

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. 52 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 18, 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

Wednesday, May 18, 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
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 236—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 236, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Bushie: I am honoured to introduce Bill 236, The Vital Statistics Act. This bill will repeal the requirement that a person's name must consist only of the letters A to Z and accents from the English or French languages.

A person's name is an important part of one's identity, culture and heritage. Bill 236 will honour all names in accordance with their traditional culture and help foster inclusivity in Manitoba.

I look forward to unanimous support from this House.

Thank you.

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

**Bill 238—The Workplace Safety
and Health Amendment Act
(Access to Washrooms for Delivery Persons)**

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I move, seconded by the member for the—Burrows, that Bill 238, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar). [*interjection*]

Oh, the honourable member for The Maples, pardon me.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to introduced Bill 238, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act. This bill amends The Workplace Safety and Health Act to ensure delivery persons have reliable access to washrooms at the business they deliver to.

Delivery persons were on the front line of the pandemic delivering food, medical supplies and other essential goods, all while struggling to have reliable access to the washrooms. They were there for us when we need them, and now we must ensure they are treated with respect and dignity through Bill 238. Bill 238 guarantees reliable access to washrooms for thousands of workers in this province, including delivery drivers, truck drivers and other important couriers.

I look forward to unanimous support of this Assembly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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 rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Music Month in Manitoba

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to have proclaimed the month of May 2022 as Music Month right here in Manitoba. Music Month is a time to recognize Manitoba's rich musical heritage and acknowledge the artists and educators who promote music in our schools.

Music plays a vital role in Manitoba schools and in students' development. The creative achievements of student musicians and the pursuit of beauty, knowledge and truth as taught by music educators are eminently worthy of celebration.

We know from conversations with educators, parents and the Manitoba Music Educators' Association that Music Month and the concert series are highly regarded in the province. Although the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the concerts, we appreciate their virtual return and the chance to honour our students' creativity.

Thank you to all music educators across the province for the great work and commitment you have demonstrated supporting students by offering music opportunities, especially during the challenges that were created by COVID-19.

Music education provides a model for lifelong learning and contributes to overall student well-being, and on May 1st, I was honoured to sign the proclamation for Music Month 2022 in Manitoba to recognize the important contributions of musicians, music educators and music education programs in schools and communities across the province.

I had the pleasure and opportunity to play clarinet in the École Edward-Schreyer School orchestra for seven years, Madam Speaker, and enjoyed my school's trips not only within Manitoba but also into the United States. The most memorable moment was when we were able, as an orchestra, to play in the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize music producer, founder and CEO of Make Music Matter, Darcy Ataman, which enriches—who enriches the lives of vulnerable populations in conflict and post-conflict zones. A Winnipegger, he founded Make Music Matter and created a new form of music therapy named the Healing in Harmony music therapy program. This program has been implemented in eight countries and has positively impacted more than 8,500 participants directly. He co-founded a record

label and publishing company that supports musicians in the most impoverished areas.

We appreciate everyone's efforts in ensuring that music remains an integral part of students' learning, promoting their development into conscious, empathetic citizens.

I look forward to music, whether that being vocal or instrumental, returning soon to the Manitoba Legislature.

* (13:40)

I am also pleased to recognize three special guests that are in the gallery today from the Manitoba Music Educators' Association: Virginia Helmer, past president; Janet Yochim, president; and Tyler Yip, vice-president of MMEA.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, we're certainly happy to recognize the positive role that music plays in the lives and development of students across this province and celebrate music teachers working in Manitoba every day: teachers like Rena Lawrence-Brown, who has taught early years music at École Centrale to literally thousands of students—including my children, who still talk about her interactive teaching style, one where Rena meets kids at their starting points and builds a vibrant program that is inclusive of student need.

But Rena isn't alone, Madam Speaker. Today we thank music educators across this province, like Alyssa Watson in Ethelbert School, also Christina Banman at Mennonite collegiate in Gretna, Jordan Audia at Joe A. Ross School in OCN. These educators and all their colleagues 'enrich' the lives of all students and inspire the musicians of tomorrow.

We also know that music teachers and their programming were challenged by the pandemic, challenged because often, Madam Speaker, their spaces were taken up in order to make safe learning spaces for everybody in the school. And it certainly compromised their programming and they certainly rose to the occasion to ensure that music still happened even in that challenging environment.

And so, for us here, on this side of the House, we would like to thank music educators for the important role that they play in development of our students and look forward to a time when we can return to more normal music programming concerts and have singing back here in this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Lamont: It's a real pleasure to speak to the motion today to recognize and celebrate music education in Manitoba. I am an amateur musician myself, having played in a few garage bands and having picked up guitar in grade 8 and grade 9 at École River Heights.

Manitoba has an incredible tradition of music, musical theatre, bands, orchestras, venues and festivals of every culture and genre, all of which are celebrated and taught in our schools. Of course, it stretches back before colonization to songs and drumming, but also including Métis Red River Jigs, jazz, Mennonite choirs, Filipino singers, high school musicals, basement bands, rock, country, punk, hip-hop and heavy metal.

We have jazz festivals, new music festivals, the Folk Festival and more, and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra is one of the best in North America.

Just one example of the incredible legacy of music being handed down across our province: Chet Atkins gave guitar lessons to Lenny Breau, who taught Randy Bachman, who then taught Neil Young. Neil Young's grandmother lived in Flin Flon and helped create music festivals there.

The 1960s saw an explosion of music on the community club scene, which has been chronicled admirably by local author John Einarson. The Guess Who, BTO and Burton Cummings all had international hits, and Neil Young has cemented his place as one of the great artists of the last 50 years.

Starting in the 1970s, the Winnipeg Folk Fest established itself as one of the best of its kind anywhere. In the 1980s and '90s we saw artists like Loreena McKennitt, local bands like Streetheart, Harlequin, The Watchmen, Tom Cochrane, The Weakerthans, Crash Test Dummies and many more make their mark.

Ernest Monias is a legend in country music, and Rhonda Head is a soprano from OCN who performed at Carnegie Hall. Andrina Turenne recently performed at the induction of the first Indigenous Governor General of Canada, and Leonard Sumner and William Prince have to be heard to be believed.

My aunt, Evelyne Anderson, was known as the godmother of Rainbow Stage and performed many times in a leading role there and at MTC, with other Winnipeg actors and singers like Jennifer Lyon and Len Cariou.

Finally, I'd like to give a shout-out to two of my former bandmates who dedicated themselves to a career in music: Luke Doucet of Whitehorse and Darren Gusnowsky of JayWalker, two of the best musicians I have ever had the privilege of supporting—though not very well.

Music is not just about unison. It is about harmony, and can provide comfort, joy, solace, thrills and, above all, a sense of togetherness that nothing else can bring.

Thank you to the—all the artists who brought us joy, and to their teachers who made it all possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Flooding Update

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, yesterday, my colleague from Swan River, four of my MTI staff and I had the opportunity to participate in a helicopter tour of the Westman and Parkland regions. We drove to Dauphin and from there we boarded a helicopter and followed PTH 10 to Swan River. Along the way, we reviewed the devastated of the flash flooding that occurred last weekend and how our province's—provincial crews are working tirelessly to repair the damages.

Just as we flew overhead, the bridge that had been closed for several days along P-H 10 at the Steeprock River reopened, allowing the safe crossing over a diminished stream now, Madam Speaker.

From Swan River, we continued to Mafeking, then looped back and spent some time assessing the community of Camperville. There have been some substantial damage around this community and with parts of PTH 20 still covered with rapidly flowing water.

This tour was, again, humbling, as we were able to assess the vast damage of these regions and fully grasp the speed and force of the water that ran down the Duck and Porcupine mountains, causing flash flooding last weekend.

Again, I want to thank the tireless efforts of our provincial crews, and we saw first-hand the continuing efforts to reopen these crucial gateways to the North.

Our historical forecasting team is monitoring the precipitation system that started last night and is expected to bring 20 to 50 millimetres to southern and central Manitoba over the next three days. Some localized areas could receive rain-and-snow mix with thunderstorms and up to 80 millimetres of precipitation. Depending on the amount, locations and intensity of the rainfall, it may affect water levels for some areas of the province.

An overland flood warning is issued for much of western and southeastern Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

The Whiteshell lakes areas of the east part of the province are—expect high water levels at this time, Madam Speaker, so provincial crews are closely monitoring the area in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders. The forecast of precipitation could worsen the conditions, causing additional overland and flash flooding and significant damage to crossings and other infrastructure.

There are now 39 RMs and three northern affairs communities with six First Nation communities with declared states of local emergency, Madam Speaker, the most recent to declare being the community of Barrows and Duck Bay and the RMs of Glenella-Lansdowne and Mossy River and the town of Minnedosa. Rolling River First Nation has also declared state of local emergency.

In the town of Minnedosa, MTI crews are—and hydrologic engineers are monitoring the dam at the Little Saskatchewan River and are communicating with the town to manage water flows. Yesterday morning, our government provided the town with 2,100 super sandbags and 40,000 sandbags and six three-inch pumps.

I will again remind the House and Manitobans at home that our government's continued support of First Nations communities: while Indigenous Services Canada, ISC, remains the leading body of the disaster efforts, our government will support federal jurisdictions when asked to do so. Our provincial crews,

along with municipal officials and Manitoban volunteers, continue to fight this long-lasting flood that seems like it never ends, Madam Speaker.

Again, I commend the dedicated staff, who have been working non-stop for almost two months, for their expertise and perseverance. Manitoba is safer for this—Manitoba is a safer province because of you.

And I just want to say, you know, I just want to say to my heart that our staff have been working so hard around the clock and making sure that we keep Manitoba safe, properties saved and making sure that our infrastructure can get repaired as soon as possible so that we can allow our transportation industry to continue.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): We appreciate the minister sharing this update to the House after toured flooded areas of this province yesterday. It truly is a dark time for many Manitobans.

Minnedosans are describing conditions in their town as absolutely terrifying, with more rain on the way. Roads are being washed out, and some houses in the western region have already been destroyed.

* (13:50)

And while it's not as devastating, we note with sadness that many Manitobans planning on camping in our great provincial parks like Nopiming won't be able to do so in the coming weeks due to the conditions. We urge Manitobans who have site reservations to double-check before they start gathering their camping gear.

But, even as we worry for the damage these floods will cause to this province this summer, we celebrate and thank those who are saving our communities from worse damage and beginning to rebuild where the flooding has passed. In Minnedosa, for example, a local football team, two nearby Hutterite colonies pitched in to help sandbag at-risk properties.

Minnedosa business owner Krista Powell said that: as soon as someone puts out a call, everyone shows up. It's just absolutely amazing to see the community come together. It makes it feel a little bit better.

In addition to volunteers, we commend all employees of the Infrastructure Ministry for their tireless work and assessing damage, clearing debris from washed out roads and bridges. We reiterate our commitment to supporting all civil service workers at this

stressful time. Thanks to you, Manitobans can get their medications, they can visit their loved ones and they can evacuate their houses if water levels continue to rise.

This House stands united in thanking those people for your work.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the member to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, the widespread flooding in Manitoba is very serious. Liberal MLAs thank all those who are working hard to address the wet weather and the flooding. This includes those in MIT and in emergency measures in Manitoba as well as individuals in communities around our province, including municipalities, northern affairs and First Nation communities. We also thank the minister, who we know is putting in long hours at the moment.

I believe there was a misunderstanding by the minister of our intent in responding to minister's statements. Our goal was and is, in part, to provide constructive suggestions for areas which need attention.

Talking of the potential need for programs for agricultural producers is important. Talking of the DFAA is important. Talking of the need for understanding why the flood risk prediction for Peguis was delayed is important. We remain puzzled as to why 39 municipalities and northern affairs communities were listed yesterday in the minister's complete list of communities with states of emergencies, but the six First Nation communities were not listed.

Today, Minnesota is in a very—Minnedosa is in a very critical state, as we know from the minister, but also from a senior staffer in our office and from news reports. We are concerned about people in Minnedosa, but we are also concerned about the situation of the dam at Rivers, which has not yet been fully repaired from two years ago. And while the department has information on flows along many rivers, the Little Saskatchewan River is not listed on the website. These comments are not criticisms but rather pointing out areas where there could be improvement.

MLAs like myself, the MLA for St. Boniface and the MLA for Tyndall Park, receive calls and talk with people from all over the province. It's important that we're in a position to provide information and help,

and this helps the minister and his department when we can pass those comments on.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

McHappy Day

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): On Wednesday, May 11th, McDonald's Canada franchisees across the country hosted McHappy Day, an annual day of community giving to support Ronald McDonald House Charities.

The first Ronald McDonald House opened in 1974 in Philadelphia, and today there are hundreds of Ronald McDonald charities operating worldwide. These homes offer a supportive environment for families to be together while their sick child receives the care they need.

Since the first house opened in Toronto in 1981, RMHC Canada has helped over 436,000 families with sick children stay together.

On May 30, 1984, the Winnipeg Ronald McDonald House opened just down the street from HSC Children's Hospital. They provide a home away from home for rural Manitobans and out-of-province families.

Our government has provided RMHC with \$5 million to help build a new location to help even more families. It's set to open this summer. The new location will increase the number of bedrooms from 14 to 40 and grow the square footage to 48,000 square feet.

I was thrilled to participate in McHappy Day at the local Southdale McDonald's, and I want to thank Amit Kapoor, the owner-operator, for inviting me to participate in McHappy Day each year. I was happy to help with the important work and to raise awareness of RMHC by selling socks and pins and handing out orders at the drive-through window.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that, this year, Manitoba raised \$150,200.

Today, I welcome three individuals here with us in the gallery. Please help me to welcome CEO of Ronald McDonald Charities, Wendy Galagan; operations manager, Brad Ferenc; and local Southdale McDonald's owner-operator, Amit Kapoor, to the Manitoba Legislature.

Madam Speaker, I ask everyone to join me in recognizing them for their dedication and support to helping children and families.

Drug Overdose Death Reporting

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I've been advocating in this Chamber for years for an increased focus on addictions in this province and for harm reduction practices. There are many others advocating for the same thing right across Manitoba.

Last week, Kim Longstaff [*phonetic*] of Brandon's Harm Reduction Network presented a survey to the Brandon City Council about people using drugs in the city of Brandon. A clear majority of them expressed an interest in a safe consumption site where they would be safe from dying from overdoses.

Council asked Longstreet what could be done to support those who are struggling with addictions. She responded that council could support Bill 217, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act. This is a non-partisan bill; it's meaningful legislation and that harm reduction advocates and families across the province are telling that their—telling their elected officials need to be supported. Longstaff [*phonetic*], whose son has gone through a decade of drug addiction and overdose, collected hundreds of signatures on a petition which I will be reading in this House today in support of Bill 217, told Brandon City Council that, and I quote, every day that the issue remains under the carpet is another day that a family member loses a loved one to an unnecessary death.

Advocates like Longstreet know that in order to provide the best harm reduction care to Manitobans struggling with drug addiction we need to know the trends in overdose use as they're happening. That's exactly what Bill 217 does: requires the government to post a report on a government website setting out the number of drug overdose deaths as well as a toxic drug that was overdosed on.

I implore the members from Brandon East and Brandon West to listen to members of their city who either use drugs or advocate on behalf of those who are struggling to support Bill 217.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Jill Fast

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Today, I am honoured to recognize Portage la Prairie high school teacher Jill Fast, who was awarded Female Coach of the Year by the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports and

Recreation Council, which was recently presented at Sport Manitoba's Night of Champions.

Jill Fast made history in 2021 as the first-ever female varsity football head coach in the Winnipeg High School Football League after taking the reins of the Portage Collegiate Trojans. Force was—Fast was the defence coach at the high school for the last five seasons.

Jill Fast led the Trojans to finish with a 2 and 4 record, and they averaged 135 yards rushing per game. The first-year head coach gives an enormous amount of credit to the people around her and the players who were part of the successful program.

Jill Fast has plenty of experience on the gridiron herself, both as an athlete and a coach. She began playing—began her career playing with the Winnipeg Wolfpack at—of the Western Women's Canadian Football League and has been selected for Team Manitoba as well as Team Canada in the past, where she excelled as a linebacker.

* (14:00)

Jill Fast says that she has always been competitive and enjoyed sports. Football requires strength, endurance, speed and toughness, all things she likes in a sport. Fast hopes that she's able to inspire some of the students, whether on or off the field, and influence more women to get involved in football. Coach Fast is looking forward to having a strong, competitive program again next year.

Madam Speaker, I ask my college—colleagues to join me in honouring Jill Fast as she continues to support youth.

Roving Campus Program

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I rise today to honour a student that is thriving in her school. Justine Richardson is a student at Portage Collegiate, enrolled in the highly innovated and successful Roving Campus program.

PCI's Roving Campus is designed to assist students in overcoming barriers they may encounter in meeting requirements to graduate from high school. From providing support with transportation to food security and access to digital resources, the Roving Campus meets kids at their starting points and helps them navigate their way successfully towards a high school diploma.

For Justine, this innovative program has helped her see herself as a learner, as someone who can

accomplish anything. When asked to reflect on her experience in the program, Justine outlined how, before enrolling in the Roving Campus, she would struggle with anxiety and sometimes panic attacks.

Now Justine sees herself as a learner, as a contributor to her school's and outside-of-school's community, to the point, Madam Speaker, where she sees herself as being an educator one day in programs like the Roving Campus so she can help kids and be a role model for youth who desperately need to see themselves reflected in the classrooms they learn in and in the schools they attend.

While at times still struggling with anxiety, Justine now has the tools in her toolbox to help overcome what she describes as her confidence issues. There is a team of educators behind Justine, Madam Speaker, and I would like to recognize them right now. They are Shannon Mulvey, James Kostuchuk and Brett Geisel, who teamed up to develop this Roving Campus model.

Justine now sees herself as a learner, contributing to not only her community but her school and her family.

And right now I'd like to acknowledge Justine's presence here in the gallery, along with her support team, Avery, Shannon, Brett and also Rochelle, who is the director of the Portage Collegiate Institute, and they're there in the gallery today.

And thank you for allowing me to share your story, Justine.

Expanding Community Cancer Care

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I rise today to recognize a group from Russell who set out in September of 2014 to expand community cancer care in their hospital.

Their fundraising campaign started with \$50 from the drink fund at the hospital so they could open a bank account.

After seeing family members and friends undergo exhausting chemotherapy treatments in a very small and dingy room that was uncomfortable and completely non-private for patients and health-care providers, Gloria Tibbatts and her friend, long-serving RN Judy Forsyth, took over the leadership of a committee to provide cancer patients taking treatments at the Russell health-care facility with more suitable accommodations. The ECCC committee was formed with representation from 15 different communities.

The committee set out to improve the chemo unit for the clients, families and staff.

And, in 2016, the committee were informed that a new building was not possible but a renovation was. This did not deter this group from their goal of a new build and expansion of the existing chemo unit.

The committee kept their fundraising goals in the forefront and kept working toward their goal through numerous fundraising events: evening dinner and gala; an annual twilight evening Walk of Hope at the Russell Peace Park; an annual Major Pratt high school hockey Stick It to Cancer charity game; growing Crop of Hope, canola and wheat; Smile Cookie sales, pie sales and raffles. This hard work and determination has raised \$1.8 million of this \$2.5-million project.

The determination and 'perseverance' of Judy, Gloria and this committee will see this dream become a reality. The community cancer-care expansion will begin this year.

Congratulations, Judy, Gloria and your committee for a job well done. Madam Speaker, these two magnificent women join us today in the House, and I want to say, Gloria, Judy: thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Construction of WPS Headquarters Request for Public Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): It seems that we're learning more and more each day about the construction scandal at the police headquarters.

Not only has a judge found that the former Winnipeg CAO took a bribe, but now the City alleges more companies were involved in schemes to defraud the City.

The residents of Winnipeg lost millions of dollars in these schemes, Madam Speaker. If this doesn't justify a public inquiry, I don't know what does.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) face the facts and call an inquiry into the City of Winnipeg's HQ today?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite knows—we've had this discussion—these are obviously very serious matters that are before a civil court. There are many civil cases that are currently before the civil court.

We've already heard from those like the former lead counsel when it came to the Phoenix Sinclair

inquiry that it would not be appropriate to have an inquiry at this time. And we'll continue to take advice from those within the legal community and not the opposition.

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

Ms. Fontaine: So far, we have learned of a \$327,000 bribe to the former City of Winnipeg CAO. Now we learn today that more companies were allegedly involved in a scheme to defraud Winnipeg taxpayers: inflated invoices, invoices for work not done and invoices for work entirely unrelated to the police HQ project, Madam Speaker.

This situation demands a real response from the Premier, not more deflection or stalling.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) make sure that Winnipeggers get the answers that they deserve and call a public inquiry into the police headquarters scandal today?

Mr. Goertzen: Nobody, Madam Speaker, is disputing how serious this issue is. It is a various serious issue. And, in fact, there are many answers being given through the civil litigation, and the member opposite risks that civil litigation by trying to interject into that a public inquiry.

We've heard from legal counsel in other public inquiries. We've heard from others in the law field who indicate that ensuring that the civil litigation ends first before considering a public inquiry is the right way to go.

I am glad that there are answers being provided in the civil litigation, and we hope that those will continue on in the cases that are before the courts.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Millions lost in schemes defrauding Winnipeggers. There are still too many unanswered questions regarding the police headquarters. The only way that Manitobans are going to get the answers they deserve is through a public inquiry.

The Premier should stop making excuses. An inquiry will help the City's case—and that's according to the City themselves, Madam Speaker.

So, will the Premier finally take action? Will she call an inquiry into the City of Winnipeg's police 'headquater'—headquarters construction project today?

Mr. Goertzen: Again, Madam Speaker, the only reason that the member opposite can ask these questions about a very important and serious issue is because there are answers being provided in the civil litigation.

There are further civil cases—many—that are before the courts, and more, I'm sure, answers are going to be provided in that process.

Until that process is over, it would not be appropriate—in fact, it could disrupt and in some ways stop civil litigation from happening if a public inquiry was foisted on top of that, Madam Speaker.

We're listening to legal experts and we will let the civil litigation complete its course.

* (14:10)

Education Property Tax Corporate Rebates

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): The PC government is pushing forward with a plan to send millions in cheques for out-of-province landlords while cutting our health and education system. That's the government's proposal.

On this side of the House, we know that's wrong. We oppose cutting teachers both in Brandon and Winnipeg. We think big corporations can pay their fair share so our kids can get the education they deserve and our health-care system is not pushed to the brink.

Will the government stop handing out million-dollar cheques to out-of-province corporate landlords?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): The member for Fort Garry should be ashamed of himself for putting, day after day, erroneous information that he knows to be erroneous on the record of the Legislature.

That member, if he has a modicum of information about—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen:—leases, understands that when you have a commercial property, you have a net lease, and included in that lease is your arrangements to pay your part of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen:—the net property taxes. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: And so, the property taxes are paid by the tenant and any rebate goes back to the tenant.

For the member to suggest otherwise, he is either incompetent and does not understand commercial leases, or he's just misleading Manitobans, and to that we say shame. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Wasyliw: It's a fabrication to maintain the PC rebate plan as putting more money into the pockets of Manitobans. That's a—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —quote from the University of Manitoba economist Gregory Mason.

It's clear that the PC plan is to give—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —more money to the wealthiest corporations while cutting our education and health-care systems. On this side of the House, we know that's wrong.

Will the PCs listen? Will—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —they stop their plans to give million-dollar cheques to out-of-province corporate landlords?

Mr. Friesen: His answer tells us everything.

When given the opportunity to retract and set the record straight, he doubled down. Madam Speaker, it's disgusting. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: These high-priced, highfaluting companies are: Aura hair design; Ben Moss Jewellers; Almond nail ball—bar; the Second Cup; Polo Park Dental Centre; ZA pizza. These are Manitoba-owned companies who are getting the rebate, who have struggled in the pandemic, and this government has said: we're giving you tax relief; and the NDP has said: we won't give you tax relief. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Shame on them. Shame on them for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Friesen: —misleading Manitobans.

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

Mr. Wasyliw: While this Finance Minister passionately defends Toronto landlords, on this side of the House we will fight for Manitobans.

Our education system has been cut to the bone—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —fewer teachers in the classroom and fewer supports for students.

Our health-care system is in a crisis as seniors wait for days to receive—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —basic health care.

But what's the PCs' response? Million-dollar cheques to out-of-province corporate landlords. We think that's wrong and that's shameful.

The PCs still have a chance to do the right thing.

Will the PCs back off their plan to give million-dollar cheques to out-of-province corporations today?

Mr. Friesen: It's sad, Madam Speaker.

One hour ago, I spoke to a Winnipeg-based real estate expert in commercial leases who basically said that member is out to lunch, that he doesn't understand the basic principle of triple net. The whole—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —premise is that the landlord simply flows through the education property tax rebate to the tenant, and the tenant is based in Winnipeg. Those tenants are often right here in Winnipeg or in rural Manitoba who have worked hard in the pandemic.

It is shameful what the NDP is trying to do.

This government will stand for Manitobans, stand for tax relief while they continue to mislead Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Seniors Advocate Office Request to Establish

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, this pandemic has taken an incredibly heavy toll on our seniors across the province, and the Stefanson government's response has only made things exponentially worse.

Action is needed to ensure our seniors are protected. After the tragic loss of life at personal-care homes, now is the time to establish a seniors advocate and for comprehensive reform of the systems that provide care for our seniors.

Will the minister commit today to the establishment of a seniors advocate?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): Thank the member for the question.

You have a—Manitoba has a seniors advocate—a seniors advocate that sits at the Cabinet table.

Madam Speaker, I am so pleased, in my position, to have been able to deal with multiple, multiple stakeholders since I took on my ministry. And every stakeholder that I deal with has been extremely supportive of the initiative made by our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) to establish a seniors department and to ensure that the seniors' needs are met in Manitoba.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, I encourage the minister to actually look up what a seniors advocate office does, because what he just stated on the record is cold comfort for thousands of Manitoba families whose seniors have been affected by this pandemic.

Seniors are bearing the brunt of acute-care bed shortages in our hospitals. It's a return to hallway medicine, with seniors being rolled into staff lounges, overflow rooms, hallways and even closets, Madam Speaker. The care of seniors and patients all across our hospitals in Manitoba needs this government's urgent attention. Unfortunately, they cut 124 of our beds here in Manitoba. They're headed in the wrong direction and it's impacting seniors.

Will the minister listen to our concern and support the call for a seniors advocate today?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, as I announced earlier in this House, I was very pleased and proud to indicate that we have formed a minister's advisory group, chaired by Connie Newman, who is a well-respected individual in—that deals with, certainly, seniors' issues in this province, as well as 12 other individuals who are—come from various backgrounds—all backgrounds, who understand seniors' issues and can advocate on their behalf.

Madam Speaker, we are doing what we have to do to fulfill the needs of seniors in Manitoba.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, tens of thousands of Manitoba seniors are waiting for surgical procedures. Waits are at record highs and the lists continue to grow every single day.

I have raised previously a case where a senior had been waiting for more than two years for heart surgery, and then had a scheduled surgery cancelled mere hours, basically moments, before it was meant to take place. They're waiting far too long, as are many seniors across the province.

Now is the time to establish a seniors advocate to speak on behalf of so many who are being left behind and forgotten by this government.

Will the minister commit to establishing a seniors advocate today?

Mr. Johnston: I can indicate to the House that there are certainly a number of initiatives that are being taken to ensure the safety and the well-being of our seniors.

Certainly, the Stevenson review that we did, where we had allotted \$32 million to ensure that we are going to fulfill the needs of seniors in personal-care homes. Madam Speaker, our government embarked—or, is embarking on a seniors strategy, which we've allotted \$20 million to do.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker, the Stefanson review indicated that we were going to support various initiatives, including allied health support. And I do appreciate the—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Manitoba Hydro Rates General Rate Application

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): The costs of living are going up. The costs at the pump are going up, the grocery store, and Manitobans are feeling it in their costs of housing. The last thing they need is a rate hike, yet that's exactly what this government is trying to do.

They're removing rate-setting oversight from the Public Utilities Board and giving their Cabinet complete control. Manitobans want their hydro rates to be set independently through a general rate application.

Will this government be transparent and submit a general rate application in November?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): So, Madam Speaker, it appears that both the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) and member for St. James missed their daily question period planning session, because they seem to be diverging completely in their questions.

We had the member for Fort Garry stand up and say that we cannot pass tax relief for Manitobans, who are focused on one thing right now, and that is affordability. And then the member for St. James got up and directly contradicted him and is saying something totally different. One is calling for tax cuts and one is calling for tax hikes.

When will the NDP finally organize a decent question period—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —meeting so they can get their strategy straight?

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

Mr. Sala: Bill 36 would allow this government to increase hydro rates without the Public Utilities Board oversight. This removes accountability and it removes transparency.

Manitobans are already dealing with high levels of inflation and the last thing they need right now is a rate hike set by Cabinet. The minister should submit a general rate application rather than deciding hydro rates at the Cabinet table.

Will he submit a GRA in November?

Mr. Friesen: A week and a half ago, the Winnipeg Free Press ran a special column to say that that whole NDP strategy on this bill in front of the Legislature was absolute hogwash. They said that they were getting it wrong in every single respect. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: And they said that when they find that the boat is leaking, that the NDP should probably patch the hole rather than continue to paddle it.

Madam Speaker, the bill is clear. It holds rates low, it gives the regulator power and it makes sure that Manitobans will never again have to deal with an NDP \$10-billion overspend on a debacle like Keeyask.

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

Mr. Sala: The Free Press article the minister keeps referring to was written by Brian Pallister's ex-speech writer.

No one trusts this government when it comes to hydro. The PUB is standing between this government and unchecked increases—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —to Manitobans' hydro rates. That's why they want to remove the PUB's oversight.

In 2017, they tried to raise rates by 7.9 per cent and the PUB stopped them, Madam Speaker.

The PUB is comprised of independent experts. This Cabinet is not. Rather than letting Cabinet decide rates, they should submit a general rate application in November.

Will the minister commit to doing so today?

Mr. Friesen: The member is completely wrong. He was wrong before; he's wrong today; he'll be wrong tomorrow. Madam Speaker, the Public Utilities Board sets the rate for Manitoba Hydro—end, full stop.

But it does give me the opportunity to say that today the member for St. James will continue in his party's strategy to block tax relief including to—tax relief to small businesses in St. James like ZA pizza, like the local optometrist's office, like the local dental—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —office, like the Second Cup franchise at Polo Park, those businesses who worked hard in the pandemic who are now waiting for that cheque—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —and that member is blocking it.

Will they change their strategy today? Will they support Bill 39 today? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Wage Freeze Legislation Supreme Court Appeal

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Earlier this week, we heard from presenters regarding Bill 2, which repeals the PC's wage freeze legislation.

That legislation was never proclaimed, however the PC government wants the ability to bring back such measures any time it chooses—any time it

chooses. Presenters explained they can't—the government continues to reserve their ability to impose wage freeze legislation at any point.

Will the minister oppose the use of such legislation at any time in the future?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, we spent a considerable amount of time in committee the other night, listening to presenters. I thank those presenters for coming forward and making their presentations. We listened intently, made many notes that we can work on in the future, Madam Speaker.

This bill repeals the legislation. That's it. Period.

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

MLA Lindsey: I understand there were many presenters there. The minister says they made presentations, but clearly he didn't hear what they had to say. The PCs want to reserve the right to reintroduce wage freeze legislation any time in the future. The Supreme Court is currently deciding whether they will hear an appeal on the matter. The minister says, well, he wants to move on.

But, Madam Speaker, workers in this province, can only do that if the minister removes his government's opposition and states very clearly his wish that the Supreme Court will hear this matter.

Will he do so, today?

Mr. Helwer: I hope that the member opposite will vote in favour of the legislation to repeal this legislation. It's his opportunity. He can do so. We listen to many people saying it is the right thing to do. We believe it's the right thing to do. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: It will get done, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Lindsey: The minister listens but doesn't hear.

Madam Speaker, the PCs want to reserve their ability to impose wage freeze legislation on workers at any time. Meanwhile, the PCs are borrowing money to give out-of-province corporate landlords millions of dollars. This government is taking the wrong approach yet again.

They need to reassure workers that collective bargaining will be free and fair, and they want the Supreme Court to hear this matter.

Will the minister assure Manitobans that this government will not stand in the way of this case proceeding to the Supreme Court, and will he do so today?

Mr. Helwer: Well, we feel it's time to move on. And we're doing so, Madam Speaker.

The member opposite wants to live in the past. We've seen that before. He wants to live in the past and make sure that workers that work for small businesses in Manitoba will be put out of work because they won't allow a tax rebate going to those businesses.

He is putting Manitoba business and those workers at risk.

Peguis First Nation Permanent Flood Protection

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Five times over the past 16 years, Peguis First Nation has had to deal with flooding. This year, the flooding is worse than ever. Yet, Peguis First Nation doesn't have any permanent flood protection.

Every time there's a flood, a significant number of residents are forcibly displaced. Homes are damaged and lives are up-ended. It's time to invest in a permanent flood protection.

Will the minister commit to making this investment today?

* (14:30)

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I just want to acknowledge the high level of the state of emergency preparedness First Nations *[inaudible]* have had in place to respond quickly and efficiently at the ground level in the communities, and state that this year's flooding has been devastating for many communities and our government understands the impact it has had on those battling to keep the water back and to protect their homes, as well as those that have been evacuated.

Our government has been in contact with impacted First Nations' leadership and with our federal counterparts, and we're committed to keeping communication open with any additional communities and First Nations that may need *[inaudible]*.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Peguis First Nation community members did not choose to live in their current area. They were forcibly relocated in 1907. Yet, they haven't been given any permanent flood protection, and this is wrong.

Madam Speaker, the Province should step up and ensure there is permanent flood protection.

Will the minister commit to this today?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Madam Speaker, our government has been in contact with the—Minister Hajdu from the federal government and the chiefs of the affected [*inaudible*] and we remain in contact and I'm working closely with my colleague, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk), and various departments across government on this extremely important issue. And we want to ensure everyone remains safe, as safety is the primary concern of all levels of government, and we are all [*inaudible*].

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

Ms. Lathlin: Every time Peguis First Nation experiences flooding, community members are adversely affected. Damage is done to homes and property. The provincial and federal governments spend millions on aid, yet no permanent solution has been invested in because investment would save people's homes. It would save the government money in the long run.

Will the minister commit to ensuring there are permanent flood protections today?

Ekosi.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I want to thank the member for the question—the member for The Pas-Kameesak.

I just want to let her know that I've been in contact with my counterpart in the federal government when it comes to—Bill Blair, who is the Emergency Preparedness Minister, and we've actually had already the discussion to talk about more of a long-term strategy when it comes to Peguis First Nation. The opportunity to look at regional, to work together to make sure that we did other investments that we did in the province of Manitoba and continue working together and, really, the federal government has to take a lead on this.

But our Province is going to be committed to make sure that we find solutions into the future for Peguis First Nation, Madam Speaker.

Long COVID Cases Support for Patients

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, in the last two years I'm not sure that anyone in the PC government has mentioned even once the long-term debilitating side effects of long COVID on people of all ages. It's hurting people so much that they cannot return to work.

In the UK, 1.3 per cent of people aged 16 to 64 have dropped out of the workforce, and the governor of the Bank of Canada—sorry, Bank of England just last week says he thinks it's due to long-term sickness reflecting side effects of the pandemic, for example, long COVID.

We're seeing that here in Manitoba. I know several people who can no longer work—a doctor, a nurse and a tax clerk—many of whom caught COVID before a vaccine was available.

Is this government and the WCB going to make sure that people with long COVID symptoms have the supports they need to get healthy, whether or not they can return to work?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for St. Boniface for bringing this question to the Chamber today.

There're several individuals, sadly, in Manitoba, who continue to experience symptoms related to COVID-19, and that's why we continue to run our campaign about recharging your immunity, getting your third dose. When fourth dose is available and you're eligible, I encourage Manitobans to get their fourth dose as well and continue to keep their family and the entire province of Manitoba safe.

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

COVID Vaccination Numbers Public Notification on Website

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): COVID is still knocking people out of the workforce and causing long-term problems. The government is still revising deaths upward week after week.

I do want to say that the Health Minister and others have referred to two shots as fully vaccinated when we do know that a booster is recommended, and

Health Canada, just today, just announced that every person over 50 should get a fourth shot.

Also, Madam Speaker, every single province on its website still has clearly indicated links about COVID vaccinations pinned to the front page—every province but one: Manitoba, where budget promotion is still front and centre.

Every other province is putting public health ahead of political self-promotion. Why isn't Manitoba doing the same?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): The member for St. Boniface is factually incorrect. This government has always put Manitobans first. They are our priority; we are here to protect Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we follow the guidance of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and public health experts, and we will have an announcement very soon by Public Health regarding fourth doses.

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

Ukrainian Refugees Arriving in Manitoba Provincial Support Services

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Manitoba is going to be welcoming 300 Ukrainian refugees to our province within the next week, and the government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Lamoureux: —this government still has a lot of work to do.

Due to fast-tracking, many refugees arriving do not have a pre-landing medical exam, which is needed for all individuals and families entering Canada within 90 days. This will be costly for families, and we know that, currently, Manitobans are waiting weeks to book a doctor's appointment, never mind find a family physician.

What is the minister going to do to ensure health care is accessible to all refugees when arriving in Manitoba?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I want to thank the member for that question.

Of course, we are preparing to welcome more than 350 Ukrainian refugees to Manitoba on Monday. We've been working closely with the federal government. And I'm honoured to say that Manitoba is the home to the first charter flight from Ukraine in—for the entire country, Madam Speaker.

So, I think that's something to be proud of for the task force that has been working diligently, to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, to all of those individuals who have been working diligently to ensure that we are prepared to accept those people here in Manitoba and we're prepared to welcome them here in Manitoba.

Ukrainian Refugees Arriving in Manitoba Provincial Support Services

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): Manitobans are united in our commitment to do all that we can for those arriving from Ukraine. It is our responsibility as members of the global community, amplified by the historical and family connections many Manitobans have with Ukraine. Some seeking refuge are already here, and we know early next week a chartered flight will arrive.

Can the Premier outline what aid Manitoba is making available to those fleeing from Russian aggression?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I want to thank the member for that very important question.

Of course, I'm pleased to inform the House today that we are preparing—as I said to the previous question—more than 350 Ukrainian refugees to Manitoba on Monday.

We are investing more than \$10 million: \$6.8 million, Madam Speaker, for some financial supports for more than 1,000 Ukrainian refugee families; more than \$3 million as well for trauma support, who—just understanding, obviously, the complicated needs that many will be facing when they arrive here in Manitoba, and we want to ensure that they have those supports.

Again, I want to commend Manitoba's task force and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, all those who have been involved, for the significant work they are doing to ensure a full range of supports for—that are available for those who are seeking refugee—refuge here in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

We will welcome them to friendly Manitoba with open arms.

EIA Recipients Adult Education Programs

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, Manitobans on EIA should be encouraged to enrol in adult education.

Unfortunately, EIA's current mandate is to push recipients into the labour market as quickly as possible, regardless of their education level. Many recipients don't have functional literacy, functional numeracy or a high school diploma, which severely limits their employment opportunities.

* (14:40)

Will the minister change this practice by supporting EIA recipients who pursue adult education?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): It's really unfortunate to hear this member opposite put this false information on the record, particularly after we did have a closed-door meeting in which we did talk about the EIA transformation that's under way.

I would like to provide the member opposite a little bit more information and provide the whole House some information about the EIA transformation that's under way. It is a program—it is a transformation to help people on EIA achieve their higher destiny, which includes investing in single-parent employment programs, providing child care for people who are on EIA who wants to get attachment to the labour force. *[interjection]*

And I know the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), she doesn't want to hear this. She doesn't want to advocate for her constituents in her riding, but—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —Madam Speaker, our government is committed to helping people on EIA achieve a higher destiny, and that is what we're—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Marcelino: Those programs that the minister is referring to is still about job readiness and getting ready to enter the labour market. And what we're speaking about is adult learning centres and an ability to graduate from grade 12, which will then lead to better jobs in the future—long-term kind of work.

So, it's ironic that, right now, recipients can only take adult education programs in exceptional circumstances only. This is very unfortunate because adult education opens the door to further employment opportunities, and it's proven to decrease poverty.

Lower levels of poverty and better paying jobs means less Manitobans who have to collect EIA.

Will the minister change this practice and encourage EIA recipients to pursue adult education?

Ms. Squires: This government is committed to helping people on EIA achieve a higher destiny. That is why this budget included \$650 million more for EIA, something that members opposite, including the member for Point Douglas, voted against. They should be ashamed of themselves. They voted against \$650 million more for people on EIA.

And, Madam Speaker, each person on EIA has a care plan, an individual care plan with a path towards success. If that path includes attachment to the labour market, if that path includes greater enhancement in education, our government and our civil servants are working very diligently on the front lines working with all recipients of EIA so that they get the best options available to them. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I have been somewhat tolerant of the incessant heckling that I am hearing today, but I am going to put it out there right now that I'm going to please ask the member that tends to be incessantly heckling throughout oral questions to please—*[interjection]*

Order.

There's heckling, and there's incessant heckling, and I'm addressing the incessant heckling at the moment. And I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

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

MLA Marcelino: Let me reiterate that the EIA policy states that recipients can only take an adult education program in exceptional circumstances only. And we know that with the adult education ministry, that ministry has frozen funding to adult education centres for years now.

So, adult education is proven to reduce poverty and to increase job opportunities, yet EIA recipients are being actively discouraged from 'pursuing' adult education opportunities.

This is a policy that helps trap people in poverty, and the minister has the power to change this policy today.

So will she commit to doing so?

Ms. Squires: Yes, our government is committed to helping all those individuals on EIA achieve a higher destiny.

That is why we had \$650 million in the budget this year, something members opposite voted against. That is why we had \$1.3 million in the budget this year for a single-parent employment program, something members opposite voted against.

That's why we had a \$650,000 investment in Taking Charge! to provide personal development and pre-employment readiness for people on EIA, something—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —members opposite voted against.

That's why we had an additional \$500,000 to dedicate in the assistance with programs such as \$142,000 for FireSpirit and Belong to Employment programs in Thompson and northern Manitoba. That is why we had \$150,000 to the YMCA in Thompson for people on EIA to get additional programming.

We're going to keep—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Overland Flooding of Farmland Supports for Farmers

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Last year, Manitoban farmers had to deal with extreme drought and this year many are having to deal with overland flooding.

Flooding has left many farmers unable to seed their crops on time. Many farmers are pivoting to faster growing crops with the shorter amount of time they have. These crops may have lower yields and can be less profitable. Farmers want to know if there will be supports when they need it.

Can the minister tell us what supports will be in place for farmers who need it?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): We're debating the bill today. If he wants to support farmers, he can support our bill for the education property tax rebate of \$54 million.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired. *[interjection]*

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: Order.

Drug Overdose Reporting

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Just waiting 'til it's quiet. Okay.

Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition—*[interjection]*—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) Across the province, many Manitobans continue to struggle with addictions, and the pandemic has led to even more death and worsened the ongoing public health crisis of opioid overdoses.

(2) Three hundred and seventy-two Manitobans died from an overdose in 2020. That's over one day and 80—that's over one a day, rather—and 87 per cent higher than 2019.

(3) Manitoba is expected to exceed over 400 overdose deaths in 2021, but the data was not publicly available since the last public reporting of opioid deaths was published in 2019.

(4) The data for drug overdose deaths from 2020 and 2021 was compiled through media inquiries, and this needs to change.

(5) Access to timely data on the harms of drugs helps to inform both government and stakeholders on where to take action and target resources needed in various communities.

(6) Manitoba is the only province not providing regular, timely data to the federal government opioid information portal.

(7) Manitobans deserve a government that takes the growing drug crisis seriously and will port the—report the data publicly in a timely manner—matter, to target actions and allow for accountability.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to enact Bill 217, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), to require the province to publish the number of drug overdose deaths, as well as the type of drug, on a government website in a timely fashion.

This has been signed by Jamieson Baird, Amber Nault, Logan Stouffer-Asklan and many Manitobans.

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

Foot-Care Services

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): 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.

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.

* (14:50)

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 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.

Speed Reduction on PR 392

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) On October 26, 2020, a 51-year-old driver was killed when a cement truck overturned on provincial road PR 392 just outside of the town of Snow Lake, Manitoba.

(2) The HudBay company will be trucking gold ore in 40-ton B-trains from its Lalor deposit into the town of Snow Lake for processing starting next year.

(3) This large-truck traffic will be competing with local vehicle traffic between the turnoff to the Lalor mine on PR 395 and the town of Snow Lake on PR 392.

(4) Similar vehicular traffic already competes with these 40-ton trucks between the turnoff at Lalor and PR No. 395 and the turnoff to the Stall Lake mill at PR No. 393.

(5) Residents of Snow Lake have suggested that a speed limit on PR 392 between Snow Lake and the intersection with provincial road PR 393 be lowered from 90 kilometres an hour to 70 kilometres an hour; residents—sorry—

(6) Residents also propose that on PR 392 from Berry Bay-Taylor Bay entrance to the Wekusko Falls park north entrance, speeds be reduced to 70 kilometres an hour; Wekusko Falls park north entrance to the helitac base entrance, speeds be reduced to 50 kilometres an hour; and from the helitac base entrance to the entrance of the fish dump, speeds be reduced to 70 kilometres an hour.

(7) Reducing speed limits on dangerous stretches of highways is a simple and effective measure to protect the safety of all drivers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to adopt the proposed speed reductions on Provincial Road 392 set forth above.

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

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madame la Présidente, je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

(1) La Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, G-B-R-G, a été avisée par la division scolaire vallée de la rivière Rouge, DSVRR, de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de l'École Héritage school, ÉHS, d'ici le 31 mars 2023.

(2) L'auditorium a été construit dans les années 1960 par le célèbre architecte manitobain

Étienne Gaboury et B-R-G y est installé depuis 48 ans.

(3) Une photo de l'auditorium intitulée la bibliothèque régionale est publiée dans un document de 2008 intitulé « Bâtiments patrimoniaux des MR De-Salaberry et Saint-Pierre-Jolys ». Il est indiqué qu'il s'agit d'un bâtiment moderne important qui pourrait atteindre le statut de site patrimonial.

(4) B-R-G et DSVRR ont prospéré grâce à un protocole d'entente mutuellement bénéfique pendant 54 ans.

(5) Leur collection commune compte plus de 50 000 livres et possède la quatrième plus grande collection de littérature de langue française dans les régions rurales du Manitoba.

(6) Les élèves qui sont transportés par autobus des municipalités voisines qui n'ont pas de bibliothèque publique, comme Niverville, Grunthal et Kleefeld, ont accès gratuitement à la bibliothèque publique et à sa quatrième plus grande collection de livres en français dans les régions rurales du Manitoba pendant l'année scolaire.

Nous présentons à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba la pétition suivante :

(1) De demander au ministre du Travail, de la protection des consommateurs et des Services gouvernementaux d'envisager de concéder l'auditorium à la B-R-G d'ici le 1er mars 2023.

(2) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation de reconnaître la valeur que la B-R-G apporte à la population étudiante de l'ÉHS ainsi qu'aux communautés du village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys et de la MR De Salaberry.

(3) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation et au ministre des affaires francophones de reconnaître qu'un protocole d'entente entre le RRVSD et G-R-L est mutuellement bénéfique, financièrement et culturellement.

(4) Demander au ministre des Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et son statut au sein de la communauté.

(5) Demander au ministre des Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine d'empêcher toute rénovation de l'auditorium qui détruirait et dévaloriserait l'intégrité architecturale du bâtiment.

Cette pétition est signée par Maria Anaya, Ruby Barragan, Jennifer Barragan.

Merci.

Translation

Madam Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The context for this petition is as follows:

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library was notified by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate premises currently located in the auditorium of the École Héritage School by March 31, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was built in the 1960s by famous Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned "The Regional Library" was published in a 2008 document titled "Significant Heritage Buildings of De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys". It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of Heritage Site.

(4) The JRL and the RRVSD have flourished by means of a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth-largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students that are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French language literature in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1, 2023.

(2) To request the minister of Education to recognize the value that the JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.

(3) To request the minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that a memorandum of understanding between the RRVSD and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) *To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.*

(5) *To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.*

This petition was signed by Maria Anaya, Ruby Barragan, Jennifer Barragan.

Thank you.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

(1) La Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library a été avisée par la division scolaire vallée de la rivière Rouge de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de 'l'école' Héritage school d'ici le 31 mars 2023.

(2) L'auditorium a été construit dans les années 1960 par le célèbre architecte manitobain Étienne Gaboury. B-R-G y est installé depuis 48 ans.

(3) Une photo de l'auditorium intitulée la bibliothèque régionale est publiée dans un document de 2008 intitulé bâtiments patrimoniaux des messieurs De-Salaberry et Saint-Pierre-Jolys. Il est indiqué qu'il s'agit d'un bâtiment moderne important qui pourrait atteindre le statut de site patrimonial.

(4) B-R-G et DSVRR ont prospéré grâce à un protocole d'entente mutuellement bénéfique pendant 54 ans.

(5) Leur collection commune compte plus de 50 000 livres et possède la quatrième plus grande collection de littérature de langue française dans les régions rurales du Manitoba, et

(6) Les élèves qui sont transportés par autobus des municipalités voisines qui n'ont pas de bibliothèque publique, comme Niverville, Grunthal et Kleefeld, ont accès gratuitement à la bibliothèque publique et à sa quatrième plus grande collection de livres en français dans les régions rurales du Manitoba pendant l'année scolaire.

Nous présentons à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba la pétition suivante :

(1) De demander au ministre du Travail, de la protection des consommateurs et des Services gouvernementaux d'envisager de concéder l'auditorium à la B-R-G d'ici le 1^{er} mars 2023.

(2) De demander au ministre de l'Éducation de reconnaître la valeur que la B-R-G apporte à la population étudiante de l'ÉHS ainsi qu'aux communautés du village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys et de la MR De Salaberry.

(3) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation et au ministre des affaires francophones de reconnaître qu'un protocole d'entente entre la RRVSD et G-R-L est mutuellement bénéfique, financièrement et culturellement.

(4) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et de son statut au sein de la communauté.

(5) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine d'empêcher toute rénovation de l'auditorium qui détruirait et dévaloriserait l'intégrité architecturale du bâtiment.

Cette pétition a été signée par Mireille Laroche, Laurette Gagné et Dolores Blanchard.

Translation

Madam Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The context for this petition is as follows:

(1) *The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library was notified by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate premises currently located in the auditorium of the École Héritage School by March 31, 2023.*

(2) *The auditorium was built in the 1960s by famous Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the JRL for 48 years.*

(3) *A photo of the auditorium captioned "The Regional Library" was published in a 2008 document titled "Significant Heritage Buildings of De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys". It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of Heritage Site.*

(4) *The JRL and the RRVSD have flourished by means of a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.*

(5) *Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth-largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.*

(6) *Students that are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided*

with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French language literature in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1, 2023.

(2) To request the minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.

(3) To request the minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that a memorandum of understanding between the RRVSD and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition was signed by Mireille Laroche, Laurette Gagné and Dolores Blanchard.

* (15:00)

Drug Overdose Reporting

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Across the province, many Manitobans continue to struggle with addictions, and the pandemic has led to even more deaths and worsened the ongoing public health crisis of opioid overdoses.

(2) Three hundred and seventy two Manitobans died from an overdose in 2020. That's over one a day, and 87 per cent higher than in 2019.

(3) Manitoba is expected to exceed over 400 overdose deaths in 2021, but the data is not publicly available since the last public reporting of opioid deaths was published in 2019.

(4) The data for drug overdose deaths from 2020 to 2021 was compiled through media inquiries, and this needs to change.

(5) Access to timely data on the harms of drugs helps to inform both government and stakeholders on where to take action and target resources needed in various communities.

(6) Manitoba is the only province not providing regular, timely data to the federal government's opioid informational-information portal.

(7) Manitobans deserve a government that takes the growing drug crisis seriously and will report the data publicly in a timely manner to get-to target actions and allow for accountability.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to enact Bill 217, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, overdose reporting, to require the Province to publish the number of drug overdose deaths as well as the type of drug on a government website in a timely fashion.

And this has been signed by Desiree McIvor, Valerie McIvor, Cara Kolt and many, many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House Business, I have a couple of announcements on behalf of your hard-working PAC committee. I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Monday, June 20th, 2022 at 10 a.m. to consider the following reports: the Auditor General's report, Vital Statistics Agency, dated September 2020; and the Auditor General's report, Physicians' Billings, dated January 2021.

The witnesses to be called are the Deputy Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services 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 Monday, June 20th, 2022 at 10 a.m. to consider the following reports: Auditor General's report, Vital Statistics Agency, dated September 2020; and the Auditor General's report, Physicians' Billings, dated January 2021.

The witnesses to be called are Deputy Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services, Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr. Goertzen: I'd also like to announce the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Monday, June 20th, 2022 at 1 p.m. to consider the following report: the Auditor General's report, Department of Infrastructure: Oversight of Commercial Vehicle Safety, dated December 2019.

The witness to be called is the Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Monday, June 20th, 2022 at 1 p.m. to consider the following report: Auditor General's report, Oversight of Commercial Vehicle Safety, dated December 2019.

The witness to be called is the Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call this afternoon Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate), which I believe remains at second reading.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider debate on second reading of Bill 39 this afternoon.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 39—The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate)

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call debate on second reading of Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022, school tax, standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas, who has 29 minutes remaining.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Again, I'd like 'reidiate' what I said yesterday, because there's members in this House who could probably take a lesson from this.

Vice President Hubert Humphrey once said that the moral test of government is how well government treats the sick, the needy and the disabled. And I'd like this government to actually reflect on how well they're doing to support these folks.

And I'm going to outline some of their fallings—shortfallings and how they're having a failing grade when it comes to Point Douglas residents, that this government seems to think that this supplementary

bill that's giving people like big corporations—like Polo Park, million dollars; \$40 million going out of our province to other provinces; you know, supporting people in Ontario when Manitobans are struggling here.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In Point Douglas, a majority of the folks that live and work in our community are renters. They don't own houses. Many of them are live-working minimum wage jobs, which this government has failed to increase, and, when they do increase, they're piddly increases. And I remember speaking in this House about two nickels, and then I think it was two dimes, and then it was a quarter. Well, in October, we're set to be the lowest minimum wage in all of Canada.

And, you know, today, the member from Notre Dame raised the issue: folks on EIA not being able to access adult services, adult education. Can you imagine? And the member from Lac du Bonnet on the other side, who is actually the, you know, Minister of Education, doesn't understand, doesn't read reports.

There's been a report done from the front-line workers in these adult education centres that have actually outlined that they have had to turn away folks that were on EIA that wanted to go and upgrade. So the member from Lac du Bonnet should actually go and talk to those directors. Go and talk to those teachers, go and talk to Jim Silver, who actually put the report together. We can actually provide that report to that member, if he'd like. And that member could be advocating with the Families Minister to make sure that people who, on our EIA, can access adult services and actually get out of poverty.

Deputy Speaker, this government has taken bursaries out of the inner-city schools, right on Selkirk Avenue. These are many of the folks that the Minister of Education actually should be supporting. But yet, you know, they vote against it, they take those bursaries away and they make them apply through the university.

These are single parents. These are, you know, women who are struggling. These are Indigenous people who, you know, have been—have come from intergenerational effects, not only from the residential school, from the '60s scoop, missing and murdered, from the CFS system—overrepresentation in all of those systems because of the lack of support that this government provides.

I want to talk about housing. Housing is huge in this province, but yet, we have a lack of housing.

We have more homeless people in this province than we've ever had under this government. This government says that they're making life more affordable for Manitobans? They actually have a billboard in the North End—imagine that. Making life more affordable for folks in the North End—not happening. Come to the North End: I invite this government to come and visit Siloam Mission, to visit the Salvation Army, to visit Main Street Project.

And you know what this government's solution was to homelessness this winter that, you know, they thought that would solve the issue, was opening up a warming centre. More beds that people had to go and line up for, that still had to cart their belongings around in a cart every day and go back and bring their stuff to this warming shelter—that does not give people sustainable housing.

There's a unit on Dufferin—711, No. 7, I actually lived in that unit when I was a single parent with two young children. That unit is boarded up—boarded up. That unit could be housing for a family. I know it has three bedrooms. It would serve a family well. But does this government invest in housing? No. They cut the housing budget by 72 per cent a couple of years ago, the maintenance. So, many of these units have sought—sat empty.

The member from Notre Dame has also brought forth the security issues. People are scared to live in these units because this government has taken the security out of these apartment units. When we were in government, when the NDP was in government, there were security right in the building to ensure that there weren't people dealing drugs in there, that there weren't people that were taking over people's units—you know, gang members—which is happening today. There were—they were making sure that people who didn't belong in the building, that didn't live in the building, that didn't have someone that they were going to visit, didn't come in that building.

* (15:10)

Do they have that now? No. What did they have? They have bed-bug-infested units. They have rodent-infested units. They have cockroaches in their units. And they have deplorable conditions that this government refuses to fix.

There's been water damage in an apartment on Selkirk and Powers several times—several times—and the elevators had to be turned off.

This is an accessible building for people who are in wheelchairs. Can you imagine that? Calling my

office and saying that they can't get to their suites because the elevators have been turned off because, yet again, there's another pipe that's been burst in this apartment—that this government knows about—that patch up, that don't, you know, maintain them properly. And this woman had to sit in the lobby all day, and there was no offer to put her up anywhere, and she had to sit in her wheelchair, nowhere to go.

And this government—you know, that's how they take care of Manitobans. They're on their own—and they've even said that; figure it out on your own.

I want to talk about health care a bit, you know, health care in this province. And this government, you know, says that they're doing so well on health care. And I remember standing with folks in the northwest and the northeast corner fighting for their emergency rooms because they wanted to make sure that they had access to health care in their communities close to their homes.

And this government, what did they go and do? They went and closed those emergency rooms which meant ICU beds closed as well.

And we know that a pandemic happened, but that's not the only reason that our health-care system is in a crisis. It's because of the lack of investments by this government. It's because of the cuts that they continually do and it's, you know, this government not caring and putting money over people time and time again.

We see, you know, sick and vulnerable people—and I want to talk about our elders, you know, our aging population. I've had several reached out to my office that they don't want a property rebate. They want health care. They want to ensure that when they're sick that they can go and they're not sitting in a hallway or they're sitting in a staff lounge or they're sitting in the—laying on a bed trying to get someone's attention where nurses are worked off their feet because this government has fired nurses in our province. This government has pushed nurses to go and work in other provinces because they don't appreciate them.

They talk about wanting to ensure that, you know, the money that is coming from the supplement should be invested in health care, not given to big corporations, not given to Polo Park—\$1 million—not given to other, you know, rich corporations that don't need tax breaks. We need to fund health care in this province. We need to make sure that when people need health care, that they're not sitting on a wait-list.

You know, a member in this House earlier brought forward a question about someone wanting—or being scheduled for heart surgery. They waited two years. Imagine that, having a heart condition and possibly dying waiting for surgery, and then going for their surgery and then being told your surgery's been cancelled.

That's what our health care is today. That's shameful.

People are losing their lives. We look at this pandemic. You know, we didn't have enough ICU beds because of this government's cuts. And, you know, this government said, well, we're doing everything we can; you know, we had to send people out of the province to other provinces. We should never have had to do that. But, again, this government put money over people and it cost people their lives.

In Maples, you know, care home, many lost their lives in that, you know, and I send my condolences to those families. I've met with a few of them as they were, you know, going through their grieving process and wanting to enact change and wanting this government to listen to them and to ensure that there were investments made in public—public health care, public personal-care homes, not for-profit, where people are put last.

They deserve—these are the people who have forged this province, that have put their blood, sweat and tears to bring it where it is. And this government continues to erode what they've worked for. They've worked for free health care—free health care—and what has this government done? They're now going to a tier—two-tier system.

If you have money—and we know people on the other side, you know, like to line people's pockets that already have money—you can get health care. But if you don't, like the gentleman who's waiting for a heart surgery, then you have to wait, which is, you know, not what our seniors fought for in this country, or in this province.

I want to talk a bit about, you know, our disability—our disabled folks in this province. This government has continually cut people off of EIA disability benefits. I had a couple of folks visit my office, one who just came from the hospital that was taken there by ambulance because they went to the bank machine to get out the few last dollars that they had because they were kicked off of disability and they are a diabetic.

This young—well, she's about 38, she's young to me, she's younger than me—she could barely walk. She was skin and bones. Like, she had a hard time seeing. Visually she was struggling. She had fallen. She had hit her face on the ATM. She had been knocked out. Thankfully, someone came in and found her and she had to have stitches and taken to the hospital by ambulance. And this government thinks that that person is well enough to work.

This person got a letter from the doctor at the emergency saying that they were not in good health to be, you know, working or seeking employment. They got a doctor from their—or a letter from their own doctor also stating that that was also sent to the government, to the minister, to, you know, the EIA worker. They've been trying to advocate from them—for themselves, but this government is not listening.

I want to talk about Bertrand McKay [*phonetic*]—or Murdoch, another, you know, gentleman who was kicked off of disability EIA; he's 55. That's not the only story. There's many others that turned 55 that were on disability EIA.

And this government knows that they can't force people who are on disability EIA to take CPP. That's why they're cutting them off, because they know that if they're not on that, that they can force them to take CPP. That practice needs to be changed. This government needs to respect our elders that have worked hard and not put them in poverty later on.

This gentleman, if he's to take his CPP later in life, would get more money. And even if he did take his CPP, he would still be in poverty. It's not going to make a huge difference, but again, this government says, well, we're not going to pay; it's the federal government's responsibility. They need to get their CPP and we will pay the difference, which still leaves them in poverty.

And they claw back dollar for dollar. So, say they're only getting \$300. The government is going to take that \$300, dollar for dollar, and supplement, and they're already living in poverty. And this government thinks that their—you know, this supplemental bill is going to support those folks. It's not. The people that are on EIA aren't going to benefit this—with this.

The people who are renters are now getting less money from this government because this government has cut the amount of benefits that they get through their taxes. And these are struggling Manitobans. These are people who are working two jobs just to pay

rent, just to keep their lights on because this government continues to raise hydro rates.

I don't know about other folks, but I was kind of shocked at my last hydro bill because that was the first rate increase and, man, I was like, you know, it's getting harder and harder—and I make a good wage, you know, I make a good salary, but I also support my kids too. So it's tough for me, you know, as someone who has a good-paying job to pay that bill—400 and something. You know, almost \$50 difference in my hydro bill that was—the decision was made at that Cabinet table on that side. And now this government wants to bring forward a bill that gives them full authority to make those decisions and put Manitobans further in poverty.

* (15:20)

We have the highest child poverty rate in this province—or in this country, and, you know, this government says, oh, we're doing so much better or, you know, we're not the lowest. But it isn't actually this government that's investing in our children, because they're actually doing the opposite.

The only reason that children aren't starving in this province is because they're getting the child benefit tax, which comes from the federal government, not from this provincial government.

This provincial government is underfunding education. So, you know, this money is coming directly from the education tax in this province. That money still has to go back into education somewhere. And we've seen what effects it's already had. We have eight less teachers in Seven Oaks. We have even less teachers in Brandon. That trickles down to students, and students coming back from the pandemic are struggling even more and need even more supports.

And what's this government's, you know, response to that? Well, we need to give, you know, taxpayers' money back so that we can, you know, convince them that we're the right government.

Well, Manitobans won't be fooled; 2023 is coming quick, and like the member from St. Johns always says, you know, voting matters. You matter. You want to vote them out? You exercise your right to vote and put your name on a ballot. Take the PCs out because they are not doing a good job of running this province.

And, you know, I always stand up in this House advocating for those who are impoverished and I always will because, you know, these are the most

needy, the most vulnerable in our province. And the government has a responsibility, but they're not even taking care of these folks. You know, they're leaving them to live in shelters. They're not allowing them to access adult education when they're on EIA, which will help lift them out of poverty, which will give them a starting chance.

You know, the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) thinks that it's okay to push people who can't even read, that are illiterate, that maybe know environmental text, that's it, to go and get a job—a job that pays 12-something an hour and that's going to lift them out of poverty? That person might have one kid, that person might have two kids, you know, and need daycare as well—and have to pay daycare.

And what's this government done for daycare? Well, they've shirked the responsibility onto the daycares to disperse funds, but they can't use that money to increase their staff wages. They can't increase their staffing. They have to administer that money to the parents, but yet a director has so many hats they're already wearing and now this government has put more responsibility on them. Because they don't want the responsibility, just like when they give the City basket funding and they say, oh, you know, that's their responsibility. We gave them all that money. It's not our fault if they don't know how to manage it. But yet, they undercut the City over and over and over again.

Even our municipalities—you know, there's potholes everywhere in our city. What has this government done? They've cut infrastructure spending. *[interjection]* You know, and the member from Lac du Bonnet would know because that member drives 59 home and there's lots of potholes on that drive, I can tell you that. And that member could be advocating with his caucus to get more infrastructure dollars to get those roads fixed so that Manitobans can drive safely and not have to worry about losing a wheel in a pothole or hurting themselves.

You know, I remember this winter—I talked about it in this House—about folks using bus shelters as housing. This government has done nothing—nothing—for those people. Those folks are still living in bus shelters. They're still living in shelters. They don't have anywhere to live because the shelter funding from this government is \$578. Where are you going to find a place to live for \$578?

I can tell you where—a rooming house that is derelict, that should probably be shut down. You have to share a bathroom with a whole bunch of people, and imagine doing that during COVID. Imagine having no

choice but to use one bathroom with 10 others, maybe more, in a rooming house; kitchen—you know, people—I'm—I like to keep my kitchen clean and I'm very anal about that, and when someone comes in, you know, my son comes and makes a sandwich and doesn't clean up after himself, you know, that drives me crazy.

And I couldn't imagine living, you know, in a rooming house and having to go into the kitchen and somebody hasn't cleaned up, or having my food taken from the fridge because I don't have enough money to buy a little fridge for my room in the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I just would remind the member that—to tie back the comments to the bill at hand. I'm struggling to keep track as we hear about sandwiches and tidying the kitchen and so on. So, please, if the member could tie it back, that would be appreciated.

Mrs. Smith: Well, thank you, Deputy Speaker.

And this is all about accountability and making sure that Manitobans have what they need, which is what this government says that they're doing. Well, housing is a huge issue in this province. This government has a responsibility to ensure Manitobans have access to housing, and they're not doing that.

So I was simply illustrating what it's like to live in a rooming house, because I know members opposite probably don't even know what a rooming house is, probably has not gone to visit, you know, someone in the North End that's living in a derelict place.

And I know members opposite have gone to, like, Salvation Army and, you know, fed the community, but I would even go further and suggest that they actually go and spend a night—spend a night in a shelter, see what it's like. You don't get to keep your belongings. That's why you see so many carts all over the city. It's because people have to cart their belongings around every night, you know, and this government is doing nothing to address that.

They're not doing anything to address the affordability for Manitobans, and Point Douglas residents are furious. They are furious at this government, that they are still having to live in poverty. They are seeing garbage all over this community, 'mour' community, because people are living in encampments because this government is doing nothing to make sure that they're housed.

And, again, I just want to go back, of course, you know, education. Education in our Indigenous community is basically, you know, we've talked about it. It's the new buffalo. It's the buffalo where you take everything, you use everything in there. It's a tool. It's something to lift you up and take you out of poverty, and I can't express that enough.

You know, we have an Education Minister, we have a Families Minister. I would suggest that those two get together and figure out in changing that policy so that EIA recipients can access adult learning.

I, in fact, you know, used adult learning. I was a young mom. I had to go back to school. Thankfully, at that time, it was an NDP government that supported, you know, supported people on EIA. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: And I, actually, after, I went into a program called CATEP, the Community-based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, which was another NDP program that supported me and lifted me out of poverty.

So these are transformational things that this government, you know, have cut. They have not supported adult learners that are on EIA. Instead, they want to push them into further poverty, push them into, you know, jobs that they don't have the skills for.

And, you know, this Province has eroded our health place and safety, which, you know—these folks are being pushed into jobs that they don't have the skills to do, but this government thinks it's okay to, you know, at any means get people off of EIA, whether, you know, they have the skills or abilities or not, or education. And, you know, I certainly, as an educator, stand up for, you know, people accessing those systems and being able to go back to school.

We have, you know, an opportunity to support folks through education around reconciliation, because probably 80 per cent of those folks that are trying to access adult ed are Indigenous, and that's an act of reconciliation. Change the policy, let them go and access adult education, let them get their grade 12, let them go on to other programs in the university. Bring back those bursaries that were in the inner city that were taken away from those, you know, people who were impoverished that needed those bursaries.

* (15:30)

That this government has continually, you know, forced people further into poverty, further into homelessness, have forced students to leave school because of the lack of bursaries that this government has provided, has not supported those with disabilities, has continually kicked them off EIA, is not supporting housing and certainly—you know, I want to go back to this quote again, you know, again, the moral task of a government is how well they treat the sick, the needy and the disabled.

This government is getting a failing grade from Manitobans. You look at the sick—well, look at our health-care system. People can't access it. If you have money, sure, you know. We're hiring agency nurses—if we had taken care of the nurses that were here and supported them and appreciated them, they would have stayed here. But no, this government didn't, and you know, the accountability of this government is money over people at all costs, so it's cost our health-care system.

I look at, you know, our disabled, and, again, I talked a little bit about, you know, our disabled here in Manitoba and those supports that have been eroded again, though this government, even in our school system, and it's, you know, atrocious. So, this government has a lot of work to do.

And, you know, giving big corporations \$40 million—could be spent in this province, as the member from Fort Garry brought up today. That money should not be going out of our province. That money could be spent on the member from Lac du Bonnet's roads, the infrastructure. That money could be spent on making sure that members can access adult education. That money could be spent ensuring that our kids have a breakfast program, that, if a family can't afford to eat with their kids in the morning, they can go to school and make sure that they have a full tummy and they can learn.

And, you know, this government doesn't think that those are things that should be supported. Instead, what they want to do is support \$40 million leaving our province to big corporate—corporations that don't need the tax break, at the expense of Manitobans here, and shame on this government.

Miigwech.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and put a few words on record regarding Bill 39, which is The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate). This government is asking for \$350 million as appropriation under this bill, and

the government wants to send out this money to people of Manitoba, including billionaires who own businesses in Manitoba.

So this government is presenting the situation in a way that this move is going to help Manitobans. But they are not talking about how it's supporting disproportionately to the rich people, as we have been discussing in this Chamber, we have been reading in the media, about who and how rich people are being benefited.

One of the names comes up, which is Cadillac Fairview. This company owns Polo Park shopping centre, and they're getting a cheque worth \$1 million. Similarly, 10 shopping centre owners, they got \$3 million in rebates.

What's the impact? We need to understand that. What would be the impact of this action? What would be the impact of this rebate? What would be the impact of this bill on regular Manitobans and on rich people? The impact is that the rich would get richer and the poor become poorer. That's what this government is all about. We need to understand the intentions of this government, what they want to achieve through this bill.

It's a simple question: Who needs money, poor or the rich? A regular Manitoban or a business owner of a \$20-billion company? Where is the problem? The problem is the political will. We need to understand and look beyond what's visible on the first side. We need to understand the intentions of this government. We need to understand the lack of political will.

There is a lack of political will to help the needy. There is a lack of political will to support school divisions; they're cutting education in every budget. There is a lack of political will to feed the kids in schools through breakfast programs. And there is a lack of political will to address period poverty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you got a chance to look at the social media of the Finance Minister recently, what they're doing is they're presenting a picture like NDP is standing between Manitobans and the government who is willing to support them.

And when you go down, scroll down and see the comments that Manitobans make. It speaks a lot about what this government is doing to our economy. It speaks a lot about what Manitobans think about this government. When you scroll further down, further down, it would clearly indicate that Manitobans, they are preparing. They are preparing for a big farewell to

the PC government in the next election. It's very much visible. Social media tells us a lot.

And through this bill, this government is just creating a situation where they can perform as a theatre artist; it's a political theatre here. They have the money; they can send cheques. But they are creating a situation which is a political theatre.

But we who represent regular Manitobans—I represent Burrows. My constituents are not owners of billion-dollar companies, they are regular Manitobans. Many of them, they don't even own their own home. They have to rent properties. They live in small houses.

So, this bill debate gives us an opportunity to raise the voices of regular Manitobans, and that's what my colleagues and I, we are standing here, one after another, standing together in support of regular Manitobans and raising their voice in this Chamber. And that's why we are here. We are here to fight for Manitobans.

The PC tax rebate approach is actually—it's corporate welfare. It's a way to support their friends with deeper pockets, their rich friends, billionaires. And the millions of dollars of money that is being offered to billion-dollar companies, it could be better utilized. I think this money could be better utilized by funding of our schools. This money could be better utilized by recruiting more teachers in schools. It can fund post-secondary education. It can provide health care to international students. And it can improve the MPNP program by removing \$500-application fees, which is a huge amount for people who don't earn that much.

* (15:40)

And this is the program which accounts for 70 per cent of total immigration in Manitoba. And this money, millions of dollars, can fund better settlement programs for our friends migrating from Ukraine.

There are options. But, again, there is lack of political will to go that route. This government is following a road that they like to go.

When we talk about our education system, we see so many things clearly. This is the time when we should be investing more in education. But this government, they funded way below the rate of inflation, and there is no plan for a post-pandemic recovery.

So when they cut education, they cut the budget to our schools and school divisions. What's the impact? We have seen the impact in Brandon School Division. They had to cut teaching positions. What

that means is our kids would be suffering, our families would be suffering, there would be less teachers, there would be bigger class sizes and the classrooms would be crowded. Same thing happened with Seven Oaks School Division; due to cuts to education, they had to lay off their teachers, their non-teaching staff, who build Manitoba.

And this government tried to pass bill 64, and everybody knows—everybody knows—the level of resistance from Manitobans this bill received. And for this bill this government spent over \$1.5 million. I would say they wasted this money.

What was the outcome? Wasted time, wasted research efforts, wasted intellect to just prepare a bill that goes nowhere. Manitobans opposed it and then the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) had to go back. They had to withdraw this bill.

It's very clear that this government is doing what's not desired in education, because if they did the right thing, Manitobans would not have stood up against bill 64. Under bill 64, this government, they tried to dissolve the school boards. School boards are local voices. School board trustees are the people who local people, school parents, trust, and this government made a failed attempt to remove those local voices. They wanted to have direct control of the education system by centralizing the education system.

And when we look on the data, it tells us that the provincial share to the Education budget is down from 62.4 per cent to 58.2 per cent between 2016 and 2021. What's needed? We need better ventilation in schools. We need better investment in our schools' sports programs, arts programs.

And same is the situation with post-secondary education. The PC government is increasing tuition at a rate way above inflation. And PCs have scrapped the tuition cap. They cut the tuition rebate, which used to be \$65 million. They froze funding to the universities. They cut health-care coverage for international students in 2018. What was the result? The University of Manitoba had to shoulder \$450,000 as a cost to it. And these international students from 100 countries, they contributed \$400 million to the economy and supported more than 4,200 jobs in Manitoba in 2018.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you think that those international students who bring in so much money and support of our economy, support of our jobs, don't deserve proper health care, which used to be there when the NDP was in power?

Health care: I will talk about health care a bit. Everybody knows that we see de facto cuts. Our health-care system is underfunded. Privately owned personal-care homes; they are mishandling our seniors. There have been reports in personal-care homes where we lost our seniors during the pandemic. And this government, during the pandemic, sent ICU patients out of province.

This government has closed ERs in the area where I represent people who used to go to Seven Oaks Hospital. Concordia Hospital—they cut cancer care. And the health care in Manitoba is a hallway-medicine health care. Wait times are up.

My critic portfolio is Agriculture. When I asked this minister, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Johnson) in the QP today about the flood situation, the minister totally deflected the question and started talking about Bill 39. He didn't have a sentence in response to the support for the farmers. But Manitobans and Manitoba farmers, they expect the current Ag minister to speak for hours and hours about how they can make our farmers' lives better.

It's unfortunate. Every time I was up in the question period regarding Ag questions, our producers, who are frustrated to see the response they had from their Ag minister talk about affordability in Manitoba. Food prices are up; gas prices are up; hydro rates are up; utilities are up. This government is failing on every—every—front.

We just witnessed my wonderful colleague from Point Douglas and my colleague from Notre Dame. They mentioned about the state of affairs in adult learning—adult education. We need to invest more in adult education so that the people who are on EI, they can improve their skills and make themselves employable through that process. And what we're saying is research-based; it's supported by the data.

But the government lacks action, which is unfortunate. Manitobans deserve—they deserve a government that works for all of them.

* (15:50)

State of our roads: potholes, potholes, potholes. No support. Cuts to municipalities. Our MPNP program: it's been years when the last draw for skilled workers overseas was seen. MPNP program, it's not even touching those applications, and people who are waiting to see their applications processed, they're frustrated.

Immigrants built our province. Immigrants built Canada. And the way this government is treating our immigrants, we can't appreciate that. Migrant labour. Just imagine a situation if Manitoba doesn't have migrant labour. How would it look like? They build Manitoba. They work on the farms. They work in the factories. But how they are treated? Everybody knows. Regular Manitobans who build Manitoba work day and night, sometimes six days, seven days a week. What this government is doing for those Manitobans? Nothing.

So, actually, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to put a few words on record regarding Bill 39, an education property tax. We have always stood up for regular Manitobans. We want that regular Manitobans should be supported in every way possible. But what's not acceptable is to disproportionately send millions of dollars to billionaires. That's where the 'conflact' is. We need to understand that—this.

And I expect the Finance Minister to tell Manitobans the real story, that why we're standing up in this Chamber and debating this bill, because we want to say what Manitobans elected us to say. We want to stand up for them. We want to support their rights. We want to support regular Manitobans. We want to narrow the gap between rich and the poor. That's the point.

And we would continue speaking up for regular Manitobans, for every Manitoban, and we would continue to do so, and that's what we have done so far, that's our role, and we stand up here to debate this bill. Let's see if this government agrees to our amendment that we will be proposing, and then we would see the real intentions of this government, if they really, really want to send cheques to Manitobans and really, really want to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. Let's see. We'll see it in a few minutes.

Thank you so much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I thank my colleagues for that generous, supportive applause, as I rise in the House to put a few words on the record in regards to this government's desire to continue to prioritize folks who, you know, as we've been repeating in this House, some folks who own some pretty financially, I guess, successful corporations. This government seems, still, very set on making sure that those folks who don't live in Manitoba, you know, and have literally \$20-billion corporations benefit from the taxes that Manitobans are paying.

But I think, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I find really interesting about this debate, and aspects of this debate that my colleagues and I have been raising over the past many days, now. Our colleague, the MLA for Fort Garry, our colleague, the MLA for Point Douglas, St. Johns, Notre Dame, St. James, Burrows, have all put words on the record—Transcona—have all put words on the record outlining the various ways in which this government could make life better for many Manitobans who are really struggling.

And I find it really concerning that when folks on our side of the House raise things like a livable wage, folks across the way, in—on the government side of the House, scoff at that. There's a real lack of compassion—that's the way I would articulate it—a lack of compassion for the realities that many Manitobans are facing.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, we all see the rise in gas prices, in housing, in cost of food. And I can't help every time I go to the grocery store and I buy groceries, I think about those families—not very different than the family I was raised in—who are going to the grocery store, and those parents and caregivers who are standing there trying to figure out how they're going to feed their families. And to think that this government has an opportunity to make life easier, to lighten the burden that those families are facing, and yet this government is actively choosing not to do that, is incredibly disappointing.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am fortunate to be someone who, you know, was raised in a loving household; certainly, challenges in our household, like probably many other families. But, you know, I think about the fact that my mother, due to some challenges in our household, had to find a way—didn't matter if the costs were rising at the grocery store—to feed five kids on a very tight budget.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I go to the grocery store and I see what people are facing now, I think back to those moments where I knew that our mom—didn't matter what was going on in terms of costs rising—had a limited budget for a very, very, very long time, basically throughout my upbringing, to try and feed five kids. And she found really creative ways of doing that.

And, you know, I think about the families that I know now, the families that I hear from on a daily basis, the seniors that I hear from who are on fixed incomes, folks who are struggling with poverty, who—my goodness, when I think about the amount of

money that's being sent out because this government made a short-sighted and, you know, poorly thought-out decision, I think about all of those seniors, those families, those parents just like my mom when I was growing up, who really need and needed this government to think beyond their short-term goals and their short-term agendas, and think about the bigger picture, about how we make sure that all Manitoba families have the opportunity to thrive—not just survive, not just somehow scrape by living in poverty, but actually a chance to thrive.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, I don't know that members opposite can really and truly appreciate what it is that many Manitobans are calling for them to do. And I don't know if that's because they don't go out into our communities and really sit down and talk to people; they're unwilling to actually, you know, sit down with these families and even walk in the constituency I represent, Union Station, and really take a good look at what's going on and recognize that the ways in which they're deciding to spend money, and distribute money and resources, is exacerbating some of these challenges.

I can't answer that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. None of us can. That is a question that could only be answered by those folks, and, unfortunately, I think what we're seeing and we've seen from this government is they're unwilling to answer that question. They'll do anything they can to avoid accountability, anything they can to avoid facing the brutal realities that many Manitobans are facing right now.

We are in a pivotal time in our province, just as many jurisdictions are in a pivotal time, where the decisions that governments make right now are having and are going to have significant long-term impacts. We are seeing disparities growing at astronomical rates, and that needs to be stopped—slowed and stopped, right now.

* (16:00)

The decisions—I know that, you know, these folks—actually, I don't know in terms of what they think in timelines. Again, I think it's very short-sighted decision making that we're seeing and in terms of who they're prioritizing but, you know, it's important for the government, the PCs to recognize that the decisions they're making right now are going to have significant long-term impacts across Manitoba.

Look at our health-care system, the fact that we literally have, what, 10 per cent of our population waiting for surgeries and diagnostic tests. I'm not quite

sure if this government comprehends the realities of how that affects people's health. And if they do—which, there's got to be maybe one or two folks who maybe grasp the seriousness of this—the negligence, the callousness that must exist there to not recognize that these 170,000 Manitobans, there are many of these folks that are not going to be able to access the care they need because, unfortunately, they will die, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We've already seen that happen. People are dying waiting for surgeries and diagnostic tests. People are getting so sick that they're getting late-stage and terminal cancer diagnoses because they didn't get the care they needed early on. Folks are presenting to emergency rooms so sick and repeatedly because they have gone without the care they need, be it primary care, physician, nurse practitioner, tests, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no way that any member on that side of the House can justify making sure that billion-dollar corporations are getting cheques of \$1 million when we have 170,000 Manitobans on a wait-list with no end in sight.

I had the privilege of meeting with some nurses recently, and it's a privilege always, but, certainly, these are folks who are exhausted, who are burnt out and are still taking the time to meet with folks in government who will hear them. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these nurses have not been able to meet with anybody on that side of the House because they won't accept their meeting requests.

But we sat down and talked with these nurses who painted a picture of what's going on in our hospitals that is quite scary. And these nurses didn't meet with us to share this information because they just wanted to be critical. These nurses shared some really great ideas and some solutions, but they wanted for us to really understand what's going on.

They wanted to make clear that when the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) show up at St. Boniface to make an announcement about an emergency room expansion but don't have the decency to even meet with the front-line staff who work there and see what they're dealing with, they're not happy about that. They find that to be quite disrespectful, and not because they want to be graced by the presence of the Premier and the Minister of Health; it's because they actually understand that if the Premier bothered or if the Minister of Health bothered to go into their department on the front lines

and see the state of things, they might actually be compelled to take immediate actions based on what these nurses and health-care providers are saying.

But no, unfortunately, yet again, we see the minister, we see the Premier, we see this PC caucus be so short-sighted and only care about things that they think or hope, fingers crossed, might benefit their own agenda and neglect the fact that right within metres—within proximity of where they were was an opportunity to get access to the information, in person, that will allow them to make the right decisions.

But this isn't a government that cares about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think—well, part of my frustration in this moment is that sometimes we stand up, we give speeches and we debate under this sort of notion that maybe, perhaps, the government is listening and they care. I'm going to be the one to say it; I'll be the bad guy: they don't care. I don't believe this government cares. I don't believe this government cares that people are starving in our province, that people are working poverty wages in this province and cannot feed their families—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Just would ask the member to draw their comments into Bill 39 and to make the connections. That would be helpful if it could be tied in.

Thank you.

MLA Asagwara: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought I was being clear, so I'll reiterate.

This bill, Bill 39, reflects this government's choices and priorities. What I am talking about are the choices they are not making, which are directly impacting people across Manitoba. Some of the most vulnerable, targeted—people who are decimated by this pandemic and are being left to fend for themselves because this government would rather cut a cheque—as we heard yesterday, to Subway—than give money to those folks and resources to those folks who are working poverty wages and working two, three, four jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, I know that maybe not everybody has a lived experience of what it means to work mandated overtime. You know, going to work for an eight-hour shift, being told halfway through your shift: no, you don't get to go home to your families. No, we don't think we're going to be able to let you go home and breastfeed your child, your infant. We'll find you a breast pump.

That's what's happening in Manitoba. I'm not quite sure how any government with a conscience

could hear a story like that about our health-care system, about nurses who have worked straight through the pandemic, have come back from maternity leave into the chaos this government has created, get mandated to stay overtime and be told, you can't go home and breastfeed your baby. We'll find you a breast pump.

I'm not sure what minister of health in any jurisdiction would hear that story and not be—that not be the catalyst to take immediate action.

But we know which government across any jurisdiction would not be compelled: It's this government. It's the Conservative government in Manitoba that would hear a story like that and do nothing by way of change.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is utterly shameful. To think that nurses in Manitoba, health-care aides, allied health-care professionals, essential workers, folks who are keeping our systems across the board are begging and pleading for really meagre improvements to their collective agreements; begging and pleading for this government to get out of the way so they can negotiate collective agreements.

To think that those folks open up the newspaper or their social media, sit down after working 17 hours knowing they're only going to get maybe five, six hours of sleep before they have to go back to their jobs, and they see that Polo Park, Cadillac Fairview, is getting a million-dollar cheque when their wages were frozen for years.

Many folks in allied health, by the way, haven't gotten a collective agreement in five or six years. That is shameful. It is a slap in the face to the same people that many of us have loved ones accessing care from in our health-care system. Many of us in this House during this pandemic and before it have accessed care with these folks, have been provided care by these folks. And yet this government comes into this House and actually stands up in this place and fights on behalf of billion-dollar corporations and not the people they've been calling heroes since March of 2020 in Manitoba.

That is disgraceful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am not going to minimize that. I cannot minimize that when I'm hearing from folks in my own constituency and Manitobans across the board how they're suffering and how they're struggling, and all of their pleas are going unheard and ignored flat out by this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, there have been opportunities in the budget, certainly opportunities—even right now this government could stand up and say, you know what? We're going to change course. We're listening to Manitobans. We're going to do things differently.

A good example would be this government, since 2016, has systemically attacked women's health in Manitoba. This government has cut different aspects of women's health. They've cut—I mean, I—there's a long list, probably a dozen different items I could list. But this was an opportunity for this government to make those many wrongs right and whole. They're not doing that.

This government knows that students are struggling with the impacts of the pandemic. They could have—they could have made sure that life was more affordable for those families. They could have made sure education had more money. *[interjection]*

* (16:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Hey, the level of chatter in here is a little louder than perhaps it should be. If you could take your conversations elsewhere, that would be much appreciated, or at least talk maybe a little more quietly if you do have to have a conversation.

MLA Asagwara: I actually appreciate you standing and rising and encouraging members opposite to find—you know, either leave the Chamber—because, they're not listening. And so your intervention actually highlights the fact that, when we're debating something that they seem—they claim to care so much about, this—getting this money to \$20 billion corporations is so important, yet they're not taking the time to even bother listening. We're bringing forward the concerns of Manitobans—many Manitobans that they represent—they don't care; they don't care. So this moment is actually really reflective of what's going on with this government. When other people are talking, when other people are saying things that they need to hear, they don't want to hear it; they don't listen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last couple of points that I will make are simple. This government can take very straightforward steps to improve affordability in Manitoba. Touting a bill that disproportionately supports people who are already well off—I'm lucky. Things are tough for many people. I can go to the grocery store and pick up what I need for myself; that is a privilege.

I have been that person who had to choose between taking the bus and paying for food; I have been there. I have been that person who didn't have a place to live. I have been that person who was trying to get ahead, doing everything I knew I had to do to get it—two jobs, going to school, playing basketball, going to training. And I finished all those things at the end of the day, and I had to make a choice: do I spend \$2.50 buying a can of pasta sauce and a bag of pasta and make my meal or do I take the bus home or—I can't—I couldn't afford both. I'd walk an hour and a half from training to my friend's couch because I couldn't afford housing.

Those were very real choices I had to make. I don't have to make those choices anymore; I'm grateful for that. But there are many people across our province who are making those choices right now, whose situations are much more dire than mine ever was, much harder than many things that all of us have faced.

This government has a responsibility to recognize that instead of making sure that wealthy corporations just get wealthier, that Manitobans—everyday Manitobans who depend on us to make good decisions on their behalf—can count on their government to look out for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I'm not hopeful that this government is listening because every decision this government has made since 2016, certainly during this pandemic and very recently, we see a—the amount of unforced errors from this government is striking. But, in this particular case, unfortunately, I'm not hopeful that they're going to put the well-being of Manitobans first, and that's devastating because it affects real people. It affects many people who don't have the capacity and the time to be here in the Chamber or write letters to their representatives or call their offices, because they don't have the resources; they don't have the capacity and so they're depending on us to do that on their behalf.

So, on this side of the House, we're going to continue to advocate for those Manitobans—for all Manitobans—to be able to live in a province with a government that puts them first and will keep fighting that fight and standing up on behalf of those citizens until 2023, when all those citizens come together to send a clear message and make sure that they have a government that's in government working for them. And that's going to be a lot of folks from this side of the House.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 39, the school tax—The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the question—the motion? [*Agreed*]

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider the report on Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate), for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

* (16:20)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 39—The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate)

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order.

We will now consider Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate).

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I'm pleased to be in the Committee of the Whole section of consideration of this bill. I indicated I'd make brief comments when we were earlier in second reading.

Just to provide a little more clarification, Bill 39 is required to provide spending authority, as we've said, for the 2022 rebate, and to ensure that those rebate cheques go out in a timely fashion before school taxes are due.

I want to provide a brief description of the provisions of the bill. Section—subsection 2(1) specifies the authority for operating expenditures is \$349,800,000. It provides for the school tax rebate issued in the 2022 calendar year.

Subsection 2(2) affirms that money expended under the authority of this act may be made through whatever department has become responsible for the program or activity during the 2022-2023 year. It's consistent with past appropriation acts. It makes allowances for when departmental reorganizations occur, or if they occur. As was the case in 2021, the

2022 rebate will be administered by the Department of Finance.

And finally, the section 3 specifies that the act comes in force on royal assent.

Mr. Chair, with these comments, I present the bill to the committee.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Wasyliw: Now, the minister's stated policy reason for this tax rebate is to provide relief to working people, seniors and lower income families. This bill fails on every one of those counts.

Forty per cent of Manitobans are renters, and given the reduction in the rental tax credit, their taxes have actually gone up. I think the minister's own statistics, there's less than 500,000 rebate cheques for an entire province of 1.4 million people. Many property owners, especially large corporate landowners, own multiple properties. So, a much smaller number of Manitobans will even sort of be touched by this, and you're looking at a very small slice of Manitoba that is getting tax relief.

So, even if this government was sincere about the affordability crisis, which we obviously know they're not, they're bringing in a 10 per cent tax cut to commercial and industrial properties. It will amount to \$40 million. And what's significant about that is that nobody has asked for this tax break. There's nobody in the, you know, Toronto landlord community that has come to this government and said that they are struggling and they need extra tax break. We know that this is going to end up padding corporate profits.

We also know that this isn't going to do anything for the economy. In fact, CBC, in their coverage in this, interviewed a right-wing economist named Jack Mintz, a type of person who's never seen a tax he didn't want to cut. And he came out and said, you know what, that's a bad idea; that this actually won't help the economy and there's other tax cuts that have a greater impact on economic growth.

So, essentially, what we're looking at is something that nobody's asked for, that will affect some of the largest commercial landlords and large corporate

companies. We're talking about the oil and gas industry in Manitoba. We are talking about the railway industry in Manitoba. We are talking about large industrial property owners with factories. And, of course, we're talking about multinational companies who have operations in Manitoba but are headquartered elsewhere.

And it's disappointing because this government doesn't have any sort of economic plan. And it appears that they wish to sell out Manitobans with this tax bill because what's going to happen is the vast majority of that \$40 million is going to leave the province. It will not stay here. It will not circulate in our economy, and it will not create any jobs.

And, of course, we are borrowing money for that \$40 million, so Manitobans get stung twice. They will see no benefit from this tax, and they will have to pay the interest for years and years on this poor decision.

And, of course, we're seeing the effects of it right now with our crumbling infrastructure. We're seeing our hospital system at near-collapse. We're seeing a chronically underfunded education system where the absolute quality of education in Manitoba has greatly diminished under this government's watch. This government has not articulated one policy justification which is sincere and genuine, as to why some of the largest commercial landlords based out of Toronto need a million-dollar rebate.

This is corporate welfare in the worst sense of the word. Manitobans have been expressing their outrage that their government would ignore the needs of children, ignore the needs of medical patients and reward very wealthy, very comfortable out-of-province corporations who absolutely do not need the help and aren't seeking it. And, of course, the insult to injury is that Manitobans will be paying this for decades, if not more, and so this \$40 million, when you compound it with the interest payments, is a lot of money.

And this, from a government that has the pretense of being fiscally responsible. I think everything to do with this tax rebate puts that to the lie. This is a government that's exceptionally fiscally reckless, and this is an exceptionally irresponsible bill, and this is an exceptionally irresponsible government when it comes to public finances.

And it is truly disappointing, and I'm 'hopeting' the minister will put the brakes on this and support our amendment which will bring some common sense to this.

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

An Honourable Member: To make an opening comment? To make an opening statement?

Mr. Lamont: Yes, to make an opening statement.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for the honourable member for St. Boniface to make an opening statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Lamont: Thank you very much.

Yes, I mean, I think I've referred earlier to this bill as immoral—to be doing this at a time of deep crisis in Canada, in Manitoba. We've got flooding. We've got crises in our health-care system. We've heard that—from education that there're serious problems with the budget because they only have a year to plan.

But, fundamentally, this is a form of intergenerational theft where we're going to be borrowing \$350 million with interest in order to cut cheques, largely, to wealthy property owners. And the more properties they own, the more they will get.

And even in the instance of Polo Park, I know that there have been—people have said, well, it's going to flow through. Well, one of the major tenants of Polo Park is Apple, which is a trillion-dollar company, which—I very much like Apple and their products, but I certainly have misgivings, and I certainly know that they don't need a tax cut. The same is true of tenants of other major buildings, like Bell MTS, which is owned by the wealthiest person in Canada.

So, this is an upward transfer of wealth, which is going to have to be paid by future generations, and it won't have the effect of stimulating the economy or helping business in a meaningful way.

I mean, one of the things that's happening is that people have been blaming—many Conservatives have been blaming fiscal spending and helping, you know, things like CERB are making sure that people without means can pay their bills, or put food on the table, or pay for medication, or keep a roof over their head, that's supposed to be causing inflation. But, apparently, borrowing \$350 million and flushing it into the economy—mostly to the wealthiest people in the province—is not supposed to somehow cause inflation.

There is a real breakdown in the Conservatives' arguments about that. The fact is, is that there are going to be people who are going to be getting \$6,000

cheques; there are going to be people who are getting many \$6,000 cheques because they own multiple properties, and the—but the vast majority of Manitobans will receive very little or nothing.

* (16:30)

So it's disingenuous to just use the word average. The word average is a really, quite frankly, misleading word. It's often used. It's almost a red flag when people use the word average because it pretends that everybody in society is already perfectly equal, which we know they are not; that everybody has the same income and owns the same property, which we know they do not. The reality is that we live in a deeply unequal society, including in Manitoba and in Canada, that there are people who have 500 times—and more—property than the average person. And there are people who have—a large number of people who have no property at all.

So, just as an example, some of the people who live in Manitoba, who are most deeply in need, are First Nations who live on reserve and they do not own property. So, they will get nothing from this. Instead we're going to be borrowing money to cut cheques to the wealthiest people and, at a time of crisis, at a time when the CFIB and others have noticed—have noted that we're seeing business bankruptcies rise, this is not going to do it.

This is not going to make the difference that this government has promised, and it's a really—of all the things that should have been changed and reconsidered when this government shifted gears and said they were going to change tone from the previous leader, the fact is, it wasn't just the tone of the previous leader, it was also the substance. It was the substance in policies like these, which are massively unfair, that are generating year over year, hundreds of millions of dollars and, in the long run, billions of dollars in debt that future generations are going to have to pay off so that this government could pat itself on the back or try to get some short-term political gain.

This is a lot of long-term economic pain for what I think will be very short-term political and economic gain, if any. This is not going to have the desired effect.

So, with those words on the record, I thank you, and I look forward to the debate.

Mr. Chairperson: We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause by clause.

The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass.

Shall clause 2 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Wasyliv: I wish to move an amendment at this time,

THAT clause 2.1 of the Bill be amended by striking out three hundred and forty-nine—hundred—eight hundred, sorry—"\$349,800,000" and substituting "\$309,800,000". [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Wasyliv: All right.

THAT clause 2.1 of the Bill be amended by striking out "\$349,800,000" and substituting "\$309,800,000".

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Fort Garry

THAT Clause 2(1) of the Bill be amended by striking out "\$349,800,000" and substituting "\$309,800,000".

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

Mr. Wasyliv: Now, we're moving this amendment to Bill 39 in order to reduce the amount by \$40 million.

This is the amount provided through the education tax rebate to other properties which includes commercial, railways, pipelines, industrial and other non-residential and other non-farm properties. I mean, budgets are about choices, and the stated policy reason behind this is to somehow make life more affordable to low-income Manitobans.

This measure does the exact opposite, and as we've raised in the last several days, the real beneficiary of this \$40-million tax cuts are out-of-province corporations like Cadillac Fairview and others like it who are receiving millions of dollars because of this tax measure. We know that Polo Park alone, this tax measure is generating a \$1-million benefit to its owner, but there's other large properties, like True North Square and others that, when you add it up, it's a considerable amount.

We also are subsidizing railway companies and oil pipelines with this tax rebate, and certainly nobody

is suggesting that either one of them need any financial help at this time.

Meanwhile, Manitobans are facing inflation that's over 7 per cent—third highest rate in the country—and that's eroding affordability in Manitoba. And the minimum wage in Manitoba is now soon to be the lowest in the entire country.

We have a bed crisis in our hospitals and our health-care system is on the brink of collapse. Our schools don't have the resources they need to recover from the pandemic, and we're seeing a dramatic cut to services in our schools, including a ballooning of class sizes, including programs that help our most vulnerable students, like full-day kindergarten and teacher librarians and ESL teachers being cut. We're seeing teachers losing positions in Seven Oaks and in Brandon.

We need to be investing in Manitobans, not sending our money to out-of-province mega-corporations that won't do anything to help our economy and certainly won't fix the problem.

And, of course, the worst part about this is that Manitobans are going to get stuck with the bill. This is borrowed money; this isn't money that we have. The government claims to be concerned about the deficit, but are running it up by 40 more million dollars than they actually need to. They could reduce the deficit this year by \$40 million by agreeing to this amendment. And that doesn't even count the millions in interest costs that this not particularly well thought out move is going to cost.

So, not only is this not going to make life more affordable for Manitobans, it's actually going to make it more expensive because they're now going to have to pay the interest so the Cadillac-Fairviews can pad their earnings for the quarter and that their shareholders can get an extra, you know, Mercedes this quarter.

You know, it is troubling that this government has not been particularly concerned about fiscal sustainability or fiscal responsibility, and they are just throwing money around without even thinking about whether it has any valid public policy purpose. This is sort of the drunken-sailor-type approach to government finances and it's hurting Manitobans because we need money right now for hospitals; we need money for schools, and there is no economic reason for this tax cut. But what this also does, which Manitobans should be concerned about, is it rigs our economy. It makes it less fair.

One of the principles of fair taxation is those that have the ability to pay, pay more. And what this does is actually reduce the tax burden on the people that are most able to actually carry the tax burden, the winners in our economy. The people that make the most money in our economy are now being asked to pay less, while those Manitobans who don't own anything, the 40 per cent Manitobans who are renters, actually have seen their taxes go up by this government.

This is a regressive tax move. This is a step backwards, and it is disappointing. But I'm hoping that the minister will see the wisdom to this and will full-throated, you know, endorse our—

* (16:40)

Mr. Chairperson: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: The member's argument has also expired.

It's one thing to see the member putting non-correct information on the record, but today, earlier, when I corrected him, it's another thing altogether when he doubles down when the entire premise that he has advanced has been disproven in the Free Press by writers, by professional commercial property managers who said that their argument is bunk, and then today, again, in this House.

That member leases property, I would imagine. He would pay triple net. He would understand that the fundamental premise that underpins commercial property is the premise of distribution of cost by triple-net mechanism, which means net of utility, net of square footage and net of property taxes. It's a fundamental consideration.

It also means—and I appreciate that some members over there are listening, because it's a good chance for an education—it also means that when there is a rebate, the rebate flows through the landlord through to the tenant. So let's punch some holes in this argument of the member's.

He claims that the money is going to multinational corporations headquartered who knows where, maybe in Dubai and London, when in fact what we're talking about is community businesses founded by Winnipeggers in places like Polo Park mall—businesses like Aura hair, businesses like Almond Nail Bar, businesses like Polo Park dental clinic. It—the member of—for St. James, it's actually in his constituency. Businesses like ZA pizza, businesses like Ben Moss Jewellers, headquartered in Winnipeg,

employing Winnipeggers, paying taxes corporately, those employees paying their taxes.

And even while the NDP laughs, now—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Friesen: —what they actually understand is they've completely misrepresented where this money goes.

But let's talk, for just a moment, about those businesses because those businesses that the NDP so malign and call them vicious names, we know that those are the businesses who have persisted in difficult times in the economy during COVID-19. And to—and they are businesses who have said we need support to be able to round the corner and get out of the pandemic. We have been there for pandemic programs, but this is reasonable and it's—and it is modest.

The other fundamental misrepresentation by this member is he's fighting an argument that took place one year ago. There was a statutory appropriation in this House a year ago and it voted a 10 per cent rebate to those properties that his amendment now lists. There is no increase in this mechanism, in this bill, of any kind, any shape or way to commercial properties. It rests unchanged from last year's legislation. So, not only is the member a day late, he's 365 days late to debate this debate.

I think the most egregious comment that the member made today, and May 18th will always now reflect in posterity for those who will look it up, that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) said that Manitobans are not asking for any kind of financial relief. He said it in this House. He said it was unneeded, it was uncalled for and it was unwanted.

Would I ever love to read the constituency correspondence coming to that member's office, to really believe that none of his constituents have said—I mean, for the member, because I'm not sure he reads the headlines, I saw today new information that says that the annual rate of inflation hit 6.8 per cent in April. It's up even more from the last month. Overall, food costs are up 8.8 per cent. The cost of fresh fruit is up 10 per cent. Fresh vegetables, 8.2 per cent. Meat is up 10 per cent. And while the NDP members laugh, their constituents are not laughing. Their constituents are saying they need help.

Yesterday, I met with one of the assistant chief economists, yes, for one of the—*[interjection]* I would

say to the member from Concordia that chief economists actually probably know better than he, what's going on in the economy. We talk with experts.

So—[*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —the member is alleging that chief economists—[*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —don't know what they're doing, but they say—[*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —Manitobans need relief. We're bringing that relief. This bill gets it done. [*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Lamont: I would like to speak in favour of this motion.

This measure is not going to provide any relief in terms of inflation at all. None. It will do the opposite.

One of the things that happens when you cut property taxes is that banks step in. When a bank offers a mortgage, they say, what are your taxes on that property? Oh, you've cut taxes? That means I can charge more. I can offer you a bigger loan because you're not going to be paying taxes. So, you're going to be spending more.

This, as a measure, is going to drive up inflation because it's going to drive up overhead. It's just completely irresponsible. It's one of the—it—all this does is help property speculators. Property speculators.

And if the member wants to talk about Justin Trudeau and putting up inflation, look, the fact is, fiscal measures don't drive inflation. And the Bank of Canada is not run by the Government of Canada. It's independent. That's the whole point.

This is a disastrous bill. It's a waste of money. It's a waste of time because this is all political theatre. We should have spoken on this, moved forward and passed it, at least, because it's going to pass, anyway. The idea that it's going to be blocked is false. But it is just—it is a terrible, terrible bill, but we should be moving on because we should be talking about things like Estimates.

This is all a waste of time and money.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I am speaking here this afternoon in support of this amendment.

I want to thank the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) for bringing this forward because, as you know, Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are fair-minded people. They're looking at this rebate, and they're saying to themselves—they're asking themselves, how does a corporation like Cadillac Fairview merit a million-dollar cheque?

And that is the million-dollar question, Deputy Speaker, because it talks about a government's priorities. If this government were truly, truly concerned about Manitobans, they would have crafted a bill, a supplementary appropriation, that realizes the real struggles that Manitoba families are feeling.

I want to bring the example that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) brought up. Everyone received their tax bills the past couple of days in the city of Winnipeg, Deputy Speaker. And what did they notice? They noticed that education tax rebate is now down below \$500, which means an immediate rise in their taxes. But this government wants to then send a cheque. How wasteful of that.

Because, like I said earlier, Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are fair-minded. A fair-minded person, a fair-minded government, would have had a rebate that directly impacted their municipal tax bill so that they could see it and understand it. Instead, we get these ham-fisted approaches, poorly thought out, that a serious government should not be bringing forward here.

I can say that removing the \$40 million, like my member from—or, our member from Fort Garry has put forward, would really indicate to Manitobans that this government is serious about affordability, because then, they could take that \$40 million and put it to services that are necessary right now, Deputy Speaker.

I can tell you that \$40 million in a public education system would make a real difference for kids, would make a real difference for their ability to come out of the pandemic, having the supports necessary in class. Instead, Deputy Speaker, we have school divisions that are making impossible choices because of a paltry 1.34 per cent increase in the base budget.

So, when this member, Fort Garry, brings forward this amendment, it's a serious amendment meant to tackle the real serious issues that are facing our province. Instead, we still have this same approach that was used before in bill 71, Deputy Speaker, because, make no mistake, this was intended. This supplementary appropriation was intended to shore up very

poor—very poor—approval ratings of this government, not for the betterment of Manitobans.

* (16:50)

There is a secondary issue here that needs to be tackled, one that really deals with what Manitobans are facing today, Deputy Speaker. And so, if this government is serious about ensuring Manitobans are being looked after by their government in a way that supports their needs, they would have put forward and certainly will support this amendment, because it's an important one and one that shows how serious we are as the 57–56 MLAs in this House right now about the real crises facing our core government services.

And I can tell you, \$40 million would go a long way to shore up not only public education, but would also provide some of the necessary services that people in northeast Winnipeg have certainly been waiting for: a reinstatement of the IV clinic, a reinstatement of CancerCare at Concordia Hospital—really tangible benefits that people can see.

Because this is an important time in our history, Deputy Speaker, one that we can't let pass by. And what do we have? We have a current government more interested in their approval ratings than they are in the people of Manitoba, and that is—quite frankly, has me very concerned.

And I will say this; when my constituents phone me, they expect me to go to this House and ensure that we debate serious pieces of legislation. This supplemental appropriation shows a complete lack of organization and understanding of the real issues facing Manitobans.

And I'll close my remarks by saying just this: if they are truly serious about affordability and about caring of what Manitobans are talking about, they're going to support our amendment.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Yes, I'm glad to have an opportunity to put some words here on the record in support of this amendment that we brought forward.

This is just simply bad public policy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is bad public policy. It's—oh, thank you very much, thank you—this is simply bad public policy because this sells out the future for Manitobans. We're taking away huge amounts of revenue out of provincial coffers on a go-forward basis here, and we're giving it away to international, national commercial property owners, out of province and, frankly, the wealthiest among us here in Manitoba. And that's

going to cause huge problems for this Province in being able to pay for the things that matter to Manitobans.

You know, there are multiple reasons why this is bad policy; we talked about that a lot in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The first one, of course, is that this is a massively unequal measure. We know—it's been publicly reported that the wealthiest among us are going to receive—the top 10 per cent are getting four times the amount of money than the lowest 10 per cent. This is a hugely unequal measure that creates a disproportionate benefit for the wealthiest among us. It's going to create huge long-term impacts. And frankly, if the government was serious about actually improving affordability, they would have brought forward a measure that would have ensured that more of those dollars would have gone to those who need it most, not to those who need it the least; this is absolutely the wrong direction. So, there's huge concerns about how this disproportionately benefits the wealthiest among us.

The second part, again, as we've spoken about a lot here, is that we're borrowing money to do this. It's unconscionable that we're going out and we're borrowing money to send million-dollar cheques to landlords based in Toronto—that makes zero sense. And I don't think that members opposite would find Manitobans that would agree with them that this is the right direction to be taking this; that we should be borrowing money to send these cheques to big commercial property landlords, especially when Manitobans start to recognize that we're borrowing money in a way that's going to disproportionately benefit, again, those who frankly don't need this extra help.

And then the last piece, and this is—really relates to this amendment that we're here bringing forward, this really important amendment—is that this measure being brought forward by the government drains dollars out of the Manitoban economy, unnecessarily sends millions of dollars out of Manitoba at a time when we need to keep those dollars here to help fund a crumbling health-care system, to help fund a crumbling education system and to use those dollars to do what we need to do to make sure that Manitobans can get access to the services that they need right now.

And you know, we haven't heard this government make any good argument as to why we should be sending these big cheques out of province, but I can

tell you that I would guess that if the members opposite sat down with any constituent—any regular constituent in their community and asked, would you rather we send millions of dollars to an out-of-province landlord, or would you rather we invest that in our health-care system so that you could get the surgeries you need right now, so that you could ensure that a family member doesn't need to get shipped across the province to get the health care they need, I think they—it's pretty clear what they would hear. They would hear that Manitobans want those dollars to stay here.

I hope that they consider supporting our amendment and that they decide to carve out that \$40-million giveaway that they seem so intent on putting out there. We need to do what's right and ensure that we keep those dollars here, to invest those dollars in our services here in Manitoba, in our health-care system, in our education system, and frankly, in a whole slew of services that are being underfunded and have been cut by this government.

Thanks very much.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I want to point out, I guess, to start off with, that we're talking about taking this \$40 million off what the government plans to rebate. And it—that \$40 million is not going to average hard-working Manitobans.

Now, the minister gets some of his supposedly factual information from letters to the editor in the Free Press. We don't know who that person was that wrote that letter—didn't claim to be a financial analyst or a financial genius or anything else; it was just somebody that thought they had an opinion. But the minister thought, gee, I can run with this, doesn't matter whether it's correct or not.

So does that trickle-down nonsense that the minister is using for an argument for giving multi-million-dollar corporations, particularly those from out of the province—does that argument actually have any merit? Well, to quote another reporter who reported after having spoken to some of these very same small businesses in Polo Park that said, well, wait a minute, I never got a cheque back from Cadillac Fairview or whoever owns Polo Park mall. They never reduced my rent. They never noted that there was any change in their circumstance.

How else do we know what the minister's putting on the record is not true? Well, we rent constituency offices from various entities throughout the province. And certainly, my own constituency office, it's not rented from a multinational, multi-million-dollar corporation. They might actually be able to use some of that tax refund. But I'll tell you what didn't happen last year with the tax giveaway that this government took part in. They never cut my rent. They never issued a cheque to recognize my portion of what they would pay in taxes.

So we know what the minister's put on the record about how we're going to give these multi-million-dollar corporations this tax break and, magically, it's going to sprinkle down like fairy dust and everybody else—we know that's quite simply not true. It's not the way the system is designed to work, and the minister should probably quit putting false information on the record, to quote the members opposite, all the time, because there is no doubt that what the minister has said is, in fact, false information.

Because we know from our own experiences as people that rent office space that it just plain didn't happen. And I'm sure if every one of those members opposite takes a look at their rent that they pay for constituency offices—now, maybe they own the buildings that they're in, and they did get the rebate—but we know that people that are renting aren't getting that.

So we know that what we've talked about here is basically reducing that \$40 million that's going to the entities that least need it. We know that it's specific to other properties, which means things like railways, pipelines. It doesn't include local Manitoba businesses that are struggling, and struggling mainly because of the policies of this government. It doesn't go to average Manitobans.

I mean, we—

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

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