LOVE Project now supports women through training and community support. To accomplish this, 60 per cent of earnings of earrings, bracelets and necklaces are handmade by those in Manitoba facing employment barriers and 40 per cent are imported for assembly.

The project focuses on women who make less than \$30,000 annually, experience mental health addiction challenges, are on the Employment and Income Assistance Program but need supplemental income, have a disability, are incarcerated or are exposed to sexual abuse or domestic violence or women who need a sense of community and purpose.

You may recognize Amy and I AM LOVE Project from the hundreds of billboards around Manitoba and across Canada, as she was recently one of the three winners of the Canada Post Tales of Triumph Contest, in which she won the Doing Good category.

Amy has many outstanding accomplishments, including being a recipient of the Manitoba Honour 150 medal, named a Winnipeg Blue Bombers community hero, made a finalist of Future Leaders of

Manitoba 2019, and she has raised over \$45,000 for our community in the first 18 months since launching her business.

Most recently, Amy was chosen as a delegate for the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Amy just returned from New York last week, and I'm happy to announce that this trip was supported by our Minister of Families, the Honourable Rochelle Squires—oh, can't say a name; sorry, apologize—that this trip was supported by our Minister of Families through the community grant program.

Thank you, Amy, for everything you have done and continue to do for our community.

I'd like to ask all members to rise and recognize everything Amy has done, who is joining us here in the gallery.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to government members that when speaking in—making members' statements, that—*[interjection]*—yes, when ministers are making private members' statements or members' statements, they are not to be referencing a government policy, just make reference to community. So, in this case, referring to government spending would be something that is not to be used by ministers.

Mr. Khan: Madam Speaker, I apologize for that sincere mistake. I was unaware of that, being a new minister, so I do sincerely apologize to everyone here.

Madam Speaker: Thank the member for the apology.

Government Record on Climate Change

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, under this PC government, health care is broken, the education system is underfunded, families are struggling financially and, on top of that, they are worried about the PC government's lack of action to address the climate crisis.

During my time as the Environment and Climate critic, the government shuffled through four ministers and most recently moved responsibility for provincial parks out of the Environment file altogether. This is four failed Environment ministers who refused to take any meaningful action on reducing carbon emissions.

This government's failure to act comes at a time when the stakes are higher than they've ever been. The effects of climate change in our province have never been more apparent, with exceptional droughts and floods and record-breaking temperatures, but most of the commitments made in the PC Climate and Green Plan are nothing more than broken promises.

Instead of working with and for Manitobans to fight climate change by setting aggressive emissions targets and taking action to meet them, the PC government spent millions of Manitobans' money on a failed lawsuit to try and strike down the federal carbon levy.

It's not just climate change; this government's record on all environmental issues is terrible. They rolled back cosmetic pesticide restrictions with bill 22, meaning pesticides are now permitted near schools, child-care centres and in city parks. Increasing the amount of toxic chemicals that children in Manitoba are exposed to can only be seen as a step backwards by this government.

Manitoba has one of the worst waste management programs in the country, the least investments in electric vehicle infrastructure and few incentives for citizens to get off of fossil fuels and utilize more of Manitobans' clean hydro energy.

The PCs have broken so many promises and failed to act for so many years that Manitobans just don't trust them to be good stewards of our land and water. Manitobans care about protecting the environment—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Collège Jeanne-Sauvé Olympiens

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I am pleased to rise today to highlight the accomplishments of the Collège Jeanne-Sauvé Olympiens female hockey team from Collège Jeanne-Sauvé that is in my constituency of Riel.

Over the past two hockey seasons, the CJS female hockey team has dominated the top division in the Manitoba Women's High School Hockey League. Last season, they completed a near-perfect season, with 21 wins and one loss, bringing home the league championship and multiple individual awards.

This season, with big shoes to fill and only four new players on the team, they set out with another championship in mind. These girls fought hard all season and were ranked No. 1 throughout, with a record of 19 wins and three losses. The team also had the opportunity to bring their talent to another province. They travelled to Montréal to play in the top division of the high school tournament and utilize their French in an out-of-context manner.

These young women competed amongst prep hockey programs and high schools from Vermont and Hamilton. They also had the opportunity to tour the

city, using their second language, attend a Montréal Canadiens game and create so many great memories with their teammates.

This great season ended too soon with a heartbreaking game 3 loss in the semi-finals best-of-three series. Although not the finish that they were hoping for this season, the CJS Olympiens female hockey team has solidified the foundation for future female high school hockey success at Collège Jeanne-Sauvé.

Throughout it all, these young athletes were exemplary role models for others. I ask all my colleagues to help me congratulate the Collège Jeanne-Sauvé female hockey team on their accomplishments in this outstanding '22-23 season.

* (13:50)

Madam Speaker, I would also ask that all the names be entered in Hansard.

Players: Reegan Aitken, Stéphanie Beaudet, Avery DeJaegher, Annika Devine, Jordan Dick, Payton Durand, Tylie Fraser, Linnae Johnson, Cademce Kibbins, Jeri-Ann Lafleche, Laura Melizza, Mika Morand, Addilyn Nohlgren, Catia Prefontaine, Olivia Price, Alexis Van Den Driessche and Brooklyn Warnick; assistant coaches: Dominic Courcelles, Dominique Beaudet, Lexie Siwak; head coach and manager: Melissa Blaine

Madam Speaker: Just for the information of the minister, the names do not—the minister does not need to ask permission. They—she can just forward the names and they will be included. The minister could just indicate that she would like the names included in Hansard.

An Honourable Member: Leave?

Madam Speaker: Leave is granted—[interjection]—no, doesn't need leave. It has been indicated that the minister would like the names in Hansard, and that will occur.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to some students in the gallery leaving the gallery, I would like to introduce them to you. We have seated in the public gallery, from École Howden, 41 grade 4 students under the direction of Jenelle Gagné, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon).

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

Seven Oaks School Division

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Seven Oaks School Division has faced some impossible decisions. Rising costs and inadequate funding from the PC government have forced Seven Oaks School Division to considering cuts to programs or staff.

While the government boasts about additional funding for Seven Oaks, the reality is that this funding falls short of inflation and increased enrolment and means that Seven Oaks will have to make cuts once again.

Faced with eliminating up to 50 teaching positions and ending after-school programs, cutting the Learn to Swim program and, due to the continued Pallister and Stefanson cuts, Seven Oaks School Division has resolved to raise property taxes by 4.9 per cent in order to—maintaining staffing and programing levels.

Manitoba needs an education funding model that funds programming to keep students engaged and learn across the province. We need an education system which can help students grow and remain out of poverty. And we need to provide adequate and stable funding so we can expand programming like the new Punjabi bilingual program, Learn to Swim and Learn to Skate.

The Manitoba NDP is working hard as official opposition to make sure that the government is held accountable for its education cuts and provide a better path Manitoban students.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ang Bahay Connection

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): We currently have record numbers of immigrants coming to Canada, and it is so important that there be formal opportunities to better understand the financing and commitments behind purchasing big items such as homes and vehicles, because, if not done properly, it can make things very difficult to manage and, unfortunately, oftentimes new immigrants are taken advantage of.

This is why public- and even private-sponsored workshops that amplify the importance of consumer awareness are so important.

I have a good example of how the private sector can contribute to broader educational principles, such as finances.

Today, in the gallery, we have joining us four individuals: Jan Reyes, Marilyn Magtoto, Vien Javier and Jennifer Auxtero, and they have an event coming up that is open to the public.

This event is called Ang Bahay Connection and the goal of it is to highlight Filipino-owned small businesses that provide services to homeowners in the community, while also educating the public on what they need to know when it comes to finance questions around buying, selling, refinancing and investing.

Ang Bahay Connection is a free event that is happening on April 1st, from 12 to 5 p.m. at PCCM—that's the Philippine-Canadian Centre of Manitoba on Keewatin Street—also happens to be in Tyndall Park, Madam Speaker—and is open for all to attend.

I want to thank our many organizations and groups here in Manitoba that help answer difficult questions and share important information. Again, the point of events such as these are to not only have questions answered by professionals and experts in a public manner, but they are to provide confidence and security to often new immigrants here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we are lucky to have groups made up of individuals like those who have joined us today in the gallery, who are working hard to provide these free services.

I want to ask my colleagues to join me in thanking them for the work that they are doing.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

City of Winnipeg Real Estate Dealings Request for Public Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Winnipeggers and all Manitobans deserve to know what happened with the construction of the police headquarters and other real estate deals in our city. Now that the City has reached a settlement, there aren't any more excuses for the Premier to avoid calling a public inquiry.

What we know so far is very concerning. Construction costs went over by \$100 million past the budget. A judge ruled that the former Winnipeg chief administrative officer took a bribe and that he breached his duty.

These and many other important questions are ones that Manitobans deserve to have answered.

Will the Premier call an inquiry today into the Winnipeg police headquarters and other real estate deals?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, this is exactly why we allow the process to take place, so that they can look at these kind of settlement arrangements and so on.

What I will say is that there's parts of this that do remain before the courts now, and we will continue to allow that process to take place.

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

Mr. Kinew: City of Winnipeg councillors have called on this government—well, most of them, except for the member for Kirkfield Park (MLA Klein), called on this government to call a public inquiry.

Now, we think when the former CAO of the—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —City of Winnipeg takes a bribe of more than \$320,000, the people of Manitoba deserve to have answers. When there are cost overruns of more than \$100 million on a City of Winnipeg-funded, taxpayer-funded project, there should be answers.

This government has consistently stood in the way of accountability and transparency when it comes to this topic. We know that they've proffered excuses to date, but now those excuses have been removed.

The only question remaining for the Premier is: Will she call a public inquiry now into the police headquarters construction and into other real estate deals?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition likes to interfere in the judicial process. We don't agree with that.

We want to ensure that justice is served for Manitobans. That's why we will continue to allow this to go through the court system.

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

Mr. Kinew: We know that Brian Pallister opposed an inquiry into one of the biggest scandals that the City has ever seen. But we don't understand why this Premier continues to mimic Brian Pallister's position in avoiding public accountability and transparency into what went wrong.

There are important questions about the current processes in place. There are important accountability answers which should be delivered to the people of Manitoba. We're talking about public officials taking bribes. We're talking about massive cost overruns that Manitobans and Winnipeggers are paying for.

There are so many unanswered questions here. The—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —City of Winnipeg is on record calling for an inquiry. We think Manitobans deserve one, too.

What does the Premier say: Will she call a public inquiry now?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we recognize that the Leader of the Opposition has no respect for the law or the judicial process. We on this side of the House do, and that's why we will let the appropriate process take place with respect to this.

* (14:00)

We've certainly learned a number of things already by allowing it to go through the process. The Leader of the Opposition is saying that justice should have been denied in those cases, Madam Speaker. We think that that's wrong.

We will continue to allow the process to take place.

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

Safe Consumption Site Request for Facility

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Here's a fact, Madam Speaker: supervised consumption sites save lives. That's the basis for our support for this form of medical intervention. It's an important fact that this government and this Premier refuse to acknowledge.

People with addictions need help today. They deserve a chance to access medical attention. They deserve a chance to stay alive.

Will the Premier acknowledge the value that supervised consumption sites play, and will she support one today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): It's been proven where we focus on recovery—that is, ensuring that individuals get off of their substances, making sure that they get the care that they need to get them off

their addictions, Madam Speaker—that will be the focus of where we're at. That is where we have been.

That's why we've also looked at harm reduction, as well—so, the introduction of RAAM clinics, Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics. In fact, we've introduced yet another one that—with an Indigenous focus.

So, we'll continue to provide those naloxone kits out there into the community, and that is our harm reduction strategy, while still focusing our main focus on making sure that we get people off of their addictions, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: The ethical question at the heart of a supervised consumption site is, do you help people when they need help or do you wait until they pass your judgment?

The people of Manitoba have spoken very clearly. They want people in our province to get help now, not after some bill passes, not after organizations are buried in red tape and certainly not after we wait for folks with addictions to be judged by the PCs of being morally deserving.

On this side of the House, we're in favour of helping people now.

Will the Premier tell this House why she disagrees?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, in fact, Madam Speaker, we do agree—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —with getting those individuals—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —the help that they need now. That is why we introduced the Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics. In fact, just one more clinic is out there now that we have just introduced, so we're expanding those areas to ensure that we help those individuals who need it now.

That's why we have increased the number of naloxone kits that we're offering out there in the community. That is taking action now.

But we'll also take action now to help those individuals, but we're also going to help them after

this to make sure that they get the help that they need to get them off of their addictions.

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

Mr. Kinew: We know that the PCs' arguments on this topic are very weak. The Premier herself cited a supervised consumption site in California as evidence that they didn't work. The problem is that site does not exist.

Then her former minister of Mental Health claimed to have visited a site in BC, and, of course, BC officials clarified that that minister had never been there for a visit.

This is clear misinformation. I would encourage the member for Kirkfield Park (MLA Klein) to write about this blatant misinformation being put on the record.

We also know that Brian Pallister forced the VIRGO report—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to erase a recommendation for supervised consumption sites from within its very pages.

All of this bending over backwards to avoid a simple proposition. Let's help people in Manitoba with addictions right now.

Will this government finally admit that her misinformation and her policy has been an abysmal failure and that she will support the creation of a supervised—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, there is no panacea when it comes to ensuring that we get people off of their addictions and giving them the help that they need now and into the future.

Now, I know members opposite talk about getting them just the help now that they need, Madam Speaker. We are giving them the help that they need now, and we've also established 1,000 new beds to ensure that they get those—the help that they need to get them off of their addictions into the future.

We know that the recovery process and the recovery approach to this, Madam Speaker, really has very positive results for Manitobans who are suffering from addictions, for Canadians, for people around the world who are suffering from addictions. So, we will take both an approach now as well as an approach into the future: a recovery approach.

Safe Consumption Site Request for facility

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, supervised consumption sites have been proven around the world to save lives.

Now, on the eve of an election, this minister is gaslighting those organizations and volunteers who are trying to help Manitobans directly in the areas that this government has refused to. Their legislation is not designed to support those who need help right now, today, in Manitoba, but instead to throw up barriers to those who are already providing care.

If the minister actually believes in the value of their live-saving work, why won't she commit to opening a safe consumption site today?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Our government is listening to individuals who are seeking support for loved ones and families. Our recovery-oriented system of care—continuum of care—supports individuals and it provides safety, consistency and accountability for family members who are seeking these services through the addiction service provider.

The stakeholders have spoken; they've asked for accountability, and the standards have been put in place. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the community organizations that I've spoken to since this bill was introduced, and that none of which were consulted by this government before it was brought forward, are dismayed. They're dismayed with this PC government's response to the addictions crisis after years of inaction.

These same advocates have pulled together to try to help vulnerable Manitobans with addiction, while this government has failed to step up. Now they know definitively that they can't trust this government. They need a partner that will work with them, not shut them down.

Why won't this minister do the right thing and support this life-saving health care?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I'm not quite sure if individuals with lived experience, individuals who work through addiction service organizations, clinical experts, Shared Health, regional health are not

considered experts, but they were all part of the panel who helped make the standards.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, we know that this government doesn't listen to Manitobans, and they certainly have not been listening to the front-line health-care providers who have looked at, studied and implemented medical evidence in this area.

The PC government's devastating cuts have failed Manitoba's most vulnerable and at-risk citizens for the past seven years.

Will this minister reverse course, cancel the red tape and work with—not against—community groups who are providing these supports and health-care services today?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Community addiction service 'providers' have come to us. They have had concerns; they wanted us to put standards in place. Safety of Manitobans—most vulnerable Manitobans—is of ultimate concern.

Then they receive services not in isolation, but services that then go back, and the provincial health system is aware of the services that are provided.

Then we also have individuals that are saying that they want to ensure that their family members get long-term treatment, a pathway to continue for the— for their recovery.

And that's what these standards will provide.

* (14:10)

Women's Health Clinic Budget 2023 Funding

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Women's Health Clinic is dealing with huge pandemic backlogs and increased demands for their services, including abortions, contraceptives, birthing and much, much more, Madam Speaker.

These services are invaluable to women and gender-diverse folks here in Manitoba, and instead of recognizing this and increasing funding for the Women's Health Clinic, Budget 2023 actually cuts their funding. That's absolutely shameful, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) do the right thing and commit to adequately funding the Women's Health Clinic today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): The member for St. Johns continues to rise in the House and put false information on the record, believing that, if she says it a number of times, it will become true. But that is not the case, Madam Speaker.

Our government sees women's health as being a priority. That is why, as early as just February 6, we announced \$300,000 in continuing annual funding to support the Provincial Eating Disorder Prevention and Recovery Program at the Women's Health Clinic.

That is just one example of how we support the Women's Health Clinic, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Fontaine: The PCs have repeatedly cut funding to community health clinics like the Women's Health Clinic. These cuts hurt Manitobans and our ability to access services that we need, like abortions and contraceptives.

Budget 2023 funding for the Women's Health Clinic does not keep pace with inflation and doesn't help the clinic expand its services to clear the pandemic backlog and address increased demand. The Premier should know that this is wrong.

Will the Premier explain why she's cutting funding from the Women's Health Clinic?

Ms. Gordon: This is communication directly from the WRHA, which are the facts. We have reached out again to our community sector to 'depotermine' if any communication has recently occurred with the Women's Health Clinic regarding reduction of funding, but this is not the case, Madam Speaker.

So, again, the member for St. Johns continues to put inaccurate information on the record, but I also—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —want to note some increases to women's health funding: \$257 million was spent on the Women's Hospital redevelopment project, Madam Speaker, since our government took office; another \$15 million for digital mammography, with \$2.3 million in ongoing operating funding occurring—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Fontaine: Budget 2023 doubles down on the PCs' failed approach to women's health by cutting funding to the Women's Health Clinic.

To make matters worse, the PCs are also clawing back COVID-relief dollars that are needed after years of underfunding. These cuts will negatively impact the services that the clinic can offer, like abortions and contraceptives.

That is the wrong approach, Madam Speaker. These services are needed now more than ever.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) apologize for her government's incompetence and commit to fully funding the Women's Health Clinic today?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, again, I just want to place on the record that women's health is a priority for this government.

Here is the question that I asked of the WRHA: There were allegations made by the member for St. Johns in the House that the women's clinic had their funding reduced. This was the answer: There is nothing in Manitoba Health's budget about reductions in funding for the Women's Health Clinic.

So I'm not sure how that information is being attributed to us and to the budget, Madam Speaker. Those are the facts.

Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act Request to Pass Bill 203 Before June 1

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Bill 203, The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act, would give all Manitobans the opportunity to learn about the history of residential schools and bring us closer to true reconciliation.

I'm happy to say that we finally took a step in the right direction this morning. However, there's still some work to do. This bill still needs to go to committee and pass third reading. It's up to the PCs to make sure this happens.

Will the Premier commit to fully passing and proclaiming Bill 203 before we rise on June the 1st?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I don't think it's any surprise that this government totally supports the recognition and the importance of September 30th in honouring and commemorating the children who lost their lives, also the survivors and the families, communities who are affected by this and the legacy of the residential schools.

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

Mr. Bushie: If it were up to us, Orange Shirt Day would already be a statutory holiday.

Orange Shirt Day is a day to reflect on the history of residential schools, honour survivors and work towards reconciliation. Bill 203 would give all Manitobans the opportunity to do so.

Now it's up to the government to call this bill to committee and give it royal assent.

Will the Premier commit to doing so before we rise on June the 1st?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I understand the bill passed second reading this morning. Second reading, of course, is about the principle of the bill.

This government has demonstrated it significantly supports the principle of recognition when it comes to Orange Shirt Day, truth and reconciliation day. It's a government that's put in significant programs, both in the schools and recognition on that day in particular.

So, of course, we accept and we recognize the principle to support and to demonstrate that this is an important, significant day for all Canadians.

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

Mr. Bushie: The PCs voted against making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday just last fall. Many Manitobans are understandably upset and angry.

Thankfully, Bill 203 passed this morning. Now it's up to the PCs to do the right thing and call this bill to committee.

It's important that all Manitobans have the opportunity to learn about the history of residential schools and work towards reconciliation. Madam Speaker, all Manitobans want to have the opportunity to reflect, discuss and educate themselves and their families on the importance of Orange Shirt Day.

Will the Premier commit to giving royal assent to Bill 203 before we rise on June the 1st?

Mr. Goertzen: This Premier, this minister of Indigenous relations and reconciliation and the previous minister have done significant work when it comes to ensuring that there's education, that there's recognition when it comes to Orange Shirt Day and the national day of truth and reconciliation.

There are also significant things in the budget that deal with reconciliation, a budget that the opposition stalled yesterday and that we expect that they might stall again today.

We need to ensure that those issues that are in the budget that deal with reconciliation funding, support for Indigenous communities, actually pass.

Will they commit to moving forward on the budget implementation bill?

**Silica Sand Mine Extraction Project
Auditor General's Water Safety Recommendations**

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): On Tuesday, the Manitoba's Auditor General said that this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) had failed to implement 90 per cent of their recommendations from the past several years.

We also know that this latest Environment Minister recently was going door to door in Kirkfield Park, telling those constituents that they were going to stand up to this Premier. Not only is that a broken promise—not only has this minister not stood up to the Premier, he seem to have lost his voice in this Chamber.

So, I'll ask the minister: Can he tell the good people of Kirkfield Park what message he sent to the Premier after his election and specifically about how poor this Premier has done in the last seven years?

* (14:20)

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I'll just remind this House that facts do matter.

I appreciate the voice of the member for Kirkfield Park (MLA Klein) in reminding all Manitobans that facts matter, and information—real information—the truth matters.

That's what we have in this House. I mentioned yesterday when asked about the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —Auditor General's report that we are committed to continuing the work to fulfill the recommendations. I looked, for example, at the Vital Statistics branch, which I was asked about yesterday. In the Vital Statistics branch, some of the items were completed in the report, many were under way. It turns out that many more of those items have actually 'subsebnuncly' been completed.

They—the report was issued as of September 30th. It's been six months, and we've continued to work. We're a government that listens and—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Wasyliw: Madam Speaker, it appears that the Environment Minister is the first to enter the Stefanson government witness protection program; but, hopefully, he can answer this question.

Earlier this week, the minister failed to commit to protecting safety of drinking water—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —from the proposed Sio Silica mine near Vivian, Manitoba. And now, the Auditor General's report says that the PC government has only implemented one third of those recommendations on drinking water safety. PC budget cuts have depleted the ranks of the civil service; they can't be blamed for this.

When will this government stop making excuses, and does this minister have a voice? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Kevin E. Klein (Minister of Environment and Climate): Obviously, when you put the facts out, people get hurt by that, because they don't like giving a—they don't like being called out on misinformation. So, let's talk about the facts in this case.

First and foremost, 32 per cent of the recommendations for Environment and Climate have been met. And, in fact, we are on track to achieve all 18 recommendations before 2024.

We are basing our information on facts. We are not simply ignoring the Clean Environment Commission. We are also simply not saying that we're going to provide you with details. *[interjection]*

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

A little respect in this place would go a long way. Trying to heckle down a minister and thinking that they've achieved something great is pretty disrespectful.

I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please. I know that people get hot on both sides of the House when sometimes you don't like the answer—or the question—but, please, let's have some civility in

this House and show some respect so that people can properly hear what is being said, especially if I need to rule on something. So I'd like to see some co-operation, please.

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

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, this minister likes to remind this Chamber that he's an expert on fake news, and we certainly saw that just then. But, you know, let's talk about facts.

Because the fact is, eastern Manitobans deserve to know that their water supply is safe. They deserve to know that their provincial government will protect their water supply. And the fact is, this minister has not committed to those eastern Manitobans. That's just wrong.

Now, the auditor made very important recommendations for drinking water safety—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —including more thorough inspections and follow-up on required actions and timelines for compliance. The Auditor General's—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —assessment of this minister is disappointment.

How can we trust this government when the minister won't commit to drinking water safety and won't implement the Auditor General's report?

MLA Klein: Let's talk about the facts.

Fact No. 1: on the night of the election for Kirkfield Park, the member opposite's leader said I was a star candidate.

Let's also look at some—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: —let's also look at some other facts. In 2003, the NDP ignored the recommendation of the—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Klein: —clean environment committee to build the North End treatment plant and simply continued to give extension after extension, harming Lake Winnipeg under their watch.

Another fact to make: the NDP, back in 2009, said they would not achieve—

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

Cross Lake First Nation Community Health Centre Provincial Funding Responsibility for Services

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Cross Lake First Nation has over 8,000 residents and they have a new health centre opening in June. They have over 120 births a year, 25 to 30 people who need dialysis, which is why they're asking the Province to fulfill its side of the bargain to fund at—a dialysis machine, diagnostics and a birthing centre.

Care in the community would mean that people would save on ambulances, charter planes and more, and a dialysis centre—it would pay for itself with savings in the first year.

This provincial government gets money from the federal government for patient transportation, equalization, health and social transfers based on every single First Nations person.

Is the Province going to step up for Cross Lake and ensure those services are in place, or are they going to say it's someone else's job?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Our government has been very supportive of northern health programs, holding a summit—a sustainability summit with over 30 stakeholders, Madam Speaker, signing the declaration to eliminate all forms of Indigenous-specific racism in health care.

And then our record investment in diabetes in the 2023 budget for those living with type 1 and type 2 diabetes—we've expanded coverage for advanced glucose monitors as well as for insulin pumps, Madam Speaker. These investments will go a long way to supporting individuals living in the North.

We're leading in the country for a change, Madam Speaker.

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

Representatives from Cross Lake First Nation Request for Meeting with Premier and Minister

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): The Manitoba government has an obligation to serve all its residents, including First Nations, and it gets the money to do it. Federal transfers, including billions in equalization, are calculated by counting every Manitoba resident. That includes every Indigenous Manitoban.

For 50 years, PC and NDP governments have granted licence for Hydro and other corporations to go onto First Nations territory, build dams, dig mines without any cleanup or compensation. So, the Manitoba government will take from First Nations, but they won't provide the services to First Nations they're getting the money to provide. They can't even get a meeting.

Now, Ivan Monias and Donald McKay from Cross Lake are both in the gallery today.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and Health Minister finally meet with them today to hear their case?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, again, we as a government are always open and willing to meet with Indigenous and northern stakeholders.

That is why we hosted—we were proactive in hosting the northern health-care sustainability summit, where 30 Indigenous stakeholders came around the table to discuss challenges that are being faced in the North.

And, Madam Speaker, in addition to that summit, we as a government have invested \$812 million into northern and rural health care. A significant portion of these funds will be used in the creation of a new intermediate health-care hub in northern Manitoba.

We are so excited to be working with our northern partners to reduce the need to travel to southern regions and allow for better care, closer to home.

Cross Lake First Nation Community Health Centre Provincial Funding Responsibility for Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Vice Chief Ivan Monias and Donnie McKay, councillor and health director for Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Cross Lake, have worked for many years to get a health centre.

* (14:30)

It's now happening, but it needs the Province to contribute a dialysis unit, a renal team, a birthing unit and to pave the last 13 kilometres of the road to Cross Lake.

Madam Speaker, 18 per cent of Manitoban's population is Indigenous; 18 per cent of the federal transfers is 1 billion, 313 million.

Will the Province be responsible for all Manitobans and ensure the people of Cross Lake can

have a dialysis centre, a birthing unit and a paved highway for the more than 8,000—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I just wanted to let the member know that, when it comes to infrastructure, Madam Speaker, we are investing over \$4.2 billion when it comes to investing for the next five years.

In a lot of those cases, it's actually going to be in the North, Madam Speaker, especially First Nations communities. We're going to be working with them as part of our truth and reconciliation.

And we're not just going to be talking about it, we're going to have action, Madam Speaker. Just wait for more announcements.

Operating Funding for Velma's House Supports for Sexually Exploited Women

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): The need for a 24-7 space—safe space for gender-based violence and sexual exploited adult women is being filled through the inspiring work of Velma's House.

Opening in March of 2021, they quickly realized they needed a larger space and announced a new location last fall. The Minister responsible for the Status of Women recently announced support for Velma's House.

Can she explain what form this takes?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): This morning, the Manitoba government hosted an anti-sexual exploitation and human trafficking summit, where we talked about ways to prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

But we also recognize the need for a safe space for those who are afflicted, and that is why it was with great pleasure that we announced \$1.54 million to support Velma's House this morning at Ka Ni Kanichihk. And this is new annual funding for Velma's House, which is an essential, low-barrier safe space for women to access resources and cultural ways of healing.

This new funding will ensure that they can operate 24-7 hours a day to ensure that women get the supports and the safety that they need when they most need it.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Expansion of Broadband Services Rural and Northern Communities

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): November 2021, the PCs promised to connect 125,000 Manitobans in 350 different rural and northern communities to broadband services. Yet here we are, a year and a half later, and to no one's surprise, the PCs have failed to deliver.

Not only have they failed to make progress, but they've actually stopped communities from accessing broadband services altogether. These services are not a luxury, they are a necessity.

Can the minister explain why the PC government has broken their promise to 125,000 Manitobans?

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I really appreciate the opportunity to update the House on the progress that we have been making in connecting rural communities, northern communities, to high-speed Internet.

It has been tremendous, with tens of thousands of households in hundreds of communities now connected to high-speed Internet that, honestly, the previous NDP government had an opportunity to do something about, and did nothing.

Our government has taken action. We have ensured that tens of thousands—hundreds of thousands of Manitobans are going to be able to get access to high-speed Internet and that hundreds of communities are already connected.

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

Mr. Sala: As part of their broken promise to expand broadband services, the PC government handed over Manitoba Hydro Telecom's fibre optic cables to Xplornet. They claim that this private company would do a better job than Manitoba Hydro Telecom, yet a year and a half later, we've seen little to no progress in expanding broadband services.

It's clear the PC approach has failed, and Manitoba's communities are suffering as a result.

Will this minister admit that his government's approach has failed and apologize to the Manitobans they've left behind?

Mr. Teitsma: I will remind that member, and I'll just say to all Manitobans, that here on this side of the House, we have a government that listens. We have a government that takes action and a government that gets things done.

And that's, in fact, exactly what is happening with what is going on in the North, what is going on in rural Manitoba, in terms of connecting communities, connecting households to high-speed Internet. Not only do we have the excellent work being done for the dark fibre and Xplore, but we also have Starlink available to rural households across this province and communities across this province.

It's excellent to have choice and consumer choice. There is options for Manitobans across this province to have access and for communities to have access to high-speed Internet.

We are getting the job done.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, this government hasn't made progress in expanding broadband, and the minister's just reminding Manitobans as to why they cannot trust this PC government. In November 2021, the PCs promised to expand high-speed broadband services to 125,000 Manitobans across the province.

Failed premier Pallister said at the time, quote, being connected and living virtually are no longer choices, they're necessities. This hasn't changed. Access to broadband services are more important than ever. Unfortunately, the PCs are failing to deliver on that promise, and hundreds of communities are suffering as a result.

Will this minister apologize for his government's failure to expand broadband access to Manitobans?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about what we've done for Manitoba Hydro. We know, under the NDP reign, they jacked up water rental rates, they jacked up the guarantee rate to Manitoba Hydro. This government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —has reduced those rates in half. We're saving Manitoba ratepayers \$190 million this year alone.

Will the NDP pass this budget so we can continue to give Manitobans the breaks they need?

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) Residents in River Park South community in Winnipeg are disturbed by the increasing noise levels caused by traffic on the South Perimeter Highway.

(2) The South Perimeter Highway functions as a transport route for semi-trucks travelling across Canada, making this stretch of the Perimeter especially loud.

(3) According to the South Perimeter Noise Study conducted in 2019, the traffic levels are expected to increase significantly over the next 20 years and backyard noise levels have already surpassed 65 decibels.

(4)–[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: (4) Seniuk Road, which runs alongside the South Perimeter, contributes additional truck traffic causing increased noise and air pollution.

(5) Residents face a decade of construction on the South Perimeter, making this an appropriate time to add noise mitigation for the South Perimeter to these projects.

(6) The current barriers between the South Perimeter Highway and the homes of River Park South residents are a berm and a wooden fence, neither of which are effective at reducing the traffic noise.

We therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to consult with noise specialists and other experts to help determine the most effective way to reduce the traffic noise and to commit to meaningful action to address resident concern.

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation to help address this issue with a noise barrier wall along residential portions of the South Perimeter from St. Anne's Road to St. Mary's Road and for River Park South residents.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

* (14:40)

Thank you.

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:

(1) 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 the area, there has been increased vehicle and pedestrian use of Provincial Road 224.

(4) Without repair, Provincial Road 224 will continue to pose a driving hazard to 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 to—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 Manitobans.

Right to Repair

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba consumers believe products should last longer, be repaired when broken and that planned obsolescence has environmental consequences that threaten a sustainable future.

(2) In 2021, the European Union set minimum design requirements for many electronic devices with new right to repair legislation.

(3) The Biden administration in the United States has formally backed the right to repair movement in January 2022, following the European Union's lead.

(4) Right to repair enables consumers access to the resources needed to fix and modify their products, appliances, including cellphones, washing machines and refrigerators.

(5) Right to repair also allows consumers and electronic repair businesses access to the most recent versions of repair manuals, replacement parts, software and other tools that the manufacturer uses for diagnosing, maintaining or repairing its branded electronic products.

(6) Right to repair further allows consumers to reset an electronic security function of its branded electronic products if the function is disabled during diagnosis, maintenance or repair.

(7) In addition, the right to repair ensures manufacturers replace electronic products at no cost or refund the amount paid by the consumer to purchase the electronic product where they refuse or are unable to provide manuals or replacement parts.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to adopt right to repair legislation, requiring manufacturers of electronic devices and appliances, including washing machines and fridges and farm machinery, to make information, parts and tools necessary for repairs available to consumers and independent repair shops.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux)—sorry, Notre Dame.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by Mandeep Chahal, Sukhdeep Brar, Jaspreet Brar and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Sukhjeet Kaur, Narinder Singh and Royalpreet Kaur.

Thank you.

Community Living disABILITY Services

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): 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, 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, if their IQ is above 80.

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

(3) Recently, it has 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.

(4) 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 is not necessarily connected to their IQ.

* (14:50)

(5) 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 to adapt changing conditions.

(6) 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 be self-sustaining.

(7) Provisions 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.

(8) Newfoundland and Labrador have now recognized that access services should be based on the nature of the disability and the person's need, rather than 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.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In according—in coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in Punjabi schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by Kirandeep Sangha, Gagandeep Brar and Amandeep Kaur Brar.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other petitions? Grievances?

Government—orders of the day, government business.

The honourable acting House leader—also known as the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Acting Government House Leader): Could you please call for second reading debate Bill 14, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. If it passes, or if it passes at second reading, please then call

Bill 14 for Committee of the Whole. If Committee of the Whole is complete, would you please call Bill 14 for a third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just for clarity: orders of the day, government business.

It has been announced by the honourable acting House leader, the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training, that the House will consider debate on second reading of Bill 14, to be followed by the Committee of the Whole and—if it passes, to be followed by the Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading of Bill 14.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 14—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So, we will begin with debate and—resuming debate and second reading of Bill 14, and the honourable member for Flin Flon has 25 minutes remaining.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I started off yesterday, so I'll try and remember where I left off. Oh, yes, now I remember: the PC government is not to be trusted.

That's a good place where I left off. It's a good place to start again today because it's as true today as it was yesterday, that while they make big announcements, they fail to live up to them. They don't implement the things that they say that they're going to do. They underfund, budgets come and go and the money doesn't get spent.

We heard the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) stand up earlier today and pat herself on the back for what a wonderful job she's doing on health care in the North. And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that every resident in the North knows that's simply not the case. They know, from every hospital, every health centre, every seniors' centre that this government is not spending the money that they need to spend in order to provide care anywhere close to home.

So many health facilities in the North have been gutted of any services that it's shameful. Families have been ripped apart. Husbands and wives that have been together for 50 years are now hundreds of miles apart, thanks to this government.

Even though now we know that there's a full complement of nurses at the Lynn Lake health centre, this government, this Minister of Health and this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) refuse to reinstate health

services for Lynn Lake hospital. They absolutely refuse to recognize the people of Lynn Lake as being important—and they are, most assuredly, important.

People have lived in those communities like Lynn Lake for so many years—40, 50, 60 years—they deserve the respect of this government and they don't get it.

We heard some questions earlier today about some roads in northern Manitoba, in particular the last few kilometres going into Cross Lake, and I've raised this issue in the House any number of times. I've written to ministers—various ministers, as they come and go—about a commitment to pay for that last few kilometres, and not once has any minister of this government responded in the seven years that they've been in this government. Not once have they responded that that piece of road is in any way, shape or form a priority for this government.

We heard the Minister of Infrastructure today stand up and say, well, stay tuned for more announcements. Well, we're tired of just announcements. We want to see actual action. We want to see roads like that get the pavement on them; make them safe for people in the North.

We know that this government has failed—constantly failed—to ensure that there's enough people working for the highways department to actually maintain roads. We heard the Minister of Infrastructure stand up the other day and say, well, they'd hired some people.

To start with, they haven't hired nearly enough people to fill all the vacancies, and the people that they have hired are recent retirees. That's not a long-term solution because those folks are going to retire again.

So, what's the problem? Well, the problem is whatever this government says is not quite reality. So while they may have hired some people, they're temporary employees at best and they have no long-term plan to actually hire and retain people to work in those positions.

* (15:00)

And part of the reason for that is that the wage rates for those heavy equipment operators, in northern Manitoba in particular, have fallen so far behind that people cannot afford to go and live in those communities and sustain themselves on those wages; which is why they've hired back retirees, because they're the only ones that can afford to work at these low-paid-now government jobs.

Let's talk about ambulance services in the North. This government has once again failed constantly to deliver—they've failed to deliver ambulances that are safe to operate. We've heard from people that operate the ambulances in the North that they don't get winter tires put on anymore. Imagine an ambulance that doesn't have proper winter tires trying to navigate hundreds of kilometres of roads that haven't been properly plowed because of this government.

When I was up in Lynn Lake, I heard about the ambulance station that they built that had to be evacuated because of the fumes from the gas that was leaking out of the ambulance that was parked there. That's the kind of equipment that people in the North are expected to work with.

Imagine—it's bad enough for the people operating the ambulances, the EMTs and whatnot—imagine how bad it is for the patients, because patients are on the road constantly in these ambulances because they don't have services in their home communities anymore.

How many trips a day does an ambulance make from Flin Flon to The Pas so that people can get some basic test work done that you can't have done in Flin Flon anymore? And yet, these ambulances are literally run until the wheels fall off, which happened to an ambulance that was slated for some repairs. They made a list of everything that was wrong, sent it to another community to pick up their spare ambulance, but before it got there, the actual wheel fell off, leaving those folks stranded on the side of the road.

There's no longer a vehicle maintenance shop in Thompson to service any of that equipment, so whenever it does need to have service done, for the most part, they have to get shipped to Winnipeg, which takes them out of service for that much longer.

People don't trust this government because of things that Brian Pallister did, things that the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) supported, sat beside him and clapped her hands and said, well done, and that she still carries on with the same mentality.

And I see the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) starting to pay attention, because he knew I was going to get to him sooner or later. Because who was the first failed minister of Health in this PC government? Well, it was the member from Steinbach, the current Justice Minister. He's the one that designed the disastrous health-care system that we are left with now. He's the one that sat behind the curtain and pulled all the strings, destroyed health care and then handed it off to

the next minister and the next minister and the next minister, and the list goes on and on. And yet, they've failed to fix any of the problems that they created. They're the ones that destroyed health care. They're the ones that continually fail to address the issues.

We know that the northern patient transportation system has been starved for resources. We know that this government fails to provide sufficient financial resources for people to actually get the medical care from the North that they need. Certainly, during the pandemic, there was people that just stayed home and missed their critical medical appointments, because they could not afford to spend a week in Winnipeg, because this government would not step up to the plate and support people in the North.

We know that there's a couple communities in northern Manitoba that are some of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba: Cross Lake, Pimicikamak and Norway House. And they're both in the process of getting new health facilities, hospitals open. Has this government stepped up and offered one cent of funding to help those facilities? And the answer is no, because they wash their hands of people in the North, particularly Indigenous folks. They say, well, that's federal government's responsibility.

What they fail to acknowledge is both of those communities also have large contingents in the northern affairs community that access those services as well, that quite clearly—quite clearly—this government cannot wash their hands of. They have a responsibility for those people; they can't say that's up to the feds. That is this government's responsibility, and yet again they have failed miserably, to say the least.

Let's talk about some of these tax cuts for a while. Certainly, there's a number of people that will be quite happy to see some of those tax cuts, but—I just want to access a note that I made here that talked about the unequal distribution of some of those tax cuts. So, tax cuts in the 2023 budget help the rich folks out a whole lot more than they help the poor folks out.

Now, we heard the government talk about, well, percentage-wise, the rich folks get 14 per cent; the poor folks get 20 per cent. But let's talk about real numbers. Let's talk about dollars rather than percentages.

So, we know that the top per cent, the top number of people—those making over \$100,000—will get somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1,322. We know that the bottom 20 per cent or those earning the least amount of money—how much money will they save

thanks to this government? Thirty-seven dollars. Isn't that something to be proud of, that we're giving the people that least afford it the biggest advantage, the biggest amount of money, the biggest break, while poor people will continue to get poorer, less well off, less able to afford—less able to feed their families?

We heard in this budget—or, one of the announcements after the budget—that they're going to fund some upgrades to one—one—northern airport. And yet, we know that there's any number of those airports that this government is in fact responsible for that are in serious need of repair. And yet, once again, they ignore people in the North. They're only going to fix one airport. Imagine what kind of bad shape it must be in, if the government has actually agreed to spend some money.

Now, we need to be cognizant of the fact that just because they've said they're going to spend some money in the budget doesn't actually mean that it's going to get spent. Because right now, they're running around like drunken sailors, with big announcements of all the money that they're going to spend, hoping that they can trick Manitobans into believing that they're not the same people—they're not the same government that spent the last seven years starving every department for resources.

I was speaking to someone in charge at Shared Health one day about ambulances, and why we don't have enough ambulance attendants—EMTs. And that person said, well, because every time we train them, they leave the province. So I asked, well, why is that? Well, because they can make exponentially more money working in a different jurisdiction. So I asked the person who I was speaking to, well, who would have responsibility to fix that issue? Oh, he said, I can see where you're going with this. Because, of course, Shared Health would be the ones that should be negotiating proper rates of pay for those people, but they have not had a raise for—they have not had a collective agreement in place for six, seven years, whatever the number is now.

* (15:10)

So, this government knows what the problem is because they created it. They know what the solution is, but they won't implement it.

We hear ministers talk about—well, particularly the Health Minister, talk about a table of solutions. The solution is to pay people appropriately so that you can retain them in this jurisdiction rather than seeing them pack up and leave—or, when they offer a training

course that nobody signs up for because nobody believes that they can actually afford to live under the wage rates that are sitting there.

This government is quite proud of the fact that they've created some 74,000 more poor people. That's the number of people that have fallen off the tax rolls because their income is so low that they no longer qualify to pay taxes. They say that like that's something to be proud of.

Instead of trying to ensure that there's economic growth in this province, instead of trying to ensure that there's good-paying jobs for people in Manitoba to go to, they herald the fact that we have more poor people than we did five years ago. Their whole mentality is confused and mixed up. But then, what do we expect?

Let me see, where should I talk about next? Well, we know that we just had some questions earlier in the week about conservation officers because there's a definite shortage of conservation officers. And the minister responsible has now added more responsibilities onto those conservation officers, more duties that they have to undertake.

And yet, he fully admits that, well, they haven't really hired any; that they're planning to hire some. Well, they're the ones that got rid of them. They're the ones that allowed the numbers to go down so low so that those conservation officers cannot possibly do the job that's expected now, never mind adding on more responsibility.

Last fire season, there was a number of communities that were concerned because, once upon a time, they used to have initial attack crews in their community that could rush to a fire and get the initial attack under way to control it before it threatened the community. But we know that this government has reduced the number of attack crews, the number of communities that have that resource available. They have committed to training some more people, but they're not going to train them to be in their community. They're not going to train them to be available to actually be initial attack crews where they need to be.

Stopped on the side of the road one day when I was headed up to Cross Lake and talked to a fellow who was explaining to us that back in the days when we had government air services, when they got word or notified that there was potentially a fire somewhere, they'd call up government air services and have a plane there immediately to get crews where they needed to go.

Well, now, without government air services being available, they have to phone charter airlines. But if the charters all happen to be booked up, they have to wait in line until one becomes available to get them where they need to go. Meanwhile, the fire isn't waiting. It's burning out of control, getting bigger, threatening communities; simply because this government's ideological approach was to do away with government control of such things, turn it over to the private entities to provide that service. But the private entities cannot and do not provide the service that they need to to get those folks where they need to go.

We've heard this government recently, in the budget, talk about—they're going to hire a number of people in the mining permitting office because they see the need to speed up that process. Well, the question is, where did all the people go that worked there up until this government came into power? Well, they got rid of them, either through attrition or layoffs, so that they became so short staffed that they did not have a chance to do the job that they needed to do.

Now, all of a sudden, there's all kinds of exploration going on in northern Manitoba, no thanks to this government, but thanks to the fact that critical minerals are required for a lot of things that need to take place, and those critical minerals, we have lots of them in northern Manitoba. Because the permitting regime has been ground to a standstill by this government, that things have fallen behind. So, now they're coming out with an announcement that they're going to hire some people to speed up the process that, once again, they're the ones that destroyed the process.

But they know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there's an election coming, and they know that, holy smokes, we better do something to convince Manitobans that we're not the same bunch that destroyed everything in this province. But we all know that they are the same bunch. They all sat beside Brian Pallister and they all clapped, whether it was bill 64, the education disaster nightmare, whether it was health care that was being cut, they all clapped like trained seals and said, look at us, we're going to save some money here.

And now those savings have come home to roost, that people of northern Manitoba in particular know that just them making announcements is absolutely totally meaningless, because they don't spend the money that they announce they're going to spend; they spend less than they're going—say they're going to spend, and we see the services continue to get worse.

So, we know that this government can't be trusted, certainly, to do anything for northern Manitoba.

We know that health funding for 2018-19 was underspent by \$215 million. Budget 2019-20 cut funding for health care by \$120 million, and yet constantly, this government, this minister, stands up and says there's been no cuts to health care.

Well, certainly, we in the North know that that's not true. Thompson hospital waited months just to get somebody to come and fix the hot water—months, not days, not hours, not weeks—but months to get hot water in a hospital because of this government's incompetence, because of this government's lack of will to actually provide services to northern Manitobans.

So, we know that during the pandemic, this government was woefully ill-prepared to do anything. We know that Manitobans suffered because of it. And I really need to recognize organizations like MKO that stepped up, stepped in and did everything in their power to try and protect the people that they're responsible for, the Indigenous folks in northern Manitoba. Contrary to this government ignoring them, they stepped in, they made sure that people had vaccines. They made sure that there was rules in place. They made sure that their communities were protected. So, I want to really thank them for that.

So, don't have a whole lot of time here left, but something that's never been talked about by this government is ophthalmologist service for northern Manitoba. Just from Flin Flon alone, there's some 100 flights a year for people going to get a needle in the eye. We also know that there's hundreds of people forced to drive to Prince Albert because they can't afford the flight and the costs of hotels. So they drive people to Prince Albert to get that shot in the eye once a month. And I know this is a fact because my wife drives her mother and a carload of other seniors to Prince Albert once a month to get those needles.

Why can't we have that service in northern Manitoba? Well, we can. A hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment, and an ophthalmologist can fly in once a month and look after those people. But this government isn't interested in providing that service.

*(15:20)

We know that if people in northern Manitoba need an MRI, they have to fly to Winnipeg to get it, and yet we have a hospital in Flin Flon that has room for one. We can get the Saskatchewan government—Manitoba government to help pay for it; it just makes sense to turn that hospital into a regional care centre. This government needs to quit ignoring Manitoba,

particularly northern Manitobans, and people up there know that this government cannot be trusted.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): How can you tell a government's in their death roll? Well, I think this piece of legislation, this budget is a big, flashing neon sign to Manitobans. I mean, they can't outrun their past. They can't unrun what they've done to Manitoba.

We're talking about seven years of cuts; seven years of underperforming with an economy; seven years of devastation to our health-care system; seven years of actively—and in bad faith—defunding our education system; seven years of increasing the infrastructure deficit where our roads and bridges are unsafe and crumbling; seven years of absolutely devastating our civil service, losing almost one in five civil servants to the point where Manitoba cannot function, cannot do basic things.

When this government took office in 2016, it took two weeks to get a birth certificate. Now it can take anywhere six months to nine months. If you needed a work permit in Manitoba in 2015, you'd apply; you could get it in a month. And, of course, to many working Manitobans, their licence means a job. Now it takes four months to get that very same thing. And just basic day-to-day services, things that Manitobans really took for granted, they can't anymore because they're not there; they're absolutely not there.

And was this government hit with hard times? No. They've had record windfalls in revenue; they—you know, literally swimming in money. Did it go to make our health-care system better? No. Did it go to make our education system better? No. In fact, they continue to defund it. Did it go to repair the \$11-billion infrastructure deficit that Manitoba has? No. They haven't even touched it. And it's actually getting worse.

So, you know, we've gone from having Brian Pallister, the most unpopular premier in Canada—so much so that his own caucus stabbed him in the back and pushed him out the door, that they lost confidence in him and got rid of him. And then what do they do? They replaced Brian Pallister with Canada's most unpopular premier now. You know, the entire time this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has held that position, has led the way in Canada being the most unpopular premier.

You know, I think Brian Pallister always used to talk about the most improved province. You don't hear that anymore. That also now sounds like a cruel joke if it wasn't Manitobans who were paying the price.

You know, they had 14 MLAs quit, who basically said they want nothing to do with this government; they want nothing to do with this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). They don't see a future here. They don't see a better vision for Manitoba and they're making out for the door.

We've had two Finance ministers who quit on this government, who had no confidence in this government and said, I would rather be unemployed than work for this government. Well, now, I mean, the current Finance Minister, I think he's retired; he just hasn't told anybody. You know, and I have a lot of sympathy for him because that man feels like he's suffering. So, I wish somebody would, you know, reach out. So, you know—and so, you have these two Finance ministers who stood up to this Premier, and they're gone.

So, Manitobans are hurting. I mean, I think all of us in this House can agree. But let's look where we came from. When this government took office, we had the second fastest growing economy in Canada. It was the first fastest growing non-petrol economy in Canada. We have now fallen to seventh place. You know, that was after COVID. The COVID excuse doesn't wash anymore. We haven't recovered like other provinces have.

We have the lowest weekly wages in western Canada. That means our citizens are poorer than all of our neighbours; they make less money per week than every single one of our neighbours. This government talks about being competitive, except when it comes to wages. That's when we're not competitive; that's when they're okay with us being not competitive.

What we—they want to be competitive about is rich-people tax rates. That's what they want to be competitive about. And that's what this BITSA and this budget is all about.

We have the lowest social mobility in Canada. Shameful. If you are born poor in Manitoba, you will die poor in Manitoba. And that—you do not have a prospect of pulling your family out of poverty, and that is sad. A government needs to give its citizens hope. A government needs to provide a pathway for success, so that when you come to this province, you have a way forward.

You know, my grandparents came as refugees from World War II, from Ukraine, from the fighting—they were in a concentration camp. They were required to do forced labour for the Nazis. And the camp got liberated, and they were able to make it to

Manitoba. They had nothing with them. They had a—basically what would've been a shack on the outskirts of Winnipeg at the time, the Brooklands neighbourhood—didn't even have running water.

But we had programs in place where that—newcomers with no assets, no anything—my grandfather was able to start a business. And he had a successful business on Selkirk Avenue that catered to the eastern European community. And my mother was able to afford and go to university and become a teacher. And that took our family out of the working class, and gave my brother and me some incredible opportunities.

And I wonder, now, if you were a newcomer coming to Manitoba under this government, you don't have that path. You don't have that same opportunity. You're not going to be able to succeed in Manitoba and you don't have any hope. And that's really sad, that we've come here, and this government has been completely uninterested in all that.

And, of course, the other shameful badge that Brian Pallister never talked about, you know, most improved province—we are not the most improved province when it comes to child poverty. In fact, we are the least improved province. We have the highest child poverty of any province in Canada. And it's getting worse.

What does it say that we're seeing trench foot show up in people in downtown Winnipeg in 2023? These medieval diseases are showing up on our streets, and what does that say about the values of this government and whether or not they support the dignity of all Manitobans? I don't want to live in a province where we write people off, where it's okay and normal for people to have these medieval diseases because of poverty. There's something completely avoidable. But that's the vision in this budget; that's the vision in BITSA.

We have the lowest number of small businesses in western Canada. We have, what, two, three hundred thousand more people than Saskatchewan; Saskatchewan has more small businesses than we do. And we saw in this budget that this government has neglected small business. There was absolutely nothing in there for the—it wasn't even mentioned. They didn't even do a sort of drive-by, it wasn't even—there's nothing.

And, of course, they're hurting. And you can walk 100 metres from this building and see all the closed storefronts in downtown Winnipeg. You can go to

Brandon and go to their downtown and see all the closed storefronts.

Is there any urgency? Is there any concern? Is there any action from this government? Absolutely not. Absolutely not. And that's where we've come.

This government has raised tuition 18 per cent in the last few years—18 per cent. And again, for many, especially newcomer families, that's the path out of poverty, that's the path into middle class, that's the path to a good life, and this government ideologically opposed to creating barrier-free education for all Manitoba.

* (15:30)

I've even heard members opposite say, well, if your family can't help you pay for university, well, it's too bad for you. That kind of mean-spiritedness, that type of callousness, that type of we're going to write people off because they don't go to our country club, that type of mentality belongs in another century. That is not Manitobans, that's not our values, that's not what we believe in.

And that 18 per cent raise in tuition is a tax on students. This government loves to raise taxes, just not on their friends and political donors. But everybody else—they're very okay with that. So, you know, this government is, you know, patting itself on the back, saying, oh, we lowered taxes—for, like, super-rich Manitobans, but, yes, well, don't look at the 18 per cent raise in tuition.

That's a tax. You raised it year over year, and you keep doing it and you're not even embarrassed. What's up with that?

This is the only province that has bungled \$10-a-day child care. Everybody else seems to be able to get this right and we can't. That's a tax on families. That holds back people who want to work who can't. Child care is a driver of the economy. The better and more universal child care that you have, the more people that can enter into the workplace, the more people who are paying taxes. It actually pays for itself.

Something that pays for itself, yet this government is ideologically opposed and was ragging the puck and slow-moving it, and then, in a chaotic fashion, slapped something together that hasn't worked. And we look across the country; we're the only jurisdiction that seems to have fumble with this. And this was an easy win. This wasn't even provincial money; this is federal money.

You know, one of the other by-products that we don't talk about is that when this government defunds public education. It's not like things just stop. It's not like the schools just say, okay, we're not going to have buses. They raise money. But now, instead of it coming from the government, it comes from the parents, and you see an explosion of student fees.

Things that parents used to take for granted, like field trips and busing and all that, all of a sudden they have to pay out of pocket. Well, you know, if you're a wealthy family, that may not be such a big deal, and everybody's going to do what they can for their children. But if you don't have a lot already, this is another tax increase for you and this is another way that this government is increasing taxes on working and middle-class families here.

And, of course, hydro bill—this government loves to raise your hydro. Month after month, year after year, they keep raising hydro rates. And it was unnecessary. Hydro has been making record amounts of money, and this government had to be shamed into acting. And if they had their way, they'd keep raising hydro.

You know, and we're hearing stories—I think the federal government just penalized Manitoba for privatized health care, that they assessed a huge three-hundred-and-fifty-sixty-thousand-dollar fine because this government is allowing privatized health care to happen in Manitoba.

So, we're losing money that way. And, of course, what's even more tragic is simple things like diagnostic tests. People are now having to show up with their credit card. You know, how far we've fallen in seven years.

And this government says, well, you know—they really don't respect Manitobans. They don't respect that Manitobans can see this, and they think that, oh, we're going to give you a tax break and all will be forgiven, right?

Well, this government had an opportunity. They had a \$2-billion windfall—huge—found money, pot of gold. Instead of paying off the deficit, they racked it up; it's another 330-odd million dollars that didn't have to come. That resulted this year in \$260 million in extra interest payments. That could hire a lot of teachers. That could hire a lot of nurses. That could reduce university tuition. So much could be done with that \$260 million. But this government made the ideological choice that they would rather send \$260 million of Manitobans' hard-earned money to

bond holders in London, England than keep it here in Manitoba. And it's going to take generations for Manitobans to pay this off. Their grandchildren are going to be paying off because of their reckless and irresponsible financial decisions.

So, this government has cut \$2 billion in taxes to the point where we are going to have trouble paying for our health system. We are going to have trouble paying for an education system as reduced and as cut as it was.

And what this really means to parents—and I hear it in my Pembina Trails schools—there are routine classrooms where there's 32 kids. Can you imagine? As a former school trustee, that's unheard of. You're starting to talk Calgary numbers, where they're packing 50 kids in a classroom—another Conservative government that doesn't value education.

So, we're at 32. We weren't at 32 seven years ago. We had small class sizes. Families deserve their children to have special attention, to have one-on-one time with the teacher, not just be some extra kid stuffed into a room. But that's where we come.

Winnipeg School Division cut 130 teachers. Steinbach cut 27 teachers. Loss of full-day kindergarten programs—programs that help vulnerable and marginalized students catch up and succeed. That's what's going.

We have all the cuts to the municipality, seven years of them. They don't have any money. And what's interesting, you see how this sort of rolls downhill: city doesn't have any money, they don't pay lifeguards properly, all the sudden we don't have any lifeguards, all the sudden parents can't get swimming lessons for kids. Then what happens? Well, private entrepreneurs see an opening, so then they open up a private pool with private lessons that are three times what the families could actually pay if the government actually had money to provide the public service.

That's a huge tax increase on Manitobans. That's a huge tax increase on families and children and parents. These things are all connected. This government ask—acts like they aren't.

So, talking about fiscal mismanagement, this government received a windfall due to inflation, record highs in PST, income and corporate tax, received one-time money from child care or new federal money on health care and equalization payments, an extra billion dollars. The problem with all this stuff is that it's not going to be here next year. And they're treating it like

we're going to get this extra billion dollars every year; we're not.

The equalization payments, why they're so high is Alberta oil, because of the war, is through the roof. So, Alberta is flush with money, and in the equalization formula that means Manitoba gets a portion of that. Oil is going to drop next year and the year after that, and that means our equalization payments will drop and then all the sudden—and having an extra billion to give to rich PC donors, we will now have to scramble to find that money.

And who's going to pay the price for that, who's going to pick up the tab? It's going to be working Manitobans. And that's not right. So, the tax changes this year alone is a loss of \$1 billion. It's going to make it harder to fund public education, make it harder to fund health care.

So, after six years, this government has made life unaffordable. Election's coming, they're—uh-oh, we're very unpopular, we got to do something; Manitobans are disillusioned and angry and disappointed with them. And so, they're desperate, so they turn to this budget and this BITSA bill.

But every single budget has winners and losers. Every single budget tells you in very stark terms who the government values and what they value, so let's look at this one.

Big business are the winners in this budget. They're getting a reduction of the health and post-secondary tax levy. That's millions of dollars and, you know. I think when I started in 2019, it applied to companies with a payroll of \$1.5 million or more. This government's now expanded it year over year to \$2,250,000. That's not small business. Those are large businesses if you have a \$2.25-million payroll.

* (15:40)

And the whole point of the levy is that you cannot run a business if your employees aren't healthy, you cannot run a business if your employees are not educated, that those investments made by government makes you money. In fairness, because of those investments and because it's like a road or electricity and everything, you have to pay your fair share. It's part of the business cost, part of being in business and it allows more growth and more investment in businesses. It's a virtuous circle.

This government doesn't believe that. It actually wants to cut this contribution to health and education

from our largest, most profitable corporations. And this doesn't do anything for small businesses.

It was interesting, when I was going to all the budget meetings and the business community in Steinbach and elsewhere would come out, they weren't saying, yes, we need tax cuts. None of them said that. In fact, never heard that once. What I did hear from all these big corporations was that we needed more investments in health care and education, right. You had these massive corporations that came to these budget meetings, talking like socialists, because they know that without those investments, their business can't succeed.

So, does this government listen to big business? No. They don't listen to anybody. And so, this is a huge subsidy to big business that they didn't ask for, that they don't need, that won't have any beneficial effect on our economy, and it will be very detrimental to our ability to fund and run properly health care and our education system.

The second big winner here was people who have large inheritances and have trust funds. Now, who could that be? Who could, over there, have a trust fund that they live off of? Hmm, maybe \$31 million in a trust fund? I mean, who could that be?

So, one of the main changes in BITSA was to include trust funds to be allowed in this hall of tax reductions, and if it's not included in BITSA, the sort of trust fund babies of Manitoba would not get to share in a reduction in tax.

These are the wealthiest families in Manitoba. How they even enter into this discussion, why this government even thinks that they remotely need to have any sort of tax reduction. This is the same—we don't have an inheritance tax in Manitoba. We had a probate tax. It was absolutely hated by Brian Pallister. He got rid of it. That was the only thing for Manitoba that had any sort of control over inherited wealth.

You know, Manitobans are fair-minded people. They believe that you should work for your paycheque and that it shouldn't just be handed to you. But this government doesn't believe that. This government supports inherited wealth with crazy tax changes like this trust fund. That's what this BITSA's about. It's about rewarding your friends; it's not about helping Manitobans.

So then, let's talk about who the major winners are of these tax changes under BITSA. It's obviously high-income Manitobans. Manitoba now, given these tax changes, will have the lowest tax on

high-income earners compared to BC, compared to Quebec, compared to New Brunswick, compared to Nova Scotia, compared to Newfoundland. What a shameful list to be part of; that each and every one of those populations have a fairer tax system in place than this government.

For a tax system to be fair, everybody has to contribute, and you have to contribute based on your ability to pay. If you are doing well by the rules of this economy and you are successful, you need to feed it back into the economy. But this government doesn't believe that. This government doesn't support tax fairness and is trying to rig our tax system, trying to rig our economy in favour of their wealthy friends and a handful of PC Party donors.

This is an aggressive move. It's \$500 million in lost revenue we'll never get back. And poor Manitobans are going to pay the price for several reasons. When you break down this tax, 50 per cent of Manitobans—500,000 tax filers, the lowest 50 per cent of tax filers, incomes between \$7,900 and \$43,000—that's 500,000 Manitobans—they're going to receive 24 per cent of this tax money.

So, keep in mind, they're 50 per cent of the population, they're only getting 24 per cent of the money back. That amounts to about \$120 million. So, there are—the poorest 50 per cent of our population is getting a quarter of the tax money back.

Well, where does the tax money go? Well, the richest 10 per cent—those 100,000 Manitobans that make a \$100,000 or more a year—they're going to get \$132 million—just 10 per cent, just 100,000. So, 500,000 get \$120 million split amongst them, 100,000 get \$132 million split among them, and they get 26 per cent of the money. So, 10 per cent of the population gets 26 per cent of the money.

An Honourable Member: That's PC math.

Mr. Wasyliw: It is.

So, let's look at your average person because the problem with average is, it means that half the people get less than the average and half get more than the average. It's \$502 is the average. That's \$40 a month. That \$40 a month is how Manitobans are going to benefit from this. Richest people are going to get well over \$100 month.

Again, either way, like—you know what? People are struggling. Any money is good, any money is helpful. I respect that and I want to honour that, but let's put this into some context: \$40 a month is not

a game changer for Manitobans. And if you look at all the cuts that this government has made, they're paying way more than \$40 a month because of policy decisions this government has made.

I'll just use one. This government used to fund Winnipeg Transit 50-50. Since they cut that seven years ago, transit fees have skyrocketed. It now costs a Winnipegger \$107 a month for a monthly bus pass. So, you just gave them \$40 in a tax benefit, they're still out \$67 a month. How are they better off? If this government took that same money and brought back the 50-50 transit split, you could lower their monthly transit pass so they would save way more than \$40 a month.

You know, the problem is, when you cut taxes for the wealthy and you give nothing to working people, it's working people that disproportionately use social services, disproportionately use education and health-care system. And if you take away all the money that means you have to cut those things, so they lose twice. They don't get any money from this government, and the social services they need to live gets cut.

Then look at the carbon tax credit. Now this one, it's pegged for wealthy people to benefit—\$175,000 a year, you qualify for this cheque. The average family income in Winnipeg is \$98,000—it's almost double. And yes, everybody's affected by inflation, for sure, even wealthy people. But that \$250 cheque is going to go a lot further to that single parent who makes \$32,000 a year than it is going to make to one of my lawyer friends who makes \$175,000-plus.

You know, we certainly could target this money better to help people who actually need it. And the key about all this is borrowed money. We don't even have the money; we're borrowing it and we're going to have to pay it back in interest, and that \$250, believe me, you're going to pay it back in interest from this government. There is no such thing as free money. So you end up paying more.

They've also made the rules really restrictive. In order to qualify for a cheque, you had to be 18 in 2022 and 2023. If you haven't, too bad for you. So, young people are not going to get a cheque. You have to file an income tax return in 2021 by January 2023.

And this is critical. Many low-income people don't pay tax, so they have no incentive to file a tax return or they may be struggling and have other issues that makes it very hard for them to file a tax return. So, in fact, many low-income people will not get a

cheque because they haven't got their taxes filed up to date.

So, this is disproportionately going to affect the people that actually need the help the most. And if you're a renter and you move or if you don't have stable living conditions, when you don't have a fixed address that they can actually find you to send a cheque, you won't get your cheque. And if you don't pick up your cheque by May 1st, 2023, you'll lose it. So, that means, you know, working people who are renters are going to disproportionately lose their cheque.

* (15:50)

We saw that with the seniors' tax rebate, that there was tens of millions of dollars of people who didn't get their cheque and this government could care less, because it wasn't about that; it was about public relations. It was about PR, it was not about a sincere effort to help Manitobans.

I certainly could go on. I would love to. But what the issue is in Manitoba is we cannot trust this government. This is a government that is not in solidarity with the Manitoba people. And what this tax change—do, it makes our Manitoba system less fair; it makes it divisive and it upsets the fabric of Manitoba.

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

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I'm happy for the opportunity to rise today to put some words on the record. Certainly, probably, to reiterate a lot of the important points that have been made by my colleagues on this side of the House. Certainly, that—you know, as we talked about substantially, and as I was able to discuss when I debated on the budget, I think it was earlier this week—that all of this is a pre-election budget. It's a budget by a government desperate to try and save themselves in a province where the residents simply have no trust in the leadership and no trust in what this government's doing.

All Manitobans remember the cuts—the seven years of cuts—that they've experienced, both under Brian Pallister and that have continued under this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). And everybody gets it: it's an election year, so there's lots of money being thrown around. Doesn't necessarily mean it's going to the right places at the right time. You know, while there may be some good investments, some things that we wish had been happening over the last seven years, we also know that a lot of the money is going just to help some of the most wealthy Manitobans get wealthier.

And so, I guess what I want to focus on a bit today is the failure in health care. That seems to be the top of mind for most constituents that I speak to. You know, there's so many stories. I heard my colleague from Flin Flon talk, you know, quite compellingly about the issues with ambulance services and air-ambulance services and the, you know, wheels falling off the transportation and all the really kind of criminal things that have happened to people in the North under this government. But you know, some of those things are happening here in this city as well.

You know, one Wolseley constituent who travelled between the Grace Hospital and St. Boniface Hospital last February, she was sent from the Grace Hospital to St. Boniface Hospital because she—there was a suspected heart attack and they wanted to do some additional tests. And when it was confirmed that, you know, and—oh, I should explain, when you make that trip in an ambulance—it's a pretty short trip, it's about 10 minutes in an ambulance—and when someone with heart condition makes that trip, they send along a respiratory therapist. In fact, there were two additional medical professionals on—in the ambulance with the paramedics between Grace Hospital and St. Boniface Hospital.

But after all the tests were done, after it was confirmed that, yes, not only was it a heart attack, it was quite a rare kind of heart attack that people aren't as familiar with, and that patient needed to be sent back to Grace Hospital—I'm not quite sure why that decision was made, but that was where the care had started—and an ambulance was called. But, because of the demand, because of this government cutting and cutting and cutting, the availability simply wasn't there.

And so, what happened—and unbeknownst to this patient—she couldn't have known that this was going to, you know, she didn't—she does—she's not a medical professional. But what happened is that she was loaded into a stretcher service and taken back. Instead of a 10-, 12-minute ride, it was about 35 minutes getting back to Grace Hospital. And she felt a little concerned because she had been being monitored so carefully throughout the day by the very attentive health-care professionals at both the Grace and the St. Boniface Hospital.

But, you know, despite having had two specialists travelling with her on the one route, she was sent back on a route that took three times as long because, of course, they're stretcher service; they're not travelling with the siren going.

They get back to Grace Hospital, and at that point, she knows something's wrong because the nurse in charge was absolutely livid and horrified that she would've been transported on a stretcher service with no medical care. She was yelling at the drivers that this patient could have had another heart attack, could have died en route, that this—that it was a very serious breach of their responsibilities and duties to have accepted the ride.

The patient told me how bad she actually felt for the drivers. One of the young women on that transport, it was her first day of work; she was about 20 years old, and the other person had been there longer. But, you know, they just showed up at work and did what they were asked to do. And maybe they should've known better—I don't know because I'm not a medical professional, but I know the medical professional who was on site that day, the nurse who was in charge, was absolutely horrified that this happened.

Now, fortunately, nothing happened. Fortunately, that Wolseley constituent did not die on that transport, because that would've been yet another death on the hands—more blood of the hands of this government for bad, bad financial decisions.

So, you know, that's just one example. There's so many. There's so many people waiting for their surgeries, waiting for knee replacement, hip replacement. And I know some people, you know, there's—we're paying tons and tons of money; this government is sending, you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars to other countries, other provinces in order to provide some of the service. But it's simply not something everyone can access; not everyone has the financial capacity or the health, even the—their overall health capacity to be able to go spend, you know, travel somewhere else and to have to go through a surgery and recover in a context without any family around or the other kinds of supports that they would need.

So, you know, that's just a couple of examples that come to mind, things that have weighed on me substantially as the MLA in Wolseley, you know, listening to people's stories. The nurse that I talked to last summer, who was a nurse at St. Boniface Hospital, she was pregnant, and she was about to go off on a maternity leave. So she wasn't as concerned for herself, but she was so concerned for her colleagues that somebody was going to make a mistake; somebody was going to have—lose their licence or somebody was going to die in the maternity

ward where she worked because the care, the staffing was so poorly—like, they weren't able to staff up.

She was giving me examples. You know, when women are in labour, there's supposed to be one-on-one care for the people giving birth, and she was giving me examples of where, you know, one nurse was having to run between two people in labour simply because they could not staff up the department because of all the forced mandatory overtime, all the cuts that have been made within the health-care system.

So, whenever I listen to the government talk about their budget, whenever I listen to them talk about the money they're pouring into the health-care system now with this budget, all I can think about are these stories. All I can think about is the pain and the trauma and the losses of life—loss of life and potential loss of life on the hands of this government and all the terrible, terrible decisions that they made with the health-care system over the past seven years.

* (16:00)

I also want to say a little bit about, you know, rural EMS, diagnostic and lab technicians, and social workers and respiratory therapists, and many of the other specialized professionals who've had their wages frozen for five years. You know, now we see this government acting like they care about nurses and they care about doctors, even though they actually primarily ignored them. But, you know, they like to claim that they're doing some things for those professional groups, but they're also—they're ignoring a huge swath of medical professionals in this province. Five years.

And, as I said last week, there's a handful of labour groups within those health professionals that have actually gone seven years, and that's entirely on this government because of the forced health care—the changes to which union folks belonged to. So, some of those labour groups that were forced to amalgamate and change unions have actually been waiting since 2017 for a contract.

You know, we've had a lot of talk in this House the last few days about cuts to services at Women's Health Clinic, but I want to remind this government, there is a number of the health-care professionals at Women's Health Clinic who actually are a part of this, who haven't had a contract since 2017. Some of the health professionals working there have, but many others have not.

So, this government has failed Manitobans miserably and—you know, both those working in the health-care system and those needing health-care services. And I think—you know, I think we all know that Manitobans long ago stopped believing anything that this Health Minister has said or the previous failed Health minister. But, you know, I think that we need to look at the fact that, despite the sort of windfall of transfers and health dollars from the federal government, that despite all of that, the PC government cannot make up for seven years of cuts and the high cost of inflation. The current and former PC governments are the source of massive, damaging cuts to health care, and Manitobans just don't believe in the government's ability or intention to fix what they have broken.

You know, I did have the chance to talk quite a bit about the health-care system during my previous debate, so I'm going to take a few moments to just raise my concerns about how much funding has been slashed in the education system since 2016.

We already know that this PC government can't be trusted with our children's education. You know, bill 64 was set on pretty much destroying the education system as we know it. And we know that the government did cave to pressure, because even a lot of their own family members and community just simply could not go down that path with the Conservative government. They could not sit back and watch—even their, you know, people who might have been supporters of your party and funders just couldn't watch the public health—public education system being destroyed by this government. So, you know, we're all glad that the government kind of caved under that pressure, but it doesn't mean we trust this government with children's education.

The government attempted to push disastrous policy after disastrous policy on Manitoba's education system, and they were just cutting education funding last year. We know that the Winnipeg School Division and Pembina Trails were forced to cut programs such as all-day kindergarten. Seven Oaks—as we keep reminding folks, they recently had to cut 28 educators, and Brandon has announced cutting 11. And the result continues to be fewer and fewer supports for children. We need a different approach focused on what kids need in the classroom.

And the government's own recent report on the connection between poverty and education also shows the need for universal 'nutritional' program—nutrition program for children, but the government has failed to

deliver on this need its entire term in office, and Manitobans no longer trust them to get it done.

You know, we have heard members on the other side of the House, over the last few years, talk about how it's parents' responsibility to feed their children, you know, genuinely confused and wondering how children eat during the summer or on spring break. I've heard that in the House, but I also heard those kinds of things in conversations with ministers outside of the House, not understanding that there's a real deficit for kids when they come back after spring break. There's a learning deficit, a nutrition deficit for many kids when they return to school in the fall.

And for all these criticisms we've heard from the other side of the House about, you know, not wanting government to take any responsibility for feeding children in schools, I was interested to see the Education Minister, of all people, like, eating a bowl of soup, showing off on social media eating a bowl of soup, so that \$1 from the bowl of soup he purchased could go to support school meal programs.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so grateful to community organizations that take on the work that the government refuses to take on themselves. I'm so grateful, so grateful for the volunteers and the individuals who step up and do this important work. But it's unbelievable to me that an Education Minister—actually has the power to make sure children are fed in schools—would go out of his way to post a picture of himself slurping a bowl of soup to donate his \$1 towards these efforts.

This responsibility lies with the government to feed the children and to ensure that kids are ready and able to learn, ready and able to go to school. And Canada is the only G7 nation that does not have a national school food program, and food insecurity is a critical issue in Manitoba. And that's especially true in the North, but it's also very true in many parts of the city and many parts of my constituency, as well as others.

I know that—I'm sure that my colleague, who's ready to speak next, will have lots more to say about education, but I'm just going to add another little part about the Poverty and Education Task Force, which this government established in 2021 and released their final report in February 2023. Their first recommendation was to enhance food security and increase access to nutritious food for students living in poverty.

They recommended reviewing in-school meal programs and partnerships to improve access and ensure equitable distribution of funding and resources.

Students identified free and healthy food at schools as the top way to support students living in poverty, and food insecurity was identified as the No. 1 barrier preventing students who live in poverty from attending and doing well in school.

Students noted that breakfast and lunch programs help them feel safe, stable, cared for and incentivised to go to school, and that they must have no costs attached, as well as being equity-based and culturally relevant.

Students shared ideas about food-related solutions for youth in poverty, and the top recommendations included more free food programs at school, healthy food options at school, and learning more about nutrition at school and the need for more funding and government support.

Students made the following suggestions for free food programming in schools: to increase the awareness of availability, and be available for after school hours and during holidays, and have fewer rules around access, for the food to be healthy and to teach about food sovereignty.

So, with those words, I just want to remind this government there's some things that are missing; very serious things missing from their budget, very serious things missing from BITSA that could make a genuine difference in the lives of Manitobans.

That \$37 reduction in people's taxes isn't the difference that Manitobans are looking for; not the majority of Manitobans, not the Manitobans—the working people of Manitoba, the people who get up every day and just try to, you know, make life work. Those people are looking for something more from this government, and not just being thrown a bunch of promises after seven years of failures and seven years of unfulfilled promises.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So, I'm grateful to be a Manitoban and to work to represent so many Manitobans, so many folks from Wolseley who see through this ruse and are really ready for a significant change in this province.

So, with those words, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I will take my seat and I give some of my colleagues the chance to put their words on the record.

* (16:10)

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): It's always an honour to get up and—in the House—to put a few words on the record regarding BITSA and regarding how it's going to impact the people in my 'constit.'

But first, before I get into debate, I just want to thank the members for St. James (Mr. Sala), for St. Vital (Mr. Moses), for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey), the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) for putting on important words that really reflect, Deputy Speaker, the feelings and the impacts and the real-life experiences of their constituents. Because it's important that, when we do come into this House, that we do reflect what's being told to us, what's being forwarded to us by the people that we represent.

It's something that's very important and it's something that—you know, I learned early on in my life, Deputy Speaker. I remember being—as a seven-year-old in 1970—and I know that's going to age me, but—especially with one of the pages here who's smiling right now—but that's the first time I was able to walk into this place and really experience the grandeur of the Manitoba Legislature.

What does that grandeur tell you? Well, it tells you, Deputy Speaker, that really important things happen in this place. And that has never left me. It's never left me because we do—when we arrive here, debate really important topics, not the least of which is a budget implementation and tax statutes act, something that allows government to move forward with its agenda.

And we've seen clearly what this government's agenda is. It's certainly not one that is reflective of many of the constituents that we represent here on this side of the House. I will tell you that we've been—many of our constituents have been disproportionately affected by a lot of the decisions that have been made by this government this past seven years.

And what's really interesting right now, Deputy Speaker, is that, as we debate this bill, we have a government that has received record revenues from the three things they despise the most: Manitoba Hydro, the federal government and income taxes, the feds, through increased equalization and transfer payments.

Now, when we look at that, what is the purpose of the equalization payment? Manitoba, Deputy Speaker, has the—you know, the title of being a have-not province. Canada, being the country that it is, takes its income tax dollars and redistributes it to areas that require equalization so that citizens in this

province are able to have the same services available to them that other Canadian citizens experience and have at their disposal in their provinces.

When we're debating a BITSA bill, what we're debating is how we're going to use those equalization dollars. It's a really important responsibility. And earlier today, when we were debating the private member's resolution this morning, we talked about—or, I talked about something—the notion of stewardship—the notion of stewardship over the dollars that are transferred to Manitoba for use in equalization and for use in providing necessary government services to Manitobans so that they can experience what another Canadian in another province experiences when they go to access things like public schools, public health care, public infrastructure, public roads, public buildings, things that are funded for—as the member for Flin Flon stated—the public good.

Those dollars, Deputy Speaker, are meant to ensure that our citizens, our constituents, are receiving services that are commensurate with other Canadians' reception of those same services. And that's a responsibility, and that talks about stewardship. And that's something that I personally learned, also, in my 'constit,' working for and volunteering my time for my local church, Transcona Memorial United Church, being part of the stewardship committee.

And in that, I learned that stewardship is an important responsibility. BITSA represents that. So what do we have? We have now, Deputy Speaker, a provincial government with record revenues received from things that they don't 'particularly' like, and are now being redistributed in ways that are disproportionately uneven. Well, let's talk about some of those.

We talk about affordability in this province. Deputy Speaker, if it was all about making it—life more affordable here, we would focus on people in this province that need to be lifted out of poverty and shown a path. I remember growing up—my parents aren't from this country, but they came here because of the opportunity, because of the path that they saw for their children, and I can say that my parents—and many of the parents, like, on all sides of this House—wanted that path for their children so that they can be successful in life, have a stable income and be able to contribute to their communities.

If it were really about affordability, Deputy Speaker, we would've focused most of these dollars on those that need it the most. I can tell you, a \$37 transfer to the lowest income is insulting. It certainly won't meet the needs of that family. Instead,

what we needed to do is say that we're going to transfer our—a larger amount of these equalization payments to the families that really needed it.

So, we had some leadership in the past in this province regarding programs that supported affordability. We also have, in our past in Manitoba, a government that was truly visionary—or, many governments that were truly visionary, Deputy Speaker. Because at different points in the history of this province, we had some very serious inflection points. Points that demanded that we needed to act on issues that were impacting Manitobans. Historians in this Chamber will know that in the '50s and '60s, Manitoba was experiencing unprecedented flooding—Winnipeggers specifically, and people in southern Manitoba. So, what was built?

A Progressive Conservative government, actually, had the vision to understand that something needed to be done. So, what was happening is that a PC premier by the name of Duff Roblin, along with all members in this House, built the Winnipeg floodway. Why? That was an inflection point, Deputy Speaker. Because citizens in this province, Winnipeggers specifically—even people in Transcona—were experiencing floods. So, what they did is they took the dollars that were transferred, and through their BITSA bill at the time, devoted significant amounts of funds that came from the feds to this very important infrastructure project.

* (16:20)

Truly visionary, Deputy Speaker. I'll tell you another way, in the 1970s, under an NDP government, under a Schreyer NDP government, there was an experiment—a program called Mincome Manitoba. I've spoken about Mincome Manitoba before in this House. I recall that program because I was sitting at the kitchen table with my dad, my dad who asked me to fill out the forms. I filled them out as a kid in—as a 10-year-old. But truly visionary because what was really visionary about that program—*[interjection]* Well, it did happen in Dauphin, also in Transcona, also there because there was an experiment there, that's for sure.

But I'll tell you what was visionary about that, is that it gave my family—because my dad was the only one that worked; my mom was at home, three kids—it made it more affordable and it created a path for him to provide for his family, again, at an inflection point in the 1970s. And I think the member from Dauphin and I are probably pretty close in age, but understands

that at that time inflation was really hammering Canadians.

Now, I don't have much of a memory—we were still kind of young—when it comes to that point. But a visionary government that took these dollars, and through their BITSA bill, transferred the wealth to the people that really needed it the most. That's what BITSA demands of us, Deputy Speaker. It demands that we do things with our dollars that impact people the most, where they need it the most.

But what do we have? We have, in this government, right now, doubling down on a property tax rebate, the education property tax rebate, without a plan for how to pay for public education. And who does that benefit the most, Deputy Speaker? Doesn't benefit the person that owns that home down on Spence Street that might get a rebate of a hundred bucks. But it certainly does benefit that person that lives in suburbia and gets hundreds of dollars in rebate when we really don't need it.

If it was truly about redistributing and fairness, what this government would've done is would've said this—and here is just a sample, Deputy Speaker, of what could've been done through BITSA. They would have said that a rebate can just go to residential homeowners, cap it at a certain amount; anyone that's \$300,000 or less in assessed value isn't going to pay tax at all on their education. Talk about maybe being visionary and maybe showing some leadership. No, didn't even think about that.

Rural Manitoba, properties at \$200,000 or less wouldn't pay education tax. But those that live in homes that have an assessed value of 350 or more, they'll continue to pay their share because that, to me, for most Manitobans, we feel that that's fair; that would make sense, because what do we need, is fully funded public services. Instead, what we're witnessing here with BITSA is such an inefficient use of tax dollars that it almost insults the intelligence of many fair-minded Manitobans. Almost; it does, Deputy Speaker, not almost; this is—and it does insult the intelligence, because Manitobans know that public services need to be funded and need to be funded adequately, predictably, so that the service is there when Manitobans need it.

I can tell—I mean, many of my colleagues have talked about their experience and their families and their constituents' experience with the health-care system. Again, when I started, I talked about us being at an inflection point, coming out of a pandemic. This inflection point required some true leadership.

Instead, what do we have? We have people leaving the health-care system because nobody wants to work for this government anymore. They've been disrespected for so long that their willingness to work for them is gone. So, what do they do? Because, through sheer exhaustion, Deputy Speaker—exhaustion with how they've been treated—they're trying to look after their own mental health and life-work balance that with—through this BITSA bill, they're not seeing a pathway, like I described earlier. And people need to see a path.

People here in this province are fair-minded and understand that these disproportionate tax breaks that are going to people that don't really require them are harming our public services, so that when that child, that grandchild, goes to school, that they have a school experience that is indicative of their need, so that child with additional needs gets the support they need from the moment they step into that school, into that classroom, with that teacher.

And so here we are, like I said earlier, at an inflection point where, with this BITSA bill, was a real opportunity for this government to show that they had changed their stripes. But no; that's not what we got, Deputy Speaker. We get many of the same policies and programs that benefit disproportionately people that don't require the assistance. It's as simple as that—at the expense of cherished public services.

Now, I talked about earlier about stewardship, and I will say that, when I talk about stewardship, we're given the responsibility, as MLAs in this House, to ensure that we properly manage the public services that we've been told our constituents need to have consistently available. That's a serious, serious responsibility, and right now, we see a Conservative government's interpretation of that.

So, what do we see? We see seven years of austerity that have created real deficits in our health-care system that we're going to need years to come out of, Deputy Speaker. When I talked about earlier about an inflection point. Well, if there ever was one for the health-care system, it's right now.

But, unfortunately, Deputy Speaker, we're at a point now where our cherished health-care workers are leaving the province because other provinces are providing thousands of dollars in bonus money so that they leave—young people that were trained right here in this province. I was talking to a phlebotomist yesterday that immigrated from the Philippines, told me they're leaving in a month because they have a better offer to work in Regina.

So, how do we get to a point where we keep people here in Manitoba? We have to create an experience here that will ensure that Manitobans receive the public services that they need and are actually deserving of. So, Deputy Speaker, when we talk about that—or, when I—when we talk about these sacred trusts that we're given as MLAs, it's one that requires a lot of thought, one that requires a lot of research, consultation, et cetera.

But when we talk about consultation, we also have to consult with people that are out of our own universes, that aren't necessarily experiencing life the way we do. As MLAs, we have a privileged existence, and we have to actually do the work of outreach—real outreach, Deputy Speaker—as members, so that we can put together a BITSA bill that really reflects the needs of all Manitobans.

* (16:30)

This is something that, when I began debate, that is very important that we do, because I viewed—I've used two important terms here this afternoon in debate: inflection—*[interjection]*—oh, at the mic, sorry. *[interjection]* Yes, I—sorry. Inflection and stewardship, two very important terms.

Inflection, meaning we are at a point in history, Deputy Speaker, that other governments were at in different decades. And right now, in 2023, this inflection point demanded a BITSA bill that was truly visionary. One that didn't insult the intelligence of Manitobans. One that was reflective of the needs of people that require assistance.

We have to finally deal with the scourge of child poverty, Deputy Speaker. We had many, many reports created—we've just had the Poverty and Education Task Force release its report. Unfortunately, released on a Friday afternoon. You know, what a missed opportunity there.

There are a—really caring people on that task force that put in a lot of work. And the minister knows this, I know he knows—that talked about and made the recommendations for nutrition programs in schools, increased access to mental health supports, the opportunity to talk to somebody when they needed to.

This would've been a perfect opportunity to do a press conference on a Tuesday morning saying that in BITSA, we're going to take care of that, because that's what the education task force came through with its recommendations. Instead, no. We have it released on a Friday afternoon, diminishing its impact, instead of seeing a government that took that seriously and

brought that forward on a day when we could've had some real debate in the House on how to get those recommendations brought through and included in a BITSA bill.

So, when we say that this is a missed opportunity, it truly is a missed opportunity, Deputy Speaker. Because right now—and I recall this visit that we had at the Lakeshore School Division. Happened about three weeks ago; we were invited by the leadership team there—Donald Nikkel, Darlene Willets, Board Chair Donny Thorkelson—really proud of their school division. Proud because they're doing their best to provide services that their children and communities require.

And all they need is a real partner in the Province, a real partner that would've come to the table at this important inflection time. Because these are the facts when it comes to the diminishing percentage of provincial support for public ed: the fact is, it's been diminishing and it's been more and more difficult for school divisions like Lakeshore to provide the supports that their students and communities need.

Deputy Speaker, do you know that in Lakeshore School Division, they don't have any clinical support, that they have to outsource it? Do you know that in Lakeshore School Division, the principal gets there, at Ashern central high—Ashern Central School—at 6:30 in the morning to bake banana bread and make muffins for her kids when they arrive after an hour on the bus?

An Honourable Member: What a hero.

Mr. Altomare: Absolutely. Absolutely.

You know, when I sat down with the board—myself and my leader—we were there listening to what their needs were. And what they really needed, Deputy Speaker, is that—what they said to us is that they needed a real partner in the Province, one that would provide the necessary support so that their communities can thrive, so that they can remain viable.

I'll tell you, going through Ashern, going through Eriksdale—for a city kid—like, I'm from the northeast of Winnipeg, considered hicksville by many in the city here, right? I certainly had a connection to those people up in the Interlake, because I—we know what it's like in Transcona to be, you know, kind of left out.

But I'll tell you, the pride that they had in their schools and their communities was like nothing before because right now, what's providing—what's—what are they really proud of? They're proud of their school.

They're proud of the people that work in that school. And they know that they're doing their very best—to the—of—with the diminishing human resources that they have to provide for their kids and communities.

And as I wrap up my comments this afternoon, Deputy Speaker, I just want to talk about how BITSA missed an opportunity to really have a positive impact on the people of northeast Winnipeg. I will include, you know, the constituents of Concordia, the constituents of Elmwood, the constituents of Radisson, Rossmere, Kildonan-River East that redid the—that needed a truly visionary document.

You know, there was a time, Deputy Speaker, as little as three years ago, you can go visit a doctor in Transcona at Transcona Medical on the corner of Regent and Brewster, get your blood requisition, go right downstairs and get your blood work done lickety-split. Can't do that anymore. Instead, that senior or that mom or that single parent now has to make their way down to Regent and Lag. If you're older and have mobility issues, you can't get there unless you phone your son or daughter.

And then they have to get themselves down there after they book an appointment, just like the member from Radisson said, on a computer. Oh, look at this, I can do it easily. It's not that easy for a person that doesn't have access to technology, that has to then find another way. So what do they do? They go sit there at Dynacare for an hour, hour and a half, before they can get their blood drawn.

Here was an opportunity through BITSA where you can get those things reinstated so that people don't have to wait anymore. And it's not people like me—I can get myself there—not people like everybody in this Chamber; it's the everyday working folks that needed support from this government. Instead, they get this bill here that disproportionately favours those that are in upper-income brackets. Like, I can't understand that, Deputy Speaker.

And when I began my comments, I began my comments by saying that we as members here in this House have a responsibility for stewardship over these dollars that we receive from the federal government, from income tax, from record revenue for Manitoba Hydro, so you ensure that everybody in this province has an opportunity and sees a pathway.

I was lucky enough, like many of us in here, we saw a path to a good life. We need, Deputy Speaker, to provide that path for each and every Manitoban so that when that child is sitting in that class like I was as

a seven-year-old, I saw a path. Our job is to ensure that every kid, every Manitoban, sees that they have a path.

This BITSA bill doesn't show any pathway for that child that's living in poverty to get out of poverty. It doesn't have anything for that single mom that wants to go back to school through an adult ed program that doesn't have a wait-list that's 50 deep. Again, missed opportunities, Deputy Speaker.

These are important points that we have to make when we're here, and we have to remember that we are the creators of these pathways because we're given the awesome responsibility to ensure that we take these hard-earned tax dollars and distribute them in a way, Deputy Speaker, that allows people to lift themselves up, to be part of something and contribute to something that's larger than themselves.

So, as I wrap up my remarks, I remain disappointed with the contents of this BITSA bill. My constituents remain disappointed with the contents of this BITSA bill. And hopefully, this is the last time that we're sitting here debating a PC BITSA bill.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

* (16:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about this bill. This bill, which is part of the budget implementation. It is a bill which shows a little bit about what the PC government is really about.

One of the interesting things about this budget is that the increase in the net debt of the Province is rather large; \$1.642-billion increase in the debt of the Province as a result of this budget. That compares to most years when it's significantly lower, except when you have a pandemic. Well, we had a lot of extra expenses in the 2020-21 year and we had a big increase in the net debt. Except when there was a major flood, as there was in 2011 and 2014, there were big increases in the net debt.

But there's no particular reason to have an increase in the net debt this year unless, of course, the government wants to go out and borrow money to try to buy votes to try to convince this—people of Manitoba that in—on the eve of an election, they will spend money.

But not so many people realize that a lot of what is being spent is actually borrowed money—\$1.642-billion increase in the net debt. That's not something that one normally associates with the

PC government, but it's what's in this budget. It's right in there in the budget documents. And the historic nature of this increase in the net debt will not go unnoticed, will not go unremarked. And I bring it up again, Mr. Speaker, today.

Second thing I want to mention is the government is increasing the basic personal exemption and they're sort of like the little boy who said, what a good boy am I, for increasing the basic personal exemption. What is forgotten in this is that there are 30 to 40 per cent of people who don't earn enough money in Manitoba to actually reach the existing basic personal exemption.

Now, increasing the basic personal exemption in some ways may be a good thing. But in other ways, it should have been in—it should have been matched by measures which would have helped those who are too low in their income to benefit from this. This government has forgotten about the 30 to 40 per cent of people whose income was too low to pay taxes before this change. They will have no benefit.

I asked the Finance Minister how many people would, in Manitoba, not currently pay income tax because their income is low. And, sadly, the Finance Minister couldn't answer the question, which is too bad and it really shows that he is not focusing at all on those who have low incomes and who didn't even meet the base income that would have meant that they would be paying taxes last year.

So, there is a problem here. There is a problem here, in that this benefits 70 per cent of Manitobans, but it has no benefit for 30 per cent, maybe as high as 40 per cent, because the minister wouldn't give me an answer to the question I asked.

So, the government has had a very tiny increase in Employment and Income Assistance, but it doesn't match in any way at all the increase that's been given to people who have property and who have high incomes as a result of the changes to the property tax and the rebates and as a result of the changes to the personal basic income tax exemption.

So, I don't argue with the benefits from having an increase in the personal tax exemption, but I argue against the fact that this government has very deliberately omitted giving any parallel help to those who were not paying taxes because their income was so low. I have been meeting and talking with and helping people who are on low incomes, and I can tell you that they are feeling this in a major way, that they are the ones who are most affected by the increase in

inflation and the increase in food prices. They're saying, I don't have enough money for food.

They are being affected by the fact that the housing costs are increasing and they don't have enough money to pay the housing because there was no parallel help for them.

And so, the sad part about this budget is the fact that it didn't help those who are most in need, those who weren't paying income tax last year because their income was so low. They will have no benefit at all from the increase in the personal income tax exemption, and they should have been remembered. They should have been helped because they are, in fact, the most needy people in the whole province.

It is interesting—as the government talks about its poverty strategy; and its poverty strategy, which is based, really, on talking about people who are not on the very low incomes, but people who are often on medium incomes. The school tax rebate, the change in the personal—basic personal exemption amount, won't help those who are on the lowest 30 to 40 per cent of income. So they are not helping those who need it the most.

The government has talked, in its poverty strategy, about the need to end homelessness. But we've looked at the government's strategy, and right in the headline on the press release is the fact that this is targeted for those who are chronically homeless.

When the government waits for—'til somebody has been homeless for six months, then you lose an opportunity to help people right away; and we know that the longer somebody is homeless, the more difficult it is to help them end their space—their time being homeless.

* (16:50)

So, we should be, as the Liberal homeless plan that does that, looking at housing people right away. That's being done in jurisdictions like Medicine Hat. But ending homelessness among people who are chronically homeless, you know, may be good, but it neglects the fact that there's a lot of people who are homeless for shorter periods than six months and this government is not really concerned about them.

I want to talk a little bit about this government's general approach. We can see it in spades in this budget. That is an approach which is not to plan ahead, but to wait until there's a crisis and then see what they can do. It would be far better if this government had had the wisdom to plan ahead, if they had, in 2016,

had a real plan for addressing many of the major issues we have today.

If, for example, they had realized, in 2016, that there was a coming shortage of nurses, of health professionals of many different varieties, then measures could have been taken then much more easily and with less overall cost than waiting 'til we have a crisis with more than 400 doctors short, with many nurses short, with emergency rooms not functioning adequately and people overstressed and overworked, because this government had not thought ahead.

Now, the government's excuse, of course, is that there was a COVID pandemic and, oh, of course, they couldn't do anything during a pandemic. Well, you only have to look at what's happening right now in Ukraine, which has had a crisis, a war, an invasion. It didn't take them very long in that crisis to work very hard to be training people. They didn't wait for the crisis to be over, as this government is doing, to start training personnel.

There was—during the COVID pandemic, in fact—quite a number of people who were at home because they weren't able to work and didn't have provisions that they would be working online. And there were many of those, I suggest, if the government had been thinking ahead, who would have been very keen to be in training programs for health professionals, as an example.

We're short of clerks to make sure that people can get an appointment in a number of areas in the health-care system. We could have been training clerks during the pandemic. There was an incredible opportunity because there was a lot of people who were sitting and waiting and not being able to participate because the business—retail business or whatever—had been closed down temporarily.

It was an incredible opportunity to launch training programs and to get people ready and to be prepared for where we are now. But instead, that kind of preparation, that kind of planning ahead, was certainly not part of what this government was about.

They had an opportunity. They've had many opportunities, but they have squandered those opportunities time and time and time again. And so we are where we are now, with a major crisis in health care, with a shortage of professionals, with people burned out and fed up with what's happening here and leaving to go elsewhere because they just don't feel that this is a good place to be. It's not a comfortable situation to be in. It is a crisis.

We've been talking a number of days now about the situation at Grace Hospital and Health Sciences Centre. Oh, the stories that I get day by day from people who have tried to get health care, who have waited a long time, who have not been able to get the health care that they need. And it's a big problem.

And it's a big problem because this government wasn't thinking and planning ahead. This government was just letting things go, and all of a sudden there's a crisis. And, oh, then we're going to put some money out and we're going to start training people, but it's going to take a number of years, in some instances, to have people ready.

If we'd started this in a good way, in 2016, if we had pushed this hard when we had the COVID pandemic—instead of just focusing so much on the pandemic and forgetting that we need to have a whole system which is operating, that you're likely to be short of personnel if you don't start training programs as soon as a crisis like the pandemic hits—there could've been so much more done. It's really sad that those opportunities were missed.

Now, the government, also in the area of home care—and we know that there is a big need for home care—we have known this for many years. We have known for many years that having home care operating well can save dollars with fewer people going to emergency rooms, fewer people needing to go to hospital and more people being more comfortable being looked after for their health care at home.

There are even people in other jurisdictions looking at what they call Hospital at Home, where you're able to do more and more health procedures at home. These are the sorts of things that we should've been engaged in.

In fact, the federal government provided a very substantial amount of money for this government to invest in home care so that the government would be prepared for things like the COVID pandemic. And, instead, from what we can see in terms of the budget,

there wasn't that increase in the home care budget that you would expect if those monies from the federal government had actually been used. And, furthermore, that instead of pushing and enhancing home care during the pandemic, as was really needed so we could keep people at home, so we didn't have to have people going into personal-care homes where they were very high—at risk of major health problems, as we know now.

And so, what the government did, what they scavenged workers from home care. They seconded workers from home care so that they would be working in other areas during the COVID pandemic. Instead of beefing up home care, as was needed, this government balkanized home care. They destroyed much of what was home care.

I have a friend whose father was having home care before the pandemic. And within a very short time of the pandemic, his home care was withdrawn and he had to end up in a personal-care home. Well, fortunately, he was not one who succumbed from COVID, but he was definitely put at higher risk and his care was at higher cost.

And, certainly, if we had had government which was thinking ahead about the importance of investing in home care, had been prepared to work quickly when it got into office to say, yes, home care is important, we better do something about it because the NDP haven't left it in as good shape as we want. But instead of doing that, they said, oh, we're not really not paying much attention to home care, so it deteriorated even further.

So, this was the sort of thing which we've seen day after day and week after week and month after month and year after—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will have 10 minutes remaining in his speech.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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