

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Deputy Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pembina Trails Collegiate

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of touring schools throughout the constituency of Waverley and was overwhelmed by the commitment and leadership of our educators and administrators. What I witnessed over and over again were teams of people from many walks of life putting the betterment and development of the kids and young adults in their schools above all else.

Today I'd like to shine a light on the fine work of Principal Jacqui Kroeker and Vice-Principal Jane Bachart and their team at Pembina Trails Collegiate.

Opened to students just this fall, Pembina Trails Collegiate is the newest addition to Pembina Trails School Division, but the community is already developing a deep sense of identity and pride in their school. What I saw as I walked the halls embodied the values of diversity, inclusion and curiosity. And the school teaches the Circle of Courage; has its six global competencies artfully displayed on the walls, which include citizenship, connection to self, critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity.

PTC is preparing students for a constantly evolving workplace through its creative innovative pathways, which provides a variety of course of streams from engineering to humanities to ecology. They've also developed a special early college stream in computer sciences, which prepares students for advanced careers in computer networking, cyber defence, software development and more.

Clubs, athletics and student government participation are all beginning to take shape, and an elder-in-residence program has already been established as well.

Every teacher we spoke with seemed to be beaming with excitement and enthusiasm. I feel fortunate to know that we have this incredible new facility filled with so many ambitious and engaged people.

I want to extend a thank you to Jacqui and Jane, their spectacular team and the entire Pembina Trails Collegiate for undertaking this difficult task of fostering a new community through inclusive and transformative education.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Andrii Shylo and Edgardo Cena

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Today I would like to acknowledge two extraordinary individuals: Andrii Shylo, a Ukrainian refugee, and Edgardo Cena, a Filipino mechanic, from the small community of Angusville.

Andrii and his wife Natalie had to leave their life, career, business, friends and family behind in their hometown of Kherson, Ukraine. Ten days before the start of the war, Andrii and Natalie went to visit their daughter in Turkey, and when the February 24, 2022, conflict broke out in Ukraine, returning home was no longer an option.

Andrii and Natalie fled to Canada and were part of the 166,000 or more Ukrainians who came under the special visa program. Three weeks after arriving in Canada, Andrii was offered a job at Hewson's Enterprises in Angusville, where the business was looking to hire a journeyman mechanic.

Caroline, a co-owner, hired both Andrii and Edgardo, Philippine-mechanic. Edgardo and his family were in the process of beginning a new life in Canada under the temporary worker program.

The community of Angusville welcomed both these families to their community, providing them with transportation, housing, two suitable personal properties and home comforts. Both men were thankful for the employment opportunity.

Owners Caroline and James couldn't be happier to have Andrii and Edgardo as employees. They're wonderful, happy people who love what they do.

Before coming to Canada, both Andrii and Edgardo owned automotive businesses in their home communities and have a level of customer care that matches the Hewsons'. The small community of Angusville welcomed the families with open arms to start a new life.

As our leader and previous premier said on February 24, 2023, she was working so hard to welcome Ukrainian refugees: Our ongoing support reflects the very finest of Manitoba traditions; caring, compassion and dedication in helping those in need.

Thank you, Manitoba. Thank you, Angusville.

Community Roots Resource Centre

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I rise today to recognize the Community Roots Resource Centre, one of the leading community resource centres in my constituency of Rossmere.

For over a decade, the Community Roots Resource Centre, CRRC, has facilitated a youth drop-in, an emergency pantry, communal exercise programs and community kitchen classes, to name just a few of their amazing programs. Gatherings like barbecues, coffee hangouts and Christmas dinners have strengthened relations throughout Rossmere, making CRRC a central hub for many in our community. During the warmer months, they also run a community garden to address food insecurity with lively conversation, laughter and hard work.

The CRRC has undergone a profound transformation this year. In creating a new board of directors, holding its first annual general meeting and establishing new institutional policies and mandates, they have become independent from their parent organization, the Jubilee Mennonite Church.

However, Community Roots and Jubilee continue to share a close relationship with shared facilities, personnel and overlapping communities. These steps will allow them to expand their programming and better serve folks in our great community.

* (13:40)

Government is at its best when it supports local organizations because community members truly understand the unique needs of their neighbourhoods. Community Roots has partnered with Manitoba Housing, Second Harvest, The Winnipeg Foundation and many local faith-based groups. So many great resources exist in Manitoba, and organizations like Community Roots act as hubs, allowing folks to access multiple services simultaneously in a co-ordinated and complementary approach.

Manitobans are feeling the strain at home, work and school. After years of austerity, many struggle to find affordable, healthy food, and families are hard-pressed to find extracurricular activities and programs for their kids.

Now more than ever, we need to support the work done by community resource organizations in Rossmere. And one only needs to look at the CRRC to see how impactful their work really is.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Ron Helwer

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Deputy Speaker, on today, Giving Tuesday, I'm honoured to take this opportunity to recognize a man that is not only a constituent of mine, but a person that I am proud to know and respect.

Mr. Ron Helwer is the father of Reg Helwer, a former PC colleague and Cabinet minister of this Legislature.

On November 4, 2023, Mr. Ron Helwer was inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame, recognized as a lifelong Canadian agricultural ambassador.

At 90 years young, Ron continues to move the agricultural world into the future and is passionate about giving back, especially to the agricultural

community. He generously donated \$500,000 to the Assiniboine Community College's campaign to build the Prairie Innovation Centre for Sustainable Agriculture. His contribution will put Brandon on the map for having a leading-edge agricultural training centre.

Ron's commitment to agriculture will continue, as he has no plans to retire. Along with his 150 employees, Ron goes to work every morning at 6 a.m. and works through 'til 6 p.m.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Mr. Ron Helwer is a man deserving of many awards, and just last week, being honoured for his decades of volunteer and fundraising efforts, he was a recipient of the outstanding volunteer fundraising award for the 2023 Manitoba Philanthropy Awards.

Mr. Ron Helwer's own words: I'm very honoured and pleased. It's exciting for an old farm boy.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Brandon West and all of Manitoba is grateful for this old farm boy.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, please join me in congratulating Mr. Ron Helwer, the newest inductee into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame, and for being the recipient of the Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser award for the 2023 Manitoba Philanthropy Awards.

MHCF's Angel Squad Event

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Deputy Speaker, for the past several years, I've participated in the annual Misericordia Health Centre Foundation's Angel Squad event.

This event this morning kicked off GivingTuesday, which is celebrated—sorry, GivingTuesday kicked off today, and celebrated the 28th year of MHC's Angel Squad. GivingTuesday is a globally recognized day for generosity that promotes the power of giving and its role in transforming our communities.

I was honoured—very honoured—to join in on the celebrations with the honourable Minister of Advanced Education, opposition Health critic was also there wearing a shiny halo, and many other guests. This year's campaign celebrated MHC's 125th year and it was great to see so many of us in our angel costumes, in halos, brightening the morning for folks who were passing by the hospital on their way to start their work days or whatever it is that they're headed to.

MHC was established in 1898 to care for young single mothers and their babies. They have a strong

history of supporting youth and community. And now they have an extensive care facility that offers specialized pediatric care, diversified care for older adults, community IV and brain injury rehabilitation.

I encourage everyone here to celebrate GivingTuesday either by donating to an organization that you are passionate about; you can also support the Angel Squad by going to their website and donating directly there.

Before leaving the hospital this morning, I was invited by one of MHC's nurses, Giselle, to visit the facility's community IV program.

I want to thank Giselle, Judy, who is one of the community nursing resource co-ordinators and their entire team of 64 nurses and allied health professionals for taking the time to share their important work with me and sharing the impact it has on all of our loved ones.

It was an incredibly inspiring way to start the day alongside community members and staff at Misericordia Health Centre, who are passionately dedicated to serving Manitobans.

On behalf of everyone in this Chamber, we thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: So, before we get to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery. We have seated in the public gallery, from École Rivière-Rouge, 44 grade 4 students under the direction of Nicole Trottier. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kirkfield, River East.

We also have seated in the public gallery, from Niiwin Minisiwiwag off-campus Winnipeg School Division, 15 students aged 15 to 21, under the direction of Kristina Gilkes and Alana Ollinger. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Ms. Smith) and—the honourable minister of Housing, Homelessness, Addictions and Mental Health.

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today family members of the member from Fort Whyte, visiting all the way from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia: Shaune Warren, Lisa Dixon, Keran Storm.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Funding to Municipalities Government Intention

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today is GivingTuesday, a day created to inspire across the world to participate in collaboration and generosity.

We, on this side of the House, encourage all Manitobans to take a moment today to get involved, make a donation, lend a helping hand to a charity, to a neighbour, that is working to do and make a difference for the betterment of our communities.

So, today is the start of AMM convention: Is the Premier (Mr. Kinew) in a giving mood for municipalities, or will he cut the funding as he has asked his ministers to tighten their belts?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I welcome the question from the Leader of the Opposition. You know, under the previous PC government, municipalities had to deal with a PC caucus that was set on cutting, cutting, freezing, freezing, cutting some more, freezing their funding year over year over year over year.

Our government is taking a different approach. Our government believes in working with municipalities to strengthen what they are able to deliver to Manitobans. Now, that is an approach that Manitobans and municipalities haven't experienced in some time due to the previous government's failed approach to governing.

Our government, on this side of the House, is taking a different approach, which will benefit municipalities across the province.

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

Ms. Stefanson: Despite a \$270-million provincial surplus left to this government, the Premier has ordered his ministers to, and I quote the Premier, to tighten their belts.

Given that there was no commitment to growing operating grants in the recent Throne Speech for municipalities, I'd like to ask the Premier: Will his belt-tightening including cuts to municipalities?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Deputy Speaker, you know, I have to say that I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, has carried on a pattern that we saw

when that caucus, on that side of the House, was leading Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition is carrying on a pattern of not being totally direct with Manitobans with what—in terms of what decisions they were making when they were at the helm of this province.

* (13:50)

Honourable Deputy Speaker, it is incredibly concerning that, on this day in the House, the Leader of the Opposition chooses to stand up and put false information on the record of this House.

We very much look forward to Manitobans in the coming days learning the full scope of the damage the PCs did during their time leading this province.

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

Ms. Stefanson: Simply not true. What is true is that we left a \$270-million surplus for this NDP government. That is the truth.

Now, perhaps they can't handle the truth. Perhaps they can't handle the fact that last year we gave a 28 per cent increase in municipal operating funding, plus over \$120 million in capital infrastructure, all of which the NDP voted against.

The Premier has ordered his ministers to start tightening their belts. Those are his words.

Will that belt-tightening also include municipal funding?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Deputy Speaker, I am old enough to remember when the previous PC government wouldn't even meet with municipalities. They wouldn't—while we were meeting with municipalities and fighting on behalf of municipalities to make sure they got the funding that they needed, the previous government was busy freezing their funding.

Our government is making sure Manitobans know it is a new day across the province. We are committed to providing stable, reliable funding for municipalities.

We are committed to going to the table as partners with municipalities and making sure that, no matter where you live in our great province, that you have the services that you depend on.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition can get up time and time again and put false information on the record. On this side of the House, we'll stick to the facts.

Health-Care Capital Projects Construction Timeline Inquiry

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Last week, the Minister of Health refused to assure Manitobans that they wouldn't cut the much-needed HSC adult bed tower redevelopment. Now Manitobans across the province are rightfully concerned about what other health-care projects are on the NDP's chopping block.

Our PC team committed \$30 million to expand the ICU at the Grace Hospital. Construction was slated to begin in the summer of 2024.

Will the minister commit to the constituents of Roblin, Kirkfield Park, Assiniboia and St. James that this project will not be cut or delayed?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I really appreciate that she's talked about two sites that we've already visited in our short few weeks as government to make significant announcements about the investments our government is making to strengthen health care in the province.

And I have to say, the reception at the Grace and at Health Sciences Centre was incredibly warm. The staff there made it very clear they got none of that attention from the previous government and they know it's a new day, a day that prioritizes strengthening health care in Manitoba under our NDP government.

Mrs. Cook: Well, then I'll talk about one of the sites that was left off of the listening tour. Construction started at the new Portage Regional Health Centre this summer, with work slated to be completed in the summer of 2025.

This total investment of over \$455 million could now be on the NDP chopping block.

Will the minister confirm for the constituents of Portage la Prairie and the surrounding area that this project will not be delayed or cut?

MLA Asagwara: I've had really great meetings, actually, about Portage hospital and that project, and I very much look forward to seeing what's to come with that hospital.

I know that the board and other folks are taking steps to not only make sure that it's a state-of-the-art facility but also making sure it's a location that is

culturally aware and inclusive to surrounding communities as well. I want to commend them for doing that work.

Unfortunately, the previous government didn't take steps to make sure we'd have adequate staffing, but we're doing that work as we're in government now, and Manitobans can count on us to get that done.

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

Mrs. Cook: Construction of the brand-new hospital in Neepawa started in late 2022. This facility is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2025, with a total investment of \$338 million.

Can the minister confirm for the House that this much-needed rural hospital will not be cut or delayed?

MLA Asagwara: Again, I appreciate these questions about projects that we know are very important to residents of—constituents of that particular community.

And I want to reassure constituents in Neepawa and the surrounding areas that our government is committed to making sure that they can access quality health care in their communities and for those in surrounding communities.

Now, I do think it's incredibly important to make very clear that, while Manitobans have dealt with the previous government that implemented years of cuts, years of mistreating health-care workers—but our government is taking a different approach, and while that side of the House wants to fear monger and scare Manitobans, we're here about working together.

Our government is about putting people first and working in a unified manner to strengthen health care across our province.

Child-Care Spaces Government Intention

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Deputy Speaker, our PC government committed to over 12,000 new child-care spaces on the way to 23,000 new child-care spaces in this great province of ours.

We already know that the NDP Education Minister and the NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) has already cut 3,400 child-care spaces.

This week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the association for Manitoba municipalities convention.

Is the Education Minister going to cut those over 1,600 spaces that we committed to, yes or no?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It's always a pleasure to get up in the House and to answer a question from the opposition critic.

What's critical to understand here, though, is that he gets up and says 2,300 one day, 1,600 just a little bit a—minute ago and then it was 800 the other day. So we really don't know what he's referring to.

But here's the truth, Mr. Honourable Deputy Speaker. The truth is, is that I just signed some initiatives that are going to—ready-to-move initiatives that are going to places like the rural municipality of Hanover, places like the RM of Sifton, the town of Melita. I will list more, Honourable Deputy Speaker, in my next answer.

Mr. Ewasko: It's encouraging to see and to hear that at least part of what we've done in the Progressive Conservative government that the minister is listening to. It's unfortunate that the minister doesn't pick up Hansard and actually see that I'm being consistent with the numbers that I am using.

It's nice to also see, because nobody for the community or the city of Dauphin is standing up and speaking on behalf of Dauphin, Mr. Acting Speaker, so I will.

Is the Minister for Education—it's nice to hear that he's signing agreements that we've already put in place from the Progressive Conservative government—is he committed—he should say it this week on AMM—is he cutting the spaces in the city of Dauphin?

MLA Altomare: You know, it's interesting, the difference between that side of the House and this side of the House. The big difference, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is this: they take credit for the work, the very hard work, of the early-learning and child-care centres. They take credit for the work of the early-learning and child-care people on Garry Street for creating space.

* (14:00)

Instead, what we do on this side of the House is honour the work of the civil servants, the very hard work, that have put these packages together.

I will also add, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is this: The RM of Sifton is just going to receive something in the town called Oak Lake, which I do believe is in the—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Your—the—your time has expired.

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Acting—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker—sorry about that. So, yes, so the RM of Sifton in Oak Lake, specifically Oak Lake, is actually getting 40 spaces according to the news release, which we on this side of the House—Progressive Conservative government at the time—had announced February 16, 2023.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's evident from the way that the NDP voted yesterday, the only ones willing to work for Manitobans—because they voted yesterday to take the rest of the day off—is the Progressive Conservative opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish the NDP would actually get to some work of their own work. I table the documents showing that—all the work that we put into place.

MLA Altomare: Well, Honourable Deputy Speaker, let me just say this. There are many educators in the House. And as a matter of fact, many educators on this side of the House are lucky enough to represent their constituencies.

Because I'll tell you what educators do. They don't take credit for the work of the hard-working people in the departments that they represent. As a matter of fact, what we do, what we're doing right now, is we are finally confirming the very, very important work that our departments have been doing this entire time despite seven years of disrespect and an unlistening government on—that used to be on this side of the House, but thankfully was booted—

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

Municipal Water and Sewer Services Funding for Infrastructure Projects

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): The NDP has a history of neglecting investments in water and sewer projects across Manitoba.

For 17 years they ignored the need to upgrade Winnipeg's North End treatment plant. We know in 2003 they ignored the Clean Environment Commission's call for major investments to upgrade this important facility.

Our government took action, Honourable Deputy Speaker, to move forward with these investments. They find them funny, we find them important for Winnipeggers and all Manitobans.

Can the Infrastructure Minister tell this House today how much she is willing to spend to get this job done and protect Lake Winnipeg?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, where the PCs cut, the NDP will build.

The Conservatives have demonstrated their deep commitment to austerity and they've left a massive infrastructure deficit for us to deal with, Honourable Speaker. I am proud to say that just yesterday our government met with the Lake Winnipeg Foundation and with the City of Winnipeg to discuss the next steps on the North End waste control plant, and I look forward to providing more updates in the future.

Mr. Wharton: Municipalities can't afford to repeat the days of the NDP inaction, certainly not the communities of Winkler, Morden, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, St. François, Powerview-Pine Falls, Letellier and Springfield.

This year's budget included \$140 million for water and sewer projects in these rural communities, and guess what? They voted against it.

Can the Infrastructure Minister confirm for this House today that she will continue with these investments and get these jobs done to protect Lake Winnipeg?

MLA Schmidt: The deep cuts and aggressive austerity policies—the aggressive cuts from the previous government, again, have left us with an infrastructure deficit.

The former government not only cut budgets but they sold off valuable public assets, Honourable Deputy Speaker, including water bombers, Lifeflight, snow clearing, highway maintenance, Amphibexes and safety inspections. Furthermore, the privatization of highway services has left—have left Manitobans at risk.

On that side of the House, they cut; on this side of the House, we build.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Red River North, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Wharton: Honourable Deputy Speaker, as you know, our government declared provincial water treatment plants as an essential service.

Will the minister confirm today that she will declare municipal water treatment plants to be essential services, yes or no?

MLA Schmidt: The PCs' record is clear on infrastructure. The strategic infrastructure budget was cut by over \$670 million during their time in office. So we will certainly not be taking any advice from the folks across the—their way.

I can go on about the cuts. They privatized government air and Lifeflight ambulance, promised to work on the flood channel for Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, which has not proceeded. Government services offices cut in Killarney.

Again, I will repeat myself. On that side of the House, they cut; here, we build.

Manitoba's Rural Economy Request for Immigration Plan

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Manitoba is a beautiful, diverse province offering opportunity and growth.

What is this government going to do to promote and attract newcomers beyond the capital region and promote the northern, rural and bilingual municipalities to help expand population growth beyond the urban centres?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): This government is so focused on growing and building our newcomer population here in this province, and also to help with all the different kinds of economic opportunities across our province.

We will work with the federal government to increase the number of immigrants and make sure that they stay in Manitoba, and we're going to be doing this through the Provincial Nominee Program with a special focus on family reunification.

We know that this is essential to Manitoba's long-term economic and skills development goals and we are going to be bringing in these skilled workers to Manitoba and, in particular, to rural communities.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean, thank—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz, with a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: The Progressive Conservative government created the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. This program has brought in more than 170,000 economic immigrants to Manitoba with more

than 20 per cent going to regional communities throughout the province.

Will the NDP government continue to prioritize economic immigration to regional rural municipalities?

* (14:10)

MLA Marcelino: Under the NDP government, the Provincial Nominee Program was a leader across the jurisdictions here, and that is the truth. And this is something that all jurisdictions across Manitoba know.

There is currently work under way to meet these immigration goals that we currently have. We are seeing a lot of demographic changes across our country, and we know that we really need to act in order to attract skilled newcomers to our province, and we're doing that with the Provincial Nominee Program.

We've been given a mandate by the people of Manitoba to make sure that we have all the rural communities and northern communities also making sure that they have access to these newcomers. And we're really looking forward to making sure that these community programs occur.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz, with a final supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Immigration contributes to the labour force growth. However, many rural industries still face these labour challenges. I know ag producers in rural Manitoba seek skilled farm labourers.

What will the NDP government do to help build and get those skilled labourers here for those farmers?

MLA Marcelino: You know, over the last seven and a half years, this immigration file was completely ignored by the PC government. Over the last seven years, this immigration file was completely cut and reduced to a program that we could barely recognize.

Instead of being leaders in this province, on this PNP, we've now become laggards, but this is going to change.

Under this previous PC government, we saw zero, zero recruitment now of international education nurses. That's zero accreditation of nurses. We will take no lessons from the members opposite regarding accreditation.

We have also seen the worst outmigration rates in two decades under this—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The member's time has expired.

RCMP Collective Agreement Costs Municipal Funding Concerns

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Deputy Speaker, a year ago, this NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) pledged to help municipalities address the increasing costs that the RCMP collective agreement has placed on them.

Does this minister of municipal relations commit today to fulfilling this pledge? Or, by not doing so, is this a movement to defund the police?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Again, I would encourage the member opposite to avoid using divisive rhetoric that was born out of the election campaign of his leader and really has no place when we're talking about supporting law enforcement in this province.

We know the previous government's record when it comes to police funding across our province. It was seven years of freezes and cuts to every single municipal police force across the province.

He has a record that he needs to answer for. I wish that the member would be clear about his party's records.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Deputy Speaker, this is a yes or no question.

We here on this side of the aisle have been firm on our support for municipal leaders and law enforcement. These government benches have been a little more of a flip-flop.

So I ask the minister again: Will he commit today to fulfilling the NDP Premier's commitment, or under his watch are municipalities on their own and ultimately be forced to defund the police?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, I can appreciate that the member is just reading questions that may have been written for him by the Leader of the Opposition.

But I would hope that he would cut through that kind of rhetoric and actually talk about the record of the previous government, a previous government that fought with the federal government at every single turn, instead of actually advocating on behalf of municipalities and on behalf of communities across

Manitoba who are asking for a fair deal with the RCMP.

This government is going to do that work. It's going to get down to business. And it's going to accomplish that where this former government failed.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Well, Honourable Deputy Speaker, let me cut through the rhetoric. I understand that supporting policing is very unpopular with the minister's base, but we need to serve the best interests of all Manitobans.

Last year, when push came to shove, the NDP voted against efforts to get Ottawa to pay their fair share. Now is their chance to do the right thing.

Will the NDP government stand with Manitobans and municipalities to ensure that they are not forced to defund the police, or will you be supporting your buddies in Ottawa?

Mr. Wiebe: I would encourage the member opposite to pick up a copy of Hansard and go back, year after year after year, when I stood in this House, when members of the then-opposition NDP stood in this House and stood up for police in this province.

And it's only now that the members sit opposite and they can chirp from their seats and they can continue to defend the actions of the Stefanson government, that now all of the sudden they want to talk about funding.

We are going to work with our police across this province. We're going to work with municipalities. And we're going to ensure that our communities are safe, because that is what we were elected to do.

Rural and Northern Health Care Public Release of ER Wait Times

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Rural and northern Manitobans need to have confidence that this government is considering emergency medical needs outside the city of Winnipeg.

Wait times are not great anywhere, but at least Winnipeg's are published on the WRHA website, unlike any of the other RHA sites.

Will this government take a step towards restoring confidence to rural and northern Manitobans by publishing wait times on rural health facilities?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for Tyndall Park for that very important question.

Unlike the previous PC government, our government on this side of the House is committed to strengthening health care in rural and northern communities; quite frankly, all communities across the province.

We have been working with—since being elected in this role, we have been working every single day with leadership in the northern regional health authorities and in rural communities, and meeting regularly to talk about the ways in which we can enhance the communication on issues that are, quite frankly, affecting folks across Manitoba.

So we'll continue to do that work. We are committed to being a government that communicates very effectively with the public.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Deputy Speaker, emergency room closures have negatively impacted every ER in Manitoba. Rural and northern ERs suffer from the same staff shortages as urban ERs. This has resulted in limited hours and doctors.

What is the government's plan to incentivize retention for health-care workers in rural Manitoba so everyone can have access to emergency care?

MLA Asagwara: I think it's a very important question about how do we retain and how to we recruit and train health-care capacity in our province.

You know, our government is committed to having those very important conversations with health-care workers, no matter where they are across the province, and making sure that we respect the collective bargaining process which is soon coming for thousands of health-care workers across Manitoba.

But I think it's important to note that the previous government not only ignored health-care workers in rural and northern Manitoba, but they outright disrespected them.

* (14:20)

Our government is taking a different approach. We value health-care workers in rural and northern Manitoba. We hear you; we're working with you every single day to strengthen the capacity in our system to make sure Manitobans get the quality care they need no matter where they live.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park, with a final supplementary.

Hours of Operation

MLA Lamoureux: I'm tabling the ER hours of operation for three different rural RHAs, which show inconsistent schedules across dozens of municipalities. Honourable Deputy Speaker, these hours of operation are subject to change without any notice.

Heart attacks, accidents and emergencies, they don't work around ER schedules. What will this government do to ensure that Manitobans in rural and northern areas can get 24-7 emergency care?

MLA Asagwara: Again, I appreciate the very important question about access to health care in rural and northern communities. It is a very serious issue that our government is looking at and working on every single day.

And, again, it's very important for folks to note that, while the previous government didn't seem to care, quite frankly, whether or not we were strengthening health-care access in rural and northern communities, our government is very invested in making sure that we have the health human resource capacity to make sure that no matter where you show up to access care, especially emergency room services, that you can get that care.

You know, I also think it's important to note that the previous government showed a net loss—a net loss—of health-care workers in our system during that time, and our government is not only cleaning up their mess, we're making progress on this very important issue.

Emergency Room Wait Times Expansion of Patient Discharge Days

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Last week, the Minister of Health announced a much-needed investment to reduce wait times in emergency departments in Winnipeg, Selkirk and Brandon. With a \$2.7-million investment, the Province will be able to hire more allied health and hospital case co-ordinators who will help ensure Manitobans are getting home from the hospital safely and without delay.

Can the minister tell us more about this investment and the benefits it will have on Manitoba patients and families?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Thank my colleague, the

wonderful MLA for Kirkfield Park, for that very important question.

I was absolutely thrilled to make an announcement last week that's going to address a long overdue challenge in our health-care system to ensure that seven days a week people are being discharged from our hospitals. This is an investment that is finally going to align Manitoba with other jurisdictions who've been doing this for many years, and it's going to address something that the front-line health-care workers at HSC, where we made the announcement, call the weekend effect.

It's important to note that this is an idea that front-line health-care workers brought forward under the previous government and no action whatsoever was taken. But under this government, Manitobans and health-care workers can be assured our government is listening. We're actioning your ideas and your solutions, and we're going to fix health care together.

Highway Snow-Clearing Services Weekend Hours of Operation

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Despite putting out a statement on October 25th saying they were ready for the snowfall this season, this NDP government clearly wasn't ready. They were forced to close down our largest trade route, Highway 75, days after the minor snowfall event we had in October because of their lack of preparedness.

Manitobans need to know: Will this NDP government actually be ready to clear the next snowfall, or will they just issue a press release pretending they are?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, when we came into office, our departments were in chaos due to years of cuts, privatization, wage freezes, staff reduction and this has translated into poorer services for Manitobans.

The Department of Infrastructure is working hard to right these wrongs by bolstering our snowplow operator numbers and upgrade equipment by hiring up to 40 retired operators to supplement full-time staff, partnering with local governments to provide winter maintenance of provincial gravel roads, working toward implementing a 24-hour snow clearing on major routes to ensure safe passage and re-implementing standby pay for maintenance staff for weekend service when needed.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: Honourable Speaker, I'm hearing concerning rumblings from Manitobans that this NDP government is repeating their past mistake of banning snowplowing on weekends.

Manitobans need to have confidence that our roads are cleared so they can make their medical appointments, buy groceries, get their kids to school and get to work.

Will the minister confirm if the NDP is planning to ban weekend snowplowing again?

MLA Schmidt: I thank the member for the question, and I can provide a simple answer, which is no. And I would urge the member opposite to listen to the first answer to his first question when I said that our government is working towards implementing 24-hour-a-day snow clearing on major routes.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, let's talk a little bit more about the chaos that the Tories have created. Forty per cent of MTI snowplow trucks are past their normal lifespan. Staffing is at a crisis level: 30 per cent—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Borderland, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Guenter: Speaker, there's a long list, but one of the worst things the previous NDP government did was to ban snowplow operators from working on weekends. This was on top of chronic underspending on roads.

Now, I want to be crystal clear: Will this minister commit to never banning weekend snowplowing again?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Deputy Speaker, I would urge the member opposite to remind his friends on that side of the House that if they were serving their municipalities they would be on this side of the House.

And I will repeat myself one final time, Deputy Honourable Speaker: they cut and we will build.

The Deputy Speaker: And with that, the time for oral questions has expired. *[interjection]*

Order, please. Order.

The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

Okay, orders of the day, government business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable House leader—Government House Leader.

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham). The title of the resolution is commitment to keeping Manitoba Public Insurance privately owned.

Miigwech.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next—*[interjection]*

The honourable Government House Leader.

MLA Fontaine: I actually said that wrong, so I apologize to the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Fontaine: It's okay, I can admit when I'm wrong.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, may I say it again, please? Miigwech. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Again, let's try this again. Pursuant to rule 34(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park. The title of the resolution is Commitment to Keeping Manitoba Public Insurance Publicly Owned.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced—*[interjection]*—order—that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park. The title of the resolution is Commitment to Keeping Manitoba Public Insurance Publicly Owned.

MLA Fontaine: I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, December 4th, 2023, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, December 4th, 2023, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act.

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MLA Fontaine: Would you resume debate of the Throne Speech, please?

**THRONE SPEECH
(Third Day of Debate)**

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that we are continuing debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, standing in the name of the honourable minister for River Heights who has—the honourable member for River Heights—who has six remaining minutes.

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): When last I rose to address the Throne Speech, I was discussing my career as a teacher. I was fortunate to have served as the head of the theatre and ice hockey programs, as well as to teach psychology, history, English and filmmaking.

In all that time, students never failed to teach me as much as I taught them. Their energy, their enthusiasm, their passion for new ideas and new challenges, pushed me to be a better teacher and a better person. To ensure that their needs and their interests were always top of mind.

That's what pushed me to first become involved with our local teachers' association, when the Liberal government of Gordon Wilson, and later Christy Clark, stripped the provincial teachers' contract of class size and composition language that we had previously bargained.

For 12 years, we fought our own government, all the way to the Supreme Court, to get that language returned in the interests of our students. In the meantime, an entire cohort of children, including one of my own, entered and exited the public school system without experiencing any of the very real educational benefits those provisions would have provided. And as teachers we watched and we agonized as countless students fell through the cracks because the supports students needed didn't exist. All because of one government's ideology.

It was that experience that drew me into the fight against bill 64, which I saw as the thin edge of the wedge for similar philosophically-driven educational change here in Manitoba, a fight that became the starting gun for my campaign in River Heights.

Here again, Honourable Deputy Speaker, our Throne Speech offers opportunities to work together across the aisle to improve the quality of education all students receive. Opportunities like universal school nutrition program; reducing class sizes to ensure that students get more one-on-one time; putting more EAs

and supports for students with diverse needs into classrooms; expanding Indigenous language programs; and working with stakeholders to develop a stable, predictable funding model for public education, as well as to strengthen the K-to-12 curriculum.

These do not have to be hard, partisan issues. And, frankly, we should be ashamed of ourselves if they become so.

They're issues of fundamental importance to all Manitobans, and they must be approached from that singular perspective. So, too, must the issues of poverty, mental health, addictions, housing, reconciliation, social and economic equality, addressing the rise of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other hate crimes and the ever-growing climate crisis.

All of these need to be viewed through that same non-partisan lens. Finding solutions to improve the quality of people's lives is what matters. Nothing else.

In closing, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to return to my earlier assertion that those in the theatre get better lines than we do in politics. By way of illustration, I'm going to borrow a couple of lines from Leo McGarry in Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing*, lines that I think offer a useful reminder of the potential of the work we do here: We can do more in a single day for people while serving in this building than we're able to do outside of those doors over the rest of our lives. So, what do you want to do?

Whether we understood it at the time or not, that question and the challenges it presents are what we all embraced when we put our names on a ballot. What we choose to do here, and how we choose to do it, matters. Not just to the people whose lives we can forever change for the better, but for all those who follow in our place for the example we can set for them.

Our Throne Speech, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is an ambitious outline of the critical work we must do together. We won't always agree on the route we take to get there, but surely the destination itself can never be in question.

Always keeping in mind the words of United States Senator Elizabeth Warren, who rightly said: We didn't come here to talk about things we can't do. Okay, sometimes politicians get good lines, too.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I look forward to working with you and all members of this Assembly in the days to come.

Thank you.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Thanks to my colleagues. Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for your introduction.

And it's certainly, to begin, the honour of my life to stand here in this place. It's a common comment from one of my colleagues, the honourable member from Steinbach, that there are no bad seats in this Legislature. There are some that are better than others, and we certainly hoped to be on that side. But we—there are no bad seats in this Legislature, and I'm certainly very privileged and honoured to be here.

You know, not every kid probably grows up dreaming of being a politician. I can't remember what my first job is—maybe a pilot, I thought I would be, or, I don't know, a ship's captain.

But, at some point, I turned my interest to politics at a relatively young age, comparatively speaking to a number of members who are currently in this Chamber, and it kind of stuck. And I never really lost my passion for public service and my interest in serving our communities and our constituencies.

And so, this is certainly a childhood dream of mine to be able to rise in this place and speak on behalf of the great people of Spruce Woods and southwestern Manitoba. So, I thank many people for that, and I'll get into that a little bit later.

I grew up a small-town kid. And, in addition to being a small-town kid, I grew up the child of an elected official. And so, with that comes some added challenges, some added burdens of, you know, you can hardly get away with anything in a small town; everybody knows your name. And that's heightened even more when you're the child of an elected official in a small town who's well known.

I said often on the campaign trail, I'm used to grassroots politics, because, when you're talking about a small-town mayor, folks don't book an appointment at your office or email your secretary. They just show up at your front door or they have a word with you on your driveway as you're shovelling your snow or interrupt supper with the doorbell. That was commonplace in our household for as long as I can remember, and so I certainly know the life.

* (14:40)

I appreciate the impact that it has, not just on those in elected office, but their families. And I thank those who are here in this place and others who are willing to put their name forward to serve their communities, both at the provincial and municipal and

federal levels, because it does make an impact. But this is important work, and it matters to those people that we serve.

My colleague from Radisson, in her introduction speech, Deputy Speaker, used the common phrase: it takes a village. And that is certainly the case in small towns, and it is certainly the case in my life.

And so, to the people of Souris who have supported me through thick and thin for my entire life, I thank you all. I thank you for the honour of representing our hometown in this place.

And it certainly does take a village. I know many of us experienced that, and, you know, so thank you to them for the honour of being their voice here in this place.

I am certainly proud of my roots, further roots in Westman at Brandon University, Honourable Speaker. There's a number of us who are BU Bobcats alumni in this Chamber, and there's not a better place to have gone to university, to have learned politics, to have learned from some consummate professionals, including Dr. Kelly Saunders, who was honoured here just last week for her role in the internship program that helps us all on both sides of this Chamber fulfill our responsibilities and our duties.

I want to thank all the professors who had a role in my education, and the institution of Brandon University, for the high-quality post-secondary education that it provides to rural and western Manitoba.

Spruce Woods is my home. It's been my home my whole life, and to use another common phrase: home is where the heart is.

And, you know, I know everybody gets elected here and says: Oh, our constituents are the best people in Manitoba; they're the best people in the country; they're the best people in the world. We are, all right, but that is certainly the case for the good folks of Spruce Woods constituency.

And again, I say to them: Please reach out to me; please get in contact with me; I'll see you out and about; and it's my absolute privilege to be your voice in this place; and I want to thank you for the trust that you've placed in me.

Western Manitoba has big potential. We've got all the right indicators, all the right tools to make a big impact on the economic engine of this province. And I think, you know, working together with our municipal colleagues, which we're meeting with later this week at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities

convention, you know, we have the potential to make a big impact and to drive the economic future of our region and of this province.

And so, you know, grounded in the agricultural sector, but not limited to it, there's lots of potential in our constituency in the Wheat City, in Spruce Woods and in the rest of western Manitoba.

Our future is bright, and I am just so excited to be able to play a small role as the MLA for part of that region in that economic growth, in that drive, in that bright future for the next generation of western Manitobans.

I would be remiss, Deputy Speaker, if I didn't comment a little bit on the folks who sent me here, who helped get me here. To the members of our great party in Spruce Woods constituency, to the voters of Spruce Woods constituency, thank you. Thank you for your work, for your effort in supporting my election here to this place.

I am truly humbled. Many of you I've known my whole life. In fact, Honourable Speaker, being one of the younger members in this place, I had the unique—or maybe not quite unique, but certainly uncommon, phenomenon and pleasure of signing up three generations of the same family; the youngest of which being my generation in many cases who had never been involved politically before; three generations of a family to work on campaigns for the first time and to be involved in our democratic process.

And that was such an exciting part of the process for me, the journey that we went through from nomination to election day. And I want to thank those families, folks I've known for my entire life, many of them, for their support and their faith in me.

I also want to thank the municipal leaders of Spruce Woods constituency for their support. I met with all of them as part of this process over the last year, and a number of them were great supports to me. I know I will have a productive working relationship with all of them going forward. As I mentioned, I look forward to seeing them later this week.

Municipal politics is the most grassroots level of our democracy in this country, the division of powers, and I have deep respect for the work that they do on behalf of the residents of our communities. It can be a bit of a thankless job at times, and they deserve all the credit in the world for putting their name forward and working on behalf of our communities. So I want to thank those municipal work-leaders for the great work that they do.

On my—specifically, on my team, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank, of course, the campaign team; in particular, my 69-year-old uncle, Derryk Jackson, who was my fearless door knocker, door-knocked almost as many nights as me, and he certainly put in a lot of hours, and he deserves recognition for the decades of work that he has done campaigning on behalf of public servants over many decades in western Manitoba.

A number of items that we heard at the door, Honourable Deputy Speaker: affordability, health care, infrastructure. And these items, I'm sorry to say, are lacking in specifics in this Throne Speech.

And so we hope that the NDP government, now that they're in their roles and as they settle in, start to come forward and flesh out in this place, on the record, more specifics about how they are going to achieve their lofty, lofty election promises. We hope to see that coming forward in the days and weeks and months to come.

But mostly, Honourable Deputy Speaker, what we heard at the door was a need to reconnect, to re-engage with our communities. This is a product of COVID, I have no doubt, but that is why I am so excited to be in this role, to be in this place and to serve our communities, because I am never happier than when I am at a community barbecue or at the doors talking to the great people of Westman. And I've had experience in that in previous life, and very excited to do that with my name as the MLA and as the ballot now. So, very excited to move forward with that exciting work to re-engage with our communities and make sure that as many Manitobans as possible are engaged in the democratic process.

And, Deputy Speaker, a lot of the reason why I love that work is due to the people that I had who have mentored me throughout my life working as a volunteer and then as a member of staff in politics. And I'm fortunate to have many strong political mentors, many of whom are former members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, which speaks to the quality of individual that is elected to this place.

So, I must start at the beginning. There's no other place to start. And the first I would like to acknowledge for her role in bringing me here is Leanne Rowat, the former member for Minnedosa and member for Riding Mountain.

Leanne was—lived just up the street from me growing up in Souris. I grew up with her kids, Cameron and Mackenzie. And I remember very well her election—

first election in 2003, which was a close one. If you are not familiar with Westman electoral history, I think the running nickname for Leanne was Landslide Leanne, because she won by about 14 votes in her first election, but then worked her tail off to make sure that she was soundly re-elected in her next two elections after that.

And that campaign in 2003, I was about five, and I was under the desk with her kids, Cam and Mack, stuffing envelopes as our parents were at the doors or calling members or whatever they happened to be doing, and I've never really gotten out. As they say, the political bug bit me early.

Leanne—I also had no interest at—after that in being a pharmacist or a dentist, much to my parents' disappointment. And so, for take-your-kid-to-work day, instead of going with either of my parents, I came here with Leanne, and I worked in opposition. I remember meeting in bank one twenty-three with her and Bonnie Mitchelson, former member for Kildonan-River East, helping them prepare their questions for question period that day. And that was the honour of my life.

What I don't highlight publicly, but I—perhaps I'll share today, is I had just gotten a brand new golf shirt—it said Souris and Glenwood golf course. I thought, yes, I'm going to wear that shirt and represent my hometown—I'm 14 or 15, whatever I was in grade 9—I'm going to represent my hometown when I come to the Legislative Building.

* (14:50)

So, Leanne picks me up. My parents had gone to work. I come here, do the full day's work, get home and Leanne drops me off. And my dad looks at me as I come in the front door and he says: You didn't wear that golf shirt. I said: Yes I sure did, it's Souris-Glenwood golf course, like, I was representing the hometown. The shirt was neon orange.

To Leanne's great credit, she never brought it up, she never said a word, she just let me be proud of representing my hometown the very first time that I entered this building. And to this day, that's a bit of a running joke between Leanne and my dad.

Leanne was passionate, committed and fierce in standing up for children and for her constituency, and I certainly appreciate her 'mentornship.'

I would be remiss if I did not mention my immediate predecessor, Cliff Cullen, MLA for first Turtle Mountain and then Spruce Woods. Cliff was a genuine

human being who I will remember well for his calm, stable leadership on many of the most difficult files that government has to offer.

And, you know, a piece of advice that Cliff shared with me that would be well served by all ministers is that the minister's job isn't to be down in the water paddling; a minister has to keep their eye on the long game. There's lots of teams around you of very qualified people—your political staff, your department staff, very qualified professional civil servants, who are there to do the paddling work of the department. As soon as the minister's in the water paddling, they've lost sight of the long-term goal of where we need to get to.

And I think the next one I have to mention is Larry Maguire, former member for Arthur-Virden. Larry took me under his wing when he ran federally for the first time. Larry is the consummate rural politician, a genuine, kind, sincere person who, despite having held many roles both here and in Ottawa, has never forgotten that your constituency has to come first.

You would be lucky—or unlucky, perhaps—to go anywhere west of Portage and find people who don't know who Larry is. I mean, Larry Maguire has worked western Manitoba and served people not just in his provincial constituency and his federal constituency, but served rural Manitobans across this great province. And he is a strong advocate for Westman, rural Manitoban agriculture, and leaves me with the lesson: Never forget where you came from.

Last but not least, I wouldn't be here without my dad. My dad was the mayor of, first, the town of Souris, and then the mayor of the amalgamated Municipality of Souris-Glenwood from 2005 until 2022.

And he raised me with lessons at our kitchen table: that to those who much is given, much is also expected and that community service is expected of people; you must give back to your community or else our communities do not succeed. Busy is never an excuse to do something halfway. Be open-minded, dedicated and most of all, patient, which is something that I still have a lot to learn from his example.

And so, I thank him for his role at our household but also his example as a public servant over many, many years. My wonderful family, my mother and my girlfriend, her extended family: thank you to them for helping me get here.

Specific to this Throne Speech, Deputy Speaker: we had some massive election commitments from this

NDP party and this NDP government over the course of the campaign. And they're already backing away from some, as we can see, like they hydro rate freeze which, despite the minister saying was due to Progressive Conservatives, he knows full well, as the critic for this file for a number of years, that Hydro's income levels fluctuate depending on the weather. And he was out campaigning, I assume, throughout the summer like the rest of us, and knew full well we didn't get a lot of rain, which impacts the ability to generate hydroelectricity.

So, you know, we'll see in the days and weeks to come, Honourable Deputy Speaker, how many more commitments—irresponsible commitments, I might add—that this NDP government decides to back away from.

On this side of the House, we will put the people of Manitoba first. On that side of the House, their record is putting ideology first and a lack of vision—a responsible vision—for the future of this province.

And so, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm so proud to be here. I represent, I think, with many of my colleagues, the next generation of Manitobans, like the member for Radisson (Ms. Dela Cruz), the next generation of Progressive Conservatives on this side of the Chamber, who are here to hold this government to account, rebuild our Progressive Conservative Party.

And we have to remember, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we will achieve great things for this province with the strength of our convictions, coupled with the ability to listen and learn from those with different backgrounds and experiences. That is the only way that we will grow.

And so, while we have deep concern with this new government's plans, I will work every day to ensure that Manitobans' best days are ahead, and that my generation, and those who come after our next generation, will be at the forefront of the conversation and the decision-making process to ensure that our future and the future of this great province is as bright as it can be.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to affirm the Throne Speech delivered by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and to introduce myself to this Chamber as the member for Rossmere.

It is a privilege to be a voice for my community at the provincial level. And I say a voice because Rossmere is home to a strong contingent of community activists and engaged citizens who I know will stay involved in provincial politics throughout the next four years, many of whom came alongside me in my campaign.

No one ever arrives in the Chamber by their work alone, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and I am no exception.

I'd like to start by thanking my biggest supporters: my family. My partner Jarrett, who's here in the Chamber—in the gallery, I should say—and our three beautiful children, Carleigh, Seager and Lainey. It is not only thanks to them that I am here, Deputy Speaker, it is truly because of them. It is for them and every child in Manitoba, so that they can have a safe and quality education, a reliable and robust health-care system and beautiful, clean, diverse landscapes to enjoy.

I'd like to thank my campaign team: Ariel Dunsmore, Chantel Bacon, Ethan Findlay, Adam Piercey, Steve Champagne, for their tireless work and belief in this campaign. I'd also like to thank the Rossmere NDP executive: Libby Powell, Erna Braun, Ellen Olfert, Ben McGilvery [*phonetic*], David Popke, Dwight Stewart, Lori Darragh, Keri Zielinski and Val Cousineau for your ongoing work in the community and in our province.

And I'd like to take a moment to honour the life of Bill Bage, who in his life was many, many things, including a talented musician, a new grandpa and a champion for workers. He was also the president of the Rossmere NDP association, until his sudden and tragic passing during our campaign. I thank you, Bill, and I hope that we've made you proud.

To my colleagues in this Chamber, thank you for coming alongside me during this campaign. Our incumbent MLAs were particularly encouraging and giving of their time and invaluable wisdom.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and the MLA for Concordia for sharing his years of experience and knowledge with me, not to mention a campaign office and some volunteers. The honourable minister knocked on more doors in Rossmere than any other volunteer on the campaign, and I wanted to recognize his dedication, and thank him. Thank you.

The real backbone of this campaign was the vast community of volunteers who braved rain and shine to build connections with the residents of Rossmere.

Each and every volunteer was appreciated, and I wish I could thank every single one by name.

But there are two particular volunteers who encapsulated the hard work and dedication that we saw day in and day out. The first is Savannah Hrydowy.

Savannah is an exceptional person for many reasons. We met Savannah early in the campaign at the doorstep, where she and her mom talked about Savannah's struggles to find meaningful employment opportunities. We talked about their concerns about where Manitoba was heading, specifically the lack of mental health and addiction services and the impact that that was having in the Rossmere community and right across our province.

We talked about the NDP's vision and our expert-driven plans to end chronic homelessness and finally get to work facing the addictions crisis, and Savannah was determined to get involved. I am so proud to have earned Savannah's support and the support of her mom, and I'm proud to share that Savannah showed up every single day to our campaign office to contribute in countless ways; and the enthusiasm she brought to our team was appreciated and needed.

* (15:00)

Thank you, Savannah.

The second volunteer I'd like to share a bit about is Theodore Dyck. I met Theo on the MPI picket line, which was ongoing during much of our campaign. Theo is a single dad, an avid singer, a resident of Rossmere, and works as an insurance adjuster for MPI.

Theo and his colleagues were simply looking for a fair deal and felt thoroughly let down by the previous government, so much so that after Theo was done walking the picket line all morning along the Northeast Pioneers Greenway in Rossmere in solidarity with his MPI colleagues, he would then join us for his afternoons on the campaign trail in Rossmere, in hopes of electing a government that respects workers and collective bargaining.

I want to thank Theo for his tireless dedication to our campaign and to his MPI colleagues.

I'd like to also acknowledge the previous NDP MLAs for Rossmere for their years of public service in representing our fine community, but also for their support of my campaign.

One day during the campaign we got the whole group together for coffee and donuts. The Right

Honourable Ed Schreyer, Rossmere's first MLA and famously the first NDP premier of Manitoba. Joining Ed and I were Vic Schroeder, Harry Schellenberg, and Erna Braun. Each of them did incredible things in our Rossmere community and no doubt changed the course of Manitoba history for the better. And I am truly humbled to be part of that legacy.

I am also thankful for the support of one of my federal counterparts, Daniel Blaikie. In 2015 I volunteered on my first political campaign in support of Blaikie's federal bid to become the next MP for Elmwood-Transcona. That election saw him defeat the Conservative incumbent and ultimately unseat the Harper government—a true success.

His win will always serve as a great source of pride for me and my fellow postal workers who worked so hard on that campaign. I am very proud to now call Daniel and his wife Janelle friends, and I adore them very much, and I want to sincerely thank Daniel and the whole Blaikie clan: Brenda, Rebecca, Jessica, Tessa and of course the late great Bill Blaikie, for their support and for their service to our north-eastern Winnipeg community and to the province of Manitoba.

I'd like to acknowledge my fellow running mates: Devlin Hinchey, Mike Chapin, and in particular, the MLA for Rossmere, Andrew Micklefield. While Mr. Micklefield and I may differ in our politics, I know we both share love and commitment to our community, and I thank him for his service to the constituents of Rossmere and for running a fair campaign.

Finally, to my Schellenberg family: to my siblings, especially my younger sister Amy, who just moved away, so I'm a little emotional—sorry—she was one of my most dedicated volunteers, and to my parents, Ken and Lauren Schellenberg. My parents were both teachers in the Winnipeg School Division and taught in some of the most underserved communities and schools in our province. They understood the importance of universal quality education and tackling inequality and injustices. And they passed those lessons down to me at the supper table.

That early exposure to issues of social justice and my parents work within the public education system no doubt inspired the path I'm on today, and I'm so grateful for them and their example in serving the community and serving their family.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Rossmere is a thriving and richly diverse community, one that has seen record growth with at least one in five residents

identifying as recent immigrants. Our community is proud to host two Sikh temples, Khalsa Diwan and Guru Nanak Darbar, where I've had the pleasure of visiting, learning and enjoying langar.

I'm proud to have had the support of many of my Sikh friends and neighbours, some of whom were instrumental to our campaign, including my now sister, Kiran Benipal. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

Rossmere has also welcomed many families fleeing war in Ukraine, attracted, in part, by the English-Ukrainian bilingual programs offered by our River East-Transcona schools in Rossmere and across northeast Winnipeg. We warmly welcome these and all newcomers to our province and our corner of it.

We also have a growing and thriving business community in Rossmere, with many local, family-owned businesses and restaurants to be proud of. Our community was sad this year to lose the Bake Oven, a European bakery that existed at the corner of Edison and Roch for more than 60 years. But we were thrilled to see Cottage Bakery + Eatery take over the space, and we welcome the Esfehani family and their business to Rossmere. Their menu and their service is exceptional, and I look forward to visiting them again soon and for years to come.

I would also like to recognize another truly special local business in Rossmere: Scout coffee and tea. Owned by Katrina and Phil Tessier, this unique play café opened on the corner of Rothesay and Kingsford in 2021 and has become popular with families across the city who come to support this progressive community-minded business. Their space offers a local community parenting hub with invaluable services far beyond your traditional café, including a birth-support program, a baby-wearing support group—including affordable baby-carrier rental program—and a social club for families.

And while Scout is busy doing the work of supporting and building connections within our community, they have also served up an amazing menu and a unique retail selection of games, books and toys. It is truly a blessing that Scout has chosen our community for their business, and it is a pleasure to welcome and support them in their work as well.

Honourable Speaker, Rossmere is also home to community groups of all kinds, each doing their own part to make positive and meaningful contributions. I spoke about these folks earlier. One of these community groups is the Community Roots Resource Centre,

led by executive director, Pam Jensen, and an incredible board of—incredible board and incredible volunteers. The CRRC offers a variety of services and events in support of the needs in the community. As I mentioned before, an emergency food pantry, free clothing program, community garden, family drop-in program and a community kitchen, just to name a few.

Organizations like the CRRC are critical resources for communities and need this Chamber's support. But we need to ask why the need has grown so exponentially. And why the provincial public-safety net was not sufficiently strengthened during this difficult time. After years of PC cuts, the need now seems greater than ever.

We've seen the growing need in Rossmere, which reflects what we're seeing across the province. The pressures of inflation, the lack of affordable housing and the struggle to make ends meet. These are systemic problems, Honourable Deputy Speaker, ones that we can change. Our NDP government is committed to making progress on these fronts and returning some dignity to the lives of Manitobans.

One final community group I'd like to acknowledge is the Save the Concordia ER group. In 2017, when the former PC government announced they were to close the Concordia emergency room without any consultation or dialogue with the community, a group of concerned citizens across northeast Winnipeg came together to demand that their voices be heard. They organized, they petitioned, they fundraised and they rallied.

I was there at their 2019 rally to save the Concordia emergency room. The Attorney General was there. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) was there. The Minister of Education was there. The MLAs for Elmwood and Kildonan-River East and Radisson were there. And where was the PC government in the fight for health care in northeast Winnipeg? Nowhere.

And look where they are now, Honourable Deputy Speaker. The NDP government will reopen the Concordia emergency room because we, like the amazing volunteers and supporters of the Save the Concordia ER campaign, knew this was a mistake in the first place. And it's with those good folks in mind that our government will work towards executing on that commitment.

And I'd like to take a moment to speak directly to workers in Manitoba. Like many of my colleagues, my political awakening began as a worker through my union. I went on strike for the first time in 2011,

delivering mail for Canada Post, and we returned to the picket line again in 2018. So just like the striking MPI, Liquor & Lotteries and many other public servants this past year, I, too, have felt the frustrations of dealing with apathetic governments.

Having a government who knows the massive financial and personal sacrifices that are required of striking workers, and what a healthy relationship looks like in labour relations, is invaluable. Honourable Speaker, this government will work to ensure no worker is squeezed, shut out or ignored the way they were under the previous PC government.

Getting involved in my local postal workers' union and working as a public servant really opened my eyes to the tremendous impact public policy and governments—governance can have on our lives and on the lives of our families. Such that through good public policy, we can change lives for the better.

My interest in policy and law led me to earn a law degree while working at the post office, and I'm proud to say that I've been called to the Manitoba bar since 2020. Honourable Speaker, it is my—Deputy Speaker, it is my hope that my professional training, experience and sincere passion for social democracy will serve and contribute to this Assembly.

* (15:10)

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Manitobans elected a government that will tackle the issues that matter to them head-on, including the preservation of our natural environment and the existential threat of climate change. Manitobans elected a government that will look for holistic solutions rather than stopgap measures that simply outsource our carbon emissions to other provinces or other countries. They elected a government that will collaborate with our federal and global partners to find fair and equitable paths forward rather than inflame disputes and delay real action.

As Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, I dedicate myself to turning the promises made in the Throne Speech into action. Important projects are already under way: \$500 million has been invested to expand our low-carbon energy grid, scaling up capacity to ensure our transition to sustainable home heating, electric vehicles and green industrial production remains affordable. And we've laid out the initial phases of our plan for geothermal heat pumps, a proven technology in Manitoba's cold climate that will reduce emissions and save Manitobans money.

These are only the first steps in our journey towards carbon neutrality and a restored relationship

with our natural environment. No one ever said the way forward will be easy, but holistic solutions to climate change, homelessness and the affordability crisis and the broken health-care system are possible, Honourable Speaker—Deputy Speaker.

They involve upstream investment in our environment and our neighbours to prevent expensive problems down the line. They involve collaboration with communities on unique solutions that draw from the expertise of local leaders. And they involve a deep commitment to always keep everyone part of the evolving conversation. That is the commitment I make today and will make every day as a member of this Chamber.

Thank you.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I want to congratulate to all of the new members like myself as well as those that are returning. I look forward to watching and learning from each one of you. It's truly an honour to be here representing my amazing constituency of Portage la Prairie. And I know Grant talked about Spruce Woods of being the best, but I can say that Portage la Prairie, I believe, is the place where everybody has an opportunity to call home.

Portage la Prairie is a very diverse area, from east to west, north to south, located in the Red River Valley on what I refer to—this is the breadbasket of agriculture for North America. We're represented by Indigenous neighbours, Long Plain First Nation, Dakota Tipi First Nation and Dakota Plains First Nation.

We're the largest plant protein facility in Canada with Roquette. We are a value-added agricultural area in Portage la Prairie.

Southport Aerospace and their tenant SkyAlyne provides primary flight training not only for Canada but others as well.

Portage la Prairie was faced in the 1990s with losing their air force base out there, and the people of Portage la Prairie said no, we are not going to let that happen. It's been privatized and it has been more successful than it's ever been.

We are also home to the largest wave pool for recreation from the Ontario border to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. I ask all of you, please come out and see what Portage la Prairie has to offer. There is a place outside of the Perimeter and Winnipeg area, and Portage la Prairie is a beautiful part of our province.

This building represents so much history as well as the future. We're all a part of this small group that

has governed in this building from this beautiful Chamber.

I am humbled to think of those that have sat in my very same seat and those that will come after me. I will take nothing for granted and know that it is an honour to represent all of the people of the Portage la Prairie constituency, not just those that have voted for me.

I must say a special thank you to the previous MLA, Ian Wishart, who continues this day, and even in the past hour, to encourage and support me. Ian served an amazing number of years in this building, and I will continue to lean on Ian for his advice throughout my time in this office.

I want to talk a little bout—about who I am and where I came from. I'm proud to say that I am a very young-looking 60-year-old, born and raised in Portage la Prairie that I still call home after 60 years. My mother and father, Mac and Barbara Bereza, both served in World War II, and I'm proud of their commitment to our country and all that we have today because of them.

I have one brother, Fred, and one sister, Maxine, that I get to see all the time. Remember, I told you how great Portage la Prairie was? My family is all still in Portage la Prairie.

I'm also the luckiest man on the planet to be married for over 34 years to my best friend and the love of my life, Lynne. We have also been blessed with two amazing daughters, Kelsey and Lindsay, that are two of my greatest supporters, as well as Kelsey's partner, Stan. I am also the proudest poppy of two amazing grandchildren, Everly and Hyde.

I am also the son-in-law of the late Ken Grant. And I want to recognize Ken for what he did and what he showed me. And he showed me why I should be part of this Chamber that I'm at today. Ken was one of the best debating partners that I ever had. He was also the president of the NDP association for Portage la Prairie.

What it shows is that we can all work together, and we can all work together for the better, and we can find compromises out there.

But I have to say to my family and to the rest of the people in Portage la Prairie that have supported me, I can't thank you enough for everything that you've done over the years.

Mrs. Rachelle Schott, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I must—best friends are like family, and I want to also mention since I was 12 years old, Bob Roteliuk, who also lives in this great constituency of Portage la Prairie and is my very best friend and has been for over 48 years.

I want to also recognize a number of people that have had such a tremendous influence on me throughout my career: my brother-in-law, Ken Shyiak; my first boss in the car business, Bill Glesby; Doug Edmondson; two supporters from Portage la Prairie that now live in Winnipeg, but I know they call Portage la Prairie home, two people that have been very successful throughout the world in making this country a better place, that's Sandy and Robert Shindleman; Janet Shindle, who I had the opportunity to serve on City Council with; former premier Brian Pallister, who always taught me don't give up; Gordon Damon; Mike Hunter and Ben Libby. Without you in my corner, I wouldn't be where I am today.

* (15:20)

I have to see my career. After I completed high school, I followed in my father's footsteps for a couple of years, and I became a car salesperson.

From there, I began a career in agriculture that took me all over North America and gave me the opportunity to meet some of the most amazing people that all want to do one thing, and that's contributing to feeding the world and looking after our population.

But I do want to talk about one thing that has helped drive me in doing what I'm doing today. When I got into the agriculture business, I was referred to as—I could only sell cars; I only knew about selling cars. And that drove me to be the best that I could possibly be.

And, in saying that about the hardships, I never had the opportunity to receive a university education. But what I did do is I wanted to be the best in my field of agriculture, and I learned and I pushed forward every day to make sure that I did that.

It also took me into 2006, when I ran for City Council on one mandate and one mandate only, and that was to build what I call the best recreation facility for our community in Portage la Prairie that had tried to be built a number of times over the last 50 years.

This facility, Stride Place, opened in 2010, and I am excited to say it will be paid off this year. It attracts not just local people, but folks from across the province and beyond. It is one of the busiest recreation facilities in western Canada.

I continue to be proud of the collaboration between the City of Portage la Prairie and the RM of Portage councils that made this happen. They knew that they had four years to make this happen, and we worked 'curalaboratively' to get that done. And I want to acknowledge former mayor, Ken Brennan, and former reeve, Toby Trimble, for their leadership in this project.

In 2016, I was appointed by the former premier for chair of the Municipal Board of Manitoba, and I can tell you, it's the biggest mess that I ever had the opportunity to clean up. When I assumed the role for our government—when I assumed the role after our government was first elected, the Municipal Board was over 10 years behind in dealing with tax appeals.

One of the times when I was in the office, I'll never forget, there was a lady that come up to the counter and said to me—she was an elderly lady—she said, will my tax appeal be heard before I die? I couldn't answer that question. But we knew that we had to do something different.

With a new team on the Municipal Board that wasn't as concerned about what was for lunch or what my per diem was, we worked diligently with the department of Municipal Relations to fix the problem. Today, this Municipal Board has saved Manitoba taxpayers over \$4 million. The backlog of appeals has been cleared. Wait times have shrunk to nearly nothing.

My campaign team. My campaign team was made up of many fantastic volunteers. My campaign co-chair—and, again, she was another person that got me involved in politics a number of years ago—was Jody Fletcher. Jody, who has the drive and energy of someone that is much younger than her.

I had the chance to work with Jody in 1986 on PC MLA Ed Connery's campaign. Ed Connery was one of the leaders and was the forefront of vegetable growers in Manitoba. That was probably one of the first times I knew this was the path that was being laid out for me.

Janice Hyde was a co-chair that I got to know very well over the past year, and she would keep me grounded, keep me always moving forward. Janis worked on Myrna Driedger's campaign. And also, Paulette Connery was another person on my team that was invaluable. And, yes, that is Ed Connery's daughter-in-law, and was our communications door-to-door volunteer extraordinaire.

These three women are amazing friends, and I continue to look for them for advice all the time.

What did I hear in the Throne Speech? I heard a lot of talk—I heard of a couch tour—and very little substance. There was lots of blaming of what past governments didn't do, but no planning on what they're going to do. You're in government now; it's time to govern.

No plan to relieve the burden on homeowners or families faced with an unfair carbon tax that is supported by this government. This province is 97 per cent green. No plan on fixing health care, like the new regional facility that is being built in Portage la Prairie that is fully budgeted for.

And years ago when I was on city council—we had an NDP government in power at that time, I'll never forget so—being so disheartened in all of my life when we were told that the Portage hospital was perfect, even though there was rats running around the operating room. But it was okay, because we were going to be No. 27 to get a new hospital in Portage la Prairie.

Thank you to this PC government for the beautiful regional health facility that is being built in Portage la Prairie.

As I said, agriculture has been my life, and there has been absolutely no relief for our agriculture community that contributes almost 10 per cent of this province's GDP.

What I'm really concerned about as well, too: our hog business. This NDP government before us put a moratorium on hog business. That hog business now is the third highest in receipts in Manitoba.

I'm so scared for our livestock producers out there, because they're getting blamed for putting—for emitting into the lakes in Manitoba, here, yet they need to ask—the NDP need to ask their new person that's going to look after things in the US, for the US to stop dumping into our lakes in Manitoba and causing high nitrogen and phosphorus levels.

We have a bright future. Manitoba has so many value-added agricultural businesses. Simplot, that was extended under this PC government; they doubled in size. McCain. Simplot. Peak of the Market. Our turkey, chicken, soybean business—our soybean business is the second largest soybean business in all of Canada. Pulse crop industry, just to scratch the surface.

I look forward to doing everything I can from where I sit, ensuring these businesses are supported all the time here in Manitoba, so they can not only survive, but they're going to thrive.

In closing, the—I have to say—and Rick isn't here, but I had the opportunity to get to meet a lot of people here over a four- or five-day—[interjection] Rick Yarish. Not you, Rick; you're right here beside me. You got my back, man.

* (15:30)

He brought us together for four or five days, where we ate together, we talked together, we learned together.

My new friends that I had the opportunity to spend days with, we are all looking to do better. And I know we won't always agree, but let's leave this province—as my dad told me—better than what it was when we first got here.

Merci, miigwech, and thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Thank you, assistant deputy speaker. Well—see, I brought my fan base with me. So, I wanted, first of all, to acknowledge you. I think that's the first time that I've seen you in the Chair. And congratulations on your appointment, and it will be wonderful having you there.

So, I wanted to, I think, start off thanking everybody, quite frankly, for my re-election. My constituents, especially, for showing their confidence and trust in me. You know, you can't say enough gratitude for that.

My family. My long-suffering family, especially my partner, who—I've took her on this journey and, you know, every member of this Chamber realizes that your family also is a politician and feels the ups and downs of politics.

And it's not always a positive experience and—especially in the media, when you're getting skewered. I think the worst of it is for your family, when they read your comments. And, you know, you beg them not to, but, you know, it's that, you know, driving past a, you know, fire truck. You can't help but look and see what's going on. And they're the ones that are affected most, and they're the, sort of, unsung heroes.

None of us in this Chamber could do what we do without the loving support of our families, so I want to take a moment here to absolutely express my love and thanks to my wife, Jackie, and my children, who've very much been on this journey with me.

And, of course, my campaign team, who were absolutely amazing, who worked really hard not only

to help us secure victory in Fort Garry, but also help us secure victory in Fort Richmond and in Waverley and all parts beyond.

And I get to brag a little bit here. Our victory in Fort Garry was historic. It was the largest NDP vote share in that riding's history. We increased our plurality by 2,000 votes, by 18 percentage points. We took votes from all three other parties: the Greens, the Liberals and, of course, you know, what we're all proud of, the PCs.

And probably one of the best statistics I like from my election was that the PCs had an historic night, as well: they got the lowest vote that they ever had in the history of Fort Garry, and 76 per cent of Fort Garry residents voted against this PC government.

So, we're still working on the other 24, and they're coming around. You know, we got our work cut out for us, but, you know, you have to have goals, right?

But, you know, this was my sixth election and, by far, it was, in many ways, the most troubling. Manitobans had a really stark choice, and I don't think in the other five elections that I've been in that you saw that kind of, you know, absolute starkness in visions.

The PC party offered a vision of hate. Offered one of division. You know, one of intolerance.

And Manitobans saw through it, and they said, you know, that's not who we are. That's not who we are as a people, you know. We believe in unite—in unity. We believe in diversity. We believe that we are stronger together. So—and I couldn't have been more proud as a Manitoban on election night, seeing my fellow Manitobans reject the politics of hate, reject the politics of division, reject the politics of despair.

They didn't want to live in a province where their government was fighting with them all the time, that sought to divide us and used wedge politics for cheap electoral gain.

You know, it is an honour to be in this room, and everybody knows that here. But it matters how you get here, right. It matters how you get here, and what a tainted victory that would have been if you had won, if the opposition had won, and Manitobans affirmed mistrust and hatred and ignorance.

So—but they chose a different path, and we are better as a province for it, you know. And, you know, I—there's a lot of new members in the opposition side, and I hope that you will take a lesson from the last election; that you will say, you know what, this isn't

what our party is, this isn't what Manitobans are and that—we're going to reject that sort of politics of hatred.

But, you know, we haven't actually been to a good start, right. Some of the really divisive language that we heard during the election about defunding the police is already cropping up in this Chamber with new members.

And, again, the currency in politics is credibility, and if you want to be credible with Manitobans, you don't use divisive, ridiculous language like defunding the police. But I fear it's going to fall on deaf ears, and we're going to get more.

You know, you have a choice, as an MLA. You don't have to read the copy that the 22-year-old intern gives you. You can actually think for yourself and actually make, you know, reasoned and smart arguments in order to, you know, facilitate your position.

But, again—so, now, you know what was also interesting, and some of my colleagues might remember this, four years ago when I was sitting in here listening to the inaugural speeches of the 2019 PC Party, we heard the language always of most improved province. You remember that? Well, that was constant. That was ad nauseam about most improved province. That lasted all of about a year when Manitoba really started taking a turn for worse under the previous government, and then it wasn't mentioned again. Just, you know what, the stats were just too much.

You know, when the previous government took office in 2016, Manitoba had the second fastest growing economy in Canada. By the time they left office, we were seventh. Seventh, right.

We are about to hear from our fantastic Finance Minister an update soon and—about how badly the finances were managed under the previous government; absolutely fiscally illiterate government that did not know how to balance the books, did not know how to manage the purse and all they could do was cut, cut, cut. They cut Manitobans' health care; they cut Manitobans' education; they made cuts to roads and infrastructures; they slashed 30 per cent of our civil service. At this point, it is going to take years to correct and rebuild the province of Manitoba, right.

And during the election, did they apologize? Did they go around and say, you know what, we made mistakes, we're going to do better? No, didn't hear that once. They doubled down and created the strawman and fantasies about defunding the police. Well, well done. You see where that tactic got you.

But Manitobans wanted a serious government doing serious things, and that's who they elected and that's what's going to happen.

So, couple things that we will fix—were much broken by the previous government, and I'm confident this government is up for the task. There's things that we heard at the door, I'm sure you guys—everybody in this Chamber—did, and it is important that—as a collective we—we, in this Chamber, address the issue.

I think one of the biggest sleeper issues I heard at the door was affordable housing. I don't think this got enough attention during the election, and I hope that it gets its due attention here in this Chamber in the coming months and years.

* (15:40)

Fort Garry is a constituency of renters. Fifty per cent of my constituents rent. That's higher than the provincial average, and every single member in this Chamber has renters; 40 per cent of Manitobans rent. And many of my constituents are newcomers—about 30 per cent of my riding—and many of them are renters as well. And I have many seniors that live in my riding, again, also many renters as well.

And there are different housing needs for different people, at different stages of their life. I remember meeting young couple after young couple, and they're often in their early 30s, who were renting an apartment, who would say, you know what, we cannot afford to put a down payment on a house; the house prices have just gotten way away from them and wages haven't kept up. And with interest rates the way they are, they just simply can't afford a mortgage payment.

And so, they've been priced out of the market. They want to start a family. They want to build a life in Manitoba, but they just simply can't afford it right now.

Under the previous PC government, rents have skyrocketed and Manitoba now has the second fastest growing rent increase in Manitoba. And, you know where I got that stat? I got it from the former Economic Development minister's briefing book when I was his critic in the last six months of that government.

This was a government that knew full well that rents were skyrocketing in Manitoba much worse than the national average and leading the way in lack of affordability, and they did nothing. They did nothing. It was never a priority. There was no effort placed into it.

Well, that's going to change. And, of course, on this side of the—well, I'm in the middle—*[interjection]* Yes.

So, on the government side, we've been talking about above-guideline rent increases for years, which have been a trap for many Manitobans. And it certainly affected people in my constituency; I would hear horror stories at the door of people's rents going up 10 to 30 per cent year over year.

And I'm excited that we had members of our caucus, including our Finance Minister, who recognized this problem years ago and put this on the provincial agenda, brought legislation forward here—which the previous PC government voted against—and we now can correct that wrong. We now can do right by Manitobans and make sure that they have fair and equal rent increases.

And, of course, we all discovered, under the PC government's rule, a new word called 'renovictions.' Nobody knew what that meant until, of course, the previous government taught us. And, of course, for those who don't know, that's a situation oftentimes where you get some senior who's lived in the same apartment for 20 years, and the above-guideline rent increases, 100 per cent of which were authorized by the previous government—they never said no to a landlord—and these seniors were getting 10, 20, 30 per cent increases year over year to the point where they could not survive on their fixed income and were forced to leave a house and a community that they loved, oftentimes for multiple years, maybe even decades. And, of course, we need to put an end to that in Manitoba.

We would speak to seniors, many of—and my riding extends all the way down Pembina Highway to Thatcher Drive and just—is just shy of the Victoria General Hospital. And when I would go to the apartment buildings around the Victoria General Hospital, they are absolutely filled with seniors, and they told me that they moved into that neighbourhood, they moved into those apartments, because they were next to an emergency room at the Victoria General Hospital. This was a deliberate choice, that they knew as they aged that they would need more health care, and they wanted to literally be a minute away from an emergency room.

So, imagine their surprise when the former PC government gets into power and shuts down their emergency room. Imagine the sense of betrayal they felt, the sense of bait and switch, that their world had 'markably' changed and gotten worse for them, and a

service that was critical, that they relied upon, was no longer there for them. Well, I am proud to say that that is another wrong that is going to be fixed by this government.

I met a number of seniors who were widows that lived alone in their former family house, and they may have been there for 40, 50 years, and it was too much house for them. You know, it was—it used to house a family. And they wanted to move, but they were now on a fixed income, didn't have the money, and they literally could not afford to get a smaller apartment for them to downsize to. And they had to say—in their house, which was paid off, for economic reasons, even though it no longer suited their purpose, and they felt trapped.

And what was so crazy about that, is that you have, in that same neighbourhood, that 30-year-old couple who need a family home to start a family. And there's a home waiting for them, but they can't move in because both sets of Manitobans are trapped.

And that's how ridiculous our affordable housing crisis has become. We have seniors that don't have dignified and affordable homes that they can downsize into, and we therefore block young families from moving into the family homes and using them for a new generation and for a new Manitoba family.

And the previous government did nothing. Did nothing, completely ignored seniors. And you would hear that time and time again. Seniors want to have—stay in their neighbourhood in dignified, affordable housing, and so that they can, you know, live properly and not worry about whether they are paying rent or they're paying for medication.

I would speak to people living with disabilities. And, of course, there's a wide range of abilities, wide ranges of challenges, but the one sort of thing that united all of them was that there, again, was not affordable housing that could address their special needs, that oftentimes they would have to take what the market gave them, and it may not be set up in a way that works with their abilities.

And they would never have appropriate housing or, if it was, it would be so cost prohibitive that they couldn't afford it. And unfortunately, many people with disabilities are on the lower end of the financial spectrum in Manitoba, and there's certainly lots of work to assist them, but one of them—ways to do that is to have affordable housing for that.

So, as a Legislature, we certainly have lots to do.

Now, we saw from the previous PC government that they really had no economic strategy. They really had no strategy for affordability.

When you say affordability to the PC government, it's always to who, and the answer always is out-of-province billionaires. And they certainly spent four years of their term trying to make life easier for Toronto billionaires. And they did, but they didn't do a lot for Manitobans, and they didn't do a lot for the people who needed help the most.

And, likewise, if you want to sum up the previous government's economic strategy, it basically was rewarding PC Party donors. So, if a PC Party donor had some type of business out there, that previous government would dump, you know, pillowcases full of money onto their desk without any sense about whether it actually helped the economy.

And of course, we saw that it didn't, right. We went from No. 2 position in Canada to No. 7. And the facts speak for themselves, is that the previous government turned its back on Manitobans in every possible way that they could and, you know, thankfully, the horrors of that government are over and there's a brighter future ahead for Manitobans.

And we certainly have taken the lessons from that, that Manitobans want to do big things. And Manitobans can do big things, and they can do them by doing them together.

So, I want to thank you for your attention. I appreciate it.

* (15:50)

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): It's my honour to rise today and speak to the Throne Speech.

And I think it says a lot about the Throne Speech that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) got up, and I don't think he said a single positive thing about his own government's Throne Speech, and 'inspead'—stead, spent 20 minutes complaining about the previous government. Nothing to promote.

But, anyway, I'd like to congratulate all of my colleagues, all of our re-elected MLAs, all the newly elected MLAs. I'd like to congratulate Rick Yarish on his appointment as Clerk. I'd like to thank all of the officers at the table, the Hansard staff, the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Legislative security staff, all the staff of the Legislative Assembly.

They recently put on a first-of-its-kind MLA orientation for those of us who are new to the House,

and I think all of us would agree that it was incredibly valuable, useful experience, and I thank them for that.

I'd also like to thank our caucus staff who have been so welcoming and helpful to all of us who are new and endlessly patient with all of our many questions.

I have a lot of thank yous that I'd like to put on the record today, but first and foremost, I'd like to thank the people of Charleswood and Headingley who elected me to represent them here in the Legislature. The Roblin constituency is my home; it's where I'm raising my family. And I'm so honoured to be here on behalf of my friends and neighbours who call it home, too.

It's hard to overstate how grateful I am to be here and how much respect I have for this institution. For me, aside from parenthood, there truly is no higher calling than to be here, serving my community in this capacity. I don't claim to have a lot of talents, but the ones that I do have are put to their best use here in this role.

We all, as legislators, have an opportunity to leave our community and our province in a better place than we found it, and that is a gift. As I've been reminded a few times since the election, fewer than 900 people in the entire history of Manitoba have ever had the privilege of sitting in this Chamber, and I do not take that privilege and responsibility for granted.

But while this may be my first time here as an elected official, it is not my first time in the building. And if you've got the political bug, this building will keep calling you back, and I think many of us in this Chamber on both sides of the House know that well.

My political career started back in 2005 as a Legislative intern, and I actually owe a debt of gratitude to the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Patricia Chaychuk. And I know we were saying kind things about Patricia last week, but I actually have my own Patricia story.

When I applied for the internship program, she was in charge of the program. And back then, in 2005, you couldn't email in your application; you had to send hard copies of everything. And it was quite a convoluted process. The application came in different parts and, you know, your reference letters had to be sent separately. To make a long story short, a part of my application was missing, and it would have been really easy for Patricia to just say, oh, application incomplete, set it aside.

But she took the time to call me and say, hey, we're missing one part of your application; would you send it in, please. And I was so grateful for that one kindness, and I had my interview and I got the job, and I owe her gratitude for that.

I had just graduated with my political science degree from the University of Winnipeg, and I came to this building incredibly green and wide-eyed. But every day, as I entered the building, I would look at the Golden Boy that sits on top of the building, and I would think, I am so lucky to be here; I can't believe my luck.

And now I have a seat in this Chamber, and I get to come here every day on behalf of the people who elected me. To paraphrase a quote from my favourite musical: I get to be in the room where it happens. And that is a privilege and responsibility that I take very seriously.

It was during that internship that I first met Myrna Driedger, my predecessor as the MLA for Roblin, and today, I am fortunate to call her a mentor and a friend. She represented our community for over 25 years with integrity and her huge heart, and I think it's going to be a little while before some of the folks in our community get used there being a new MLA. I still get a lot correspondence addressed to her.

And, actually, on Remembrance Day, when I went to go and lay a wreath in the local ceremony, they announced me as Myrna Driedger. And they were terribly apologetic, but I assured them I'm sure that is not the last time that's going to happen.

Following my internship, I stayed on as a caucus staffer for another five years, working closely with Myrna when she was Health critic. So now I feel like things have come full circle.

And on that note, I would like to thank our leader for appointing me Health critic. I am humbled by the faith and confidence she's shown in me, and I take the responsibility of serving in this role very seriously. A strong opposition is good for Manitoba, and it is my intention to approach this role thoughtfully, critically and always with the best interests of my constituents at heart.

So those first six years in the Legislature were formative years in my career. I made many mistakes, and I learned from them. I learned what my strengths and opportunities are. And I got a front-row seat to the important work that happens in this building.

I made friends during those years here that are some of my closest friends to this day. When you've sort of gone through the political trenches with people it's a kind of bond that you wouldn't get in any other workplace. And I worked for some folks who are today my colleagues, including the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and, of course, our leader, as well.

I'd like to thank them—and, in fact, all of my caucus colleagues—for the warm welcome, support, mentorship and guidance over the last several weeks as we've settled into our new roles. Thank you.

But in 2011 my career took me in a different direction and I left this building for the first time to take a local leadership role in a global non-profit organization. And then in 2012, my first set of twins, my sons Rhys and Dylan, were born, and my career came to a screeching halt for the very best reason. And in 2015 my second set of twins, my daughters Aubrey and Rhiane, were born.

And just like that, we had four kids under the age of three. I was so fortunate to be able to stay home with my children for a few years. It was incredibly challenging, at times, to be a stay-at-home parent to four very young children, but it's not lost on me that not everyone gets that opportunity, and I am so grateful. It's also not the right choice for everyone, or for every family. But it was for me.

So, to bring it back to the Throne Speech for a moment, as a working parent, I know first-hand the importance of accessible child care. And I was so pleased that the former PC government under my colleague here, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), was able to open thousands of new child-care spaces for Manitoba families.

In fact, the former PC government made it about halfway to its goal of 23,000 child-care spaces by 2026, and it is my sincere hope that the new government will also make child care a priority for working families. And not just infant and preschool spaces; we need child-care spaces for school-age children as well, which is why it was so great to see the former government commit to new child-care spaces in new schools.

And earlier this year in Headingley, we saw the opening of the very first ready-to-move child-care centre, and that created 74 new child-care spaces in the community of Headingley.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It's operated by Bright Beginnings Educare, a fantastic child-care facility in the community. It's beautiful; these facilities are very quick to go up, they're cost effective and they make a tangible positive impact for families.

We need more of this innovation and commitment to accessible, affordable child care. The Throne Speech was pretty quiet on the future of these new child-care spaces and new school projects that were underway by the previous government. And as a working parent representing thousands of other working parents in Charleswood and Headingley, that gives me cause for concern.

Not every parent, not every family has the option or the desire to have one parent become a stay-at-home parent. Child care makes all the difference for those families.

Honourable—Assistant Deputy—oh, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I am grateful to use this opportunity today to thank many folks that have helped me to get where I am today. There is no one in my story who deserves more gratitude than my husband Jared. We've been together for 23 years, and married for 16 of them. He is my teammate and my partner in every way. He's unfailingly supportive of all my goals, but it's more than that; his loyalty and integrity, and the courage with which he does everything in his life, inspires me to be a better person and a better parent and a better partner.

He held everything in our very busy family together for the duration of the campaign, and to me that was the most important job on the campaign team. No matter what happens during the day, I am incredibly lucky to get to go home to the family we've created together, and I thank God for that every day.

Parenthood fundamentally changed me, as it does most of us, I think. It made me want to leave the world a better place for our children, and that's why I'm here.

* (16:00)

And I know that's not unique to me, I know many of us in the Chamber would say the same. But I want to thank my kids for their patience and the sacrifices they've made over the last year. Being their mom is my favourite and most important job, and I'm grateful every day that I get to do it.

But I've gone back to work in political roles a few times over the years, both here at the Legislature and over at Winnipeg City Hall. I've had the privilege of

working with amazing politicians and public servants and I have learned so much from them.

The last time I left this building, I told myself I wouldn't be coming back unless it was as an MLA, and here I am. But none of us gets here alone. I had a lot of help, and I want to thank a few of those people in particular.

First, my friend Jackie Maxted, campaign manager extraordinaire. I have been fortunate to know many trustworthy and capable people in my life but Jackie is the best of the best. I couldn't have had a better person keeping me on track for the last several months. I wouldn't be here without her.

I would also like to thank several folks on my campaign team, notably Glenn Lester, who door-knocked with me almost every night for three months; Julie Ryall and Tricia Chestnut, my long-time friends, who I actually met here in this building, who came out of their political retirement to help me, in two important ways: first, by door-knocking, but also by taking my calls and texts and offering me advice whenever I needed it; Cathie Cronin, my official agent; John Field, a jack-of-all-trades volunteer who did a little bit of everything and did it all well; the Reverend John Howson, who put up signs almost every day of the writ period; Sabrina Brenot, who I have had the pleasure of working with on more campaigns than I can count, and who loaned us her time and expertise; Carol Vandale and Pat Rondeau, who volunteered their time whenever they could; Dennis Maxted; Danelle Hueging; Jackson Hamm, and so many other folks that volunteered, donated, and offered their advice and expertise behind the scenes; and three of my long-time friends, Ryan Mitchell, Leslie Howard and Paige Johal, close friends from my childhood and my time in the Air Cadet program; and if I had more time, I would talk about the Air Cadet program all day.

I also want to thank the many mentors I have had over the years in politics in the non-profit world and in the small-business advocacy world, for everything they've ever taught me.

Some of them have moved on to other roles, some have retired and some have passed on, but their wisdom stays with me. Many of those folks I am not going to mention by name, just to protect their privacy, but I have certainly shared my gratitude with them privately.

Like most of us, there have been people in my life who gave me second chances or who saw potential in

me before I did, and without their encouragement and the opportunities that they afforded me when they could, I wouldn't be here.

They taught me to take responsibility for my mistakes and to learn from them, to trust my instincts, and to speak up with confidence.

I will name Myrna Driedger, Mavis Taillieu, Leanne Rowat, Bonnie Mitchelson, Scott Fielding, and thank them for their mentorship, example and guidance in this particular realm.

I just want to put a few words on the record about the beautiful constituency I am privileged to represent. The constituency is named Roblin which, frankly, causes no end of confusion for anyone familiar with the province of Manitoba. It's comprised of two distinct communities—neither of which is Roblin—Headingley and Charleswood.

It is home to many small businesses, terrific non-profit organizations, service clubs, schools, places of worship, community centres, seniors' residences, sports teams.

It's home to the Harte Trail and the Headingley Grand Trunk Trail, which together make up 16 kilometres of active transportation stretching from Beaudry Provincial Park in the west to the Assiniboine Forest in the east.

And these trails are managed by dedicated volunteers: Friends of the Harte Trail and the Headingley Grand Trunk Trail Association. They are responsible for trail maintenance, conservation efforts, education, and I just want to commend the work of these hard-working volunteers.

And I am, of course, part of the youth sport-parent community in Charleswood, and I spend significant parts of every weekend at the rink, at the gym, at the dance studio and on the soccer pitch. As a parent, there is no greater joy than watching your kids do what they love. And that's all possible thanks to the dedicated coaches, managers and staff, most of whom are entirely volunteers.

Sometimes I think that those conversations I have with parents and grandparents at the rink are the most valuable source of information for me as an MLA when it comes to learning what the people in my community care about.

Community centres are at the heart of both Charleswood and Headingley. I was privileged to serve on the board of Roblin Park Community Centre, but we've also got Westdale, Varsity View, Phoenix

and Headingley, and they are all incredibly active and integral parts of our community.

When I was growing up, hanging out at the community centre wasn't really a thing that we did. But my kids do, and they are so much richer for it. We spend loads of time every winter at Roblin Park Community Centre enjoying the rinks, the skating trails and the toboggan slides. We go to community centre carnivals and pancake breakfasts and barbecues and litter pickup days, and we get to know our neighbours. And that rich sense of community makes Charleswood and Headingley two of the best neighbourhoods I've ever been a part of.

But to take it back to the Throne Speech again for a moment, I just want to comment on the importance of two provincial grant programs: the Building Sustainable Communities program and the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund. Last year, several deserving projects and initiatives in the Roblin constituency received grants under these programs. That's funding that goes right back into the community in the form of improved facilities and new programs.

This year's Throne Speech was silent on the government's plans, and I know there are a lot of questions in the community about whether the new government will continue them or cut them. Our communities rely on these facilities and this programming, and I would urge the new government to continue these programs and make this funding available to the facilities and programs that enrich our communities.

Roblin is also home to a significant number of seniors. There is a thriving 55-plus centre in Charleswood and a seniors committee in Headingley that advocates for older Manitobans in the community.

I'd like to commend the former PC government for the seniors strategy, which was carefully developed with many important stakeholders external to government. It was the first time there was a real—whole-of-government approach to the issues facing seniors in our province. And as we all know, this is actually the fastest growing demographic in Manitoba.

And I hear from many seniors who are concerned about affordability and tax relief and the prudent use of tax dollars. I think the Throne Speech was silent on the needs of seniors and the fate of the seniors strategy, except to dissolve the department that was dedicated to their needs, which—crosses departments and folded into Health. I think that's a mistake. I fear that the results of this will be that seniors issues will be dealt with off the side of someone's desk rather than

being given the cross-departmental, co-ordinated approach that they deserve. I would urge the new government to rethink this and ensure that issues like health care, affordability and housing all have a seniors lens applied to them.

Before I close, I want to again reiterate my thanks to the people of the Roblin constituency for the trust that they have placed in me. It is an honour to serve and a privilege and a responsibility that I do not take for granted.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Well, thank you, Mr. Assistant–Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker–just Deputy. Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, for the privilege to rise in this House, to my first address as the MLA for Transcona and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

I always listen with great interest to–when new members rise in the House. I particularly was paying attention to the MLA for Roblin. I want to welcome her to the House. It is indeed a privilege, as she said in her inaugural address, to serve the people of the constituency of Roblin. Please know that the best thing that you can do as their MLA is to listen to their concerns, to bring their concerns forward in this House. I can tell you it was–it is, and remains, the honour of my life to represent the very fine people from northeast Winnipeg that call Transcona home.

I know that you will do the same as a new MLA, and when you have that privilege, it is something that will be a highlight for you. I can tell you, as an educator–and I know I'm speaking to you directly, but I don't mean to. I only mean to say that we have that privilege every day as teachers, to serve the communities that we were hired to serve.

* (16:10)

You are hired right now to serve your constituency, and nothing is better than that. You'll be challenged. You will be–you'll have days that are going to be frustrating. I'll be honest with you: when we were in opposition, there were some frustrating days.

But there are way more better days. And I wish that for you. I wish that for you when you're at events, when you're representing your community and constituency as their MLA. You'll have plenty of opportunities to get to know people, and I know you

probably know a ton of people, because that's the way you got elected.

And I know that you–

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member should direct his–*[interjection]*

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

MLA Altomare: At this point, I do want to get to the contents of the Throne Speech and how proud we are as the government of Manitoba to put forth a positive vision for the people of Manitoba.

I think what you noticed throughout the last election, Deputy–Assistant–no, Honourable Deputy Speaker; I will get this correct, because I will have to write that down at some point. I will say that there was a stark difference in election campaigns and election platforms. We saw that, and what we have today here is in our Throne Speech debate: the clear difference between what was presented by the Progressive Conservatives and what was presented by the New Democratic Party of Manitoba.

And what we presented was a positive, new vision for our province. A vision that includes every Manitoban, that didn't separate Manitobans, that instead brought Manitobans together, unified, in one voice, for one purpose. And that is for the betterment of the people of Manitoba. You see that outlined throughout the Throne Speech, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Manitobans were looking forward to this new day, and I can tell you that since October 3rd we have gotten to work in putting together a Throne Speech that reflects that new day.

In the portfolio of Education and Early Childhood Learning, I can tell you that what really resonated throughout the campaign, and what is clearly outlined in the Throne Speech, is a focus on education and early childhood learning; class size initiative; nutrition program that's available throughout the province.

We also talk about the appointment of two ADMs: one for Indigenous excellence; and the re-establishment of the ADM for French education. Bureau–l'éducation française is an important part that will be–that will be–highlighted as we move through the mandate that will take us right through to 2027.

There is a lot of work to do, Honourable Deputy Speaker. In education, what we had is a consistent underfunding of the system since 2016. It is. And here's the piece that was really quite difficult for

school divisions to move forward on, and that was—their plan, of course—and I'll move my paper off the mic so that it can be heard on this one—was, of course, their educational plans that benefitted their students and the students that they served.

We heard from boards of trustees where they consistently were communicating their frustration with the previous government on consistent underfunding of public education. And this was something that came through loud and clear.

You see that in the Throne Speech, and in saying that we will be consistent, predictable and funding public education, so that school divisions can plan more than just a month at a time; essentially they can plan in three-, four-year blocks so that they can provide the services that their families, that their communities and that their students require.

Class size capacity is going to be something that we're going to have to continually work on, because we know what the research says, Honourable Deputy Speaker. We know that when we focus more resources at the early years, we can have better results as students pass through the system.

We will work with our education partners to ensure that this initiative is brought forward, and in a way that benefits not just the students, but also their families and communities. Because, often, as you know this—you know this, Honourable Deputy Speaker—what happens is that, when you work very closely with families, you get to know families, you get to know their needs, and then you can provide the supports that they need to flourish.

Here are the pieces that we're talking about. We're talking about pieces as simple as inviting parents into the schools so that they know what's happening at schools. You'll see that teachers have a continual pipeline open with their families and communities. They do that by regularly emailing and regularly having meetings. This is something that will be exemplified, and certainly something that we want them to continue as their child progresses through their educational career.

Our kids 'desern' to learn in an environment that is conducive to their development. And so, we know that we will leave that to the school divisions to come up with the plans that reflect their communities' needs, because they're the best positioned to do that.

And school divisions now will have a partner in the provincial government—an active partner that will be with them every step of the way to provide those

environments. We will, of course, partner with them in ways that perhaps hasn't been done in—or, seen since 2016.

And here are the pieces that are really important. The word that we like to use is, we're a listening government. And listening governments, what they do is they call people to the table to have what is called productive dialogue, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

And how do you do that? Dialogue is different than discussion. I've talked about this before. This is based on the work of Garmston and Wellman that goes back to the late 1990s that really revolutionized my practice as a school leader. Is—talked about the difference between dialogue and discussion.

Discussion is very focused on the individual; your individual point of view, your individual world view. Whereas dialogue is much more based on a listening exercise where you're trying to find what is the particular issue you want to do—you want to tackle. And how do you do that? By listening to all the partners at the table.

So when we say that we're a listening government, that's what we mean. We're going to be involved in more dialogue that involves actively listening to all the partners, as opposed to discussion, where we're just telling people what our point of view is. So we're moving from a very individualistic perspective to one that's much more broad-based and involves all the partners at the table.

That's the difference, Honourable Deputy Speaker, between discussion and dialogue. And, like I say, revolutionized my way of working when I was employed by school divisions. And so what that meant was we also included student voice. And you see that in the Throne Speech.

You know, yesterday, Honourable Deputy Speaker, had an opportunity to meet with the Student Advisory Council, made up of students that are grade 9 to grade 12 throughout the province. And they were bringing their voice to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. They were bringing forth their wishes, their hopes, their dreams, their desires for the public school system here in Manitoba.

But you know what, I just don't want to limit it to the public school system, Honourable Deputy Speaker. I also—it includes students that also come from independent schools, which is something that is, I think, actually important, because when you include students from every type of school that's in the province, they get to see and hear from each other. And we talk

about that when we talk about discussion and dialogue.

This was truly a dialogue yesterday, where students were expressing their desires for a very productive educational experience.

And what did they talk about? They talked about equity. What do you find throughout the Throne Speech as a theme? Equity.

* (16:20)

You know what else they talked about, assistant—or, Honourable Deputy Speaker? They talked about inclusion. And you'll find that throughout the Throne Speech as well, that really important part of ensuring that everyone has a voice and is included in this document, one that's very important.

You know, when we put into action the words that we have on paper, that actually shows and displays how serious we are as a government. Since October 3rd we've already put in many, many pieces that have shown where our actions and where our words mean something.

We talked about the other day my colleague, the Minister of Health, actioning the point where we can now release patients over the weekend and providing \$2.75 million to ensure that patients can be discharged during the weekend so they can free that bottleneck that's up in the emergency rooms—those kind of comments and solutions that are going to be really important—and that's been outlined in the Throne Speech.

The other important piece is, of course, is that when we talk about the finances of this province we're looking at some very important initiatives that we're going to be undertaking.

But here's the piece: The previous government made commitments that were not sustainable for the province's finances, and it's left us with some challenges. When I tell you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we're up for the challenge; absolutely. And right now, what we're dealing with is a set of finances that, despite—despite—the financial obstacles that we have in front of us, we are committed to fulfilling our mandate of a balanced budget by the end of this term, despite what we were left with.

And there are many challenges that are facing this province, but I can tell you this province has elected a team of MLAs, on the government side of the House, that is ready to meet those challenges. Absolutely, we are. The energy and enthusiasm on this side of the House regarding the Throne Speech and regarding all

the points that are in the Throne Speech will certainly demonstrate our seriousness in making sure that we fulfil our commitments.

Of course, we made a commitment on the environment as well, Honourable Deputy Speaker, one that's obviously very important. We were not—we are not going to create a silo here in Manitoba where we don't communicate with the federal government. We're just simply not going to do that. That would be irresponsible to the people of Manitoba to do that.

Instead of picking fights, what we'll do is we will secure additional investments from our federal government partners, like the \$500 million with the federal government to deliver low-carbon, affordable electricity. We're already going to be doing work and we know the plans. We outlined the plans for the Pinawa Dam, replacing all of the turbines there—very old turbines, as a matter of fact, that now require modernization.

So what did we do? We partnered with the federal government to get that done and got that done right away. And you know what—and I do believe that that is very close to the member from Springfield-Ritchot's riding, I think Pinawa does kind of butt up against that, and it's going to be very important for that part of Manitoba.

The other interesting piece that, when it comes to the environment and ensuring that we go through what's called the just transition, is our recent heat pump announcement and initiative, and it's going to be really important to Manitobans.

So here's a piece: we're not talking about just air source heat pumps, Honourable Deputy Speaker. We're talking about heat pumps that actually go into the ground—they're ground source heat pumps—that go below the frost line where the temperature is much more stable and then is pumped back up where it's warm again and then distributed into either homes, businesses, schools. Can you imagine—can you imagine—schools that can use ground source heat pumps with consistent temperature and also air conditioning?

And so, here are the pieces that are really important. These particular pieces are important because they provide the role model for the rest of the province in how to do this properly and how to do this with a low carbon footprint, which will be really, really important, especially because, I mean, as many of you have seen myself, I mean, how long are we going to be around? I mean, I'll be around for a while; that's for darn sure.

But I can tell you there are—there's youth in Manitoba that are going to be around longer than I am, and what they need is a responsible government that takes the initiative, that takes their responsibility seriously to provide the leadership needed in a just transition.

And we can do it in Manitoba. We can be the role models for the rest of Canada, showing them how to get this done in partnership with other levels of government, which would be really important.

And you see that, Honourable Deputy Speaker, throughout the Throne Speech.

Here is the other piece that's really important, of course, and we're talking about reconciliation. Actioning the part of reconciliation is really important, and you see that throughout the Throne Speech document.

I can tell you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that in the Department of Education, we are committing to an assistant deputy minister for Indigenous excellence. That particular position is going to take a critical role—a critical leadership role—in ensuring that Indigenous students, families, communities have what they need to be successful in Manitoba schools, and a partnership that is government to government.

Just—right now, as a matter of fact, this afternoon we met with the Red River Métis and we met with the minister responsible for education for the Red River Métis, and had a very productive meeting.

And one of the things that the minister outlined was her enthusiasm for the Throne Speech contents, specifically the ADM for the Indigenous education, something that will be really, really important to them. And they want to work in partnership with us in a government-to-government relationship so that we can get this done.

It's turning the page on relationships that were damaged before, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

We're going to take the responsibility right now to ensure that we repair those very important relationships, and we're going to repair them with Indigenous nations on a government-to-government level to ensure that not only voice is included, but also leadership is included.

And sometimes that means that we're doing all the listening, because it's been a long history of a lot of telling going on. But right now, this listening government on this side is going to take all of the advice that we need from all of our important partners to ensure

that every word in this Throne Speech is actioned throughout our four-year mandate.

Nothing less will be satisfactory. Because I can tell you, when we put this here, when we put the Throne Speech together, it was not our ideas, Honourable Deputy Speaker. It was the voice of each and every Manitoban. Every MLA on the government side of the House has taken and put together a document and put forward their ideas that they heard from their community members to ensure that their voices are included in this document in front of us, the Throne Speech.

I cannot be prouder at this moment to represent the government in adopting and in supporting this very important Throne Speech and document.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Deputy Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen: today, I rise to share my inaugural speech.

My name is Carrie Hiebert, a long-time resident and newly elected MLA for the constituency of Morden-Winkler.

I am honoured to share my appreciation for my family, friends and my constituency, as well as my personal journey that has brought me to this very seat in the Legislature.

I will share how my life events have prepared me for the very work that I am doing in my critical—my critic role of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

First, I want to express my gratitude to the amazing constituents of Morden-Winkler for trusting in me and electing me to be their representative in the Manitoba Legislature.

The constituency of Morden-Winkler is 75 square kilometres consisting of two beautiful cities of Morden and Winkler. Connecting the two communities is a corridor with a vibrant business and manufacturing sector.

* (16:30)

Many know Morden for the amazing three-day festival called the Morden corn and apple. *[interjection]* Yes. The large festival is filled with food trucks, amusement rides, artisan stands and large stage for live music, along with many events and activities. The community is steeped in history, culture and a—lots of beautiful green space.

Winkler is home to the—*[interjection]*—thank you—is—Winkler is home to the Winkler Harvest Festival, a three-day, fun-filled festival of rides, food and music, with a large display of fireworks at the end of the—a family fun weekend.

Winkler is deeply rooted cultural community with an ever-growing industrial manufacture and business sector. Both Morden and Winkler have vibrant arts programs and music scenes, not to mention the amazing recreational programs and golf courses. I am proud to represent a community that values people. We have such a diverse community with—both economically and culturally.

Our community of Morden-Winkler is one of the most generous areas in the country, people stepping in to meet the need whenever a need arises. One of those opportunities to give was announced by the Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation, setting a goal to fundraise to add equipment to the new hospital expansion, adding much-needed equipment that would otherwise not be available.

There are so many organizations that—blessed by the generosity of those that give monetarily—donations—and also volunteering of their time.

Again, I'm very humbled and have—to have been elected to represent such a kind and generous community. I am blessed to have had opportunity to serve in so many capacities as a citizen and contributing community member. Volunteering is one of the things that brings joy to my life.

I am a wife, mother, a community volunteer and a small-business owner who has called Morden-Winkler her home for over 25 years. I want to thank, first, my family. My husband Mike supports me in all of my fearless, crazy ideas and goals. I want to express my gratitude to my oldest son, Taylor, and his wife, Madison, for always being there when I needed to talk or bounce ideas off someone. Taylor is always a steady, grounded voice, and I'm so proud of the man he has become.

I would like to thank my youngest son, Colton, who is watching today, and his wife Aley. Colton, thank you for your help with my campaign and always being there to share in my victories and my political firsts. Colton has been involved with me in the politics from the start, and I had the honour of him sitting with me on the floor for the—during the Throne Speech. I am so proud of him.

I also want to thank my friends and volunteers. I have had so many amazing friends and family help me

with my campaign; I can't express it enough how much each one of you means to me. You came alongside me as friends, financial supporters, encouragers, campaign team members, even event planners and participants. Words can't express how much I appreciate each one of you.

Each one of you has helped me achieve a huge goal. I stand you—I stand before you this—for—as the first woman to ever be elected in this position in Morden-Winkler. I am proud to be the first woman MLA to be elected in this—in Morden-Winkler.

There have been many strong women in leadership in my life that are both political and have also had otherwise influences on me. I have had the honour of serving and learning from strong examples, such as retired MP Candice Bergen and our first woman premier and leader, Heather Stefanson. *[interjection]* Did I say that wrong? Oh.

I have also been blessed to have a mom that supports me and several—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Just a friendly reminder that you're not allowed to use members' names; you should refer to them by their constituencies.

Mrs. Hiebert: The leader of our party.

I have also been blessed to have a mom that supports me, and several spiritual mothers and prayer sisters. I am a proud elected member of the Legislative Assembly, and most recently, our PC caucus leader entrusted me to be the shadow Minister for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness. I am humbled by the trust that my colleagues and Manitobans have placed in me, and I am eager to serve with passion and compassion.

I want to look back to the place where I started, so I can look and see how far I've come. Let me share some of the highlights of my journey to help you better understand who I am.

I was a successful business owner at age 22. My then-partner and I started a small diner, then moved up to owning two Subway sandwich stores. I have always had a hard work ethic and a head for business. We were a successful team.

Several years later, I found myself in a dysfunctional relationship and he asked me to leave our home with our two sons, then two years old and a baby. With a small bag of clothes and two car seats, I looked for someone to take us in. We were essentially homeless overnight. I lost everything, all my security, I had no

money or a bed to sleep in. Many people took us in and gave us a place to stay.

I met an angel during that time named Loraine Helps, and she's watching today, yes. She worked for income assistance, and she gave me—and she saved me. She had nothing but love and compassion in her eyes. It's a very hard place to be, the shame you feel, not to mention the way others look at you in your community, but there's no judgment with—there was no judgment with Loraine. To this day we still have a bond.

For three months, she helped me get back on my feet and find a place to live. No one plans to be homeless. No one wants the insecurity of not having money to buy milk for their child. Life circumstances don't take—don't care who you are or where you come from.

We need to continue to work towards helping those who need help. I work hard—I worked hard in my life as a waitress, saved up to buy my first home as a single mom. It was a fixer-upper, but it was mine. I had a coffee can on my stove labelled bathtub because I wanted a new bathtub.

I will never forget how it felt to buy my first home. It did not take long for me to start realizing my goals once again. With hard work and an overcoming spirit and a strong faith, I became both successful and confident again. I continued to strive and overcome every challenge that would come my way.

I have had the most amazing experiences as I've gone through life, including my many different achievements, having prepared me to serve here in this House beside many of the greatest examples I've ever had.

I have been married to a wonderful man for 18 years and have the most amazing children who are also like me, goal-oriented and both owning their own businesses at age 27 and 29.

This brings me to where I am today. I started my own business, and my two sons and daughter-in-law are also business owners, with a fourth—with my fourth daughter-in-law is the top of her class in university with a goal of helping youth and mental—mental health. I'm so proud of my family.

I continue to step out, take risks and achieve my goals; to improve myself and give my children a solid, stable life and example. My journey has not always been easy, but when I look back at how far I've come, I am eager to tell everyone: dream big, take that risk; you're worth it and you can do it.

I know I deserve to be here, and I feel there is a reason why I'm here. My life has taught me so much. I have such an incredible passion to help others around me and so serve people. I am very thankful for the support of my family, those who have loved and encouraged me have been the source of my—throughout my journey. They are my inspiration, reminding me every day of the values that shape our lives. I am also grateful for the trust you, the people of Morden-Winkler, that you have placed in me, and I assure that you—I assure you that I am fully committed to working tirelessly, advocating on your behalf.

My entrepreneurship background as a business owner has equipped me with knowledge that translates very well into my role as an MLA. My experience in both political—provincial and federal government, having served our communities for over 11 years under two leaders that I really admire and appreciate. I have run the palliative care program and volunteer program at Boundary Trails Health Centre and been on the Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation board.

I have worked hard—I have worked for local chamber of commerce in city of Winkler. I have volunteered with many charities and non-profit organizations and have felt compelled to give back to our community in ways—in any way possible, including several—mentoring several single mothers over the years. In addition, I have been very involved establishing a mission overseas in India to help single mothers, a farm where they can earn a living in a safe place and provide for their children.

* (16:40)

I am very involved in the business sector also. Morden-Winkler is a rapidly growing and thriving community that is blessed with resources and skills in place to make it an economic hub in southern Manitoba.

It is this same platform that I will use to advocate for our businesses, manufacturers and farmers. For industries and the business sector to continue to grow, we need to ensure infrastructure such as access to adequate water and good roads, human resources and skilled labour, forest-to-field jobs, and to provide the best health care to the population that help grow our economy.

Some of the issues that I plan to address in our community and province: I will work to help our community attract new doctors and other health-care professionals that we need to fill our—the Boundary Trails Health Centre expansion that is under way.

Morden-Winkler, the RM of Stanley, have seen a steady increase in our immigration program, which is a testament to great opportunities that our—both our cities can provide—have provided.

However, this is—with this rapid-growing growth comes the issue of housing. Today I want to address three critical areas that demand our immediate attention: housing, addiction and homelessness. These are real challenges that have been faced by so many in our province.

From the streets of Winnipeg to all the corners of a province, the lack of affordable housing is becoming a stumbling block to a healthy life of—and prosperity for so many Manitobans. My commitment to addressing these challenges is rooted in both my personal and community experience, and also my background in business and politics.

First, let us turn our focus onto housing. Every person, regardless of their background, culture, orientation or circumstances deserves a safe and secure place to call home. As I experienced myself, it is disheartening to witness the struggles faced by individuals and families who find themselves without stable housing.

This is not only a Winnipeg challenge, but a problem that expands throughout the province and country. We must take action to address this urgent need.

I would like to see development of comprehensive housing policies that prioritize affordability, accessibility and sustainability. We must collaborate with community stakeholders, developers, housing advocates and local governments to ensure that our strategies reflect the diverse needs of our people.

For a rapid—for a rapidly growing economy such as Morden-Winkler, the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, I will prioritize housing for all.

Next, we need to confront the issue of addictions that is affecting so many, including the young, in our society. Addiction is a complex challenge that requires a different approach, blending prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. As a family member of a drug addict, I know and understand the addiction battle that they fight against every single day.

Let's extend our hands to help those struggling with substance issues, offering not only treatment but also the support and empathy they need to reclaim their lives, providing a safe and healthy way to break free, and give them a chance to live a healthy, fulfilled life.

Furthermore, we must invest in education and awareness issues to eliminate the stigma surrounding addiction. By fostering a compassionate, understanding community, we can create an environment that encourages individuals to help—to seek help without fear of judgment of the general public. That is why compassion is so important, not only in this House, but in our communities and our streets as well.

As we tackle these issues, we should draw inspiration from both our own experiences of compassion and justice, but also those around us also.

Many faith-based organizations have deep compassion as well as a desire for restorative justice. My personal family member—my family's—my personal family's member's addiction story includes his faith in a strong way. His faith was so real and important to him in the darkest struggles to get free from his addiction. He has shared how he found help to continue as his healing journey in the Christian faith.

Let us come together regardless of our backgrounds or beliefs. Communities, compassion—sorry—yes—concerns—communities where compassion and justice are cornerstones of our policies and actions. I will commit to doing all I can to help our communities and all Manitobans to continue to thrive.

I understand the importance of economic growth a job—and job creation, and I commit to fostering an environment that encourages business development while prioritizing the well-being of our citizens. We can make Manitoba the economic powerhouse of our country.

In the 11 years that I have been involved in politics I have witnessed the power of collaboration and the impact that collaboration, resulting in policies that are rooted in the principles of equality and the betterment of our communities as a whole.

I am dedicated to working across party lines to find the missing common ground and deliver results that benefit all members of our communities. Together we can unite and focus on the common goal of building a better, more stable, safe and secure place for families, a more prosperous and inclusive future for our children and grandchildren, making us a have province, a province that attracts the young, the skilled and the educated to help fill jobs, to keep us growing and moving forward as a province.

As I take on this responsibility of the shadow minister of housing and addictions to homelessness,

I am increasingly aware of the challenges that lie ahead, but I am confident that, with the collective

efforts of our communities and all of us of government we can overcome these challenges and build a brighter future for generations to come.

In conclusion, let us embrace this moment as an opportunity for unity, compassion, and positive change. Together we can create a community where every person is valued, where everyone has a home, homes that are not just structures, but havens of security and warmth, where addiction is met with empathy and support, and where homelessness is a thing of the past.

I am honoured to serve you and I look forward to the journey ahead. May God bless Manitoba and our constituents as we diligently serve Him for the next four years.

Thank you.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and address some comments towards our government's very first Throne Speech.

I do want to echo some earlier comments made by MLAs on this side and across the way regarding family and the importance of family and, you know, just how we're not able to do our jobs without the full support of our loved ones.

I want to first of all thank my husband Joel, whose idea—in lots of ways, this was his idea that I enter into politics. I remember after the then-Leader of the Opposition asked me to consider running, I didn't really feel very confident in my ability to enter politics. At that point I was a stay-at-home mom of two toddler boys, one aged one, and the other aged three, and, you know, laundry piled up to here, just couldn't even fathom how I would be able to do something like this.

And my husband Joel told me, you know, you have the education, because I happen to have a political science and economics background; you have the experience because you have been apprenticing under your mom for the last 12 years, because my mom was an NDP MLA for those 12 years and, you know, I was always there to help write speeches and attend events with her and be her fundraising co-ordinator.

And I did that, not because I ever wanted to be a politician, but because she was my mom, and I knew that, you know, what she was doing was very, very difficult and that it had to be all hands on deck and I was going to be there for her during, you know, this difficult period of her life. Didn't want to make—have any

regrets. I actually moved from Ontario to Manitoba in order to help my mom.

* (16:50)

And, finally, Joel said, and I think that you're going to be really good at this because you really care about the community, and the community's going to really, you know, benefit from somebody like you.

And then, you know, still not sure, and my husband Joel said, and I think you might regret it, if in 10 years, you know, you said no to this opportunity, you know, from the—that the leader of—the then leader of opposition had asked me to do this.

If you don't take this, then I think you might regret it. And I, you know, my husband and I, we've been married now for 15 years. Before that, we had known each other for 12 years before I asked him to get married to me—another story for another day. And I've never met anybody who, like, I trust so much to do things and to say things and to really be there for me and to do that in my best interest.

So when my husband Joel says to me, I think you might regret it in 10 years, that really perked up my ears, and, you know, I just looked at the laundry everywhere and okay, maybe we can do this because I don't want to live with regrets.

And, honestly, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I haven't regretted a single day of this, no matter how hard or how challenging it's been over the past four years. And he was right; and my husband Joel often is right. Even though he's quiet and doesn't say much, he's always really thinking about me and thinking about the situation. And so when he does put his oar in, I do listen because he's proven to be right on so many times.

So I just want to thank my husband Joel, who is probably going to be super, super embarrassed, but he doesn't read Hansard anyway.

You know, when—now, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) asked me to consider being in Cabinet, this was mind-blowing, really. I know exactly what this would entail, maybe a little bit more than other folks in the House, obviously not our former colleagues in the front benches, but because of, again, the experience of my own mother in Cabinet and her experience as an interim NDP leader, I just saw how gruelling this was.

And it was, you know, mind-blowing that, you know, the Premier had asked me to do this. I went back to my family, and in particular, I spoke to my eight-year-old son. We have two boys, an eight-year-

old and a six-year-old. And I asked my eight-year-old, and my six-year-old—they were there in my bedroom—and I said, well, I've been asked to become a minister. What do you guys think I should do?

And my eight-year-old said, well what does a minister do anyway? And I said, well, you know, for example, the Minister of Health would be in charge of all the hospitals across Manitoba. And, you know, if there's anything wrong in those hospitals, then the Minister of Health would be in charge of trying to make sure that those hospitals are running and making sure that they're, you know, being safe places for the people that work there and for all the patients that need to go there, for example.

And my eight-year-old son said, okay, that sounds like you're going to be very, very busy. Are you going to be as busy as you were during the election? And I said, yes, I'm definitely going to be busier than I am now as an MLA, but I don't think I am going to be as busy as I was during the election, because people on—MLAs on both sides of the House know how gruelling an election is. It's a gruelling, gruelling experience.

And that's what my eight-year-old said. And he said, because—maybe you should become a minister in four years when I'm 12 and my brother is 10, because we really still need you right now. And during the election, you know, I didn't really see you very much, because, you know, he'd go—they'd go to bed before I would come home at night. And my eight-year-old son said, and sometimes, you know, I'd be lying there in bed and I'd be trying to remember your face and I couldn't remember what you look like.

So, I'm sure everybody knows, here, what I would probably—what I was feeling. You know, nobody wants to hear that.

But there is a reason why we have to make this choice in order to, you know, obviously have some sacrifices for our families. And that's because we're here for the betterment of Manitoba. We're here because we care about our communities and because we care about the people of Manitoba, and because we want to put them first and because we care about our shared destiny and our shared purpose as Manitobans.

And that's why, you know, we make those sacrifices. I promised my children that I wouldn't be as busy as that gruelling election, and that we would make more time; and that the next time it would be that busy to that level was in another four years.

So just a deep, deep appreciation and thanks to my husband, Joel, to my children, to my parents, Orli

and Flor, who when I am unable to come home at a certain time, are there to help out with the kids; to my mother-in-law, Nanay Rosa [*phonetic*], who's moved from Mississauga to live with us here, now, in my house—who's, you know, going through health challenges that we're supporting her through, but at the same time brings, like, an immeasurable richness to our children's lives because of her presence there in our home, now.

So, you know, just such a great thank you to my immediate family, like my brothers and my sisters, who were always there to even help out during the election, even though some of them didn't even live there. They participated in, like, the call centres, you know, reaching out, like—my immediate family has really, really been there for me all throughout my life.

And now as, you know, I enter this new chapter here as an MLA and as a minister, I really need support more than ever, and my family has really been there for me. And I wouldn't be able to do this without them, so thank you very much to my family.

I do also want to touch on some incredible volunteers at the Notre Dame constituency. Again, these are folks that I would not be able to be here without their dedication and perseverance. I want to speak about Jean Padrinao, who, you know, is our constituency assistant. Tita Jean, as we call her; Tita, T-i-t-a, means, kind of, auntie, because she's, you know, older.

But this person is practically an immigration expert. In the Notre Dame constituency, we receive a lot of immigration inquiries from across the province, and if I have to be honest, including even parts of Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta. People reach out to our office because they're—they know that Tita Jean is very, very well versed in these matters, even though immigration policies keep changing.

Tita Jean Padrinao has really been an anchor for us there at the constituency office. And she was there even before I was elected; she's been helping in this capacity as a constituency assistant for—getting close to 15 years now. And during the election she was also a volunteer for the Notre Dame riding, and again, just so much thanks goes to Tita Jean for all of her efforts as a volunteer.

I also want to speak about Beth Campomanes. Beth is another constituency assistant that we have in Notre Dame, and she actually has legal training from the Philippines. She was unable to do her accreditation here in Manitoba, but she brings that legal background

with her to all the casework that she provides in our constituency. And what can I say but that kind of dedication and level of expertise, for somebody to help with all the different casework that comes through our doors, it was—and she also helped so much during the campaign and the election.

I also want to lift up Rey and Imelda Sangalang; again, these are a husband-and-wife team, but Rey Sangalang has also been there for our constituency and

volunteered for more than 10 years. And we're very, very grateful for Tito Rey, despite the fact that he—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) will have eight minutes remaining.

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

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