

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXVI No. 37 - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 19, 2022

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 19, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Folklorama Volunteers

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, it is my privilege to rise before the House to recognize the long-standing engagement of the thousands of volunteers who have made Folklorama our province's flagship multicultural festival.

We will, of course, all remember that this past October a resolution was brought forth by the MLA

for Tyndall Park to recognize Folklorama for its contributions to honouring culture and diversity in Manitoba, and that this resolution was adopted by the Legislative Assembly at that time.

As of many things that have been disrupted or delayed in light of adaptations we have all made while navigating this pandemic, so too was the important gesture of holding an official event in recognition of this deserving organization and its representatives.

Madam Speaker, today we had the opportunity to do just that. As we continue to meet with and work with Folklorama, I'd be remiss not to seize the opportunity to highlight the fact that, prior to the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, Folklorama had succeeded in putting on a record-breaking festival: over 440,000 'vinitis'—visits to 45 pavilions, a great celebration of culture and diversity for what was its 50th anniversary edition.

This success is due to the mobilization of over 20,000 Manitobans each and every year who, as volunteers, choose to align their efforts, energies and even their personal vacation time to share and celebrate their respective cultures, traditions and ways of being with the world.

We have all been enriched by the willingness of thousands of our neighbours, colleagues and friends who, each and every year, choose to generously share their traditions, foods, dances, stories, history and music to make the world's longest running and largest multicultural festival a success that we know it today.

That is a vibrant, living, cultural diversity at its finest, Madam Speaker. I am even more humbled at the realization that this two-week festival would not be possible if it weren't for the fact that the event itself is a reflection of the rich, diverse and nurtured transmission of heritage that occurs in homes, gyms, community centres, places of worship, art venues and artisan studios and workshops all around the province throughout the year.

Folklorama is a festival that is the sum of its all parts. Of all these parts, the pavilions and the volunteers they bring together are important. We are aware that the pandemic has had a negative effect on the continuity and 'cagectedness' within our cultural communities.

The traditional momentum has been interrupted by this pandemic, and some volunteers and pavilion organization—organizers are facing very real challenges, whether they be financial, related to capacity or a combination. We recognize the commitment and work that lies ahead at the volunteer level and remember that it is within the pavilions, where the magic happens, where that volunteer recognition is so well deserved.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members to join in recognizing the board members, staff and thousands of volunteers whose engagement and dedication have ensured Folklorama's success for 50 years, and whose collective efforts will ensure that it can build and recover in 2022 and in the many, many years to come.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the many wonderful volunteers who make Folklorama a very special event in Winnipeg every year.

Since 1970, Folklorama has been an important contribution to Manitoba's social fabric by giving us a reason to come together to learn, appreciate and celebrate our own diverse cultural backgrounds, and also those of our neighbours and friends.

Folklorama's mission is incredibly important to improve our society and live together in a peaceful and respectful way. Not only does Folklorama give us an opportunity to enjoy tasting unique cuisines and seeing the beautiful displays of cultural attire and performances, but it brings us together in our common values to respect each other, appreciate diversity, foster inclusion and building cross-cultural bridges.

With over 400,000 people visiting pavilions each year, Folklorama simply could not happen without the 20,000 volunteers who participate. All of the volunteers I have talked to were so proud to be at Folklorama and said they gained a deeper understanding of their own cultures as well as the many other groups represented at Folklorama. Their experiences helped them build confidence and they celebrated their culture and served other people at the same time. Many children grow up seeing Folklorama and dream of one day participating in some way, whether it is performing on stage, making delicious meals or teaching others about their culture.

I'm so excited to attend Folklorama again this year and greet many of the amazing volunteers who are already starting to prepare for the summer. You are all vital in creating an event that is not only fun and exciting, but goes far beyond that to bring

Manitobans together and celebrate the beautiful diversity of the cultures and groups we are all made up of.

Please join me in celebrating our Folklorama volunteers today.

Thank you.

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

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

* (13:40)

Ms. Lamoureux: Back on October 12th, 2021, this House unanimously passed a resolution Recognizing Folklorama for its Significant Contributions to Honouring Culture and Diversity in Manitoba. I table a copy of the resolution now.

And today we have the honour of celebrating with so many past and present board members and volunteers who have joined us today in the gallery.

Madam Speaker, every summer since 1970, Folklorama has showcased and educated us about Canada's diversity through dance, entertainment, food, heritage and games and so much more.

In addition to this, Folklorama has been recognized as the largest and longest running festival of its kind in the entire world, which was determined by the international council of organizations for folklore festivals and folk arts.

And not only does Folklorama foster a sense of community and belonging by bringing hundreds and thousands of volunteers and performers and artists and neighbours from all across Manitoba and even beyond our borders, but they are trail-blazing our province forward.

Let me share an example, Madam Speaker. On June 20th in 2017, Folklorama proudly became signatories with Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord, committing to reconciliation by taking steps to implement Calls to Action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada through the promotion of educated—education related to the history and culture of Indigenous people.

Furthermore, over these last couple of years and over the pandemic, Madam Speaker, Folklorama volunteers went above and beyond in creating a

One Unified Virtual Experience that allowed us all to still celebrate Folklorama virtually.

And, Madam Speaker, they even made themselves accessible to workplaces—perhaps we should have them come perform at the Manitoba Legislature—and to schools; they fit their programs into the school curriculums. They went into child-care centres and they even made themselves available, through following public health regulations, to perform in people's driveways and in their backyards. That's what makes us so proud to be here in Manitoba and to be celebrating Folklorama.

Madam Speaker, I am so grateful for those who have joined us up in the gallery today for taking time to come and meet so many of us MLAs and celebrate with us, and your patience throughout the pandemic.

And I want to thank my MLA colleagues for their unanimous support on this resolution and for those who came out and celebrated with us this afternoon.

And lastly, I want to thank all the past and present volunteers and board members of Folklorama for creating this world-class event through partnerships with businesses and groups, all supporting Manitoba's rich cultural heritage and diversity.

Thank you.

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Education Week

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to invite all Manitobans to recognize this week—April 18th to 22nd, 2022—as Education Week, and April 20th as School Bus Driver Day.

Education Week in Manitoba honours education, learning and the valuable contributions of dedicated educators, school staff, bus drivers, principals, administrators, business professionals and mentors who work within and in collaboration with our education communities. Education opens doors of opportunities for Manitoba students.

In 2015, I introduced bill 214, a private member's bill proclaiming the third Wednesday in April of each

year as School Bus Driver Day in Manitoba to recognize and promote awareness of the important role of school bus drivers.

School bus drivers provide safe and efficient transportation for over 2,000 bus routes, Madam Speaker, carrying over 68,000 students across the province each and every day. They have done this while meeting the challenges of the pandemic and this harsh winter. School bus drivers also ensure that students get to their sporting events and field trips to facilitate further learning opportunities.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize Jean Wasnie, a school bus driver in the Sunrise School Division, for 50 years of service, Madam Speaker. Jean hit this milestone this past January and has no plans to stop any time soon.

I encourage all Manitobans to acknowledge School Bus Driver Day and show appreciation to the drivers in their communities.

In addition, let us all pause and reflect on the importance of education and its contribution to Manitoba's future. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the committed educators, school staff, bus drivers, principals and administrators who have navigated the challenges presented by COVID-19 with innovation, flexibility and thoughtful care and consideration for students, families and fellow staff.

Over the last two years, nearly \$250 million in Safe Schools funding have been allocated to school divisions and schools for COVID-19-related spending, including \$63 million allocated to ensure continued pandemic protection for schools to support the mental health and well-being of students and for ventilation improvements, \$6 million had been allocated to provide PPE to schools and over 2.1 million rapid antigen tests supplied to schools for staff and students.

Learning does not end with graduation from grade 12. A mindset embracing lifelong learning paves the way to a future enriched by educational, workplace and community service experiences, all of which contribute to both personal well-being and the prosperity of our province.

We are listening to the K-to-12 commission on education and moving education forward here in Manitoba. Stay tuned tomorrow, Madam Speaker, for more good news.

I am pleased to recognize two special guests from the Manitoba Teachers' Society who are here in the

gallery today: Nathan Martindale, vice-president, and Samantha Turenne.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): The dedication and effort that school staffs have undertaken to keep our children safe and learning over the past two years has been nothing short of heroic.

To the teachers who continually put in extra hours adapting their lesson plans, making adjustments minute-by-minute: we commend you.

To the EAs who support kids in classrooms: we salute you.

To the custodians and custodial aides who've gone above and beyond to ensure that schools have safe physical learning environments: we thank you.

To school clerical, the first point of contact for all schools: we appreciate all that you do to keep schools running smoothly.

To bus drivers: of course, your dedication is lauded and appreciated.

However, Madam Speaker, when the minister opposite expressed his appreciation, he needed to apologize for the years of de facto cuts educators have had to endure under this PC government's austerity agenda and how it has impacted key public services like public education.

Reflect on that. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: There remains little evidence, Madam Speaker, that this PC government has been supportive of public education and educators with any real action other than cuts and failed legislation like bill 64.

Madam Speaker, there isn't enough time to begin the list of cuts and hardships imposed on educators and public education under this PC government, but let me just state one.

The Brandon School Division was forced to cut 10 teaching positions, programs for speech-language—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —psychology and reading recovery. The prioritization of cuts over people will certainly leave a lasting impression on kids, families in the Westman region.

Madam Speaker, we sincerely hope that the Education Minister reflects on the austerity agenda imposed on the public education system by his government and the shock it continues to have on kids and families throughout the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I ask for leave to speak to the ministerial statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: It's Education Week, and we want to thank everyone who works in the education sector.

Education is woven directly into the founding of our province.

La constitution du Manitoba garantit l'éducation en français comme un droit.

Translation

The constitution of Manitoba guarantees education in French as a right.

English

Early childhood educators, teachers, principals, superintendents, professors, researchers, retired teachers, substitute teachers, coaches: everyone who works in education deserves our thanks.

And I want to say a special thanks—because when it comes to the pandemic, one of the strongest and most resilient and adaptable sectors was education. Truly incredible, innovative work was done in order to care for our children. The people who work in education support them, teach them, dry their tears, nourish their bodies as well as their minds and souls.

* (13:50)

There was a professor at the University of Manitoba who said it as simply as it can be said: If you want a guaranteed return on investment, put it into education; you will always get back more than you put in.

My father used to tell me that education was the great leveller. It breaks down barriers to opportunity; it opens new worlds, leads to new discoveries, new potential—both for the learner and for society. These changes, and getting better at something, can happen at any stage of life, from preschool to adult learners.

We do face significant challenges in Manitoba, especially for students who struggle because of circumstances completely beyond their own control: childhood poverty, family breakdown, adult literacy,

access to post-secondary education and education for the recognition of credentials earned outside of Canada.

Education is the key to invention and reinvention and change, and in learning something one can see the world in a new light and it can change people and inspire people to make change. Most of us have someone in our lives who gave us that insight or who helped us—a teacher, a principal, a coach—who we still remember with fondness because we're still carrying those lessons today.

And my kids, as anyone will, will get discouraged or frustrated and say they think they're just not good at something, like math or English. I always say, no one is born knowing how to skate or play the piano. It takes effort and it takes practice. And while we may never reach perfection, we can certainly work towards it a little harder each day.

Thank you to all who work so hard in education each day, because there is no life in Manitoba that you have not touched. As individuals and as a province, we owe you a debt of gratitude.

Thank you. Merci.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Norbert Farmers' Market

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): What started out as a tiny farmers' market 34 years ago has grown to become the largest outdoor market in Winnipeg and the surrounding region.

The St. Norbert Farmers' Market hosts thousands of visitors each year and brings in hundreds of thousands of dollars for the many local vendors who set up shop each week. Many changes have taken place over the past 34 years. Many of these changes have been under the guidance of executive director Marilyn Firth.

Marilyn has been the executive director for the past 14 years and describes the market as extended family: a gruff uncle in one corner, families with small children chatting in another and moms and pops cooking up great food while fiddling and guitar-playing cousins perform together on the stage.

Marilyn has overseen more than \$1 million in investment in the market site, including doubling the size of the market, a water management project which addressed annual flooding of the site, construction of permanent washrooms—the site had no bathroom facilities prior—and a new building which allows the market to remain open year-round.

The past two years have created challenges and opportunities. Throughout COVID restrictions, Marilyn advocated for and kept the market open so individuals could have access to fresh local farm products, including launching an online market that continues to this day. The results of Marilyn's commitment to the market and Manitoba families will carry on for years to come.

To quote Hermann Grauer, the board president: Under Marilyn's guidance, the market has become a strong force and outlet for farmers and artisans of the region. She has helped position the market as a key player in answering increasingly important questions asked by people surrounding their supply of food. Everyone at the market, the board, staff and vendors, respect and appreciate Marilyn's commitment to the market and her willingness to always go above and beyond to meet the needs of the organization. Her visionary leadership will be missed and we wish her well in her future endeavors.

You have been the force by which the—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

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

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: You have been the force by which the market has not only grown, but set an example for other farmers' markets to follow. We wish you well on your retirement and future endeavours.

West Broadway's Good Food Club

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I am pleased to rise today to recognize the incredible work of the West Broadway Community Organization's Good Food Club.

Madam Speaker, 20 years ago, some West Broadway residents had a vision of growing, harvesting, preparing and eating their own fresh food. They wanted to make food more affordable, to build friendships and a more equitable community with improved health outcomes, so they formed a community club with a sliding scale so that everyone could participate.

Today, program staff support 1,600 Good Food Club members who are engaged in their own food security from field to table. Weekly farm trips give inner-city residents the chance to get their hands in the dirt and learn from a local producer how food is grown and harvested. Members earn sweat equity points to be traded later for the food they helped grow.

The Good Food Club has worked with several farms, providing labour and direct market access in exchange for subsidized food prices. At both summer and winter markets, volunteer club members learn skills by preparing and distributing affordable vegetables, fruit, meat and cheese to their neighbours.

In 2019, volunteers served 3,000 meals and attended 29 markets. More than 200 children and youth attended cooking classes that year.

But programming had to shift during the pandemic, so the Good Food Club distributed thousands of emergency hampers, food boxes and event kits for the cooking and gardening programs that they offered virtually. They also initiated a program for connecting with older adults at home.

My guests in the gallery today include Ailene Deller, good foods—Good Food Club's program director; Nicole Sward, the initiatives co-ordinator; long-time volunteer Katherine Carruthers; and a founding member of the program, Mike Maunder.

Madam Speaker, I ask everyone in the Chamber to join me in thanks for their important contributions to a better nourished and more connected community in the West Broadway neighbourhood of the Wolseley constituency.

Thank you.

Annual Poetry Reading Event

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): In 2002, the Flin Flon Writers Guild, Toastmasters and the Flin Flon Public Library came together to plan and to start the annual poetry reading evening. It is usually held in the library, and many writers and readers are invited to share a reading. Many share their own original works; others find poems that are meaningful to them to read.

The writers' guild, which was formed in 1983, has appealed to many people of all ages. They have enjoyed having members as young as 18 to seniors. They have prompted many to participate in the poetry evening. The annual poetry reading now includes individuals that have moved away but continue to read via Zoom. One of the local Toastmasters, Doreen Roman, does an excellent job as the emcee for the event both in person and now virtually.

In conversation with Harry Hobbs and his partner Glenda Walker-Hobbs, who are writers' guild members and Toastmasters, they proudly shared that this year there were readers from coast to coast as well as a few readers from the US.

Mr. Hobbs has invited the MLA to participate in the poetry reading for several years. While I am no poet, I always look forward to the challenge of finding just the right poem, or, as the case this year, finding two poems to share. I also enjoy listening to the reading by others as they share what is important to them.

Flin Flon can proudly boast many published authors, including both the Hobbs, Myrna Guymer and Brian Humphreys, to name just a few. There are many more who write for their own enjoyment.

The annual poetry reading is just one of the many artistic showcases in Flin Flon that has so many talented folks that call Flin Flon home or who have lived there in the past.

Here is to many more years of poetry readings.

Thank you.

Manitoba's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the window to prevent global temperatures from rising more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial averages is rapidly closing. Action is needed now. Implementation and actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions takes time.

Because of inadequate action by consecutive NDP and PC governments, Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions have risen by 5.6 per cent from 2005 to 2020. Every other province but one has achieved substantial reductions.

Manitoba is an outlier. Manitoba is far behind other provinces.

Between 2005 and 2020, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions fell by 9.3 per cent, while in Manitoba they went up substantially.

This year, the government's budget has allocated only 6 and a half million for one of the most urgent of all causes. The money has been allocated without a target and without an adequate approach to reduce the greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Each greenhouse gas and each section of our economy must be itemized as to precisely what reductions are planned.

* (14:00)

A major effort is needed to move to electric vehicles, to retrofit homes and to include an effective plan in agriculture. Agriculture is responsible for a large majority of the methane and nitrous oxide production and a considerable amount of the production

by vehicles and buildings. In total, this may account for as much as 40 per cent of Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions.

There are opportunities in agriculture which are a win for farmers, a win for the province and a win for the climate. As Liberals, we've been saying this for 20 years, yet so far neither NDP nor Conservatives have collaborated effectively with agriculture producers to reduce greenhouse gases.

There's precious little in the Manitoba budget to slash greenhouse gases. Vague promises of future action are not enough. It is urgent to act today.

Dave and Lora Rawlings

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): A Hamiota family made the best of pandemic isolation after constructing a hockey arena inside an unused sheep barn on their acreage in my constituency of Riding Mountain.

Dave and Lora Rawlings, with the help of their sons Sam, seven; Matt, five; and Dave's father, Eric, built the rink out of necessity and availability. The busy young boys needed activities. The handy father and grandfather needed a project and the 90-year-old barn no longer served an agricultural purpose.

So, in the fall of 2019, the Rawlings, who own the Hamiota Home Hardware, began the dream of creating an arena. They cleaned out years of evidence of the red barn's previous use and prepared it for the next phase while retaining its old-world charm. As with most rookie seasons, there were growing pains. The ice was crummy, and at times, too slushy to use.

In the fall of 2020, the loft floor was removed. The roof was reinforced. A heated dressing room was constructed and a sound system was installed. Around the ice surface the boards were decorated with signs of four generations of businesses the Rawlings family has owned in Hamiota and Glenboro—and, yes, the ice was much better thanks to an ice resurfacing machine: a repurposed Rubbermaid cooler.

While the boys participated in the Huskies hockey program in Hamiota, the family still found the time for many skates and scrimmages in their own arena on evenings and weekends. The first skate this past fall in the Coliseum, as one of their friends named it, was November 28th, and due to the cold spring the ice was still in fine form in mid-March for their 44th skate.

Madam Speaker, Stompin' Tom Connors would have been proud to hear the words of his famous hockey song blaring from the speakers in the

Rawlings Coliseum: The puck is in / the home team wins / the good old hockey game.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Surgical and Diagnostic Services Timeline to Clear Backlog

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, nearly 170,000 Manitobans are waiting for a surgery or for a diagnostic test. We've now learned that, instead of using the money that they've announced previously to help with the surgical backlog for things like, say, surgeries, this government is actually using it to pay for routine visits to the family doctor.

Now, of course, visits to the family doc are important, but those should be covered by the base funding for the health-care system. New initiatives to tackle the surgical backlogs should—I don't know—tackle the surgical backlog.

So I ask this government: When—by which date—will they clear the surgical backlog?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): It's a great opportunity for us to talk about our record investment in health care to the tune of \$7.2 billion. Madam Speaker, that's over \$1 billion more than any NDP government ever invested in health care.

In that we've included \$110 million for reducing the diagnostic and surgical backlog. We've made steps on that backlog already. We realize there's more work to do, but we're committed. We've shown the investment in it. We are committed to that investment and we're committed to Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, who can believe them when it comes to health care?

The Stefanson government, just like the Pallister government, announces ever greater sums of money, and yet, what's the reality today? Manitobans are waiting longer than ever for surgeries—to say nothing of those who are waiting longer than ever in emergency departments as well.

But, again, we know that this government—much as they did under Mr. Pallister last year—is going to roll out announcement after announcement, but it's going to be the average Manitoban sitting in a hospital bed or waiting in pain at home left to carry the burden.

At this point, we know that this government needs to be judged by one criteria: by which date will the surgical backlog be cleared.

So I'd ask the Deputy Premier, what will that date be?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we recognize the challenges the pandemic had brought to Manitobans and, certainly, all those across the country and across the world. It's created health-care challenges for sure.

We recognize that. That's why we've committed \$110 million in this year's budget. We committed \$50 million from last year's budget on this. We have a plan to address this for Manitobans.

The NDP has no plan, and they should put whatever plan it is on the table because Manitobans want to know.

Our government has a plan and Manitobans will get—have these backlogs addressed.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the money that they announced for surgeries was not spent on surgeries last year, so who can believe them this year when they start quoting new figures about amounts that they're going to spend? It seems like they're just going to keep repeating the mistakes of Brian Pallister, even though it's now the Stefanson government.

And we know that seniors and those waiting in pain should hear a date, a date by which that pain will end.

And so I'll ask the government this: If the amount that they announced will be enough to get the job done, why can't they tell us a date by which the surgical backlog will be cleared?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we put together a task force of experts in the field to address the surgical and diagnostic backlog, and we've invested \$110 million. We've also committed \$630 million in a contingency fund.

We recognize there's challenges in terms of capacity in providing these services, but we're taking steps to make sure that these backlogs are getting addressed and that Manitobans have the care they want as soon as they want it—Madam Speaker, a commitment by this government and a plan to address these backlogs going forward.

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

Use of Agency Nurses Cost to Health System

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Let's just correct the record. That's the amount announced. The amount invested will prove to be far less this year, just as it was under Mr. Pallister last year.

We know that another major issue in the health-care system is the practice of hiring private nurses to work in our public health-care settings. This year the amount that this government is on track to spend: \$40 million, Madam Speaker. That's \$40 million that could have been used to hire nurses in the public system.

Not only does—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —this cost more, it also disrupts the care that patients receive. The government should stop this practice and should stop giving millions and millions of dollars to private companies.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) simply stop spending \$40 million a year on private health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is we're going to continue to invest in health care in Manitoba—this year, a record amount: \$7.2 billion for health care. And the member should know a lot of that will go into salaries and wages and benefits for doctors and nurses in Manitoba.

We're looking for more doctors and nurses in Manitoba. We've committed an additional 400 seats to train nurses. Madam Speaker, we have a plan to get those nurses to work here in Manitoba. The NDP has no plan.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, they announce ever higher sums, and yet Manitobans are waiting for longer. And guess what: there are fewer nurses working in the public system.

The PC Party simply has no fiscal responsibility.

Mark my words, Madam Speaker. Manitobans are beginning to see through the charade—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –on the other side, and nowhere is that more clear than in their practice of hiring private agency nurses. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: We know that hiring a nurse through an agency costs more, but it also leads to less quality care at the bedside. Manitobans deserve better.

Manitobans who are admitted to hospital deserve to have a nurse who gets to know them by name and to—gets to know their health-care needs.

Will they simply stop the practice of spending \$40 million a year on private agency nurses?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we're going to continue to invest in health care in Manitoba. We're going to make sure that nurses are there for Manitobans when they need it.

Madam Speaker, I know they're hooked on ideology. We're not. We're going to make sure that Manitoba nurses are there for Manitobans when they need it.

* (14:10)

Record investment: \$7.2 billion. We're in the process of training more nurses. We're going to make sure and we're working closely with the nurses colleges to make sure that we have trained nurses available to work here in Manitoba.

I tell you again, Madam Speaker, we have a plan; the NDP has no plan.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, our plan is simple: we're going to fix the damage that the PCs caused to health care.

Now, we know that this plan is going to take years to execute because they have damaged our health-care system to such an extent. Even as we speak, there are over 2,000—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –nursing positions vacant in Manitoba.

So, again, there's no fiscal responsibility with their plan, because even as they spend \$40 million more on nursing agencies, we are down 2,000 nurses across the public health-care system. That has a real world impact on patients at the bedside. Patients

deserve to be able to have a nurse who knows their name and who gets to know their health-care needs, Madam Speaker.

Why has the government abandoned that and when will they stop spending \$40 million a year on nursing agencies?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we should reflect on when the NDP were in government. They were in government, they closed over 20 emergency rooms across Manitoba. We are investing in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: –health care in Manitoba, record investments: \$7.2 billion, including \$110 million for the pandemic and diagnostic surgical backlogs.

Madam Speaker, we've also built in here—if we can provide—get these services for Manitobans—a contingency of \$630 million.

We have a plan to invest—health care for the benefit of all Manitobans. The NDP have no plan.

Use of Agency Nurses Cost to Health System

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, five years ago the PCs began their plan for cuts and the results have been obvious. Far too many nurses are missing from the 'bedsign'—bedside, and there's an extreme reliance on agency care. Manitoba is on pace this year to spend \$40 million on private agencies. That's more than three times what was spent in 2017.

Why does the minister think spending \$40 million on private agency care is good for Manitobans?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for Union Station for the question. It gives me an opportunity to share with Manitobans that in the last few years of the NDP's government, they spent over \$46 million on agency nurses, Madam Speaker.

Perhaps if they had addressed the issue of the cost of agency nurses—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: –during their time in government we wouldn't be left as a government to clean up their mess. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, to be clear, the heavy reliance on private agencies began before the pandemic because of this government's cuts.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: In 2019, Manitoba was already spending \$12 million more on agency care than they had just a few years prior. Manitoba is now spending \$40 million per year on private agencies. That money could go directly to hiring more nurses into public health care and bringing back the beds that this government cut.

Why does the minister think it's acceptable to spend \$40 million a year of Manitobans' money on private agencies? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: I put the question back to the member opposite: why did the NDP government, in their 17 years in office, not see that \$46 million that was going to agency nurses required a strategy to address hiring nurses?

They did not see it, Madam Speaker, but our government did, and that's why we committed \$19.5 million to add 259 nurse training seats. Five institutions will see new nurses coming into their—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—programs. Budget 2022—and I hope the members opposite vote in favour of the budget—adds an additional \$11.6 million.

Again, Madam Speaker, we're left to clean up the NDP's mess.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, I continue to be struck by this government's absolute rejection of any accountability of the mess they've made of our health-care system.

There's 2,400 nursing positions vacant across our province. Nurses are being told they can't take summer vacations. Nurses have been running short in our hospitals for years under this government. And at the same time, the Stefanson government is spending \$40 million on private agencies—more than three times

the amount spent just a few years prior. Madam Speaker, this needs to stop.

Why does the minister think spending \$40 million on private agencies is okay and acceptable here in Manitoba?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I want to give a huge shout-out to all the individuals in Manitoba that have gone into the nursing profession.

I've said many times before, it's a very rewarding and fulfilling occupation, and I want to thank the 115 new nurses that I was part of their graduation last fall—new nurses coming into the system—as well as 149 nurses that have completed the ICU nurse training program since last April. Madam Speaker, 93 nurses in the last year have also completed the 12-week critical care orientation program so they can support Manitobans in our ICUs.

The profession is great. I thank the Manitoba Nurses Union, all the nurses across the system, across the province, that have done the—such an incredible work during the pandemic, Madam Speaker.

Internationally Educated Nurses Barriers to Working in Manitoba

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, the system to recruit and qualify internationally educated nurses is broken in Manitoba. This is happening at the worst possible time. This government's cuts mean that 2,400 nurses needed at the bedside aren't there.

This government is now spending \$40 million on private-agency care, and internationally educated nurses are part of the solution, but this government is adrift.

Why aren't they taking this issue seriously, and why won't they address this issue today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member opposite for the numerous emails and conversations we've had about internationally educated nurses.

Our government is very committed to addressing this issue. We're working very closely with the colleges. We have a working group that has been established with the various colleges, as well as Shared Health, and we are moving towards solutions, Madam Speaker. Our government is very solutions focused. That is why we've made available \$23,000 to internationally educated nurses to go through the licensure process.

We will continue to support our internationally educated nurses to join the health system here in Manitoba.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, indeed we've had numerous emails and numerous conversations, but no solutions yet.

Last month, as minister said, that 1,300 internationally educated nurses had been identified as prospects to work in Manitoba, but the college says it's only seven. The minister is misleading Manitoba about what is really going on.

She says that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —funds are identified, but there's not enough people actually eligible. Newcomers are voting with their feet; they are working elsewhere, even when their family has already settled here in Manitoba.

Why is the minister not focused on a solution for our internationally educated nurses?

Ms. Gordon: Again, I want to remind the member opposite that the question is coming to this side of the House, where we are all solutions-focused individuals, a government that is focused on addressing an issue members opposite did absolutely nothing about.

* (14:20)

I'm not sure which college the member is calling, but I had the opportunity to meet with the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba last week, Madam Speaker—just last week—and we're working closely with them to ensure that 19 individuals who are preparing to go into the bridging program at Red River College gain access to that program.

That is not seven, Madam Speaker, that's 19.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, I would suggest that this government is not solutions focused; they are austerity focused. And they're definitely not patient focused.

Madam Speaker, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds less internationally educated nurses are applying each and every year. The college has said that

there are only seven internationally educated nurses currently eligible.

This minister is misleading Manitobans about this issue. We need internationally educated nurses, but the Province is turning them away. There are registered nurses right now working in Ontario close by who want to work here with their families, but are being told no.

We need immediate action.

Why won't this minister address this issue immediately?

Ms. Gordon: Perhaps the definition of austerity has changed—can't be a government that invests \$7.2 billion total for health care in Budget 2022, Madam Speaker, can't be. It can't be a government that's—invests \$1 billion more than the previous members opposite ever invested in health care. And it can't be a government that I'm proud to say has invested \$3.1 billion in pandemic supports to protect the lives and livelihoods of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to be solutions focused, to do what is in the best interests of Manitobans, and we will allow members opposite to continue to dial the wrong number.

Surgical Backlog at Concordia Hospital Concordia Foundation Fundraiser

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): The people of northeast Winnipeg have repeatedly suffered this government's health-care cuts since 2016. Not only have we lost diagnostic—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —labs, IV clinics, we've also lost our ER and CancerCare out of Concordia.

Now the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is making it worse by forcing the people of northeast Winnipeg to raise funds themselves to reduce the surgical backlog this government had helped—created.

That's disrespectful and wrong.

Madam Speaker, will the Premier reverse this—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —decision today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Shame on the member opposite.

What is disrespectful and wrong is that the member is saying that a foundation should not do the activities that they are established to carry out.

Foundations fundraiser. Foundations—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—support projects, quite often in their hospital and health-care facilities, and I'm proud that the Concordia Foundation came forward to the task force to partner on an amazing opportunity to build a fifth OR at Concordia Hospital and provide care for individuals not just in the north section of the city but the entire province. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Transcona, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Altomare: I want to remind this government that nearly 170 Manitobans are waiting for surgery, millions of dollars set aside to reduce the backlog were instead used for routine procedures, and now the Premier asks residents of northeast Winnipeg to fundraise hundreds of thousands of dollars for their own health care.

That's not leadership. Manitobans shouldn't be forced to pay out of pocket for services that they need.

Will this government admit their mistake and fully fund the Concordia suite today?

Ms. Gordon: The members opposite continue to try to put inaccurate information on the record.

There is no higher priority for our government than clearing the backlog, ensuring Manitobans receive the diagnostics and surgeries that they need.

Again, I'm grateful and thankful to the Concordia Hospital foundation for coming forward to our government. We are investing \$4.9 million—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—Madam Speaker. The members don't want Manitobans to know this will lead to 1,000 surgeries being performed annually at that fifth operating room. And we continue to invest \$400,000 in spine assessment clinic to help 900 patients receive their treatment or care plan sooner—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Transcona, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Altomare: The residents of Concordia, Rossmere, Radisson and Transcona have suffered countless health-care cuts at the hands of this government. It's been going on 'frince' 2016.

Rather than reverse course of the predecessor, the Premier is now forcing residents to raise funds for health care that nearly 170,000 Manitobans desperately need. Residents are saying enough is enough.

Will the Premier fully fund these surgeries at Concordia today?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, we will continue to support Manitobans in the diagnostics and surgeries that they need. We recognize that there are several Manitobans that are suffering in pain, and our focus is to end that suffering. That is why we have already provided funding for 11,000 additional procedures to be completed.

And I'm pleased to report that all \$50 million of last year's funding dollars will have been spent on request for supply arrangements, for contracts with our service delivery organizations to perform endoscopy, cataracts, pediatric general surgery, dental, ear, nose and throat and more, Madam Speaker, for all Manitobans in the city of Winnipeg, north—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Highway 6 and Road Upgrades Need for Infrastructure Spending

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, since coming to office, the PCs have left \$166 million unspent on our highways in this province. That means promised upgrades aren't getting done. We know there's a need.

After years and years of cuts in this province, thousands of Manitobans are now calling on an investment in important upgrades, especially on highways like Highway 6.

So the question is simple: Will the minister commit to spending his roads budget this year and start by investing in Highway 6?

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

And the member has to realize, too, that when they were in government—when the NDP were in government, they underspent—they spent—they overspent in every department except for Infrastructure.

I'm not going to take any lessons from this member from the opposite for investing in highways. We have a \$1.5-billion investment in the next three years, and that's far more than the NDP ever had.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, in this minister's budget this year, \$60 million in investments are being unspent from last year. Promises made and promises broken once again by this PC government. And those broken promises have consequences.

Now there're over 5,000 Manitobans who have signed petitions asking for upgrades to Highway 6. They're asking for road upgrades, rest areas, more regular passing lanes, all to help reduce accidents, which are so common on Highway 6.

Will the minister simply start to listen and work to make Highway 6 safer?

Mr. Piwniuk: I just want to let the member opposite know that our government is investing in—all across the province. We're going to invest money into all our infrastructure, no matter to the north, the south, the city of Winnipeg, around the Perimeter Highway. We are investing in infrastructure record amounts of money—\$1.5 billion in the next three years—and we're going to continue making sure that Manitoba is going to be a place that people would want to do business here, and because of our infrastructure investment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (14:30)

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, for the fifth year running, this government is underspending in their highways investment.

And so the question is: why should anybody trust this minister when he says this year they're going to spend their budget?

We recognize that this year's budget reveals \$60 million was not put to use, and all at the same time that Manitobans are asking for their highways to be upgraded—highways like Highway 6—who are just simply asking for this government to start to make this highway safer. Five thousand people have now signed a petition.

I ask the minister to answer to them: Why will he not put his budget to work and start by investing in Highway 6?

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I just want to let the member know that we spent over \$20 million in the past, in Highway 6, as we took government. We're going to spend another \$9 million this coming year for Highway 6.

We're going to spend money all over the province, not just in the ridings that they used to have, when that's all they spent the money in, was their ridings that they held.

We're going to invest all over this province and make sure that economic development is going to happen here, and we're going to invest in our highways so that it's going to be safe for Manitobans. And I just want to thank our engineers that—who are going to bring projects forward to make sure that we invest our money in this province into the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Housing Buildings Maintenance and Security

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, Manitobans who live in Manitoba Housing deserve to be treated with dignity.

Sadly, people who live in Manitoba Housing, some of whom are vulnerable and marginalized; seniors on fixed incomes; refugee families; people who can't work because of a disability, an injury or a mental health challenge, have had to live in crumbling housing with bedbugs and gangs as neighbours.

I have written the minister more than once about issues at 101 Marion in St. Boniface, which is a high-rise where recently the fire and sprinkler system was out of service for two weeks.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and minister hire round-the-clock security patrols and increase the budget for routine maintenance to make sure that Manitoba Housing buildings like 101 Marion are safe for residents?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite.

Manitoba Housing has always been committed to the security and the safety of its tenants, and I do want to take a moment to appreciate all the work that our Minister for Families has done on this portfolio. She has addressed some very complex issues that have

arisen in her time within the Ministry of Families. And, Madam Speaker, we are committed to continuing to improve daily on the safety, security and for our housing issue in those who are most vulnerable.

Over the past decade, Manitoba Housing has made significant improvements to their security operations, including hiring in-house security staff and expanding the camera, card access and restricted key systems.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamont: We know the NDP left a serious mess with Manitoba Housing and the PCs have been promising to clean it up, but it's been six years and lots of people are telling us it's worse than ever.

One of the greatest concerns is the safety and security of residents. The government switched to private security and private management, and it's not working except in one case where residents told me the new management excelled at pest control because, they told me, it was the first time they'd ever had more meth dealers than bedbugs.

We have heard from advocates that criminals and gangs are taking over suites and entire buildings, and that residents are afraid to leave for their safety, including seniors with dementia.

What is the government's plan to clean gangs out of Manitoba Housing to make it safe for law-abiding residents?

Mrs. Guillemard: I appreciate, again, the question coming from the member opposite.

Safety is the No. 1 focus, and that has been the No. 1 focus of our government when it comes to Manitoba Housing for all of our residents who utilize the service.

Madam Speaker, that is why our government has provided \$138.7 million to Manitoba Housing in the 2022-23 budget to ensure that low- and moderate-income Manitobans have access to safe and affordable housing. And we have more work to do, and we will get it done.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Action on Climate Change Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the latest IPCC report says action is needed now to keep global temperatures from rising by more than 1.5°C.

Because of inadequate action by consecutive NDP and Conservative governments, greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba have risen by 5.6 per cent from 2005 to 2020.

In every other province but one in Canada, emissions have fallen, so much so that averaged overall Canada's greenhouse gas emissions are more than 9 per cent below those in 2005.

Manitoba is an outlier and far 'behind' other provinces.

Why was the mention in the budget so small and so weak compared to what is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our province?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): I certainly appreciate a question from the member on climate, Madam Speaker.

We know that our government is focused on climate and reducing GHGs, Madam Speaker. We know that under the former NDP government nothing was done.

We are committed. Our announcement this morning to invest over \$50.7 million to fix up orphaned and abandoned mines that were left behind by the NDP, Madam Speaker, is a crucial investment towards reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and also improving our environment for all Manitobans.

We know that there's lots of work to do. We are committed to that work, and we will get it done.

Education System Capital Investments

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Last week, our government announced another historic budget that will better the lives of all Manitobans.

One of the highlights of our government's 2022 budget is an emphasis on rebuilding our province.

Will the Minister of Education and early childhood education expand on the great strides our Education department is taking to expand school capital projects for Manitoba's most important resource, our children?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'd like to thank my colleague from Portage la Prairie for that excellent, excellent question today on the start of Education Week, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we know that in order for students to succeed they need to be in the proper environment. Under the failed NDP government, our children were subjected to oversized classes and crumbling infrastructure.

That is why our government has put just over \$260 million of capital projects into 2022 alone. This investment builds upon our promise of building 22 new schools by 2027.

We are committed to ensuring that all students in Manitoba have a great quality of education, Madam Speaker.

Safe Consumption Site Addiction Treatment Services

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Nearly 1,200 lives have been lost to drug overdoses in Manitoba over the past four years, with this number increasing every year under this PC government.

Tracy Sanderson, who became an Overdose Awareness Manitoba advocate after losing one of her own daughters to opioid overdose and a step-daughter to suicide after a long battle with opioid addiction, is not surprised.

It's clear that aggressive action is needed. It's needed today.

Will the minister commit to doing something today to end this overdose crisis in our province and open a safe consumption site and help the families who are suffering with losing loved ones in this province?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Appreciate the question coming from the member opposite.

And we've had this discussion, I think, for the past three or four weeks. Our government doesn't start today, it started six years ago today, addressing the issue of addictions and mental health needs in this province.

Madam Speaker, I will also point out the overdose deaths have been increased across all jurisdictions, regardless of government in power. And it is a tragedy; every single loss of life is a tragedy for each of the families experiencing that.

And, Madam Speaker, we will continually look at harm reduction strategies and improvements to help every family avoid experiencing these kinds of tragedies.

Thank you.

* (14:40)

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

Mrs. Smith: Madam Speaker, 1,200 people have died in this province in the last six years under this government. This government is not doing nearly enough to tackle Manitoba's addiction crisis, which is becoming worse every day.

RAAM employees agree with Tracy. In fact, they said that every person that we don't see or have to turn away, there's a little voice in the back of their head saying, is that the one that they're going to read about in the 'bituaries' on Saturday? That's hard and breaks my heart.

They go on to say that this provincial government has little interest in supports for people with addictions and calls that disgusting. Existing funding has been called a piecemeal approach that won't solve the issue.

Will the government do the right thing and take aggressive action to address the addiction crisis—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Guillemard: I know that the member opposite really wants to portray this as an ideological kind of approach or argument, but it's not.

Madam Speaker, the member opposite's party had 17 years in government. Not a single RAAM clinic was ever designed or implemented or started up. They were dealing with the same pressures that we are as government, but instead of just looking at a problem, we came up with a solution.

We will continue to invest in the core services to address addictions and treatment and recovery for everybody who's struggling with substance—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: —use issues. Thank you.

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

Mrs. Smith: This government's approach has been to ignore proven methods when addressing Manitoba's

addiction crisis, such as drug-checking services and safe consumption sites—1.8 hours a day RAAM clinics are open in this province; that is simply not enough. Twelve hundred people have died in this province. These are someone's—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith:—loved ones.

Five other provinces have implemented safe consumption sites, yet this government continues to ignore leading research, research that was actually in one of their reports that they took out.

We need to do everything we can to address the addiction crisis and reduce overdose deaths, including implementing a safe consumption site.

Will the government commit to doing so today and help save Manitoban lives?

Mrs. Guillemard: Again, the member's opposite party was in government for 17 years, listening to the same experts who advise us today, and they were told the same things that we were told: invest in the core services; you do not have enough investment in the addictions, mental health recovery, poor services. But for 17 years, the member's opposite party did not invest in those areas.

So we listened to the experts, and we are investing in those core services. And I'd be happy to sit down with the member opposite, or any member from the opposition, if they'd like to discuss various initiatives that they think are important to include as we roll out our five-year roadmap plan.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Foot-Care Services

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare:—in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

This petition is signed by Ethel Timbog [*phonetic*], Angelique Larocque, Donna Fidler and many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes, rather, until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for care—for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The—are there further petitions?

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, the N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and in surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical foot care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

This petition has been signed by many Peter Dick, Jessical [*phonetic*] Nelder, Terry Lansdowne [*phonetic*], Donelda Parenteau and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

* (14:50)

The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the—sorry, to urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling these positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health centre—excuse me—as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by many Manitobans.

Louise Bridge

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

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

(10) The provincial budget due in mid-April 2022 is the Province's opportunity to announce its portion of funding for this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg in her new 2022 provincial budget to build this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

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

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

And this petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

An estimated 1 million people suffer from eating disorders in Canada.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses affecting one's physical, psychological and social function and have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

The development and treatment of eating disorders are influenced by the social determinants of health, including food and income security, access to housing, health care and mental health supports.

It is important to share the diverse experiences of people with eating disorders across all ages, genders and identities, including Indigenous, Black and racialized people; queer and gender-diverse people; people with disabilities; people with chronic illness;

and people with co-occurring mental health conditions or addictions.

It is necessary to increase awareness and education about the impact of those living with, or affected by, eating disorders in order to dispel dangerous stereotypes and myths about these illnesses.

Setting aside one week each year to focus attention on eating disorders will heighten public understanding, increase awareness of culturally relevant resources and supports for those impacted by eating disorders and encourage Manitobans to develop healthier relationships with their bodies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support a declaration that the first week in February of each year be known as eating disorders awareness week.

This has been signed by Chris Young, Kelly Speak, Nancy Sanders and many other Manitobans.

Foot-Care Services

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, the N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

* (15:00)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

This has been signed by Anne Abel, B. Bonsel [*phonetic*], Kathryn Waddis [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Health-Care Coverage

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care: migrant workers with the permit of less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for various—a variety of reasons.

(2) Private health insure is not a substitute for public health insurers. Private insurance plans available to most migrant workers and international students are paid for by the workers or student. They do not provide coverage for full—for all of the potential health needs covered by the public health coverage. Individuals are required to pay up front for health expenses without a guarantee that they will be covered and wait weeks for reimbursement.

(3) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(4) Without adequate health-care coverage, if they are ill, many of those without provincial health coverage will avoid seeking health care due to the fear of being charged for the care, and some will fear possible detention and deportation if their immigration status is reported to the authorities.

(5) According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care to undocumented irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(6) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

(7) The public—the pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to public health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free public-health-care coverage to all the residents of Manitoba, regardless of their immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers and international students, dependent children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to inform all the health-care institutions and providers of expanded coverage for those without public health insurance and the details on how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

(4) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to create and enforce strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with the training to protect the safety of residents with a precarious immigration status and ensure they are—can access public health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Foot-Care Services

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends far—extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

This has been signed by Jordan Bradburn, Colette Saunders, Acelyn Dorian-Cambell [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, the N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and regions, where the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond those just served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Miigwech.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I have several announcements for the House.

Pursuant to rule 33(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter). The title of the resolution is Strengthening, Rebuilding, Investing, and Recovering in 2022.

Madam Speaker: It has been 'nounced'—it has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private member's business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Borderland. The title of the resolution is Strengthening, Rebuilding, Investing, and Recovering in 2022.

Mr. Goertzen: For House business, Madam Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Monday, May 16th, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. to consider the following reports: Auditor General's report, Management of MRI Services, dated April 2017; Auditor General's report, follow-up recommendations, dated March 2019, Management of MRI Services; Auditor General's report, follow-up recommendations, dated March 2020, Management of MRI Services; Auditor General's report, follow-up, previously issued recommendations, dated March 2021, Management of MRI Services.

The witnesses to be called are the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) and the Deputy Minister of Health.

* (15:10)

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Monday, May 16th, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. to consider the following reports: Auditor General's report, Management of MRI Services, dated April 2017; Auditor General's report, Follow-up of Recommendations, dated March 2019, Management of MRI Services; Auditor General's report, Follow-up of Recommendations, dated March 2020, Management of MRI Services; Auditor General's report, follow-up of previously issued recommendations, dated March 2021, Management of MRI Services.

The witnesses to be called are the Minister of Health and the Deputy Minister of Health.

Mr. Goertzen: I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Tuesday, May 31st, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. to consider the following reports: Province of Manitoba annual report on Public Accounts, dated March 31st, 2020; Auditor General's report, Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits, dated December 2020; Province of Manitoba Annual Report and Public Accounts, dated March 31st, 2021; Auditor General's report, Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits, dated December 2021.

The witnesses to be called are the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Tuesday, March 31st, 2022—

An Honourable Member: May 31st.

Madam Speaker: Pardon me—will meet in the Chamber on Tuesday, May 31st, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. to consider the following reports: Province of Manitoba Annual Report and Public Accounts, dated March 31st, 2020; Auditor General's report, Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits, dated December 2020; Province of Manitoba Annual Report and Public Accounts, dated March 31st, 2021; Auditor General's report, Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audits, dated December 2021.

The witnesses to be called are the Minister of Finance and the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr. Goertzen: And, finally, on announcements, Madam Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, April 20th, 2022 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 205, The Filipino Heritage Month Act; Bill 223, The Ukrainian Heritage Month Act; and Bill 227, The Turban Day Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, April 20th, 2022 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 205, The Filipino Heritage Month Act; Bill 223, The Ukrainian Heritage Month Act; and Bill 227, The Turban Day Act.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, can you please commence the debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Seeing as how my colleague from Steinbach had so many announcements, I just have one announcement I want to share with the House, which is that our team will not be supporting this terrible budget that the PC government has brought in this year. *[interjection]*

And I'm sorry to disappoint my colleague from Assiniboia to remove all the suspense from the speech that I'm about to give here, but, in fact, there's no way that we can support a budget that is going to mean cuts to health care, is going to mean a higher cost of living and has no vision for the future of our province.

So, again, Manitobans are looking for hope, Madam Speaker, Manitobans are looking for reasons for optimism, you know? We've been through this tremendous collective experience in the form of the pandemic over the past few years; we've gathered together to make sacrifices in the name of a brighter tomorrow. And yet the government doesn't seem to match that commitment with the document that they've tabled here for the House.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And so, to all the people out there who have that sense of hope, who, in spite of that sense of optimism, maybe have a word or two to say about all the snow recently—but I digress—I want to say that, you know, we're working hard for you. We're working hard for you and we're bringing forward a plan to put in front of you in the next election that we are very confident will earn your support.

Now, I know when I talk to Manitobans across the province, the No. 1 thing that they say—in addition to where is my PC MLA who I haven't seen in Radisson, in Dauphin or even in Portage la Prairie through their times of need—the No. 1 thing that they say to me is that we need to fix health care, all right, we need to fix health care.

And, of course, you know, I know the PCs like to huddle up in their caucus room before they come into question period and say, okay, just remember the story; let's get the story straight, everybody: every province is having the same problems as us and it was all the pandemic's fault.

But anyone who's lived in Manitoba since 2016 knows that it's the PC government's fault that we have problems with health care.

And, again, we know, like, before they break up that huddle in the caucus room, they say, oh, yes, just one more thing: remember, there's no cuts. No cuts, okay? There's no cuts.

Well, again, anyone who lives in a community near Victoria General, near Concordia, near Seven Oaks, and can't visit an emergency department in their neighbourhood anymore knows that there have been PC cuts.

Any one of the 170,000 Manitobans who is waiting for a surgery or a diagnostic test right now knows that there has been cuts.

Anyone who receives a joint surgery and can no longer receive outpatient physiotherapy knows that there has been cuts.

Anyone in a hospital, a health centre or a personal-care home who no longer has a nurse that knows their name and instead sees a revolving cast of agency staff coming in knows that there have been cuts in Manitoba.

In fact, I could spend the rest of the afternoon articulating, elucidating and listing all manner of PC cuts that we've seen just in the health-care system, but I will leave it at that. Again, as much as I have unlimited time, I want to leave time for my colleagues to speak on the record.

And I want to leave time even for the PC members to twist and flail in the wind as they try to extrapolate from this budget some measure of something to be proud of. And I challenge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will not find it.

An Honourable Member: No, they're hiding under their desks right now.

Mr. Kinew: Exactly.

We know that the health-care system has seen tremendous cuts because, again, not only has this government ordered direct cuts, they have also starved funding for the health service delivery organizations—and by that I mean the regional health authorities. We also know that they put in caps on the funding.

And so, again, you know, you're the average Manitoban out there, you hear about this budget and you're thinking, well, wait, the No. 1 priority for me and my family is health care, why isn't this government offering funding that at least keeps up with the rate of inflation? Still haven't heard an answer from anyone on the PC benches.

And so if I—I'll venture a step further—I'll venture a step further. Not just the average Manitoban, but let's go to the average PC supporter—and, you know, I want to recognize that there are far fewer of those these days than at any time in recent memory. But let's say you're that dyed-in-the-wool PC supporter and, you know, you went through the whole process of supporting this caucus as they chased Brian Pallister out of the building and then they prevented some of their colleagues from running for leadership. You went through that whole process and then you went into the leadership and you were told, you know what, it's really important—and we heard this from people who bought memberships and people who made donations to the PC Party last year—oh, we all got to gather together to prevent Shelly Glover from becoming the next leader of the PC Party. Apparently that was the

big rallying cry during the leadership amongst the PC caucus, was anybody but Shelly.

How would it have been any worse if Shelly Glover had become the leader of the PC Party? This PC administration capitulated to the convoy, they gave up on trying to work with Manitobans in the fight against the pandemic, and then, following all that, they cap it off by bringing in another budget that is going to lead to health-care cuts in Manitoba.

So, again, if you're the PC supporter—that dwindling number of PC supporters out there—you have to be disappointed with the performance of this government. Even those on the right side of the political spectrum say very clearly and say very publicly that they expected more support for health care in this budget.

You know, there was a time where I had a seat next to where my colleague from Elmwood—who's listening so attentively right now—I had a seat back there, and we used to hear the same sort of announcements about record level of funding, record this, record health, record education, more than anyone can scarcely wrap their mind around. And I made the point back then, in 2016, same point that I'd make now: when they stand up and make those announcements, they're talking about nominal dollars. So, at best, those are nominal announcements.

But we have to pay for things in real dollars, and so we need to be talking about real answers for health care. And, yes—[interjection] My colleague from Concordia was the first to clap because we used to sit in the back row of our economics class together, and that was an economics joke: real GDP, real dollars; nominal GDP, nominal dollars.

* (15:20)

But the reality is that anyone who goes to the gas station and has to fill up their tank this year knows that your dollars right now don't go as far as they did last year, right? And the same thing is what we are going to see in the health-care system under this budget. We have a Health budget that contemplates amounts below 2 per cent. Meanwhile, inflation, the consumer price index, is running at a pace north of 5.6 per cent, 5.7 per cent—even higher than that in the United States of America.

And so what does that mean? That means that the same nominal dollar amount this year will not pay for the same level of services once we have to deliver that care at the bedside. And so, again, Manitobans have wised up to this act and, simply put, they do not trust

this PC government when it comes to health care anymore.

When they talk about addictions—again, we hear the same sort of talking points; same sort of, you know, commentary about the past governments in Manitoba. We hear the same sort of references to other jurisdictions. But we don't hear—is a plan. What we don't hear is a vision for how to respond to the addictions crisis in Manitoba.

Simply put, our team has put in the work to research the problem. Unfortunately, many of us have lived experience and first-hand experience with loved ones who are living through this challenge. And it's clear that we know what is needed when it comes to addictions. We need a government that is not afraid to embrace what works. What we've seen from the current government is an ideological approach that simply rules out some potential solutions because they wouldn't feel comfortable explaining that to somebody on the floor of the PC convention.

Meanwhile, we have Manitobans falling victim in the form of overdoses to this crisis and we have many, many multiples of that in terms of families and lives who are being disrupted because of the addictions crisis.

So what is the plan? What is the path forward? Well, (1) it starts with recognizing that we are not dealing with an opioid crisis, we are not dealing with a meth crisis. We are dealing with an addictions crisis, and it will 'manifest'—it will manifest itself in the form of whatever substance is available to those folks who have not had an opportunity to address the trauma that they've experienced in their lives. We'll build from that an insight and understanding, an approach that's grounded in harm reduction and evidence-based policies.

Now, again, this is not exclusively about safe consumption sites, but anyone who is serious about responding to addictions with addictions medicine and harm reduction cannot rule a safe consumption site out as one of the potential solutions. We have watched many folks in the community drop their objections over the years as it becomes very clear what the evidence says.

The evidence says that a safe consumption site—a safer consumption site, rather—can and should be part of the overall response of any responsible government to an ongoing addictions crisis. I've heard that from the chief of police of Winnipeg; we've heard that from

many folks working in the public health system and we've heard that from many front-line experts.

But perhaps, most importantly, what we hear is from families. We hear from families who say that the current system is so difficult, if not impossible, to navigate, that the resources provided to it are too thin to be able to meet the needs of those suffering and, at the end of the day, a simple statement that we have to do better.

And, again, the reason why I bring the addictions crisis forward to the floor of this esteemed Chamber is because this is a challenge that cuts across every socio-economic category, every geography of our province and, indeed, into every cultural community.

Yes, we see, you know, in many of the communities that are represented by NDP MLAs, big challenges on this front. But there are many, many folks suffering in constituencies represented by Progressive Conservatives as well. And this is, indeed, a true public health crisis, and so we have to act.

Unfortunately, this budget does not do that. This budget maintains the Brian Pallister approach of ignoring harm reduction and ignoring sound evidence-based ideas and solutions that are grounded in addictions medicine, and it continues the PC political tactic of trying to announce nominal sums, hoping that nobody does the work to dig deeper and realize that the system is actually teetering on the brink because of consistent ideologically motivated underfunding.

When we get to the cost of living, we know that this government has increased the cost of living when it comes to people in Manitoba. Again, they like to, you know, make pronouncements and pat themselves on the back of all the times that they stood up and cheered Mr. Pallister's ideology and strategy.

But who in Manitoba feels better off than when they took office? No one. No one today feels better off. Nobody feels like they have more money in their pocket today than they did six years ago—well, perhaps with a few exceptions. Those exceptions would be, of course, concentrated in the 1 per cent of income earners in the province.

But if you talk to anyone in Manitoba who has dirt under their fingernails at the end of a day at work, if you talk to anybody who works in the health-care system, if you talk to any producer out there who has had to abide by the Crown lands lease changes, if you talk about folks in northern Manitoba who have watched jobs leave their regions, who have watched facilities close, you will not find anyone standing up

to say, oh, thank you, Brian Pallister. And, in fact, you won't even find anyone in the PC benches saying, thank you, Brian Pallister, even though he is the reason that most of them were elected.

So, again, it's a strange position that you find the PC Party in today. None of them will stand and say that Brian Pallister approved health care. None of them will stand and say that Brian Pallister made the cost of living easier. They all know that they owe their political careers to Mr. Pallister, but none of them have the political courage to stand up and say that publicly anymore.

So, again, you know, our duty as opposition is to point some of these things out and also to provide an alternative. And, really, to me, the part of the budget that is most sorely lacking after health care, when it comes to lack of vision, is on the economy. Again, the PC Party has a certain brand that they try and put forward in public, but what is that brand today? There is no fiscal responsibility on that side of the House, and there is no economic aptitude to manage the province of Manitoba's future on that side of the House.

So what is the brand if you're trying to fly the blue flag? It appears to be an operation merely concerned with trying to hang onto power rather than trying to deliver the goods for the people of Manitoba.

So, again, when it comes to the economy, when you're making investments, billions of dollars a year, when you're investing in infrastructure, when you're putting forward a future that is going to affect the lives of some 1.4 million people in the province, you need to have a vision. And the vision for us, it has to begin with constructing a backbone that connects the fast-growing southern communities in Manitoba with the emerging opportunities in the North. And when we talk about backbone, that thing is going to be built out of infrastructure.

We have a tremendous opportunity with the Port of Churchill. I've heard it said that the Port of Churchill makes Manitoba a maritime province, and I don't just mean maritime in the sense of beachcombers and stuff like that. I mean maritime in the sense of a province that has access to international markets because we have a deep seaport that can both import and export goods.

Think about what that means to producers in the southern half of the province. Think about their ability to get goods to market with an export terminal right here in the province. Now think about the fast-

growing manufacturing operations in the southern half of the province, in communities not only like Winnipeg but also in Morden and Winkler and Brandon in the southeast corner of the province.

What does it mean to them to be able to accelerate their supply chain by being able to import goods through a deep seaport and terminal here in the province? Well, what it means is tremendous opportunity for the future, and yet we are about to repeat some of the mistakes of the past when this PC government let public resources and public goods and public infrastructure languish and hand economic opportunity for the future of our province to people who live in other jurisdictions. We cannot allow that mistake to be made again.

So, again, let's build a backbone that connects the Port of Churchill through the northern rail lines, a rejuvenated Highway 6 to CentrePort and the southern rail lines and southern transportation network. The logistical opportunities, the transportation opportunities there would be mind-blowing even on that basis alone.

But now add to that economic vision a future in which all the world consensus is that the electrification of transportation is going to happen in the next 10 years. This is not the plan of dreamers. This is not the plan of those who have a vested interest in, you know, trying to sell you shares in Tesla or something like that. This is the consensus view of not only economists; this is the consensus view of business leaders here in the province who are showing us with the pre-orders that they're making to electrify their fleets.

* (15:30)

And, again, of course, we have a unique opportunity with Manitoba Hydro to become an energy power. We have a unique opportunity with the minerals that we have access to in northern Manitoba to chart a course forward to the future and say, yes, if you need nickel, if you need lithium, if you need these other elements, you can source them affordably with higher environmental standards and higher human rights standards here in Manitoba than anywhere else in the world.

But you never hear talk of a vision like that from the PC government, right? You hear the sound of the fingernails on the office door, you know, trying to prevent themselves from being taken out of office. But you don't hear talk about what are we going to do for the next 10 years. You don't hear a concrete plan for

the kid who's in grade 11 or 12 now and is wondering, what should I do with my future, what should I do with my life?

Well, I'll tell you, I have a vested interest in that plan because my kids are in that position right now. And what I would tell them is the same thing that I would tell kids from all walks of life here in Manitoba.

I would say, first of all, our health-care system needs you. Consider this the same calling that generations before who fought overseas or who engaged in the great nation buildings—nation-building projects of the past undertook. You have an opportunity to serve. You have an opportunity to join the health-care workforce—the opportunity to be that nurse, that health-care aide, that physician, that X-ray tech of the future, who not only is going to be able to increase the quality of life and quality of care, but who is also going to be able to put down roots in a community with an affordable cost of living—so long as the PCs are not in power—and develop a life for yourself. That is one of the value propositions that we can offer future generations of Manitobans.

The other big thing that I tell them is, what about being an electrician? What about being an electrical engineer? What about being a power engineer? We have a tremendous resource that was built up in the form of Manitoba Hydro. We have an immense source of power that is readily positioned to be able to power the future. We have an untapped demand in the consumer sector of many, many people who owns—who own homes in the suburbs, who own homes in the country, who are going to need a charging station installed in their garage.

We have many gas stations who are going to be forced to install charging terminals on their properties. And, by the way, they're probably going to expand their restaurant offer and probably going to be expanding their hospitality facilities as they cater to a new clientele, as our economy and society electrifies.

And so I tell them, yes, what about doing something with your hands, what about doing something with electricity or maybe do a business opportunity that's adjacent to those emerging trends?

And again, do we see that kind of talk, do we hear that kind of vision articulated from the members opposite? No, we don't. In fact, what do they do? They make tuition more expensive for any young person wanting to go to college, any young person wanting to go to university. It's right there in the budget papers in black and white: \$30 million higher tuition in

Manitoba. That's how they hope to incentivize young people in Manitoba.

Because here's what we're squandering: not only are the PCs squandering their political fortunes, what is—whatever. Here is the fate that is being squandered in Manitoba: Manitoba has the ability to be a global leader at this moment of climate crisis. Everyone around the world is looking for hope in the face of this climate crisis and they throw up their hands because they say, you know what, it can't be done, we can't meet our climate targets while also having advanced economy.

And I say, no, look at Manitoba. I say, look at Manitoba—we have the opportunity to be a global leader, to prove to everybody on planet Earth that you can have an advanced economy while doing your part to solve the climate crisis.

And so, yes, you know, these are a couple of the broad outlines of the plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I do want to spend a moment to talk about what we hear at question period. Of course, you know, we've heard the new talking points, and I won't, you know, commit the politics 101 mistake of repeating those talking points. But there is one thing that I hear from the PC benches in question period time and time again that I do want to call out on the record here today, because it's not so much that it affects me as a politician, it's something that offends me as a human being.

We hear time and time again from members opposite, they would say, we will take no lessons from: we will take no lessons from members opposite when it comes to health, we will take no lessons from members opposite when it comes to making life more affordable, we will take no lessons from members opposite when it comes to education.

And I say to anyone out there, whoever finds themselves about to enunciate the words, we will take no lessons from, do yourself a favour and just stop.

Each and every one of us, as human beings, should humble ourselves before the Creator each and every day and aspire to make that day one that we make ourselves better through learning. That is a truism and that should be true in any setting.

Again, it perhaps feels like a barb well placed for the members opposite when they say this in question period, but, in fact, it reveals one of the defining characteristics and greatest weaknesses of their Pallister-Stefanson governments' time in office, which

is an unwillingness to listen to folks who bring forward important ideas and a failure to learn from the mistakes of the past.

And so, again, I offer this in the spirit of somebody who each and every day wakes up trying to be better than the person that I was yesterday. I offer this in the spirit of somebody who is trying to learn from what the government has done, who is trying to learn from what the community leaders are saying, who is trying to educate myself about what the experts and about what the average person out there in Manitoba is thinking about given issues.

And, again, I'll say it in this context as well: a good opposition should make a government better. I can tell you with absolute confidence that there is a good opposition in Manitoba. But can the members opposite say that they have taken advantage of the things brought forward by that good opposition to make their government better? We have seen precious little of that, and, to me, that is a deep flaw and that is something that I would ask them to take seriously.

This is not me stepping forward and taking shots. This is me saying lifelong learning should be an important attribute that each and every one of us try to aspire to and implement in our own lives. And if you have an organization that is not a learning organization, you are going to be left in the dust.

Now, the proof is in the pudding in the private sector, when we see organizations that don't learn. Who would you rather be today, Blockbuster Video or Netflix, Xerox or Apple? And so, again, stay humble, work hard and continue to learn and learn and learn.

And one of the things that I've learned in my time here is that one of the most important duties that we have as elected officials in the province of Manitoba is a duty to honour the sacred trust that has been invested in us by the people of Manitoba. People have sent every one of us here in order to accomplish a very important function, and that is to stand up for a democracy. It's a function that is under threat in parts of the world right now. It's a function that people are laying down their lives to fight for in parts of the world right now. And for me, it's a reminder that each and every one of us has an obligation to come here and to carry out the work that we were elected to do, and I try never to take that for granted.

And so, again, when it comes to the budget, where is the trust? Where is the trust for the people of Manitoba? How can they trust a document that is clearly, in the form of real dollar cuts, going to pave

the way to the further deterioration of health services in the province? Where is the trust for the people of Manitoba in a government that scarcely—not even a week after they table their budget, it comes out that the previous year's announcements on the surgical backlog weren't actually spent on surgeries.

Where is the trust for the people of Manitoba who've been asking for action in funding addictions medicine and only get talking points in return? Where is the help? Where is the trust for people whose cost of living is spiralling up and up and up, and one of the few things that we see this government committed to doing every time they come to the Legislature is to raise people's hydro rates?

And where is the trust for the people of Manitoba who are saying, you know what, we don't want a government to do everything, but we think a government should do some things, and one of the things the provincial government should do is to articulate a vision for economic growth over the next decade?

And again, it brings me no pleasure to call these things out, in the—terms of the government's failure. I would much rather to see the government actually invest in health care to the level that's required. I would much rather see them articulate a vision for the future of Manitoba. Chances are I won't agree with it, but why don't we have a starting point where we actually resource the priorities of the people to the extent that they are needed, and then we can have a debate about the approach, about the strategy, about the ideological underpinnings of such a thing.

So for us, it is about trust. We're working hard each and every to earn the trust of the people of Manitoba. We have a strong plan that is strongest on those areas that matter most to the people of Manitoba. And, of course, we are working hard each and every day to earn your support in the next election. But, of course, we won't take any of that for granted.

* (15:40)

So, with that, I just want to say, once again, thank you for the opportunity to offer a few constructive critiques on the record here.

So we've got some ideas for some changes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine),

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

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

- (a) continuing with Brian Pallister's plan and failed approach to health care, education, reconciliation and the economy; and
- (b) taking Brian Pallister's failed plan for health-care cuts from Winnipeg to rural Manitoba; and
- (c) instituting a de facto cut to hospitals, emergency rooms and clinics across Winnipeg, Brandon, Swan River, Dauphin, Selkirk, Gimli, Thompson, Flin Flon, The Pas, Churchill and many other rural, northern and remote communities across the province; and
- (d) offering more empty promises to fix the extremely high surgical and diagnostic case-load backlog that has only grown longer because of the inaction and refusal to work with front-line workers and invest in real solutions; and
- (e) refusing to stop the practice of sending seniors hundreds of kilometres away from home for health care because the PC cuts have removed capacity from the system; and
- (f) failing to increase the amount of personal-care-home beds as Manitoba has fewer—now has fewer personal-care-home beds today than when the Progressive Conservatives took office—took power in 2016; and
- (g) refusing to offer a comprehensive workforce agenda for the health-care sector or for reversing their cuts to health-care coverage for international students in Manitoba; and
- (h) failing to present a plan for adult education or other supports for Manitobans;
- (i) rejecting evidence of the effectiveness of safe consumption sites to address the addictions and mental health crisis as the province experienced the highest number of overdose deaths last year in its history; and
- (j) continuing to underfund, underspend and cut the K-to-12 education system, leading to larger classes and fewer supports in the classroom for students; and
- (k) offering no plan to create the spaces needed in the early-learning and child-care sector, no real capital program or a workforce strategy to staff the sector; and

- (l) failing to implement a universal school breakfast program to ensure every child succeeds in the classroom; and
- (m) refusing to provide products in schools to make sure no student is subjected to period poverty; and
- (n) failing to provide for regular families as the cost of everyday essentials, including electricity and natural gas bills, increase; and
- (o) making permanent a renters' tax hike in the midst of the highest inflation in decades; and
- (p) making life more affordable by increasing tuition for colleges and universals—universities by millions while continuing to freeze support for post-secondary institutions across the province; and
- (q) refusing to help municipalities deliver their essential services by not increasing the funding for municipalities for a sixth consecutive year; and
- (r) underspending last year's infrastructure budget by nearly \$60 million and freezing the maintenance and repair budget for provincial roads and highways for at least the next three years while refusing to invest in important projects like repairs to Highway 6 or improvements to Chief Peguis Trail; and
- (s) continuing to send hundreds of thousands of dollars of Manitobans' money to a Texas-based company in order to access our provincial parks while failing to fix the technical failings of the booking system; and
- (t) ignoring the climate crisis by not offering a real plan or targets to address it, underfunding programs meant to support cleaner energy and not adopting measures to support transition, like updated building codes; and
- (u) failing to offer leadership or a plan to grow Manitoba's economy for the next 10 years; and refusing—
- (v) refusing to offer a real plan to create good jobs in rural and northern Manitoba or to invest in the mining sector; and
- (w) jeopardizing access to rural broadband by pursuing privatization and failing to provide investments to ensure rural and northern communities can get connected to high-speed Internet; and
- (x) ignoring the needs of small businesses who have been left behind by this provincial government while it rewards its friends and other well-connected insiders; and
- (y) lacking any real action on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples; and
- (z) refusing to engage in good-faith negotiation with rights holders like the Manitoba Métis Federation; and
- (aa) failing to offer a plan to build or repair social housing in Manitoba, housing for seniors or a comprehensive plan to address homelessness; and
- (bb) refusing to offer real support for settlement services for people fleeing the war in Ukraine while at the same time cutting funding for programs such as Immigration Pathways; and
- (cc) cutting funding to the fair registration office after having failed to support internationally educated nurses and other professionals in having their credentials recognized in Manitoba; and
- (dd) failing to address the concerns of producers, including their concerns regarding increased lease costs, a failing Crown lands program and closed Agriculture offices across the province; and
- (ee) rejecting the need to provide proper salaries for working people, failing to properly address the needs of workers in sectors like Community Living disABILITY Services or home-care workers or other health-care workers, and refusing to address the challenges experienced by women, BIPOC and other marginalized groups to fully participate in the pandemic recovery; and
- (ff) failing to learn the lessons of the pandemic by further cutting health-care funding, refusing to release up-to-date data about the spread of COVID-19 and refusing to call for an independent investigation into the provincial government's pandemic response.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba. *[interjection]* Did I mess something up?

Deputy Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew).

Mr. Kinew: I just wanted to clarify one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I believe that I read into the record, under clause (d), the phrase, diagnostic caseload backlog that has only grown longer, when, in fact, I meant to say, diagnostic caseload backlog that has only grown larger because of the inaction and refusal to work with front-line workers and invest in real solutions.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine),

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Dispense.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Relations. *[interjection]*

It's my understanding that the minister is having technical issues with her computer.

The honourable member for Seine River.

Point of Order

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Yes, so I'm not sure how she's going to connect because she's out of town right now. And she's been following all along, so it's not like she's not prepared. So can we see if we can reconnect or get her back on? Oh, there she is. *[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

I—*[interjection]*—the honourable member for Seine River, were you speaking on the budget debate or were you up on a point of order?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Not on budget. Oh, she is there now.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are you—were you speaking on a point of order?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: That was on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): There is no point of order.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): We will now continue with budget debate.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Relations.

* (15:50)

Honourable Minister, we cannot hear you. Could you check if you're still muted? *[interjection]*

Order.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations): Thank you very much, and I'm going to go to hard copy just to ensure there's no issues.

Thank you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's an honour to be the first speaker for our government's annual '22-23 budget.

I'd like to start by acknowledging Premier Stefanson for all she has done to get us to this first budget under her leadership. I also want to thank her for inviting me back into Cabinet and my appointment to the Treasury Board. While I attended my first meeting in January, the budget process had been mostly completed, but I enjoyed the time spent the last couple of months updating and reviewing decisions of the former—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would like to remind the honourable minister that, first, like, you're supposed to use the office but not the person's name in the Chamber.

Ms. Clarke: I want to 'awknowledge' our previous, as well as our present, Finance ministers for their leadership on the Treasury Board, as well as all members of the Treasury Board Secretariat.

For the past two years, as a government, navigating a historic worldwide pandemic has not been easy as a government. Going into it with a balanced budget was a very positive factor, but we knew another deficit would be inevitable.

Our first concerns were the health and safety of residents and a system that could handle what we couldn't even predict. There is no government anywhere that had all the answers, and were able to manage all aspects were repeated in each wave, each with different outcomes.

I have to acknowledge all levels of medical professionals and many other professionals that have navigated us through this worldwide pandemic. To all staff in housekeeping, dietary and maintenance and various other support services, we owe you our most

heartfelt gratitude. These months and years have been unbelievably hard, physically as well as mentally.

Together, we have learned many lessons, most of them the hard way, by trial and error, just like every other province and all other countries. All positions were needed, and so many worked beyond expectations to care for those who were so sick with COVID and those who lost their lives. Even those outside the 'facilities,' like paramedics, home care and all other support staff, were facing challenges in their respective jobs that they would have never anticipated they would face during their career.

Thank you to everyone, and to those who continue to maintain—maintain adequate health care today all across our great province.

As modern as our world has become, there are still diseases and other life-changing events that are not expected and cannot be planned for in any way. In many ways, our world has changed forever, and, consequently, our budget and funding has also changed. Manitobans are resilient and we will find our way back to a healthy and more sustainable future.

This government is listening to the people of Manitoba and we are making necessary changes as required to give Manitobans a great place to work, raise their families and enjoy the many types of recreation, sport or culture they enjoy with good health care, education, jobs and a strong optimism for the future.

There was so much good news in this 2022 budget for health care all across our diverse province. New hospitals that have been needed for so long in Neepawa and Portage la Prairie are now in the planning and design stages, construction to begin in the coming months. These two facilities have not met the needs of today's level of required health care for decades, but this government is stepping up to the plate and is committed to better health care closer to home.

We will also ensure there's adequate staff for a variety of positions when these 'facilities' are completed, with enhanced services and treatment options. Additional funding and spaces are also in place to train hundreds of new nurses all across our province. We are listening and we are doing exactly what we promised we would do.

We're also excited about expansions to facilities and additional health-care services in Dauphin, Ashern, Selkirk and Boundary Trails and many more facilities.

COVID has shown us some of the gaps in health care, but so much of this existed long before 2016, when the now-opposition had 17 years to make significant health-care upgrades. What did they do instead? They shuttered several rural hospitals, like the one in my hometown of Gladstone. That seemed to be their answer to absolutely everything instead of providing the needs of Manitobans.

I look across the room today for anyone that has a good understanding of rural issues and what matters to the people in municipalities of rural Manitoba. We are a province of opportunity, and we not only recognize that, but we are encouraging and promoting it with financial investments as well as commitments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is unique that we only have one major city. As a rural resident, I have enjoyed my past six years getting to know and experience the city life. I love the diversity of Winnipeg. As you drive through St. Boniface, St. Vital, St. James, downtown Winnipeg, The Forks and many other great communities, you see why people choose to live in their 'preferred' area.

I hear nightly the 'sirens' of ambulances, law enforcement and fire trucks providing emergency services and ensuring the safety of the people. I've experienced emergency room services at the Grace and the St. Boniface Hospital during my time. I've attended concerts and many gala events. I enjoy the many restaurants and eateries with still many on my to-go-to list. I've experienced grocery stores that are so massive and stocked to the limit with many products I've never seen before coming from a small community, and I love it.

We live in a great province, and we need to strongly promote all of our businesses, services and attractions. I've also enjoyed my meetings and conversations with Mayor Bowman as a past municipal minister, but also in the past three months. We both recognize that there's so much to do, and that can only be accomplished with open and consistent dialogue, so that's what we do.

This is happening also between the City and our government with the working table that has been established. This ensures that there are no surprises and issues. They dealt—they are dealt with as they arise. And I want to thank all those participants for their efforts to maintain a positive relationship between the two levels of our governments.

As announced, this will be Mayor Bowman's final months in the mayor's office, and I wish him well in future endeavours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) says he doesn't want to hear that we'll take no lessons from this side—that side of the aisle. Well, when it comes to municipalities, I'm taking some really good lessons, and I have not forgotten what I experienced with the opposition this last 17 years. I experienced first-hand that in—their time in government was spent sowing division and creating uncertainty for municipalities by forcing amalgamation on our local communities. I walked with the people of Manitoba throughout our province for two years and saw first-hand the destruction that was done.

In my time previously and now again, one of my main focuses has been on repairing the relationship between municipal governments and the provincial government that was damaged when the NDP were in power. I learnt a lot. The Selinger—pardon me—the previous government's decisions to amalgamate municipalities came with absolutely no plan, and that was evident from day one. It was an absolute disaster.

The AMM lobbied the NDP government of the day through two municipal ministers, encouraging to reconsider their approach and engage the process in a manner that would work without so much confusion and long-lasting damage. This fell on deaf ears, and now, eight years later, I will continue to deal with the mistakes that they made, which is very unfortunate.

The future of Manitoba is full of opportunities, and we will be full partners in charting a path with municipalities as well as their respective regions. We will take into account the diversity, population differences, geographic and cultural differences across our province, and we will build on our strengths. There has been no—there has been significant growth in our province, and we're seeing labour shortages. Our government recognizes this and is addressing the need for additional spaces and funding for a variety of trades. We are offering this training and education in alternative locations so individuals can enroll close to home and close to their families. The opposition never, ever thought of that.

Our education is also getting the financial increases needed to build 22 new schools, and this answers to the continued growth in many areas of Winnipeg and the rural areas as well. Our Department of Education will work with stakeholders to ensure our education system is where it needs to be to provide

a better brand of learning and outcomes for our children so they are well prepared for their chosen careers in the future.

* (16:00)

The '22-23 budget, we are pleased to be providing additional funds to the Water Services Board to work with many much-needed infrastructure projects both regionally and to individual municipalities. I met with the Water Services Board a few weeks ago and they were excited about the '22-23 construction season, and they have many projects engineered and ready to go.

Our province is growing and being seen as the ideal location for many corporations to expand their business ventures. We are also attracting a lot of interest in commitment from developers and investors abroad. This is great news for all Manitobans. As a government, we are doing the necessary preparation to encourage and welcome this growth and expansion. Bill 37 that was passed in the fall, and 33 and 34 recently tabled through Municipal Relations, are enhancing and aligning our provincial planning to ensure we have a solid procedure for this to happen.

The Winnipeg metro region will now be positioned and aligned with other provinces and ready for future growth, working collaboratively with a significant reduction in red tape.

There has been a significant amount of work gone into Plan20-50 already, but there's still so much to do. It's exciting to be a part of it as we move forward in this process. Regional planning and projects are strategic, reduce red tape and ensure quality and affordable project for all partners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm happy to use this time to also reinforce our government's commitment to our local municipalities. It doesn't have to be repeated, but the past two years have been challenging. But our collective efforts and sacrifices are being rewarded as we move into a new normal. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the AMM and all municipalities for their efforts of the pandemic and, in a general way, for all that they do to promote the interests of the people of Manitoba and ensure that all voices are heard.

A strong provincial economy benefits all municipal partners and the budget provincial—positions the province to grow so that municipal development, related property values and municipal property taxes in all sectors continues to be strong.

Our government remains committed to exploring shared funding solutions with AMM on their

Partner 4 Growth initiative and the City of Winnipeg fiscal priorities through our officials collaboration tables.

Our government recognizes the importance of building thriving and sustainable communities across the province and it values partnerships with non-profit organizations, municipalities and local communities as we work together to improve the quality of life in the communities where people choose to live, regardless of the location.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased again to share that the amount of our Building Sustainable Communities funding has been increased to a level of \$25 million for '22-23. Our government is very pleased to provide this additional funding, as it is much needed, and it will help municipalities and non-profit organizations to build, repair and enhance many worthwhile projects and to help bolster many events that have not been achievable during the past two years of COVID restrictions.

There were close to 600 applications and almost \$40 million in funding requests for innovative projects and improvements. It will also help to bolster communities in many ways. We are close to announcing the recipients and seeing the work get under way.

I look forward to visiting many communities to make formal announcement and others in the upcoming months to see what the outcomes of their—and the progress of their projects, large or small.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a vibrant and a sustainable 'provent' isn't just about dollars spent. It's about relationships that are built on trust and respect. It's all about carrying through on commitments and always keeping a focus on what's best for Manitobans.

I am beyond proud to work with a team of colleagues that are focused on these commitments to the people who have elected us. Many decisions do not come easy and we don't always agree, and I see that as being very productive.

We have a Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) who listens and is open to a fulsome discussion on all issues. Her door is always open to us. She is a Premier that gets out of her office in the Legislature so she can walk and talk to the people. This is exactly what we need. She recognizes we all come with different strengths, knowledge and experience, and she encourages us to use it in our respective roles and responsibilities.

I look forward to the next couple of days, meeting and spending time with Manitoba municipalities at their annual spring convention, which is in person, which is very exciting. I look forward to participating in a fireside chat with AMM President Kam Blight as we commit to a strong and respectful working relationship on behalf of all municipalities large, small and in-between.

I also look forward to an early morning Women in Municipal Government Breakfast with delegates, as well as our Premier.

I consider it an honour and a privilege to have represented the people of Manitoba in three different levels as an elected official. It comes with an abundance of responsibility and often a high level of stress, but there are rewards. For me, those rewards are the people I've worked with, the people I've met from all across Canada and beyond, but the greatest rewards for me are the many I'll continue to call my friends forever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is a great province and I'm so proud to call it my home. I look forward to a great year ahead as we build a healthy, sustainable communities and a future that Manitobans can depend on for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Mr. Deputy Speaker, listening to the comments from the other side and their talking points, and it just comes down to some basic truisms in life: that you don't create a great health-care system by cutting it; you don't build an excellent world-class education system by defunding it; and you can't have an economy when you don't have your infrastructure, when it's crumbling, when you refuse to repair it, when you do not build the infrastructure for tomorrow; and you cannot build an economy by cutting taxes solely for the wealthy.

This budget is from a tired government. It is—got no new ideas in it and it's the same old PC government budget. The whole idea—the whole project here was they had to get rid of Brian Pallister because he had worn out his welcome. Manitobans had passed judgment on him. He was, you know, done with; nobody was ever going to vote for him again.

So, they get themselves a brand new leader, one who we hear, unironically, listens and this is supposed to be their change budget. This is supposed to be the budget where they prove to Manitobans that they've listened, that Manitobans absolutely have hated the policies of this government for the last five years and

this is the budget to turn things all around, say that, you know, we've listened to Manitobans and we're going to bring in the budget that they want.

Well, they failed, and they failed spectacularly. Brian Pallister would have been proud of this budget. In fact, this is a Brian Pallister 'brudget.' This is his ideas, his way of thinking. There's absolutely nothing new or different about what's gone on here.

So, the talking point from this budget was that this was supposed to strengthen health care. Bottom line: since 2016, the health-care funding has not kept up with inflation. It's been a de facto cut six years in a row.

So, this government is offering up \$105 million in new money for health care, keeping in mind that they don't actually spend what they claim they're going to. So we're not actually going to see \$105 million of new money in health care, but even if we did, that is so far below the rate of health-care inflation, that it is a drop in the bucket and will not ail what the system needs.

And, of course, they're providing a one-time, \$110-million surgical backlog dollars. Well, we've heard that, you know, in the last year, the \$50 million they provided there didn't actually amount to \$50 million. It actually was more like \$10 million, and \$40 million of that went to other purposes. So we have to take that with a grain of salt.

And of course, with that, we now know \$10 million as opposed to \$50 million backlog money, backlog has gotten drastically and significantly worse. So we can only imagine how much of the non-spending will happen with this new basket of money and how much the backlog will get worse.

* (16:10)

We also have, in this budget—and this government pats themselves on the back—\$9 million to add 28 ICU beds so that we get up to 100 ICU beds in Manitoba. We used to have over 120 before their fetishism of cutting happened, right? We had the hospital at Victoria. We had Concordia. We had Seven Oaks. All had ICU beds, and we are not even putting back in the system what's already been cut and taken out.

You know, somebody commented is that if you didn't cut in the first place, these new dollars would be about improving ICU and health care, it wouldn't be trying to salvage what we have. But, of course, there's no staff, in any event, to staff these beds. And, of course, we've learned from COVID that we needed much more than 120 ICU beds, and we routinely ran

out, and we had the shame of having to send Manitobans out of province because we couldn't even look after our own citizens because our health-care system was in such dire straits.

Now, again, this government says they listen to Manitoba, and, of course, they point to the budget town halls, and the—this Finance Minister and the previous one, this is the sort of talking point. They come out there, oh, we listened to 50,000 Manitobans. No, you didn't. And the whole process is a sham. I—what happens, and I'll give Winnipeg as an example. The Winnipeg town hall, the government hires a private polling company to cold call Manitobans in targeted ridings. And for the Winnipeg town hall, they called 12,272 people. So the people at home, you know, they're just relaxing, doing whatever, the phone rings. They pick it up. Oh, it's the Manitoba government; we're having a town hall.

At its peak, the Winnipeg town hall—only 1,608 people listened for a few seconds before hanging up, right? And so when the government says that 12,000 people attended the town hall, no, they didn't; it wasn't even 1,600. Those are the only people that actually listened for, you know, 30 seconds or whatever the metric was. But, basically, 76 people wanted to ask questions during the town hall. They were, of course, screened out. Only 12 people were allowed to ask questions, and surprise, surprise, what did these 12 people want to talk about is: I'm a rich person, how can you 'cutch' my taxes? And that was the town hall, right.

But what was interesting with these town halls, they had polls, and this they couldn't screen out, this they couldn't manipulate. And they would rank in these polls people's priorities. And, of course, tax cuts for rich people was dead last in every single PC town hall—every single one, didn't even come close. And the No. 1 priority in—Manitobans was health care by a country mile.

So this listening Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and this listening government, what is their priority in the budget? Is it health care? No, it is tax cuts for wealthy people. In fact, they spent more money in this budget giving tax cuts to wealthy people than they did on new health-care funding. That was the priority. So how did they listen? Well, they didn't, and, of course, that becomes very common with this government.
[interjection]

So what did this budget do? It got a whopping \$610 million more from the federal government. Revenues grew by \$1.5 billion. That's an 8.5 per cent

increase year over year. Corporate and personal income taxes were way up about \$503. We were basically flooded with money in this last budget, and despite that, we're running a \$548-million deficit. That deficit could've been eliminated this year completely. We had enough money to do it but for the tax cuts that went to wealthy Manitobans. *[interjection]*

We know that they froze funding, which basically was a cut to education. We know that they froze funding for municipalities, which, again, is a cut. And they have underspent infrastructure. They've froze funding for the child-welfare system, which is a cut, and they raised taxes.

How did they raise taxes? They raised taxes on people who couldn't actually afford it—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order, please. Order, please. Order.

If we could have it down a little bit. It's getting difficult to hear.

Mr. Wasyliv: So who did they go after to raise taxes on?

Well, students who don't have any money—\$35 million they raised off the backs of students instead of giving a tax cut. That's what they could've done: they could've frozen tuition fees. They could've not raised taxes on students. But it would've meant that, you know, the Brian Pallisters of the world who live in multi-million-dollar mansions and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), who is a large commercial landlord, would get less of a tax break. That's what it would mean.

But that's the choice they made. That was their value. That's what they cared more about, is making sure the Brian Pallisters of the world got a tax break and they didn't care if \$35 million more in tuition needed to be raised by students who are trying to get a better education. And, of course, that's going to exclude many Manitobans. Many Manitobans are not going to be able to afford that tax increase and will not be going to universities.

Well, let's look at what else they did. While they were out giving a \$350-million tax break to large estate owners and the very wealthy corporate landlords, they cut the rental tax credit. There's 40 per cent of Manitobans are renters and they are now worse off because of this budget. They basically had a tax increase this year. So 40 per cent of Manitobans, the ones that need the help the most, got their taxes raised.

And, of course, what a property tax is and why this government hates it so much, it's a wealth tax. And the wealthier you are the more you pay, and, of course, it has to go. So they cut Manitoba's wealth tax, which is a property tax, which disproportionately helps those that are doing just fine.

And to add insult to injury, they borrowed money to do it. They didn't actually have the money, and so it's not only, you know, offensive that the people who don't have the money to pay, who live in rental accommodations that aren't sort of accruing property assets, they're the ones that get, you know, their taxes raised. Now they're also going to have to pay the interest on the money this government borrowed to hand over tax breaks to the Brian Pallisters of this world. That's absolutely shameful and it certainly doesn't do anything for affordability in Manitoba.

We know that over 30 per cent of the education property tax rebates are leaving the province. They're going to out-of-province corporate landlords, big companies in Calgary and Toronto that own property here and, you know, are basically absentee landlords that have management firms here that look after a property. That money's not even staying in Manitoba. It's not creating any jobs. It's not helping to grow the government.

So—and then, of course, there is absolutely these sort of targeted tax cuts that don't make life more affordable. And the classic one that's probably the height of ridiculousness is this government cut \$15 million in vehicle registration fees. And they're saying, this is our big affordability plan. Now, you know, who cares if gas is going up and groceries are going up; you've got a \$15-million break on your registration. Well, that works out to \$10 a car. Nobody is going to notice that. That is not going to help anybody.

But what they do notice is when they lost their ER—because \$15 million keeps the Victoria General Hospital emergency open for a year. And I can tell you the good people of Fort Richmond are not happy about that. I can tell you the good people about Waverley are not happy about that. The good people of Fort Whyte are not happy about that, and the good people of Seine River are not happy about that.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And if you ask those people, and we do, they would rather pay \$10 more on their registration fee for their car and have a functioning, fully staffed, modern emergency room in the south end of Winnipeg.

Another one of these boutique tax cuts that didn't happen this year, but we're seeing the impact, was the fancy haircut PST rebate. So if you pay more than \$50 for your fancy haircut, then now you get a PST rebate from this government. And, of course, you know, this government, this is another one of their affordability measures, keeping in mind most people can't afford expensive haircuts like that. So who were you actually targeting for your affordability measure?

* (16:20)

But it was interesting, I was talking to a salon owner the other day and she had indicated to me that her clients weren't even aware that this PST cut had happened. And they even would say things to her, well, why don't you just keep the money? Because it basically amounts to a coupon: a three-, four-dollar coupon that's not going to make the difference to whether they get a fancy haircut or not.

And what's interesting, what this salon owner was telling me—of course, she needs to get her hair done, too, 'sho' she goes to another salon, and she's looking at her bill; and, of course, she knows, you know, what the tax changes are—and she sees that, of course, the PST on her expensive haircut was taken off but was replaced with an administrative fee that happened to be the exact same amount. And that is what, often, companies are doing is they're replacing that tax cut with an administrative fee to keep the profits.

In fact, I did my taxes the other day, looked at my bill from my accounting firm—this was another affordability measure from this government—and, sure enough, there was an administrative fee of 6 per cent on my bill where PST used to be.

And, of course, Manitobans are not better off. We're not saving anything.

Now, of course, the other problem with the rich-people property-tax cut is that you've also frozen, for six years now, municipal funds, and they're struggling; they're hurting. They need new revenue and their situation's not sustainable.

So what's going to happen? They're going to raise their property taxes in the same amount as the rebate in order to recover the money that they are not getting from this government.

They are—this government is downloading services onto municipalities, and they've downloaded services on school boards. And that's what was happening with—before bill 64 is this government would freeze and cut education funding; school

boards were then forced to raise taxes in order to come up with the difference.

Now, the government's put an end to that, and the roosters are coming home. They—you have circumstances where Seven Oaks has now cut teachers, Winnipeg School Division has closed down their full-day kindergarten program, Brandon has now also laid off teachers. We see class sizes in Pembina Trails ballooning to, like, 30 children in a classroom and the system is straining under this pressure.

So none of this—I mean, this government is economically illiterate and I think they prove that every day when they come in here, and this budget certainly reflects that.

But also, you know, my time's limited here and there's so much more to say, but the last sort of thing I want to talk about is that there was a real missed opportunity here when it came for money to support Ukraine and the crisis there, not only because of our historic ties in Manitoba between our large ethnic Ukrainian population, but also because we have historically been a refuge for people fleeing conflicts around the world.

And, really, if this government had a vision, we need to become the province that opens its arms to all people everywhere when there's a conflict. And this is a real opportunity for this government to create a system and services that, when we have these conflict zones, that we have the supports in place and show leadership to actually have Manitoba as a sanctuary where we can help them.

But of course, this government loves to make speeches on the steps of the legislature, loves to pander to the Ukrainian community, but doesn't actually spend any dollars to help them. The humanitarian aid that's been supported of \$800,000 is absolutely an insult. It's one of the lowest out of any of the provinces that have any significant Ukrainian population in Canada. There has been no money for professional resettlement officers, and there has been absolutely no attempt to promote the province as a destination. Other provinces are opening up immigration offices in Poland, and they are helping to, sort of, pre-screen them and then have them come to Manitoba.

And I'm also hearing that the community wants to help. I was in Gimli and talking with the Ukrainian community there, the mayor had pledged—there's the old air force base there and there's an air cadet training dormitory—something like well over 100 rooms, and

there's a commercial kitchen there—and it's empty. And they will open a door and there—we could put lots of refugees there. The problem is they need a service agreement—they need somebody to take the trash out, to cook the food, do the janitorial services—and they have crickets from the provincial government.

The provincial government is doing nothing, right? They're not putting any agreements in. And we're hearing Brandon University is opening up their dormitories, we're hearing other institutions want to do it, but they need this government to partner with them and they simply haven't done it.

Again, I'm running out of time. There's too much to say. The last point here is that this budget was a huge slap in the face for small business in Manitoba. There was absolutely no supports in it. This government, in a very mean-spirited way, sit back—they feel very comfortable giving \$500,000 to the member from Fort Whyte, but they absolutely refuse to help out his competition. They absolutely refuse to help out small business that are struggling and have huge debt levels. There's absolutely no direction. There's no plan here.

This government doesn't have any sort of view of building an economy or a recovery. And the fact of the matter is, is not everybody in Manitoba was equally affected by COVID and not everybody has recovered from COVID.

And we still have high unemployment in the core area, we still have high unemployment with female workers, with young workers, with newcomer workers. And, again, that just, you know—always talk about the, sort of, Latin inscription over the door of the PC caucus: If it doesn't affect you, it's not a problem. And that, again—it just sums up the whole value system of this government.

Thank you.

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): It's an honour to be provided with the opportunity to speak today on our government's Budget 2022. I am very proud of the actions we are taking to strengthen, invest and build our great province.

C'est un honneur d'avoir l'occasion de prendre la parole aujourd'hui au sujet du budget 2022. Je suis très fier des mesures que nous prenons pour renforcer, investir et construire notre province.

Translation

It's an honour to be able to speak about Budget 2022 today. I am very proud of the measures we are taking to strengthen, invest in and build our province.

English

This is the first opportunity I've had to speak in a budget debate since I've been in the Cabinet, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the former minister for the years of work she's put into this portfolio. I know that she's worked very hard over the years, and she's helped set the stage for many of the good programs and funding that will be coming forward in the future from this portfolio. So thank you to the member from Kildonan-River East.

For over two years, Manitobans, along with the rest of the world, have faced an unprecedented challenge. The pandemic affected our health-care system, kept families apart and challenged our economy. But as we all know, Manitobans are strong, and I'm optimistic for our future thanks to Budget 2022.

I'd like to thank all Manitobans for their resilience, patience and optimism during this challenging time. And I'd like to extend a special thank you to our front-line health-care workers and those individuals working at the vaccination sites, dedicating their time to getting more shots in the arms of Manitobans so we were all able to return to the activities we cherish most: visiting our families, friends and loved ones.

I'd like to also thank the good people of Lagimodière who did their part throughout the COVID pandemic. I was very happy to see there were a number of vaccination pop-up sites in and around Lagimodière. First at the Hindu temple, the Raj Pandey Hindu Centre, and, of course, the Southdale Community Centre, who each had hosted pop-up sites. While back in Lagimodière, constituents of mine did helps-up—organize two pop-up sites at the Punjab cultural centres, serving people from that part of the city.

Thank you to my constituents and all Manitobans for your efforts during the past two years. While they weren't easy, Manitobans proved themselves to be resilient.

Madam Speaker, our government understands the challenges that faced and continue to face our province, and that's why I'm proud of last week's budget.

Our government understands how important arts, culture and sport are to the province. Engagement in culture and sport enriches individuals' lives, providing people with joy and inspiration and contributing to a sense of belonging and inclusion. While we always have known the importance that cultural experience and sports have on our lives, this was made even more apparent during the COVID pandemic. The loss of these experiences and the closure of facilities during this time also highlighted a tremendous social and economic impact that arts and culture and sport have on our province.

* (16:30)

And since the start of the pandemic, our government has been in discussion with the sector, working with them to ensure their long-term stability. We've listened and announced specific COVID-relief programs to ensure their long-term sustainability; in fact, Madam Speaker, to the tune of \$38 million in support. It's through the Arts and Culture Sustainability grant—it's \$12 million; Bridge grant—\$22.1 million; Safe at Home—\$5 million; for the CCFM, or Centre culturel franco-manitobain—\$30,000; Manitoba Centennial corporation—\$1 million.

The NDP, unfortunately, ignored the arts and culture and sports sector in their 17 years; in many cases, leaving this integral sector to fend for themselves. In fact, they left tens of millions of dollars of deferred infrastructure, leaving the sector in disrepair.

Now I'm proud to share with you that our government, through Budget 2022, will provide the much-needed support to invest in the arts and culture and sports sector. Our PC government will not make the same mistake that the NDP did during their 17 disastrous years in government. And unlike them, we're listening to the sector and taking action to strengthen the arts, culture and sports community here in Manitoba.

Budget 2022 will continue to invest in the film and video production sector, facilitating its continued contribution to jobs, economic growth and a strong creative sector. These investments include the film and video tax credit program that was made permanent in 2019; the most generous film and video tax credit across the country, enhancing the cost of production tax credit with an 8 per cent Manitoba company bonus in 2020, and adapting the 10 per cent frequent filming bonus to the cost of salaries tax credit to remain effective during production delays as a result of the pandemic. The industry in Manitoba has grown from \$500,000 to \$300 million in production

volume, and our government is excited to see this important sector to continue to grow and strengthen here in Manitoba.

Our continued investment in cultural industries ensure that book publishing and book printing remain active, creative and economic contributors to Manitoba. The Book Publishing Tax Credit was made permanent in 2021, and Budget 2022 will extend the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit and the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit, recognizing the important economic and cultural value that these industries provide to Manitobans.

Our government values the important services that public libraries provide and recognizes that they are the hub of our communities. Our government cares about libraries and Manitobans who need them. And unlike members opposite who neglected our libraries—after all, the last increase was nearly 20 years ago in 2004—our government proudly supports public libraries' services with over \$6.3 million in annual grants. These funds help communities provide access to services locally and support public libraries in extending their services across the province.

Budget 2021 invested an additional \$769,000 in rural and northern public libraries. Budget 2022 renews this investment in Manitoba's public libraries, supporting their critical role as educational, cultural and community hubs. This funding include \$600,000 to rural public libraries, \$100,000 to sector development and \$69,000 to ensure all libraries have access to resources and services through the Centre for Equitable Library Access. Manitoba's investment in public libraries will continue to their ability to provide high-quality services and programs to enhance the well-being of Manitobans in all regions of the province.

Madam Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of investing in our past and ensuring that Manitoba museums and archives can continue to share and preserve our stories for our future generations. Unlike the previous NDP government who failed to take concrete actions and never committed to preserving our provincial heritage, our government, on the other hand, is committed to preserving, enhancing Manitoba's historical places.

In Budget 2021, our government committed \$25 million for the creation of The Bay Building Fund to support projects that will restore, preserve and maintain heritage elements of the historic Hudson's Bay Company building. Held in trust by the Winnipeg Foundation, a capital investment in The Bay Building

Fund will help preserve one of Manitoba's most cherished landmarks. The interest generated on the capital will be used to support Manitoba's broader heritage sector.

Budget 2022 includes up to \$240,000 for project grants to community museums, targeting initiatives that are aligned with key priorities of government and community needs, including reconciliation, equity, diversity, accessibility inclusion, COVID-19 recovery and collections management; an additional \$200,000 to support heritage initiatives that respond to high-level or emerging-sector needs, to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of Manitoba's heritage and to conserve, protect and preserve Manitoba's long heritage.

I am proud that our government recognizes the importance of investing in our past, ensuring that Manitoban museums and archives can continue to share and preserve the stories for future generations. While preserving our heritage, the arts and culture sector is also an economic driver in Manitoba. Pre-pandemic, it contributed to \$1.6 billion of Manitoba's GDP. Sport contributed an additional \$348 million. Together, these sectors provided over 26,000 jobs and contributed to tourism and hospitality.

In 2021 our government invested up to \$6 billion in one-time funding to support areas of the arts and culture sector severely impacted by COVID-19, related facility closures, programming and event cancellations and significant loss of revenue and jobs. An additional \$6 million were provided in '21-22 to continue to support the sector going on this year. Madam Speaker, these funds have helped to stabilize organizations and supported the adaptation of operations, programming and artistic practices to ensure a more resilient and sustainable arts and cultural sector.

Our PC government is committed to strengthening, investing and building the arts, culture and sports sector in this great province, and that's why I'm very pleased to share with you that Budget 2022 introduces a new community arts, culture and sports fund: an investment of \$100 million fund over three years, which will build and strengthen the arts, culture and sport for those working in the sector and the many more who enjoy and celebrate our rich culture and heritage. This fund will address the need across the sector for capital projects, capacity building, community festivals and events in the province.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the NDP were silent when it came to supporting this vital sector in

our province in their 17 years of disastrous government, where they left tens of millions of dollars in deferred infrastructure maintenance. The NDP completely ignored the sports sector.

While theirs is a record of failure, we, on this side of the House, we're getting it right, Madam Speaker. Our PC government will continue to correct the wrongs of the NDP and we are listening and taking action.

Budget 2022 solidifies our PC government's commitments that is needed to recover together here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I think it was H.L. Mencken who said that he never failed to pick up a newspaper without a sense of optimism or put it down without a sense of disappointment, and that's a little bit what it was like reading the budget.

I know there was a full page—two full page ad on the Free Press, so I'll just run very quickly through the summary that was provided.

—It is a disappointment in that I think that this government—is that—but this budget really needed to do was invest in people. There is too much of a commitment to investing in bricks and mortar and not in people when it's fundamentally people are the economy and people are the health-care system, that we need a plan to hire nurses back and make the health-care system friendlier, as a friendlier place for nurses to work, as well as investing more in a productive way in our post-secondary institutions, simply because, as we saw from the strike at the University of Manitoba—which is one of the longest strikes in a long time—that in talking with faculty, they couldn't actually attract enough people to be able to run departments to train people.

So it was clear to us that post-secondary, and making sure that you're investing, whether it's in Polytechnic or if it's Brandon University or University of Manitoba or elsewhere, that it's absolutely critical to put those investments in so that we're attracting people to Manitoba and we're training people up and giving them new skills.

So I'll just—and we do live in a great—a time of great uncertainty and we need major reinforcements in many of our systems. And I'll—just as one example, the boast that there's a—major investments happening in health care, when one of the major investments or

increases is actually the fact that nurses have finally received back pay.

But I also have to—I'll be polite about it—I'll have to correct what I see as some inaccuracies. Simply, as the budget opens up and says the COVID-19 pandemic has been the most difficult public health and economic challenge the world has faced in over 100 years, we did have a depression and the Spanish flu that my ancestors both lived through, and when it says—the idea that—we also have to acknowledge that the response in Manitoba—or Manitoba's response and outcomes from the pandemic have been some of the worst in Canada. And, in fact, when it comes to deaths in care homes for seniors, that Canada had some of the worst deaths anywhere in the OECD, and this is something that should really cause a much bigger look at how we are housing seniors, in a much bigger way, and we're concerned that this is still very much a continuation of the last six years.

* (16:40)

But I'll just—just as an example, under the headline, strengthening health care, it says \$110 million to address the pandemic diagnostic and surgical backlogs. Well, there's a key word in there: it's the pandemic; it's the pandemic backlogs.

Well, those backlogs already existed prior to the pandemic and they were getting worse every year for three years prior to the pandemic. So one of the things that this budget does is set the bar low on a number of goals. One would be balancing the budget. They've said, well, it'll take seven years when it's clear it could actually be balanced this year if they wanted to balance it, by, you know—if we could forgo the additional property tax cuts that are going to happen or—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lamont: —any of a number of other measures that could be taken. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: But that's an—but clearing the pandemic, setting—defining clearing backlogs simply for the pandemic is setting the bar low. The fact is this government has been in office for six years, but we're only now implementing year 1 of a five-year plan on mental health. Implementing the recommendations of the Stevenson review is really—it's not something—it's necessary, but I don't see that it's something to be that proud of because what happened in Maples was such a tragedy and a catastrophe and it was avoidable, that

many of us in this Chamber stood and asked, as well as the Long Term Continuing Care Association of Manitoba, sent—they sent every single MLA in the House an email throughout the summer of 2020, asking for help because they said they'd received excellent guidance on how to keep their facilities safe but no funding.

And the result was that they were facing staffing shortages going into the second wave. And we warned about that. We put out press releases. We asked questions in the House, and there were no—there was no response. So—and even the Stevenson review was criticized by family members who are involved in Maples as being inadequate.

Increasing enrolment in Manitoba's post-secondary institution, again, I just mentioned the fact that there was an UMFA strike where, because of the low pay in Manitoba, we not only have a challenge of attracting and maintaining faculty; we don't have—we can't attract and maintain faculty enough to be able to run courses. This is—and it's directly a result of underfunding of the—of Manitoba when people will go to Saskatchewan where they can make 15, 20, 25, 40 thousand dollars more for doing exactly the same job.

The commitment of \$812 million in rural and northern health care, that's capital—that's a capital commitment; it's not new; it's already made, and we don't actually have enough people to staff the hospitals that we have right now.

So, again, I think it's disingenuous to present this as health-care spending in the same way that it's disingenuous to present 22 schools as being education spending; this is construction; it's infrastructure. Ultimately, it's people who teach, and it's people who provide health care, and if we don't have the people to teach, and if we don't have people to provide health care, we're not actually—though, we're not actually making investments in health care or in education.

The \$630 million dedicated to contingencies is positive, but the fact is is that there are a number of people who are struggling very desperately right now. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business was extremely critical of this budget because of the lack of support for small businesses who've been struggling and who've had to take on colossal amounts of debt during this crisis.

Increasing the education property tax rebate, they talk about the average homeowner. This is—the use of the word average is it's one of those words that really needs to be handled extremely carefully because the

idea that the average homeowner is actually going to get \$1,355 might—people might think, well, I'm an average homeowner; that's what I will get. The reality is that's not how the distribution works. Is that—the average homeowner will actually receive less, but because a large number of people and commercial owners and apartment buildings and everything from large commercial farms or corporate farms and even pipelines, will get—can get the maximum, which is, I think, \$5,000—which was \$5,000 and now will be increased as a rebate, which means that the vast bulk of homeowners will actually receive nothing, and, of course, people who don't own the home—own a home or property will receive nothing.

The residential renters' tax credit is not new. Expanding the child-care subsidy program—again, this is a federal program, which is to mean entirely fed-funded with federal money. Ironically, it was a program that the federal Conservatives promised to cancel.

There are some promising gestures in terms of low-income Manitobans for EIA, Rent Assist indexation and income support for programs with people with severe and prolonged disabilities. But these are long overdue. It is actually—I've talked to a number of people and it's truly shocking at the living conditions that people on EIA have to live in, and the—and especially people with disabilities. I've heard some truly tragic stories of people doing—trying to seek—even injuring themselves in despair.

And this is something that it's—EIA reform is long, long overdue. Even we were to, say, allow people to earn more, there are people who are—many people who are under 65 who have to break into their CPP savings because they are ill. They are—they have mental illness. They've been disabled or injured and they cannot work. It means that we have tens of thousands of people in Manitoba living on EIA, which is really a tragedy because—and it's been—and it has been going up, basically, since 2008. Tens of thousands of those people could also be working, but some of them have—they need adult literacy and we don't see the kind of investments happening there.

Reducing vehicle registration fees is just sort of a helicopter drop of money. The venture capital fund is positive in principle. But one of the great challenges with any kind of business assistance is that it needs to be politically impartial. I think \$50 million was the amount of money that was lost under Crocus.

So we do—it's positive to have venture capital. I know that their businesses were being—who feel compelled to leave Manitoba because they've not been able to access capital. But we need—it needs to be done in a way that's politically completely independent. There are at least—or even multi-partisan or find some way in order to distribute funds in a way that is based on merit and not on who you know.

We continue to have concerns about the skills, talent and knowledge strategy in the \$326 million over two years is all federal money. There are concerns from child-care advocates that the 50 new home-based spaces and 1,716 spaces in new child-care centres still need people to work in them.

And when it comes to climate change especially, there are some major, major shortfalls: \$6 million for 12 initiatives; and \$1.5 million when we really are living in a climate crisis. And there are enormous—there is enormous potential. Of all the provinces in Canada, Manitoba probably has one of the best opportunities to make gains and contribute to fighting climate change not just with hydro, but with working together in ways—and—but it will take much more investment than we're seeing, especially when, as the IPCC and many others have insisted, that time is running short. We have to act on this immediately.

I'll just finish by saying I am concerned. It's not anything to do with this government, believe it or not, but concerned about the fragility of the Canadian economy. We have a—there's a housing—lots of people have predicted a housing bubble. It's extremely difficult for people to afford a home. New home-buyers, young people have basically given up. There's talk of people abandoning the idea of owning houses entirely. It's—I won't get into all the weeds of the policy, but I am extremely concerned that the Bank of Canada is going to be raising interest rates and that it will ultimately end up—while it might end up crashing, the—might end up popping the housing bubble, it may also bankrupt a lot of people and businesses who are labouring under crushing debt and will not be able to handle an increase in interest rates.

So on that sombre note, I just wanted to get it on the record that I am concerned, though it is something essentially because the Bank of Canada is independent, out of all of our control.

Therefore, I will, if I can, I'd like to move the sub-amendments to the budget.

I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

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

- (gg) failing to make new investments in improving the lives and abilities of Manitoba, choosing instead to expand existing inequities in selecting the status quo over growth and innovation; and
- * (16:50)
- (hh) failing to increase funding for the Emergency Measures Organization, despite two years of historic crises, including pandemics, fires and floods; and
- (ii) failing to provide any sort of plan for individuals seeking to escape wars in Ukraine and Afghanistan by partnering with local organizations to ensure a proper and smooth resettlement transition to Manitoba; and
- (jj) failing to commit to equitable health and education funding for all Manitobans, choosing instead to continue concentrating services in Winnipeg; and
- (kk) failing to provide adequate relief and support to smaller enterprises in Manitoba and mom and pop businesses who are struggling to survive after two years of pandemic struggles; and
- (ll) failing to create an independent, non-political means of distributing \$50 million in venture capital, which is essential to establishing business confidence; and
- (mm) failing to pursue fiscally sound measures, choosing to issue cheques with no lasting economic benefit that will have to be paid back by future generations, while shunning meaningful investments in growth and stability; and
- (nn) failing to make desperately needed new investments in education, and in reducing barriers and obstacles that block Manitobans from meeting their full potential; and
- (oo) failing to make proactive investments to avoid health concerns, especially areas such as diabetes supplies and medications that can prevent death and disability; and
- (pp) failing to provide a plan of relief for the thousands of Manitobans that have waited weeks, months, and sometimes years on a waiting list to have necessary medical needs addressed; and
- (qq) failing to address the significant impact COVID-19 has had on the mental well-being of Manitobans and the development of children by providing a plan that focuses on mental wellness and brain health to assure that Manitobans are living healthy, fulfilled lives; and
- (rr) failing to ensure children attending Manitoba schools receive a minimum of one meal or snack each day; and
- (ss) failing to recognize that health-care reforms to date have been a disaster, and choosing to build new hospitals across Manitoba while failing to recruit and hire enough doctors, nurses and other health professionals to staff existing facilities; and
- (tt) failing to provide a seamless, integrated and effective approach to addictions where people can get the help they need at any time of day or night, instead of through RAAM clinics, which have limited hours and therefore limited effectiveness; and
- (uu) failing to close the wage gap to ensure that rural paramedics are given a wage incentive to live and work in rural Manitoba; and
- (vv) failing to present a plan to address economic issues, while at the same time making Manitoba more sustainable, making drastic reductions in net carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide emissions; and
- (ww) failing to allow Manitobans to take steps to reducing their own carbon footprint by following the federal government's lead by providing rebates for the purchase of electric vehicles, major retrofits to existing buildings and adaptations of agriculture.
- Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), seconded by the honourable member for River Heights,
- THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (ff) the following clauses:*
- (gg)–
- An Honourable Member:** Dispense.
- Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

The subamendment is in order. I do want to indicate and ask, is there leave to consider the subamendment as printed? *[Agreed]*

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

- gg) failing to make new investments in improving the lives and abilities people of Manitoba, choosing instead to expand existing inequities and selecting the status quo over growth and innovation; and*
- hh) failing to increase funding for the Emergency Measures Organization, despite two years of historic crises, including pandemics, fires and floods; and*
- ii) failing to provide any sort of a plan for individuals seeking to escape wars in Ukraine and Afghanistan by partnering with local organizations to ensure a proper and smooth resettlement transition to Manitoba; and*
- jj) failing to commit to equitable health and education funding for all Manitobans, choosing instead to continue concentrating services in Winnipeg; and*
- kk) failing to provide adequate relief and support to smaller enterprises in Manitoba and mom and pop businesses who are struggling to survive after two years of pandemic struggles; and*
- ll) failing to create an independent, non-political means of distributing \$50 million in venture capital, which is essential to establishing business confidence; and*
- mm) failing to pursue fiscally sound measures, choosing to issue cheques with no lasting economic benefit that will have to be paid back by future generations, while shunning meaningful investments in growth and stability; and*
- nn) failing to make desperately needed new investments in education, and in reducing barriers and obstacles that block Manitobans from meeting their full potential; and*
- oo) failing to make proactive investments to avoid health concerns especially areas such as diabetes supplies and medications that can prevent death and disability; and*
- pp) failing to provide a plan of relief for the thousands of Manitobans that have waited weeks, months, and sometimes years on a*

waiting list to have necessary medical needs addressed; and

- qq) failing to address the significant impact COVID-19 has had on the mental well being of Manitobans and the development of children by providing a plan that focuses on mental wellness and brain health to ensure that Manitobans are living healthy, fulfilled lives; and*
- rr) failing to ensure children attending Manitoba schools receive a minimum of one meal or snack each day; and*
- ss) failing to recognize that health care reforms to date have been a disaster, and choosing to build new hospitals across Manitoba while failing to recruit and hire enough hire doctors, nurses and other health professionals to staff existing facilities; and*
- tt) failing to provide a seamless, integrated and effective approach to addictions where people can get the help they need at any time of day or night, instead of through RAAM clinics which have limited hours and therefore limited effectiveness; and*
- uu) failing to close the wage gap to ensure that rural paramedics are given a wage incentive to live and work in rural Manitoba; and*
- vv) failing to present a plan to address economic issues while at the same time making Manitoba more sustainable by making drastic reductions in net carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide emissions; and*
- ww) failing to allow Manitobans to take steps to reducing their own carbon footprint by following the Federal Government's lead by providing rebates for the purchase of electric vehicles, major retrofits to existing buildings and adaptations of agriculture.*

Madam Speaker: So, the subamendment is in order.

The floor is open for debate.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise in the House today and put some comments on the record related to Budget 2022, a recovering together budget designed to strengthen, invest and build our great province of Manitoba.

Before I speak specifically to the content of the budget, I would like to pause and just thank all the

health-care workers in Manitoba, at all the various levels that they work, from housekeeping to surgeons, nurses, physicians, health-care aides, allied health. I just want to, on behalf of all Manitobans, thank all of you for the incredible work that you've been doing over the past two-plus years to keep Manitobans safe.

A lot of personal sacrifices have been made, and I want you to know that those sacrifices have not gone unnoticed, and your efforts are valued and appreciated by myself, by this government. And the Manitobans that I speak with in my constituency of Southdale, and when I'm out and about in the various communities, just always speak very highly of the health-care professionals that are in our health system and the incredible work that they've done.

I also want to thank the leadership of the regional health authorities here in our province. Very difficult time, as well, for the leadership and the management throughout our various service delivery organizations.

I can tell you that we worked around the clock, Madam Speaker. I remember us even doing a huddle on Christmas Day at 8 a.m. because we did not want to stop working on behalf of Manitobans. So, thank you to all of you for the incredible work that you have been doing.

And then, Madam Speaker, I'd want—I want to also extend my 'deepest' appreciation and gratitude to the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) for allowing me to be appointed as the Minister of Health. Initially the department name was the Ministry of Health and Seniors Care and in January I was confirmed as the Minister of Health and the entire PC caucus has shown their confidence and trust in me to continue in that capacity to lead Manitobans out of the fourth wave and into the period of recovering together that our budget so very much focuses on. And so I thank my colleagues and the Premier for the opportunity.

I also want to thank the constituents of Southdale. Southdale is a very diverse community. We have over 100 businesses there. A very unique constituency, very welcoming, very close-knit community, and they have been just very, very welcoming of myself. We've done some incredible things in terms of building capacity within the community.

And so I want to thank all of them for their support, the the many thank-you cards that I've received since being the MLA, being elected in 2019 and just want them to know that I'm here for them,

their strong voice here in the Manitoba Legislature, not just in my capacity as the Minister of Health.

So I do want to now turn my attention to the content of the budget and, of course, I'm going to speak specifically to the areas relating to the Health ministry because I think it's so important for Manitobans to hear directly from me what is, indeed, accurate information about what our government is doing.

So this budget has invested \$7.2 billion for total health care in 2022. That is not a cut, Madam Speaker; that's an investment. That is the most significant health-care investment in the history of our province. And so I want all Manitobans to know that we take this area of government very, very seriously and are making significant investments. It's over \$1 billion more than the previous government ever invested in health care and I think it's important for all Manitobans to be aware of that.

And we're proud, Madam Speaker, to date, that our government has invested over \$3.1 billion in pandemic supports to protect the lives and livelihoods of Manitobans. And so a couple of weeks ago I had the honour and privilege to rise in this House to thank Dr. Reimer for the incredible work that she did in terms of leading our Vaccine Implementation Task Force. I recently had the opportunity to chat with Dr. Anderson in the hallways of the Legislature and I've sent a little thank you to her, as well, for the incredible work she has done with the Indigenous clinics.

And so a lot of stakeholders have come together to help us navigate the various waves of the pandemic. And our government has walked alongside those organizations, adding \$3.1 billion in pandemic supports and then \$630 million to strengthen the fight against COVID because we're not out of the woods yet, so to speak. We still have to be careful, as Manitobans, to ensure that we assess our risk. Wear a mask if you feel that you're at a high risk for the area that you will be in; social distance, and then all the fundamentals that we've talked about, Madam Speaker, since the start of this pandemic: washing your hands—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 14 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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