

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The 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, Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 33—The Change of Name Amendment Act (3)

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the Minister for Health, that The Change of Name Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

The Speaker: Been moved by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara), that Bill 33, The Change of Name Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

The honourable minister of—

Make sure we're technically correct. I'll do it again.

Moved by the honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure, Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, that Bill 33,

The Change of Name Amendment Act (3) be now read a first time.

MLA Naylor: I am pleased to introduce Bill 33, The Change of Name Amendment Act. This bill provides an exemption from the requirement to publish a legal name change in the Manitoba Gazette if the reason for the change relates to the person being transgender, two-spirit, Indigenous, non-binary or gender diverse.

The amendments also update the legislation with gender-neutral language. The information that is currently published in the Manitoba Gazette is a person's new name, old name and city, town of residence. This amendment responds to requests made by the 2SLGBTQI+ community for many years.

These amendments demonstrate government's commitment of a Manitoba in which the 2SLGBTQ+ community is safe and valued.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure—the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to table the Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care 2024-2025 Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure.

The Speaker: Are there other reports?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I am pleased to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, as well as the Department of Families for the financial year '24-25.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the following annual reports for Manitoba Justice for the 2024-2025 supplemental to the Estimates of Expenditures, and the '22-23 annual report of the independent investigation unit of Manitoba.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): I'm pleased to table the following annual

reports for the Department of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I'm pleased to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for the Advanced Education and Training Department for the Budget 2024-25.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'm pleased to table the '24-25 Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for Budget 2024 for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): I'm pleased to table four copies of the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditures for Agriculture for the fiscal year of 2024 to 2025.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I am pleased to table the Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2024-2025 Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I'm pleased to table the Supplement to the Estimates of the Expenditure for the Manitoba Transportation–Infrastructure Budget 2024, and I am also pleased to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for the Manitoba Consumer Protection and Government Services Budget 2024-25.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I am pleased to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for the Manitoba Municipal and Northern Relations and for the Manitoba Indigenous Economic Development departments for Budget 2024-2025.

* (13:40)

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2024-25 Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure, Budget 2024, for the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure, Budget 2024, from Manitoba Finance, Manitoba Public Service Commission and Manitoba Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports? No further tabling of reports?

Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Sturgeon Heights Collegiate Fundraisers

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): It is with great pleasure I speak today on the incredible accomplishments of Sturgeon Heights Collegiate.

When a student manager on the Huskies football team lost a close friend to cancer, he proposed dedicating the team's homecoming game to supporting CancerCare Manitoba.

Sturgeon's students and faculty showed their full support for the initiative as many experienced the effects of cancer in their own lives. Since then, the CancerCare game has become a beloved fundraiser for the students of Sturgeon Heights.

In the days leading up to the game, students canvass for donations and encourage community members to attend the event. Game day admission fees, 50/50 ticket sales and food canteen proceeds are all donated to the CancerCare foundation. In three years, the Sturgeon Huskies have raised nearly \$10,000 in donations, some of which are the team's own personal contributions.

Another annual fundraiser hosted by Sturgeon Heights is their Amazing Race and Pros vs. Joes competitions. Every year, students apply to participate in the Amazing Race, where they are given a weekly fundraising task. Those who perform well at the end of the month advance to the Pros vs. Joes competition. Every day for one week, professional athletes and other community leaders

visit Sturgeon Heights to compete with the students over the lunch hour. For \$2, students can join the fun and watch the excitement unfold in the school's gymnasium. I had the distinct honour of attending this year's competition and took part in a very intense rock, paper, scissors tournament. During this year's event, over \$50,000 in food and money was raised for families in need over Christmas.

Community strength, unity and empathy are on full display at Sturgeon Heights Collegiate. These students are Manitoba's future.

Thank you to Deborah Woods, Hudson Baribeau and the extraordinary students of Sturgeon Heights for sharing your compassion and leadership with our province. You make us all very proud.

George Valentim, principal; Deborah Einarson Woods, teacher

Coaches: Hudson Baribeau, Eric Vincent

Athletes: Marley Dacquel-Javate, Abdul Ibeyeye, Truson Joyal, Lennon McKinney, Marley McKinney, Nash McMillan, Ben Waters

Joers: Lauren Anderson, Kyle Beaulieu, Erin Bickell, Brynn Cottrell, Michael Crowe, Kaitylyn Dudar, Bronwyn Hull, Rourke Lipinski, Aubrey Phillips, Jaeda Produniuk, Katie Ridd, Jaelyn Rogowy, Danika Steeves, Alex Zhao

St. Malo Warriors Junior Hockey Team

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to showcase the tremendous accomplishment of a La Vérendrye Junior B hockey team, the St. Malo Warriors. The Warriors, led by associate coach Patrick Trudeau and head coach Ralph Collette, have been crowned this year's CRJHL champions all while celebrating their 30th anniversary as a team.

In a series where St. Malo fell down 2-0 to the Beausejour Comets, the Warriors clawed their way back, winning four straight games to beat the Comets four games to two in the best of seven final.

Their road to the championship has been paved with hard work, unwavering perseverance, showcasing the resilience and talents of the St. Malo Warriors.

From the passionate fans who filled the arena with cheers to the coaching staff who provided guidance and mentorship, this victory is a testament to the collective efforts of all involved.

After taking a 3-2 series lead in the final, the Warriors were flooded with video messages from the community, local businesses, schools, past players and fans, showcasing their support for the team going into game six hoping to clinch the series, which is exactly what they did.

The most rewarding part of this championship wasn't the top playoff spot. This year's championship was dedicated to a local young boy named Mateo Gosselin as he battles through a critical illness. The team looks forward to celebrating with Mateo and wish him a speedy recovery in the coming days and weeks.

The St. Malo Warriors would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to their board members, fans, sponsors and the entire community for their unwavering support throughout the season.

Together we celebrate this remarkable achievement, and I look forward to their continued success in the seasons to come.

Please join me in congratulating coach Patrick Trudeau and team captain Thomas Maynard, who we have up in the gallery with us today.

* * *

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): I ask for leave, Honourable Speaker, to add the names of the folks who were here today in Hansard after my member statement.

The Speaker: Does the member have leave to add the names into Hansard at the end of her member's statement? [*Agreed*]

Lido Theatre Fire

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I rise with a heavy heart as I just—I rise with a heavy heart as just yesterday the Lido Theatre in my community of The Pas was ravaged by fire.

Upon arriving at the scene at 4:38 a.m., The Pas Fire Department discovered the theatre engulfed in smoke. Along crews—alongside crews from Opaskwayak Cree Nation, they battled flames until mid-morning and eventually got the fire under control. No one was hurt, but the damage has yet to be assessed.

The Lido Theatre was in many ways the beating heart of our community. Built in 1929, it was the home to a theatrical and musical performances, and was western Canada's first theatre constructed for movies with sound. It was a place for us to gather in celebration of our rich and vibrant arts and culture.

As a kid, I would often gaze up at the Juliet balconies that adorned the theatre's interior, and I thought about what it would be like to sit in them, to look down at the crowd below and the performers onstage. For us kids, it was a magical space.

The Lido Theatre wasn't without its problems. For many decades, segregation held a firm grasp on the theatre as Indigenous families were forced to sit in the back behind the white folks. It was a great triumph when these racist laws and practices were repealed and we could finally claim the Lido as our own space.

The Lido was shuttered in 2019, on its 90th birthday. In 2023, the City of The Pas acquired the venue and had hoped to revitalize it.

I want to hold up The Pas and Opaskwayak Cree Nation and our surrounding communities as we grapple with this loss to our arts, our culture and our history.

Ekosi.

Klar So Nordic Spa

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Manitobans' second Nordic spa is now open at the Elkhorn Resort, located adjacent to Clear Lake and Riding Mountain National Park.

Klar So Nordic Spa offers 18,000 square feet of hot, cold and temperate pools, as well as steam saunas, dry saunas and numerous outdoor relaxation centres.

The basics of a Nordic spa consist of relaxing your muscles and activating blood circulation with a hot sauna or bath. Then you refresh your body by immersing yourself in cold water to flush out the toxins and release muscle tension.

Klar So, which is Danish for Clear Lake, also offers massage therapy for relaxation and pain relief, comprehensive hand-and-foot care for revitalization and face regeneration treatments.

Elkhorn Resort co-owner Ian Sarna believed that Manitoba could certainly support a second Nordic spa. After studying the market, Sarna and co-owner Gary Buckley invested more than \$10 million to construct the new facility.

* (13:50)

Klar So will boost the local economy by providing more jobs and bringing more visitors to the entire region. People love Clear Lake in the summer, and now they will have another great reason to visit in the winter.

Visitors already familiar with the Elkhorn Resort will remember that—the former Solstice Spa, which has been rebranded under the Klar So Nordic Spa name. The resort also boasts a world-class waterpark, which includes a waterslide, and both indoor and outdoor hot tubs.

There's plenty of room to stay, with the hotel portion featuring 57 rooms, along with 61 time-share units. And for foodies, the Buffalo Bar at the Elkhorn Resort offers a wide range of cuisine, from casual breakfasts to fine dining.

Thanks to the continued investment of Ian Sarna and his partner Gary Buckley, the Elkhorn Resort has always been a wonderful place for a getaway and continues to be a tremendous economic driver for the region.

Honourable Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the owners of Elkhorn Resort on the opening of Klar So Nordic Spa and wishing them continued success.

Bill Beardy

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): Honourable Speaker, today I'd like to honour the life of an incredible community member and friend of mine, Billy Beardy, who recently passed away on March 8.

Billy was a former chief, caretaker and lifelong resident of Fox Lake Cree Nation. He was loved by all who knew him. He leaves behind his wife, Tamara, his seven children and his grandson.

Many of us remember the manhunt that took place in northern Manitoba back in 2019. Thanks to the efforts of a community-led search, the—and the RCMP, the fugitives were eventually found near the Nelson River.

Billy was the one who took the lead in organizing the community effort in Fox Lake. His extensive knowledge of the bush as a hunter, fisher and trapper were crucial to the search. The day the fugitives were found, Billy was the one steering the boat for the RCMP. He was driving when he spotted a raven, which led them to the scene on the shore.

Billy has always been a leader, and during this terrifying time, he chose to be a true leader and risk his life for his community.

Keewatin Tribal Council honoured Billy's incredible contributions to the search during their 41st semi-annual assembly. His courage and determination throughout life made it no surprise that he was willing to serve his community when they needed him most.

I know Fox Lake will forever be grateful for Billy's service to his community as a chief and as a community member for his historic legacy.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson.

MLA Redhead: I ask for leave for a moment of silence in honour of Mr. Beardy.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence to honour Mr. Beardy? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to oral questions, I would like to draw all members' attention to the public gallery, where we have with us today Louise Dewar and her grandson, Quin Dewar, from the Red River Métis Nation, and they are guests of the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin).

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

Further, I would draw all members' attention to the loge on my left, where we have joining us today David Faurshou, who is the former member for Portage la Prairie, and Cliff Graydon, who was the former member for Emerson. Also joining us in the loge to my left is Gilles Roch, the former member for Springfield.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Federal Carbon Tax Requirements Request for Provincial Carbon Tax Price

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Before they leave, I'd like to say congratulations, as well, to the St. Malo Warriors. I know it was quite the series. Had a chance to catch a—quite a few of their games.

Also, Honourable Speaker, we celebrated Sikh Heritage Month, the kick-off in the Rotunda. Hats off to absolutely everybody involved in the celebration today. Vaisakhi diyan lakh lakh vadhaiyan. *[Countless best wishes for Vaisakhi.]*

Honourable Speaker, this NDP leader owes Manitobans some clarity when it comes to their future affordability in this province. They know he isn't standing up to Trudeau now, but what about the future?

The Prime Minister made it crystal clear that any exemption from the federal backstop carbon tax will

come with a price on consumers. The Premier's promised what he knows he cannot deliver.

So I ask him straightforward question today: What price will he set for his carbon tax replacement to meet these federal requirements?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Want to begin by acknowledging the importance of Sikh Heritage Month and the committee that ensures that that cultural and faith community's presence in Manitoba is acknowledged throughout the month of April.

When it comes to the PC carbon tax that the member opposite voted twice here in the Chamber, I just want to remind him that it was a Manitoba NDP that stopped them from bringing that into place.

What did we do? What is our plan, for the member of Turtle Mountain? On January 1 of this year, we cut the provincial fuel tax to zero. That saves you and your family money each and every time you visit the pump.

While they stand for higher taxes, we're delivering real relief for the people of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, again, Premier stands up, more showman than statesman. I must remind the Premier that one of the points that Sikh Heritage Month likes to portray to all Manitobans is the speaking of truth no matter what type of political agenda you may have. So I know that the Premier probably missed that educational point.

Ottawa previously rejected a proposal of \$25-a-ton flat rate which took into consideration the massive green investments in Manitoba Hydro. That is \$55-a-ton cheaper than what the Premier is okay with Justin Trudeau charging Manitobans now.

Why does the Premier think he is one exception to the federal mandate? Can he let Manitobans know how high his carbon tax is going to go?

And, Honourable Speaker, I'm going to table an article, since apparently the Premier doesn't read unflattering media.

Mr. Kinew: Well, we've been so deluged with all the flattering media about Budget 2024, it's been a bit hard to keep up.

In particular, I'd direct the member opposite to the latest edition of The Clipper from eastern Manitoba where he himself said that he was thrilled by the

Manitoba NDP's announcement of a personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet. I just keep looking at the photo of him; he's so happy in the photo, it really warms the heart.

The other thing that has warmed the heart of so many people in our great province is the fact that the provincial fuel tax is zero. That saves Manitobans money each and every day.

I appreciate the fact that he's reminding people about the PC carbon tax in the preamble to his question, but what are the actions our government are taking? Real relief for you, helping you each and every day.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Again, Honourable Speaker, having the ability to stand in front of the—instead of the—stand in front of the cameras and tell the truth is a lesson that I know that this Premier needs to brush up on.

The feds have made it clear, Honourable Speaker: there, they will only consider some specific proposals. We have outlined them for him, the Premier, and he still says he can negotiate his way out of it.

Who would you think that they are immune to all requirements and that they are special? Why, you know who, Honourable Speaker: the Leader of the NDP.

Why does that member think that there are rules for nine provinces and three territories and a different set of rules for him?

* (14:00)

Mr. Kinew: You know, if I would have accepted as a given the confines that the member opposite takes for granted, I would have accepted the hateful campaign tactics of the Stefanson government: the landfill ads, the attacking of vulnerable children.

But you know what? On this side of the House, not only I, but every single member here, rejects the hateful divisions of the Stefanson government.

And so, when he hears orders handed down from other people and he meekly goes along and: oh, yes, okay, right away—we're going to stand up for Manitobans each and every day. That's what we did on January 1, when we cut the provincial fuel tax to save you and your family money, and we're going to keep on doing it every single day we're in office.

Release of Dangerous Offender Request for Bail Reform

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, the media reported last week that a suspect in multiple murder investigations was arrested on a charge on March 19 and released on bail on the 25th and is currently at large and considered dangerous.

This is an example of the violent repeat offenders that true bail reform would keep off of our streets. Instead, this government sent out a redundant directive. Clearly, his bail reform didn't work.

Can the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) explain himself?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Keeping Manitobans safe is a sacred trust and a top priority of our government. That's why we brought in direction to Crown attorneys in Manitoba, to ensure that they take community safety into mind when bail is being applied for.

I need to point out for the members opposite that these sorts of community safety considerations never existed when the PCs were in office for two terms. When folks in communities are rightfully concerned about public safety, they ought to reflect on the lack of action taken by the Progressive Conservatives, who had two terms.

The good news is this: There is a new government in Manitoba who is taking real action to keep you safe.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, if you could remind the First Minister the eclipse was yesterday. It's time for him to stop casting a shadow and keeping his minister in the dark.

Last year, a provincial court judge told the suspect, for sure you've got to stay away from weapons. That is the binding legal authority that this government expects to keep Manitobans safe. Only this NDP government would call that effective.

Why does this minister oppose real bail reform and instead insist on his own version, simply to seek to pad walls of the existing revolving door?

Mr. Kinew: Well, the eclipse was yesterday, but the member continues to hide his eyes from the real steps that our government is taking to keep Manitobans safe.

I know that people in Manitoba are rightfully concerned about community safety, about public safety. Again, after two terms of the Progressive Conservatives, things were getting worse and worse and worse in every single category. And that's true whether you're in downtown Winnipeg or if you're in small-town rural Manitoba.

However, the steps that we're taking to provide new guidance to Crown prosecutors, to provide new resources to law enforcement, are the first steps towards ameliorating the situation that emerged under their watch.

But you don't have to take our word for it. Again, the National Police Federation, the representatives of the RCMP officers across this great province, are calling on other provinces to follow our lead.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Balcaen: Well, my eye health is very important, so I'll continue to hide my eyes from looking at this darkness across the aisle, just in case the Justice Minister decides to breach the eclipse.

This minister tried telling Crown prosecutors how to do their job. Why doesn't he try doing his own job and give the experts the tools that they need? It's too common a sight to look out one's window and see police tape and evidence markers, but this minister is content.

We need systematic change and supports for the judicial system, not politicians who play at experts because they watch Law and Order.

We need real bail reform. Will he get on board, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: Again, we brought in new direction for Crown attorneys and new supports for law enforcement. And you don't have to believe the comments of myself or the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe). You can look to those on the front lines if you want a verdict on how it's going. And I quote: The national police federation applauds the Manitoba government for listening to the public, police and Justice stakeholders on repeated calls for action on bail reform. End quote.

But when the member opposite talks about darkness in this province, he must be talking about the Stefanson government's hateful election campaign. I cannot believe that they ran ads targeting the families of murder victims. He needs to stand up today and distance himself immediately from those attacks on

the families of murder victims if he wants to have any credibility on this topic in the future.

Provincial Park Investments Capital Funding Concerns

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, this government is cutting parks capital funding instead of following through with a multi-year capital plan that would have brought new life and many years of enjoyment to users of parks throughout our province. This minister's cutting capital investments that is written in ink in the budget that they defend.

Why does this minister pretend that a cut is anything but a cut?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I know that we both share a love of our provincial parks.

Our government is very proud of our budget. We're very proud of what we brought forward. We're proud of the capital investments we're making this year. There are many projects on the table for this year and I know that Manitobans are very excited about park reservation services which opened this week. I look forward to seeing Manitobans out in the parks this coming summer.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, this minister is running around with scissors, making cuts throughout her department, and it is Manitobans who are paying the price. Park staff are cut. Capital funding is cut. Cuts, cuts, cuts.

Why does the minister want to diminish our amazing parks?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, we are making strategic investments in our capital projects this year. We're very excited about the projects that are going forward.

I'd like to highlight three exciting projects that we're going to be hitting the ground this year. We are going to be replacing the Nutimik museum in Whiteshell Provincial Park; that's a real treasure. We're also finally going to be restoring the West Hawk seawall, something that the previous government could not get done. And I'm really excited about the restoration of Kennedy House out near Lockport.

Three exciting projects. More to come, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, facts are facts, and they are clear as day in these budget documents. The minister's talking points are fabrications. I was proud to introduce our parks strategy and beyond disappointed to see this minister throw years of consultation with Manitobans in the garbage.

Why has she abandoned the advice of Manitobans?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, I am glad to talk about fabrications. Fabrications were the PC's budget last year, not just in my department, but across government. They have left this province with a record deficit, irresponsible spending.

We are going to appear on a path back to balance, thanks to our wonderful Finance Minister and our—the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Kinew). All we have to do is look at their 2022 budget, Honourable Speaker; two and a half million dollars. We have more than doubled that.

We are very proud of our budget.

Federal International Student Cap Plan for Provincial Institutions

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans need to know what this government is going to impose on the education institutions, especially considering the impact these decisions will have on their revenue.

We have asked the minister before and didn't get the answer.

Will she publicly produce a list of how many cuts she is asking each educational institution to make that will comply with the federal cap?

* (14:10)

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I thank the member for the question.

I believe that what the member was asking about was the international student cap that was imposed by the federal government.

And I'm proud to say that Manitobans elected us to work for them, and that's exactly what we did. We got the—we received the number from the federal government and we went to work at working with them to

ensure that we could get a larger allotment. That's exactly what happened.

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

Post-Secondary Education Study Permits for Language Programs

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): We'd like to know the number per school to find out where the actual favouritism is going.

At Heartland International English School, they've already laid off staff knowing that there was no support coming from this minister. Gary Gervais says his program is not receiving the same consideration as other provinces, and I table the article.

Can the minister explain why language programs were not granted any study permits?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Again, I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm happy to get up any day to talk about the investments that we're making in post-secondary education, and all we're doing to defend the good work that the institutions are doing.

We fought for our fair share of the attestation letters that were imposed by the federal government, and I'm proud to say that we came out on the good. I can appreciate the—*[interjection]*

I thank the honourable member for the concern, and I can assure the honourable member that we are continuing to work with the federal government to ensure that institutions are as good off as they can be in this province.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, what is most troubling is that while some institutions are laying off staff and facing revenue cuts, the minister's own alma mater is given more permits than the previous year. I table this article, talking about picking winners and losers.

Can the minister explain herself?

MLA Cable: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question.

He knows very well that this was a program that was imposed by the federal government. And we could have gone and screamed in the newspaper and thrown things against the wall to try to maybe move things in a direction.

Instead, we worked with the federal government. We increased our allotment—*[interjection]* I'm learning to not listen to these folks. I am very proud of what happened, and we made the best of a situation that was really quite unfavourable.

This member and this—the folks on the opposition did very little to help support post-secondaries in their time in office. In fact, they made cuts year over year over year. Our government's a listening government—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Education Property Tax Increase Concerns

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, we have asked this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and minister over a dozen times why they are increasing the taxes on hard-working middle-class Manitobans, and they will not answer. Manitobans—to have answers and transparency for once by this NDP government.

So, I will ask a very simple question, and I'll even give him the answer. And I will table from his own budget, page 122, line 1, where in his own budget it says, school tax measures increased to \$148.4 million.

Can the minister please confirm that according to his own budget, he is, in fact, increasing the education property taxes to the tune of \$148 million?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, the member's wrong. Our team is proud to be cutting taxes for Manitobans.

You know, right after we were elected on October 3, we came in and we did the work right away of bringing relief to Manitobans on fuel tax. That's something that the members opposite applied to Manitobans every single day they were in office for seven and a half years. That's their record.

Our record: lowering costs for Manitobans. In fact, our fuel tax holiday was so impactful that we not only have the cheapest gas in all of Canada, we have the lowest inflation in the entire country for two months in a row. That's something to be proud of.

They make life more expensive; we make life more affordable.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Khan: Again, more fabrications and non-answers. Maybe the minister didn't read his own document: page 122, it clearly lays it out. This minister refuses to answer the questions.

His own budget isn't proof enough, so I'll table another article of a real-life family living in Royalwood: bought the house at an average price in Manitoba and their property taxes are going up. Yes, that's right. Your MLA for Lagimodière thinks it's okay to increase property taxes on hard-working Manitobans.

Why does this minister and the MLA for Lagimodière think it's a good idea to increase taxes and education property taxes to the tune of \$148 million?

MLA Sala: The member opposite doesn't want to believe us; he doesn't have to. He can believe folks that spoke about the measures we brought forward in our budget. For example, from the Manitoba Real Estate Association: We are pleased to see the government introduce the \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit for those who need it most. This credit will make home ownership more affordable for Manitobans. That's right.

You know, for years the members opposite were busy making life more expensive for Manitobans. They applied the fuel tax to Manitobans every single day, seven and a half years in a row. They increased costs for renters by raising taxes on renters—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, the minister still will not answer, and he goes back and reads old quotes from newspapers.

Honourable Speaker, the facts do matter, and this minister refuses to listen. So, I will show him exactly how many houses—increasing. Minister, why does he think—Honourable Speaker, why does he think it's okay to raise the education property taxes for houses in MLA Fort Rouge and the Premier's riding? What about the MLA for St. James's riding? What about the MLA for Seine River, Kildonan-River East, Burrows, Waverley, Wolseley, Southdale, McPhillips, the MLA for Maples, the MLA for River Heights, the MLA for Lagimodière, the MLA for Assiniboia?

I table each and every one of these houses where the property taxes are going up under this NDP's budget. Why does this minister and everyone over there think it's—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

MLA Sala: The member opposite doesn't like the savings we're bringing to folks living in his community, the other folks living in communities for the other representatives.

Maybe he'll like some of the other affordability measures we're bringing in. Like for example, the broad middle tax—tax cut that increases personal income tax brackets; doubling the fertility treatment tax credit; increasing the renters tax credit; free prescription birth control; 5 per cent lower auto insurance breaks; \$300 security system rebate; \$5,000 rebate for EVs and on and on, Honourable Speaker.

We're making life more affordable; they made it more expensive. Lots of good news for Manitobans in this budget.

Manitoba Diagnostic Health Clinic Service Agreement Renewal

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): The operator of another Manitoba clinic has reached out to both the minister and I today with grave concerns. This clinic had an agreement to provide important diagnostic tests for Manitoba patients. The agreement expired on March 31. It's now April 9, and still no word from the NDP on whether their contract will be renewed.

In the meantime, patients are no longer getting publicly funded cardiac ultrasounds through this clinic.

Why is the NDP government continuing to put politics over the needs of Manitoba patients?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Our government is committed to ensuring that Manitobans have enhanced access to services in regards to surgeries and diagnostics across the province.

That's why in Budget 2024, we've invested millions of dollars and enhancing diagnostics across the province, something the previous government simply refused to do.

In addition to our budget, we've also communicated directly with clinics across the province who had RFSA's previously to let them know to continue providing those services to Manitobans. And we're following up with each of those clinics, and they're well aware of that, to develop a long-term plan, something they never had under the previous government.

* (14:20)

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

Mrs. Cook: This clinic had recruited seven sonographers, none of whom came from the public system; they came from other provinces. Without a continued agreement from the Province, these sonographers are now going to leave Manitoba. Several facilities in Alberta have offered them lucrative, multi-year contracts.

Why is this minister content to watch staff leave the province while they dither?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, staffing is our top priority as a government, which is why I was at the Misericordia Health Centre just this morning, and I had the opportunity to meet the most recent fellow, who was part of the historic announcement that our government is proud to support, and that is that we have a sleep disorders clinic program in Manitoba that rivals that across Canada.

Our government is giving clear direction to clinics across the province to ensure they continue the services that Manitobans depend on and that we work together to develop a long-term plan.

Unlike the previous government, we will work with all health-care workers who want to strengthen the system and be a part of our broader health-care team here in Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Cook: Without an agreement with this NDP government, this clinic can no longer continue providing cardiac ultrasounds to Manitoba patients. It's a critical diagnostic test.

The clinic reached out at the beginning of March to inquire about the status of their contract and request a meeting. No response from this minister. The clinic has the staff, the capacity and the willingness to help shorten wait times for Manitoba patients.

Why won't the minister respond?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

And I want to reassure Manitobans that not only have we been in contact with all of these clinics who provide care to Manitobans, but we actually have a plan for long-term enhancements in our health-care system, something the previous government didn't care about.

The previous government sent millions upon millions of dollars out of province. Here, on this side of the House, Budget 2024 invests millions upon millions of dollars into Manitoba's health-care system to strengthen the services. Here, on this side of the House, we're working with health-care experts to improve health-care outcomes for Manitobans.

On that side of the House, they disrespected them, forced them out of the health-care system, and we're doing the work on this side to repair the damage that they did over seven and a half years.

Honourable Speaker, the work—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

New High School in Tyndall Park Budget for Construction Project

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Before the last election, Tyndall Park was set to break ground on a new high school to address the needs of our community's growing population. Now, it seems that this project has been completely scrapped under this new government.

Can the minister explain to my constituents why there was no mention of building a new school in Tyndall Park in this provincial budget?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I want to thank the member for that question.

And as that member knows, what happened before, under the previous administration, is that all they said is that they were going to do this, do that, do this and that, without having any money in place to do it. And because Manitobans take their schools and their children in school very seriously, they now have a government that's going to ensure that investments are made, that kids will have their space in their classrooms.

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

New Education Funding Model Status of Review

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): After many years of underfunding and playing catch-up to inflation, teachers, school divisions and educational leaders have been waiting for the release of this government's new education funding model. Unfortunately, the budget has no details about what a new, revamped model will look like.

Can the minister answer for the House: What is the status of the government's funding model review and when can Manitobans expect this government to release it?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Again, I want to thank the member for that question. It's a very good one. As a matter of fact, that member pointed out the seven and a half years of underfunding that they had to endure in public schools.

I will say this, though. What we did, instead of having a one-person member of the funding model team, we've expanded the funding model team now to include members from the North, from rural and from urban Manitoba. They are meeting right now, coming up with the model, and will have something to report very soon.

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

Student Attendance Rates Release of Data Collected

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Ultimately, it is up to the government to decide where they choose to delegate these funds, Honourable Speaker. Many parents, teachers and school divisions have expressed concerns about student attendance rates in schools. Absentee rates are as high as 30 to 50 per cent in some school divisions, especially rurally.

The previous government instituted a policy directive whereby every school had to collect data on student attendance and report these rates publicly. I table these action items.

Can the minister update the House on how many school divisions have provided this data, and when will he expect all school divisions to comply with this policy directive?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Again, I want to thank the member for that important question. The pandemic has wreaked havoc on attendance rates in this province. What's occurring right now is that we have a large number of students that remain unaccounted for, and they have still yet to register back into their public schools.

As this member knows, attendance policies and attendance rates need to be published and are available at the local school division, and all that member has to do is contact the school division to get all the information around attendance.

Potential Closure of Clear Lake Impact on Tourism and the Economy

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Clear Lake is a recreation and tourism hot spot for our province. Many Manitoba families plan their summers around boating, swimming and enjoying some warm sunny days on its shores.

Manitobans are deeply concerned that Parks Canada is considering closing the lake this summer. This will be a major blow to the Clear Lake community, and residents and business owners say they haven't been properly consulted by the federal government.

Can the Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources please tell us what he is doing to protect the local economy and tourism in Clear Lake?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Honourable Speaker, our government learned yesterday that Parks Canada is considering closing Clear Lake this summer. We're deeply concerned—the lack of consultation with Manitobans before making such an important decision.

Clear Lake is a Manitoba destination for families, and closing the lake would be harmful for residents, for tourism and for our local economy. Our government is advocating for Manitobans by urging the federal government to reconsider and properly consult all Manitobans before making this decision.

Our Budget 2024 invests an additional \$500,000 for preventing aquatic evasive species, and we will continue to advocate for the people of Manitoba on this very important issue.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Education Property Tax Increase Concerns for Farmers

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Last Friday, the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) asked an important question on behalf of the ag industry, and this minister's answer scared a lot of people. When asked about the existing farm—education property tax rebate, this minister answered, and I quote, and table Hansard so he can remember what he said: We have made commitments to reduce this year's education to \$1,500 credit.

Has the minister secretly announced the largest tax grab on Manitoba farmers ever?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Obviously, the member's already—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. When I can't hear the member speaking, there's something wrong. So please come to order.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Obviously, they already knew what the comeback on my question was to be, and they had brought it out right away: Crown lands.

So subconsciously, Honourable Minister, is the—Honourable Speaker, is the fact that they're admitting that they done wrong to the Crown lands individuals in the long run.

* (14:30)

And they want to talk about the viabilities of rural economic development. They chose to penalize the young generational ranchers and they're—and they continue to dwell on the fact that they don't care. All they're worried about is where they can get the biggest buck off of supporting large corporations in operation for the betterment of themselves, not small communities—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order.

You folks are making so much noise today that members whose turn it is to speak can't hear me recognize them when it's time for them to speak. So I would ask you to please keep it down, let members that have the floor be heard.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, I want to recognize all the producers that are listening today.

The minister concluded his remarks talking about 50-odd per cent, but that is not the certainty they need. His comments indicated a massive tax bill that farmers need this minister to be serious about.

Will he commit today there will not be increases to the education property tax that farmers pay, yes or no?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Yes, farmers will continue to see 50 per cent off their educational school tax on the report. So, that's what we're talking about.

But you know what, Honourable Speaker? We have a report recently by the Keystone agriculture producers. Now, let me read what the commentary was. It's all good announcements for agriculture. I think putting

good things place forward, working with the current government, realize the full support of the agriculture in the province of Manitoba. That is the president of the Keystone agriculture producers, who supported our budget moving forward.

And I'll gladly table—I will gladly table the remarks, that was in the Brandon—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Bereza: It's a simple, simple question, but I'll go a little slower. But it has far-reaching implications.

Reducing to \$1,500 is pretty specific language, and farmers are scared. This minister won't just be known for refusing to stand up for hog farmers, he'll be the minister that taxed farmers out of business entirely.

He needs to commit today to the rebates that better reflect farmers' reality; will he, yes or no?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Maybe I should take my member opposite, let's go for a ride up to Ste. Rose, let's go up to Eddystone country and let's drop by and talk to producers like I did two weeks ago.

Honourable Speaker, the producers, the young family producers that moved from Alberta, that were staunch supporters of that political party when they were there, said, I quote: I will never, I will never, ever support the PC government for what they've done in the province of Manitoba to young entrepreneur ranchers and producers on the Crown land leases that went up 300 per cent. And then they double billed the producers in this same year while they were fighting a drought—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Provincial Nominee Program Application Processing Times

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Our PC team secured a 50 per cent year-over-year increase, bringing our allocation for 2023 to 9,500 MPNP nominations. Between that being announced in March and the election in October, we did our part.

The NDP government failed to process 2,000 applications last year, so I guess the NDP were not equipped to get that process across the finish line. And I see why. This minister has spoken of the right kind of immigrant, about wanting to screen them through her office.

Was this why she couldn't finish the job?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): The member opposite is clearly wrong.

Upon arriving as a Cabinet minister, I got to see what was going on in this office: total mismanagement by the previous ministers. We had a previous immigration minister that didn't even understand the difference between a permanent resident and a tourist.

We had members opposite who just totally mismanaged this file. Over the last two terms that they were in office, they cut the workforce for people who process our MPNP applications by one third. That's extremely shameful, Honourable Speaker.

This PC government was unable to process the extra 2,000 allotments that the federal government gave us. That's 2,000 extra families—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: And I would draw all members' attention to the loge on my right, where we have joining us this afternoon Marianne Cerilli, who was the former member for Radisson.

Welcome.

* * *

The Speaker: Petitions? Seeing no petitions—

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(11), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux).

The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Extend Employment Standards Benefits to Workers of the Gig Economy.

The Speaker: It has been announced pursuant to rule 34(11), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Extend Employment Standards Benefits to Workers of the Gig Economy.

* * *

Mr. Wiebe: Would you please resume debate on the budget.

**BUDGET DEBATE
(Sixth Day of Debate)**

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now resume debate on the proposed motion moved by the Minister of Finance and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Lakeside, who has nine minutes remaining.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): It's great for me to be able to get up and finish my budget speech today. I know where I left off yesterday. I was talking about some of the great things that the municipalities had come to them under the PC government with the building sustain–community funds and the arts, culture and sport community funds.

But seeing as I've only got eight minutes remaining, I'll get into more of the infrastructure for municipalities. And when we see \$164 million cut in the infrastructure in this budget, we wonder, where did it go? I think I know where it went. The 14-cent tax that we talk about daily, that we're trying to convince Manitobans that it helps all of Manitobans, which it doesn't; it helps some of Manitobans, because not all Manitobans have a car that they can put gas in.

But the ones that do, I'm not so sure that they're going to save money either, because when we take our cars, we fill them up with gas, and we drive down the roads, like 229 between me and my colleague from Interlake-Gimli, or if we drive across 227 that we don't think is going to be funded now, with my colleague from Portage la Prairie, and we blow a shock out of our car that costs us \$300 because there's no infrastructure money to fix the roads. So that's where I think our \$164 million went was from our 14 cents that we're paying that we're not really saving money on. Oh, sorry; thanks, Wayne.

* (14:40)

The other thing is, when we're not fixing our PR roads, we're finding, and I'm hearing from municipalities, that we're getting a lot of more traffic onto our municipal roads, and they're being damaged more from the traffic because they can't drive on our provincial roads without hitting potholes. So I think it's really disheartening that we've lost out on those infrastructure dollars.

Water and waste water funding; again, another concern for municipalities. The NDP told us in their budget that we were going to see an increase in the

water and waste water infrastructure funding, but yet when I look in the books it appears to be the same amount.

You know, there's a—Honourable Speaker, there's \$1 billion of infrastructure projects shovel-ready in this province, and these are all growth-enabling projects, all growth-enabling infrastructures. We need these infrastructures for our communities to grow.

Now, the only way that municipalities can raise money is by taxation, and I think we all know that.

An Honourable Member: There's only one taxpayer.

Mr. King: There's only one taxpayer. So again, we go back to that \$1,500 tax credit that I think is going to vanish real quickly because we did not meet the inflationary rate for the municipal funding. So our property tax bills are going up, and we already know our education tax bills are going up anywhere from 6 to 17 per cent.

So those infrastructure projects in our communities are real important, and to lose infrastructure dollars is not responsible budgeting.

Another huge, huge concern for municipalities there is the public safety basket funding. And I know my colleague from Brandon West has spoke on this in depth, so I won't go into it too much, but that—those programs were important, too. Then they've cut some significant funding from our public safety dollars. We don't have enough officers. We need more public safety officers, not just in the city of Winnipeg, but throughout rural Manitoba, all across the province.

And municipalities were asked, what was their No. 1 priority in their municipalities, and they said it's public safety. They don't feel safe in their communities. So, very disheartening that the public safety dollars have been cut.

The City of Winnipeg, North End Sewage Treatment Plant. The upgrades initially budgeted for this in 2019 was \$552 million. And here we are a few years later in 2024, and that project is now going to be well over a billion dollars, and nothing mentioned of the North End Sewage Treatment Plant for the City of Winnipeg funding.

So, again, very disappointing to municipalities, not having that—we need those improvements to main our level of service, and, of course, accommodate our growth in this province. Very important projects that is going to be very challenging for the City of Winnipeg to do without some help from the Province.

Arlington Bridge, sitting there closed. When are we going to see that reconstructed, or improved? Huge artery through the city of Winnipeg, and no mention of funding in this budget for that.

The NDP need to find more ways to make life affordable for us here in Manitoba. The 14-cent tax, it's great for some people, but not all Manitobans. We need something that is going to benefit all of Manitoba, Honourable Speaker.

What we need here from our NDP government is to step up to the NDP-Liberal carbon tax, the federal carbon tax that is causing everything to go up in price. Everything across this country that is produced, grown and transported is affected by the carbon tax, and people are feeling the pinch from that.

Again, we go back to the 14 cents. Those of us who get that discount at the pumps, that's fantastic, but the lower income people that are trying to buy—afford to buy groceries, it's not helping them 'whatsoall'—whatsoever.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And people in this province shouldn't be going hungry. We should not—we will not be able to afford a place to live, and I think that's partially on us and our fiscal responsibility here as legislators. Canadians paying the price on carbon that we should be charging other countries for, it's not an affordable tax for us, as it raises the price for all goods.

Another cut we see in the budget was emergency expenditures. So we're seeing—we're going to see repeat natural disasters that have happened over hundreds of years and we're not preparing ourselves for emergency funding. That seems to me a little concerning, too, when we're facing a dry season. I don't think the rain and the cloudy day that we had on election day, October 3, was quite enough to keep things dampened, other than our fiscal responsibility in this province. So, Honourable Speaker, \$50 million for emergency expenditures is—or \$50-million reduction is not something that we'll take lightly here.

MPI talks rebates in the budget. Well, I think we could withstand more rebates if it was handled differently as well, with some SRE policies that are good for our MPI customers, or possibly even the—you know, using the companies that pay taxes in here and let them insure their vehicles in our province.

And our ER in Eriksdale. Well, although we all love to have a emergency room in our communities, and especially for us in the Interlake, I think we need

to staff the one that's 20 minutes down the road before we look at maybe opening any more ERs. Staffing seems to be a huge issue.

It appears I'm running out of time, Honourable Speaker, but I do want to get some of these points on the record for my constituents, for myself and, of course, for all Manitobans on this Budget 2024.

So I thank you for the time, thank you for the opportunity to bring these forward and put them on record.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): It's a privilege to rise today and to put a few words on the record as they relate to Budget 2024.

I want to start by speaking directly to the constituents of McPhillips. Seven months ago, you voted to send me to this Legislature to work with our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this team to make much-needed and important changes in government. You wanted a government that would rebuild health care and invest in infrastructure to public services. You wanted a government that put an end to the PC cuts.

When I was at the doorstep last summer during the campaign, you told me you wanted a government that invested in staffing so we had more doctors, nurses and health-care professionals in our system, including at Seven Oaks hospital.

You wanted a government that put an end to the funding freeze to municipalities, so that municipal governments could invest in roads like McPhillips, Leila, Sinclair and so on. You wanted a government that made life more affordable for you at a time when just driving to work felt expensive.

Well, I'm happy to say that this first budget, our government's first budget, is a big step in that direction: One Future, One People, One Manitoba.

This budget is focused on making the quality of life better for all Manitobans, and there's a lot of exciting stuff in it. In fact, some of you have already been reaching out to me to share your excitement on the support for renters, on the homeowners tax credit that was announced. I've also heard from folks who are happy that we're extending the gas tax holiday, which, by the way, gives us the lowest average price at the pump in Canada.

* (14:50)

Our government is a listening government, and Budget 2024 reflects the values and priorities of everyday families across the province. Budget 2024 will

deliver more help for you and more help for those who need it most.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, anyone who's interacted with our health-care system recently knows that the PC cuts have had a devastating impact. It will take time to rebuild what's broken, but our government is taking concrete action and is investing a record \$8.2 billion in Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care.

This means we're hiring 1,000 more new health-care workers. That's 100 new doctors, 210 nurses, 90 paramedics and 600 health-care aides. Honourable Speaker, \$309 million will go towards retaining, recruiting and training more health-care workers to add safety, 'saffed' bed capacity and reduced ER wait times, while connecting more Manitobans with a family doctor, which can be a challenge.

We all know that Canada has a growing senior population, which is why we're allocating \$22 million in Budget 2024 to provide more direct hours for care for seniors in personal-care homes and also fund a new independent seniors advocate, which I know something that seniors living in McPhillips will appreciate.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, investing in health care is investing in the economy. A thriving society is one that has a reliable health care for its people to depend on. That's why these investments are critical.

McPhillips is a 'frast'-growing community. We've seen a lot of change, and more and more families are flocking to northwest Winnipeg and the surrounding area to build a life in a great community. Our government's plan to remove the PST on new builds to jumpstart housing development in our province will have a real and meaningful impact in McPhillips.

Home ownership is a dream for all Canadians, and Manitoba's a fantastic place to live. Removing the PST from new builds means making that dream more attainable for families. Moreover, increasing the renters tax credit will help make life a little more affordable for renters. It will help seniors living on a fixed income, because no one should have to choose between rent and groceries.

The \$1,500 homeowners tax-homeowners affordability tax credit will also help keep Manitoba affordable, with 85 per cent of Manitobans benefitting and paying less or no school tax at all.

Simply put, this budget makes significant progress on the commitments we made to make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

I mentioned infrastructure earlier, and I want to note that we're making \$540 million in capital investments in highways and infrastructure. This is important because Manitoba is a transportation hub for goods and moving goods from across North America. I know folks living in McPhillips who are involved in the transportation industry will appreciate that our government is making this important investment.

I want to take a moment here to mention an important piece of news, and one that's close to my heart. For some 30-plus years, Manitoba's Sikh community has been asking various governments to address the growing needs for adequate and safe access to the Sikh Society of Manitoba, on Mollard Road, for the thousands of weekly visitors that attend services from across the city and the province. I have personally been on the other end of that table making the case for this investment.

For the 10 years that I sat on the board of directors at the Sikh Society of Manitoba, I was disappointed to see no commitments from any level of government. Last summer, our Premier (Mr. Kinew), the MLA for Maples and myself visited the Sikh Society of Manitoba during the campaign and made a commitment to get it done. And I'm proud to say that we're following through on that promise. Promise made, promise kept.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, when I was on the campaign trail last summer, the message from McPhillips constituents was clear: they wanted a—they wanted better from their government. They wanted a responsible and pragmatic government to make decisions focused on Manitobans.

I was raised by immigrant parents who taught me the value of being sensible with your money. And I know many expect the same from our government. That is why I'm incredibly proud to support Budget 2024, because we're following through on our campaign commitment while responsibly correcting course on Manitoba's finances.

Before I close out, I want to take a moment here to acknowledge that April 14 is Vaisakhi, an incredibly important day for Sikhs around the world. It is the start of the harvests in Punjab and northern India. And it is the 325th anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa by the 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

Millions of Sikhs will be celebrating Vaisakhi this weekend, including in our vibrant and growing community here in Manitoba. So I would welcome all my

colleagues around the Chamber to join Manitoba's Sikh community in celebrating.

And, to the Sikh community watching, I'd like to say *Khalsa Saajna Diwas diyan ate Vaisakhi diyan lakh lakh vadhaiyan. [Many, many congratulations for the anniversary of the establishment of the Khalsa and Vaisakhi.]*

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I'm proud to stand here as the MLA for Agassiz and represent my constituents and my constituency and many Manitobans who share concerns with the NDP budget that was announced last week.

I'm proud to stand up and speak for the citizens who've brought concerns forward and the stakeholders who have concerns where funding has been cut and the detrimental impact that this budget has on Manitoba taxpayers, businesses, municipalities and also educators.

I also want to say thank you to my colleagues, who have shared the concerns from their constituents, as well as the many Manitobans who have reached out to voice their opinions on this matter.

The NDP has shared their vision for Manitoba in the delivery of a no-development-plan budget last week. Unfortunately, the financial blueprint this government shared last week did not deliver much in respect to affordability for Manitobans. It's lacking in infrastructure funding, affordability, investment and many other areas that are important to Manitobans.

Let's talk a bit about affordability. I'll touch on the other concerns in the budget in just a moment. Let's—so again, speaking on affordability, what this government has for a plan to help those families who are struggling right now. This government has forgotten about the families that can't afford to put their kids into hockey games and play hockey.

There are many more families facing financial burdens, not just those families involved in driving their kids to those hockey games and extracurricular activities that the NDP make reference to in their budget speech. There are many families who don't even own a vehicle due to the extra financial burden of owning one. These individuals and families are completely forgotten about, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

What is the NDP doing for those people that aren't spending hours commuting every day and are just struggling to put food on the table? Nothing, that's what they are doing for those folks. Nothing. There's

absolutely nothing in the budget to help families who need the most help. They are not going to get the most support.

There's no long-term plan for financial relief for families in Manitoba today. Many struggle to fill their cupboards and to put food on the table, and those folks and families will continue to struggle with this NDP budget.

The member for Fort Rouge, the Premier (Mr. Kinew), stated in December, at an AMM event, that he would take further action on grocery stores if they did not pass the gas tax savings on to the consumers.

Well, guess what, Honourable Deputy Speaker? We are calling his bluff. The member for Fort Rouge has done nothing of the sort, and consumers continue to pay ballooned prices at the grocery store. Nothing. There has been no follow-up on that, nor has there been any savings at the grocery stores and no assurance or plan for relief any time soon.

Health care: Of course, many promises were made on that front, but we still yet to see any delivery on those campaign promises, other than talking about clinics with no staff to support or deliver the services, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Shall we talk about the fact the NDP still have not delivered on a plan to train, retain or recruit health-care staff? New emergency rooms need to have the professionals and support staff. And what is the plan for this, Honourable Deputy Speaker? Oh, there is no darn plan, just like there wasn't when they shut down the surgical task force. It left Manitobans feeling very frustrated and in pain.

* (15:00)

Now, we've heard many stories from Manitobans who are going and having the surgery done and paying out of their own pockets while this NDP has no immediate solution for these patients now. What is the plan for recruitment?

You know, the previous government, the—our side of the House, the PC government, recruited Filipino nurses, and there was progress being made on getting health-care workers here in Manitoba. I know my colleagues, the member from Portage la Prairie and the member from Roblin, met with some of those health-care providers that came to Manitoba through this program, and they heard their success stories of getting here to work in this great province. And they are happy to be working in Manitoba and in their designated health-care field.

This NDP government has cut that recruitment initiative, eliminating any further recruitment from the Philippines and potential offers. So now what is their plan moving forward?

Well, the NDP have no significant plan when it comes to immigration and recruitment. This government has set the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program backwards. I've met with and spoken to many of the individuals that have been affected by the lack of movement and engagement by this current government since the NDP took over in October. They are being ignored and marginalized by the current state of the MPNP process. Many applications are being pushed off to the side, ignored and not made a priority with this government.

The previous PC government had addressed the increased number of applicants and were successful in reducing the backlog, and applications were being processed in a timely manner of a three-month period.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, since October, this NDP government has created a huge backlog. When it was only just three months, but we are now seeing things backlogged for nine to 12 months, and that is unacceptable. We are in a nationwide human resource crisis, and what is this government doing to help ease that burden?

Well, nothing but holding up applications at the office and overlooking the credentials of many of the applicants. We have pharmacists, many managers, health-care workers, early childhood educators, people in the queue to help relieve the workforce pressure, but no one—no response or progress has been made by this current government.

The government has had over six months to get applications approved, but instead they come up with excuses and blame. It's time that this NDP quit blaming, start working on the issues to address the problems and come up with real solutions of their own. The NDP budget has barely added enough resources to address their created backlog in this department, and they are continuing to ignore this file and hiding from the people and the real issues.

These applicants have lives here already. Many of them are established, have created great relationships in their communities and have been contributing members in our province. Yet this government fails to recognize that fact and continues to play the blame game. These people want to stay in Manitoba, work in Manitoba, raise families in Manitoba and be a part of our growing communities.

These same individuals, like many other Manitobans, like to get out to explore the many great parts of our province. Travel is an important part of our Manitoba economy. With this fact, it is imperative to have the roadways maintained and built to accommodate the growing use of Manitoba's infrastructure. We have so many great cities and rural communities right across our province, many of which I have been to, and I'm confident to say that all of us in this Chamber have travelled our great province to some extent.

Travelling through Manitoba, we have many provincial highways and roads that are imperative and essential to the economic growth of our province. The PC government had a five-year plan for infrastructure, and it's concerning to see this NDP budget cut plans for infrastructure in this province.

There were investments made by the PC government. I saw first-hand in my Agassiz riding with this investment our PC government did. We got the Highway 34 resurfaced. There were commitments made to do portions of Highway 5. Bridges were repaired, overpasses were completed, projects got done. However, I was sad to recently learn that the work that was in the queue for Highway 5 south has been pushed back. This is not what our province needs to hear.

With such significant cuts to infrastructure budget, it is concerning that this would leave major projects and upgrades off the table. This would impact significantly any potential work for junction Highway 1 and 5.

Transportation on our roadways is key for economic growth in our province. Increased trucking and larger hauls are on roads every single day. Every day. Roads and infrastructure investment must be there to provide the proper care and maintenance of our major thoroughfares, only enhancing our province, creating employment, opportunities and attracting investments.

Good roads also attract tourism, whether it be for rest and relaxation in one of Manitoba parks, but the NDP budget has slashed funding to our great parks by half. However, if not visiting a provincial park, one might enjoy a day trip to sightsee and check out our historical sights, or perhaps a sports game with your children, or a music festival or a theatre to catch local artists.

There are an endless amount of outdoor activities that we can all engage in during all four seasons in Manitoba. I would again be confident to say that all members on both sides of the House enjoy the venues and the facilities that we have an opportunity to visit.

Many of these community centres and facilities have been fortunate enough to receive funding from the Building Sustainable Communities fund that the PC government brought in to help communities sustain their programs and assist with facility upgrades. This investment back into their organizations, while contributing to the growth and development of their community.

Under this NDP government, there is no darn plan for growth or building sustainable communities. This funding alone in Agassiz was significant for many organizations. Some of the projects included over the years, Neepawa Golf & Country Club, upgraded golf course. ArtsForward was able to put on a Truth and Reconciliation event.

Town of Neepawa was able to upgrade trail and tower construction. Eden's community centre developed green space in an outdoor area. Yellowhead centre got washroom upgrades. Gladstone arena, funding for new flooring. Westbourne Perry Park got play structure upgrades.

Kelwood arena got upgrades to a facility. Plumas Curling Club got a lighting upgrade. Manitoba agriculture museum got food booth upgrades. And the Treherne Minor Athletic Association got upgrades, all from the Building Sustainable Communities fund. And many of these organizations rely on this funding.

Some of these grants may seem minimal compared to others, but important in providing longevity of the space, creation of new space or continued programs. The NDP has cut the funding to the BSC program, leaving many of these small organizations and community projects out of options for future funding.

Education: let's talk about education. Although we know this does not fall into the top number of categories for the NDP government, it is certainly a priority for many Manitobans. This government has cut the school capital funding by \$100 million. Where is the investment in education and students? Oh, it's not a priority for this government.

The previous government was committed to education and building the future for many young people with a commitment to build new schools. Making these types of investments in our youth was a priority for the PC government, but now, with the current no development plan, or for ease of reference, the NDP, they have decided to just erase all those schools, take them off the board, stroke them off.

That is nine schools, Honourable Deputy Speaker, nine capital projects absent from this budget. That means no education investment, and growth just taken off the list. Taken out.

* (15:10)

It's a significant impact on many communities, and in Agassiz this hits close to home, right in Neepawa. We have a growing population in the town of Neepawa, and the student population continues to grow steadily along with that, and rapidly filling up the classrooms which are now bursting and requiring much-needed space.

Many of these capital projects were not priority, and that is sad news for those school divisions and communities. What is this government going to do to accommodate for such influx and student growth? Classroom sizes are ballooning, and no plan for future growth in this budget.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm going to close with comments I've made before. I've made—Manitoba continues to be an important part of the economic fabric of our wonderful country. And we want to continue to be a leader in business, employment opportunity, equality and equal access to public projects and future investment. Unfortunately, the NDP budget falls flat on many opportunities, and this budget misses out on growth and development.

I will continue to advocate, stand up and represent all Manitobans here in our great province, those that are here now, and for those that are seeking to come and make Manitoba their home.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Good afternoon. It is with great pride that I rise today to speak in high favour of our NDP government's first provincial budget.

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

MLA Dela Cruz: Hear, hear. One people, one province, one future, one Manitoba; and one thing that I want to say to correct the record after listening to the member opposite.

So when it comes to prioritizing the needs of Manitobans that are here at home, there are thousands of Manitobans who came here for a better life, like my family, who came from the Philippines for a better life, like my family, who came from other countries, from Ukraine, in order to be here working with dignity.

And what did the PCs do to a lot of the folks who came from other countries? They deleted their jobs. Thousands of positions in health care were cut under the previous government. And the now-opposition PCs continue to gaslight every single one of them, and gaslight us here in this House when we stand up for the record.

So not only that, but there are countless health-care workers, countless workers who are accredited in their home countries to work professionally as doctors, as nurses, as, heck, even veterinarians, even dentists, that are working here as cashiers at Dollarama, that are working here in industries that they don't find their home passions in.

What we owe to these people that come here that invest in our economy, that invest in our community and that choose to call Manitoba home is dignified work, decent work, work that they can feel empowered to perform.

And I'd like to start off, as well, by thanking Minister Marcelino—rather, sorry, the Minister for Labour and Immigration—for the countless hours that she has put in since she has been appointed and elected. In fact, in the opposition, she pulled days that ended at 2 a.m., 3 a.m., and as an individual, she championed something that is very, very strong in our community, which is our work ethic. And I think she leads by example when she fights for people that are already here at home, and fights for our home country at the same time.

The Speaker in the Chair

When it comes to the Philippines, there are so many skilled workers in the Philippines that are needed in order to bolster their health-care system. Here in Manitoba, many of them have chosen to come here for the life that they choose to build.

But what is abhorrent are the lies that the PC opposition currently chooses to spread, currently chooses to misguide all of Manitoba by expressing the lies in that one third of the staff department in Labour and Immigration were cut by the previous government. And where did that leave our province in return? That left us with a backlog of 2,000 applications upon taking office.

We have a disaster that took them seven years to cause, and it won't take as—nearly as long for us to fix, but the problem is, misinformation at the end of the day, people need to understand where the problem comes from.

We've already announced in Budget 2024 that the MPNP processing applications will be bolstered by \$1 million dedicated toward staffing. Yet the PCs continue to repeat their talking points when it comes to, you know, their various lies. Like for example, what cuts have we brought in? What cuts have we brought in that—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would caution the member about using that word; it's unparliamentary. Normally, we try and not use that kind of language that would potentially inflame people and get them upset. So I'd just caution the member to find different ways of expressing herself.

MLA Dela Cruz: I apologize for using that unparliamentary language. It's—I'm still getting used to the fact that stupidity is parliamentary but that other word isn't, so.

Okay, so far, we've heard impassioned, eloquent cases made by this side of the House reiterating the impact that the good news in Budget 2024 holds, good news central to our investments in health care and affordability and community safety, and in making life better for all Manitobans.

So my colleague from St. Boniface comes and brings his education background. Our, you know, our member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen) brings community organizing. And there's so much diversity on this side of the House, and I'll honestly be kind and say across the Chamber, when it comes to the valuable life experience that each of us are here to represent and put on the record.

So every member of this Legislature brings valuable personal and professional experience with them into this Chamber. Hearing some of what's been said so far, you know, there's a critical voice that's missing from this conversation and one that I hope I can do justice by today, and that's young people.

Every member of this Legislature has a privilege to be here and to exercise the opportunity that we have to make laws that honour the work and the work that has yet to be done by this next generation.

When rising in this House on multiple occasions, I've made it clear how essential it is for the socio-economics of our community to bridge the gap between generations. I've spoken at length about how senior issues are issues that concern us all, that young people like me and younger ought to see value in

taking care of those who take care of us. And young people get it.

It's time that I shed some light on who young people are and what young people get in return. Young people are compassionate. Despite the stigma attached to our age, our age truly is our strength. We come with bright ideas, an infinite amount of learning and energy to get the job done for our communities.

You see us on the front lines of volunteer service and hospitals, in senior homes, shelters, parks and more. In fact, you know, from the age of 12, I volunteered myself at Bethania nursing home, porting the elderly from recreational activities. I served as an emergency room attendant at Concordia Hospital, when we had an emergency room. And up—and what led me here was continual community service and continual inspiration from other young people around me.

Young people, you know, are the reason in fact why many of us in this House are here. We probably wouldn't be here if it weren't for our volunteer teams and for the inspiration behind the issues that they champion. You see us building up our communities by giving selflessly and mobilizing our peers to do the same. We are a body of people that understand to our core the power of collective action and what it can do when employed justly.

* (15:20)

So what exactly do young people get? What do we receive in exchange for the weight that so many of us shoulder? And in Budget 2024, you know, what do we get when it comes to the lengths that we have gone to serve this community?

Previous to this year, you know, we inherited a set of challenges that challenged, yes, the entire world, but challenged us especially here in Manitoba because of mismanagement from the previous government. An escalating climate catastrophe, addictions and mental health crisis, precarious work, skyrocketing 'greedflation', all of these things went ignored and denied under the previous PC government.

Meanwhile, here in Budget 2024, we strive to improve government services for everyone, and we're finally bringing forward plastic health cards that we waited too far—too long for and reducing wait times. We're eliminating the backlog at Vital Statistics for birth, marriage and other vital forms of identification, and we're hiring more staff to process MPNP applications, which is integral in our recruitment strategy.

Yes, in Budget 2024, meaningful progress is made to steady the ship so that we can sail it in the right direction for all generations. There is so, so much to be proud of, from ensuring: that kids in school are fed; that kids are being taken care of when they need to be taken care of; that young adults like myself, but like my previous self, that worked a minimum-wage job or that worked a non-profit salary, that they can afford rent and tuition; to funding for more direct home-care hours; and finally, to a seniors advocate office.

There is so much good news for all Manitobans, and I am grateful that I had the opportunity to put these words on the record today. One people, one future, one Manitoba, Budget 2024 is historic in so many ways.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I wish to begin my comments by thanking the great constituents of the constituency of Springfield-Ritchot for honouring me with the privilege of representing them here in this Legislature. To the communities of Cooks Creek, Oakbank, Dugald, Holden, Ill des Chênes, Ste. Agathe, Grande Pointe and Niverville, thank you for your support.

I would also like to thank the team I had the honour of working with, and I want to extend my heartfelt thank you to the many volunteers who gave time during the summer and fall. They gave time to go door to door canvassing on hot days, cool evenings and even severe rainstorms. To my core campaign team of Cyrus Reimer, Joan Golebioski and Cameron Hay, I would like to thank you for months and months of planning a very successful campaign.

As for this big, dishonest budget, I would like to point out a few points to this Legislature. In '22-23 budget year, the end, March 31, 2023, the auditor released a report signed off by the auditor, which indicated a \$270-million surplus.

Now, we have the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) who has stated from time to time that there was no surplus. So my question is to all Manitobans, would you believe the Minister of Finance or would you believe the auditor? Because one of them isn't telling the truth.

If I were going to be a betting man, I would put money on the auditor telling the truth. There was a \$270-million surplus. And I would point out to members of this Legislature, that was taking, after we took office in 2016, a government that was out-of-control spending, we got that all right sized, and then we hit a

one-in-every-hundred-year pandemic. We funded all of that, got through it and then had a surplus budget in '22-23, a surplus of \$270 million. That is incredible. That is so noteworthy that a government in this province could actually achieve that kind of a benchmark.

And what did this NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) say when he found out about it? Oh, that is a disaster. Because as we've pointed out before, for an NDP socialist government, a surplus is a disaster. It means you didn't spend enough. It's only when you have a deficit, then an NDP socialist government would say, that is good news, because at least you spent all the money, and then some.

But the news actually got better. So on top of a \$270-million surplus, there was a \$842-million increase in equalization from the sugar daddy in Ottawa, the Justin Trudeau government; \$842 million on top of 270. However, it got better: Another 112 in health and social services transfers. I'll do the math for the members opposite: that's more than \$1 billion. So the question, then, has to be: Why wasn't the budget balanced under the NDP?

And you know, they said, well, because we didn't budget properly. And what they mean by that—and I'd like all colleagues to understand this—is that we failed in not budgeting for the \$3 billion of NDP promises. We did not put that into our budget, and that's why there's a deficit today, because we failed to budget for \$3 billion of NDP promises. That's why there's a deficit.

I know time is short and there are many colleagues who wish to speak and I want to be respectful of that, I want to be mindful of that. So I would like to point out to members: we face a huge debt, not just a deficit. Deficit is overspending, but we also face a huge debt. So the deficit's going to add to the debt. We face a huge deficit, we face a huge debt.

We face substantial tax increases. And the whole shell game of the education property taxes—and it is a shell game, and I'd like to thank my colleague from Portage la Prairie, who is pointing that out. And I said to him today, you know, the foolish and gratuitous comments that are—answers that come from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) will only go so far. And the truth is going to come out that this will actually end up being a punishment for those who put food not just on our table, I point out to the minister, not just on our table, but help feed the world.

This is serious business, and we will be punished—the NDP will be punishing them, because we will see

a massive tax increase. This is only the beginning, and I would like to point out to this Legislature, as the famous saying goes, the problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money. This is a warning to Manitobans. When looking into the future, debt will go up, the deficit will go up, taxes will go up and affordability for Manitobans will go down.

There are storm clouds on the horizon; they are coming, and no matter of squealing and clapping and gratuitous foolish questions, and the more foolish and the louder that they're given by ministers, the more their backbench squeals and claps and hoots and hollers, but that's not going to make a difference when Manitobans are going to face an affordability issue where it's—they're going to start making decisions whether or not they're going to feed their family or they're going to do other activities; whether their children can go for soccer or hockey or whatever it might be, or other expenses. They are going to face an affordability crisis because of this government and the way they're mismanaging the finances of this province.

Thank you.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I'm certainly pleased to have my turn to speak about how this new NDP government failed miserably in their first attempt at creating a budget that will benefit all Manitobans.

* (15:30)

While the members on that side of the House continue to sound off about their temporary gas tax relief that doesn't help the many, many Manitobans that don't have vehicles, I know that drivers will get a real shock when the gas tax holiday ends at the end of September.

The recent 23 per cent in-carbon tax increase from the Liberal-NDP coalition has added to the price of gas at the pump that has risen by, quite coincidentally, 14 cents since the 1st of January. Many are predicting Manitoba will again have the highest priced gas in the Prairie provinces this fall.

I'm not sure about you, Honourable Speaker, but in the first three months of this temporary reduction in gas and diesel prices, I have not seen a corresponding decrease in food prices in grocery stores across the province. Last fall, the Premier crowed in the media that he would hold retailers' feet to the fire to ensure his temporary gas tax holiday reduced prices.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) told me at the time that he expected local grocery stores to lower food prices during the provincial fuel tax holiday and warned retailers who didn't pass on the saving, that they could count on the government to act.

The Premier went on to say he wanted shoppers to see immediate savings at their local grocery store. Here's what the Premier said in the Winnipeg Free Press on November 30: We do expect that grocery chains will pass on the savings to you when we reduce their transportation costs starting on January 1. And if we don't see these saving materialize, that's when we're going to follow up on those further steps.

The Agriculture Minister also got in on the promise to bring down food prices in Manitoba. My friend from Dauphin said he had been speaking with his federal counterpart about what could be done to deliver more affordability at the grocery store level and to ensure fuel tax savings are passed on to consumers.

The Premier, however, did not explain what steps the Province would, or more importantly, could take to ensure that private businesses pass on commensurate level of savings to their customers.

However, in the short term, when retailers save money, consumers should, too, the Premier said. Today, on this side of the House, we see no evidence of prices being lowered in grocery stores, and there's been no mention by this NDP government what they're going to do about it.

It's time for the Premier and the Agriculture Minister to tell Manitobans why retailers have not dropped grocery prices for Manitobans who are finding it hard to make ends meet, especially those who aren't able to take advantage of the 14-cent temporary gas tax relief.

Honourable Speaker, it says a lot when the only long-term tax-saving relief for taxpayers in this year's budget is the change in income tax brackets made by our PC government in Budget 2023. Our PC government made two significant bumps to the income brackets as well as increasing the basic personal amount, the threshold of earned income that is allowed before any tax is levied.

I will say, I join with many hard-working Manitobans in being relieved that this government decided to keep our PC tax-bracket increases, which were designed to put more money back in the hands of wage earners on a permanent—not temporary—basis.

In 2024, these changes took effect. The first tax bracket increased by over \$10,000 to \$47,000, while the second went up by over two—\$20,000 to \$100,000. These are meaningful, long-term tax policies, not temporary.

It's the basic personal amount that the NDP have chosen to tinker with in Budget 2024. Yes, the basic personal amount will rise due to inflation; however, the NDP will start to attack high-income earners; the same high-income earners such as doctors that they are trying to attract to Manitoba.

Anyone making over \$200,000 in net income will see the basic personal amount start to be clawed back. And at \$400,000 in net income, it will be fully clawed back. Manitoba will become even more unfriendly to professionals such as doctors as it becomes the first province in Canada that will fully claw back the basic personal amount.

Why does the NDP dislike hard-working Manitobans who have studied and advanced their career or Manitobans that have put their capital at risk in businesses to earn that kind of income?

Under the NDP, Manitoba has gone back to the Robin Hood mentality: take from the self-made, successful people and distribute in whatever way they believe is right. On this side of the House, Honourable Speaker, we know that all Manitobans work hard for their money and should be able to keep more of the fruits of their labour and to spend the way they see fit, not the way the Premier wants at the Cabinet table.

Manitobans can expect less repairs and construction on our network of highways this year after \$163 million was cut from the budget. Honourable Speaker, the funds for the temporary gas tax holiday have to come from somewhere, and I would submit this funding is coming from the very budget that is used to upgrade our highway network.

For the past eight summers, Manitobans were used to seeing contractors working on rehabilitating and repaving roads across the province after 17 years of neglect. I have no doubt there will be road work done this year, but with a budget being cut, the Minister of Infrastructure needs to come clean on which projects, in which areas of Manitoba, are on the chopping block.

Rural Manitobans have to drive their vehicles each and every day on our highway network to get to work or take themselves or their children to sporting or cultural activities. On this side of the House we

understand rural Manitoba, and our government continuously budgeted predictable amounts year after year to repair and upgrade our highway system.

In my constituency, motorists drive on an upgraded Highway 10 and 16, thanks to a PC government. In time, we will learn which highway projects have been cut, and there will be one reason: the reduction of infrastructure spending in the NDP budget.

Community groups, organizations and municipalities have relied heavily on 50-50 matching grants provided under the Building Sustainable Communities program. The BSC program has provided municipalities and non-profit organizations access to 50-50 matching community grants. In 2023 our government provided \$25 million in funding across Manitoba.

In this year's NDP budget there was no mention of this valuable program, even under a different name. This was not a surprise as normally the call for applications comes out in January with approvals in the spring.

Many municipalities and volunteers with organizations reached out to me over the past three months, wondering when the program would be announced. I told them not to hold their breath, that I believed the program would be cut.

Budget 2024 proved that to be true. There will be many, many Manitobans disappointed that worthwhile projects that would have benefitted them and their lives in their communities will no longer receive funding.

Nineteen organizations in my constituency of Riding Mountain received over \$1.2 million in matching funding in 2023 for their community projects. And the thing to note, Honourable Speaker, is that hard-working volunteers raised the matching amount.

Among the projects in Riding Mountain were upgrades to arenas in Cromer, Miniota, Oak River, Reston and Shoal Lake, a park upgrade in Elkhorn, the addition of pickle-ball courts in Birtle, a splash pad in Shoal Lake, upgrades to a park in Virden, beach upgrades at Rapid City and upgrades to the rodeo arena and campground in McAuley.

This year, however, there will be very few improvements made to community infrastructure. With the rising cost of materials and the lack of government support, projects will be put on hold.

The Minister of Municipal Relations and his government obviously don't understand the value of these

community improvements and how they contribute to the fabric of life in small towns, or he would have lobbied harder at the Cabinet table to retain the valuable Building Sustainable Communities program.

Also, Honourable Speaker, there was no mention of—in the NDP budget—of the \$100-million Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund established by our government and, more specifically, by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan)—when he was the minister responsible—that supported the delivery of quality programming in facilities and communities throughout Manitoba.

It's a shame that the current minister could not, or, would not deliver a program that supported libraries, museums and the arts community across the province.

I know my friend, the MLA for Swan River, is passionate about the great outdoors and will want to talk more about the Department of Natural Resources that didn't get any mention in this year's budget.

Our hard-working conservation officers do more than just work with animals. They provide enforcement of resource laws and, indeed, many other laws across Manitoba. On rural roads, where you may never see an RCMP cruiser, you will often see a conservation officer vehicle.

With the cuts announced to provincial policing services in the NDP budget, the work of the conservation officers service is even more important across rural Manitoba. On this side of the House we value the work of our conservation officers, and we put money where our mouths were by providing funds in Budget 2023 to hire more officers, open more detachments closed by the previous NDP government, provide higher wages to retain and recruit officers, and provide new vehicles and equipment to allow our officers to do their jobs properly.

On this side of the House, we will be continuing to monitor the work of the minister to ensure the government continues to make natural resources and our conservation officer service a priority.

Thousands of Manitobans and out-of-province visitors who take advantage of our provincial parks each year will soon begin to express their outrage at the 50 per cent cut in the budget for the Manitoba Provincial Parks Infrastructure Renewal Strategy. This plan, instituted after nearly three years of consultation with stakeholders, earmarked \$224 million to be invested in Manitoba parks over the next 10 years.

But in Budget 2024, the NDP chose to slash this year's portion of the plan in half to just over \$6 million. One has to believe that this is just the start of the cuts.

Now I know the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt) loves parks. She has said that numerous times in response to my questions in this House.

* (15:40)

I take this minister on her word, but must say that her love of parks must not have been felt by her Cabinet colleagues, and certainly not by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) when setting the 2024 budget.

With the cut to the Parks capital budget, it looks like the Fox Lake campsites at Birds Hill won't get funding for upgrades, nor will the campsite electrification project at Hecla/Grindstone. And in the Duck Mountain, it looks like the Childs Lake yurt expansion is on the chopping block.

And one would think the Minister of Environment would want to see water projects go ahead, but it looks like projects in northern Manitoba, like the wastewater lagoon at Paint Lake, will be put on hold, as will the replacement of washrooms and showers at Bakers Narrows. The minister and her colleagues need to explain to all users of Manitoba parks why the NDP government threw out the results of the consultations and recommendations by the knowledgeable folks at Travel Manitoba, and slashed the Parks budget in half.

An Honourable Member: Because they're outside of Winnipeg.

Mr. Nesbitt: Likely.

Honourable Speaker, my colleagues that eloquently spoke before me touched on many of the other deficiencies in this first attempt at budgeting by the NDP. On this side of the House, we expected cuts; it was just a question of how deep they would go. And now we know.

As I touched on, cuts to road projects, cuts to Parks budget and no funding for community initiatives will negatively affect the lives of my constituents in Riding Mountain.

Honourable Speaker, to no one's surprise, I will be voting against this NDP budget.

Thank you.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Honourable Speaker, my colleague and friend from Brandon West

mentioned in his speech about a eulogy, and a eulogy is a celebration of life. Well, this budget is the furthest thing from a celebration of life that this province has ever seen.

The NDP budget is a letdown of monumental proportions. It's not just that it fails to address critical issues facing Manitobans, such as skyrocketing property taxes and deepening housing crisis; it shows a fundamental lack of understanding or concern for the realities of everyday citizens.

We heard ambitious talk from the NDP painting visions of economic revitalization, community support; however, the reality we're dissecting today falls markedly short. It's as though instead of nurturing the horse that meant to pull our collective cart forward, the budget opts for an approach that neither feeds the horse nor lightens the load. When we dig into the details—natural resources, education, health care, property taxes—it's clear the crucial areas that matter to Manitobans are being overlooked.

They even overlooked the buckwheat plant in Ethelbert, the Minister of Agriculture's (Mr. Kostyshyn) hometown. This budget misses the mark on delivering the support and investment we desperately need. We're here to demand more. Manitoba deserves a budget that's about real progress, not just playing it safe. We need actions that match the scale of our ambitions, not half measures that leave us asking what could've been.

Let's not settle for this. We need a budget that works harder for Manitobans, one's—that—ready to tackle our 'allenges'—our—and head-on, and secure a brighter future for the province. Anything less is simply not good enough, thank you.

Let's talk plainly about where the NDP budget has landed us, especially when it comes to our infrastructure. Raising fuel taxes while cutting back \$64 million in roads and a shocking \$104 million from the water infrastructure isn't just bad math; it's a bad move for Manitoba. It hits everyone, from folks in the city to farmers in the countryside, right where it hurts—in the wallet and our daily lives. We're all feeling the pinch with the cost of living going up; now with these tax hikes set for October 1, it's going to cost us more just to get around to do business, to live our lives.

And it's just not about paying more at the pump. It means everything we buy, everything we rely on gets more expensive, too. This at—time when we're already watching our spending.

But let's get to the heart of it. Slashing our infrastructure budget means we're falling behind. Roads crumble, water systems age, and what's the plan? It seems like there isn't one. We're just not talking about comfort here; we're talking about safety, about the ability to support our communities and grow our economy.

This isn't just disappointing; it's concerning. How can we look forward, aim for a future where Manitoba thrives? If we're not willing to invest in very—in the very things that make that possible. These cuts just save money—they just don't save money, they cost us in more ways than one.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question we need to—or, Honourable Speaker, the question we need to ask ourselves, and the NDP needs to answer is, what kind of future are we building with a budget like this? It's time for some real talk about our priorities, and about making choices that actually reflect what Manitobans need.

You know, as critic for Natural Resources, I looked, and outside the budget line Natural Resources gets one mention in Budget 2024, on page 55. Zero mention of forestry. Zero mention of fisheries. Zero mention of wildlife. Zero mention of resource tourism. Zero mention of wetlands. Zero mention of peatlands. Zero mention of enforcement. Zero mention of conservation.

The NDP had six months to put together a credible budget and a credible plan for Manitobans' resources. They showed up on budget day empty-handed.

Okay, Families minister was in New York, playing fiddle with her department, while her department burns up in a scandal. Where has the NDP Natural Resource minister been? Who has he been meeting with?

Mr. Speaker, the NDP plan for education funding in the 2024—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Once again, it's Honourable Speaker. The member has corrected himself several times. It's time to get it right.

Mr. Wowchuk: Yes, Honourable Speaker, I thank you for that reminder and I apologize greatly. And I will make sure that I correct that in the future.

Honourable Speaker, the NDP's plan for education funding in the 2024 budget is concerning, to say the least. At the core of our societal values lies the belief that education should be accessible to all,

serving as a cornerstone for personal development and societal advancement, yet the measures introduced in budget present challenges to the fundamental principle.

The NDP has chosen to raise school taxes: 16, 7, 4 per cent, and the people of Manitoba are going to pay for that, while concurrently initiating the phasing out of the educational tax credits.

This pivot in policy introduces an additional financial strain on Manitoba families, contradicting the ideal of universally accessible education. For instance, the decision to increase school taxes directly impacts homeowners, making it more expensive for families to sustain their living expenses, let alone invest in education.

I had a member attend our—come to my office on Monday. He is a renter, and he said, MLA, he said, we know very, very well, he said, that I rent to low- and middle-income people. And he said, with this education property tax, I will not get my rebate. I have got to put my taxes up—I mean, my rents up anywhere from \$12 to \$15, and that's on the low and middle income. That is what this is doing.

It's—they go ahead and they say, oh, tell—you're giving money to the rich and all that. These are people who work all their lives to get a—to advance themselves, to build a dream home, and then this NDP government is turning around and taxing them to the hilt, anywhere from seven to a thousand dollars more.

* (15:50)

I wonder what all those constituencies in Winnipeg, how they're going to answer to those people that worked their lives to get their dream home, and then all of a sudden, they're going to see seven hundred, a thousand dollars more, and their MLAs will have to go to them and say, that's because you are rich; you are getting penalized by our government.

Anyway, the removal of certain education tax credit further exasperates this issue, diminishing the financial support once available to upset—or, offset educational costs.

Let's consider the tangible effects of these changes. The increase in school taxes is expected to raise the financial burden on the average Manitoba family by a significant margin. Though the exact percentage increase varies by the district, the trend is 'unnamistakenly' upward.

Simultaneously, the cessation of some education tax credits means that students and families who once relied on the support for educational expenses such as

textbooks and tuition fees will now face increased out-of-pocket costs. This raises a critical question about the equity of our education system. With these changes, we risk widening the accessibility gap, particularly affecting students from lower income families and those in remote or underserved communities. Education, ideally a tool for levelling societal disparities, may inadvertently become a privilege rather than universal, accessible right.

Mr.—or, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it prompts us to question—*[interjection]*—or, Honourable Speaker—I apologize for that. It prompts us to question the NDP's long-term vision for Manitoba education system.

How does this budget align with the goal of ensuring that every Manitoban, regardless of their financial background, has access to quality education? The decision to raise school taxes and phase out certain tax credits seems to contradict this objective, challenging the sustainability and fairness of their educational strategy. We've got to do better by Manitoba students. It's time for a budget that truly puts education within reach for every Manitoban.

When we talk about health care in this budget, there is something that doesn't quite sit right. Health care is just a service—or, isn't just a service; it's a lifeline. It's what keeps our communities—from our bustling cities to our quietest rural corners—strong and thriving. And the member from Keewatinook keeps on, you know, talking across the floor because all he's concerned about is a candy store. What—when I pore over the numbers and projections laid out by the NDP government, a nagging question echoes in my mind: Are we truly 'prioritizing' what matters most?

Now, I'm not one to shy away from the tough reality, Honourable Speaker, that managing a province purse strings is no small feat, but I can't help but notice a worrying trend in this budget. A significant chunk of our money is embarked for debt servicing. That's 10 cents on every dollar. Just think, when we started—when the NDP start running up a \$130-million debt-service charge, think what that could do in 134 communities in Manitoba. It's a tough—it's as though for every dollar we scrape together, a dime is whisked away before it can even think about improving our hospitals and clinics. I understand the need to balance books, but it strikes me odd that our health-care system seems to be left picking up the leftovers.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, let's look at the numbers for a moment. We're told there's an increase in health-care funding, and on paper that sounds promising. Yet, when you stack that up against 9 per cent of our

entire budget going towards debt servicing, it doesn't take a financial guru to see the imbalance.

This isn't just about dollars and cents. It's about those dollars—the dollars mean for the granny in Neepawa waiting on a hip replacement, or the young lad in Dauphin needing mental health support. With so much going to debt, I worry about the squeeze on services they rely on.

And, when it comes to long-term thinking about our health care, this budget feels a bit like a foggy morning in the Interlake. You know there's a road there, but you can't see where it's leading. It leaves me wondering if we're really putting our best foot forward for health care, or we're just treading water.

Our government was taking all the right action. Honourable Deputy Speaker, we got a lot of good things happening in my constituency. We got the McKay *[phonetic]* building that's going to be opening. There's going to be 37 health-care workers, 20 nurses every year. We've got the CT scan that's going to be announced in Swan River—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

It's getting pretty loud in here again. Even though the member is screaming, I can barely hear him, so let's tone it down a little.

Mr. Wowchuk: I just get quite excited about the things that our government did that members across the floor are going to try to take credit for, because there's a lot of good things happening: the CancerCare expansion in Russell, all those good things. You know, we're going to be—we'll be at those events.

But Manitoba knows who's responsible for making those things happen. And, when it comes to long-term thinking about health care, this budget, like I said, feels like a foggy morning.

So, Mr. Speaker, I find myself asking, does this budget reflect a true commitment—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Honourable Speaker. Maybe the member needs to practise a little more.

Mr. Wowchuk: Okay.

Or are we seeing a different set—Honourable Speaker—priorities peek through where managing the present overshadows planning for a healthier future.

It's a conversation we need to have, not just as politicians, but as Manitobans who rely on these services every day. Let's make sure we're investing in the right places for the sake of every community across our province.

Honourable Speaker, when we sit down at the kitchen tables across Manitoba, from the bustling streets of Winnipeg to the quiet farmhouses dotting our rural landscape, there's a growing concern that echoes through these conversations: rising property taxes and housing crisis that seems to slip further from our grasp each day. And I have always believed that there will—there's a way.

But as I comb through the NDP's budget, I'm hard-pressed to find the will to tackle these pressing issues head-on. It's as though we're trying to navigate through a storm without a compass, knowing full well our folks are counting on us to steer the ship safely.

Honourable Speaker, let's talk about facts and figures. Across the board, we're seeing property taxes climb, pinching pennies from families already stretched thin. It's like asking someone to run a marathon, then handing them a backpack filled with rocks just as they catch their stride.

Where are the concrete measures to make homes more affordable, to ensure the dream of owning a home isn't just that, a dream, for too many Manitobans? This just isn't about numbers on a page, Honourable Speaker; it's about the young couple in Brandon, wondering if they'll ever afford a place to call their own. Or the single parent in Thompson, choosing between rent and groceries. When property taxes rise without a clear plan to enhance housing affordability, we're not just crunching numbers; we're making life tougher for real people.

So here's a million-dollar question for the NDP: How do we square these tax policies with the commitment to social justice we all hold dear? It's one thing to talk about standing up for the little guy, but it's another to walk the walk.

If we're serious about building Manitoba where everyone has a fair shot, we need to rethink.

And I'm just in conclusion here. Honourable Speaker, tasked with steering Manitoba in the right direction, we find ourselves at a crossroads with the NDP budget.

* (16:00)

It's more than a collection of numbers. It's a clear sign that we need to question where they're leading us.

Are we going to let this budget, with its short-sightedness and constraints, dictate our future? Or are we going to stand up for Manitobans—that's thriving, fair and forward-looking?

This isn't just about budget lines. It's about principles. It's about ensuring we're not settling for mediocrity—policies that barely scratch the face of what we can achieve. The budget, frankly, doesn't cut it. It's a road map to nowhere, failing to address the real challenges Manitobans face.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. It's time for us to demand more, to insist on a plan that truly serves our province and reflects the hard work and resilience of Manitobans. Let's not be dragged down by a vision that sells us short.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to begin with a note of gratitude. In addition to thanking you, I want to thank our Finance Minister for bringing in this amazing budget.

I also want to thank the civil service, folks who work tirelessly behind the scenes. These are the professionals, the hard-working people in the public administration who are going to deliver on the vision that our budget articulates, to build the Manitoba that we want for the future. One Manitoba, a place for everybody.

I feel a ton of gratitude to be able to come to work each and every day beside these hard-working people. To be able to advance a common interest, which is the public good.

And I also, importantly, want to thank you, the people of Manitoba, for all the conversations, for all of the cries for help and for all of the dreams of the future that we've engaged in with substantive conversations over the past number of years.

I can say with true sincerity that this budget document is informed directly by you, the people of Manitoba, and it is a product of those late nights, early mornings and countless kilometres that our team travelled across this great province.

And everything we heard from Manitobans, there was a common thread. There was a desire for change, a desire for something different. Of course, there was a frustration with the years of the cuts and the closures and the government that didn't listen to those folks who wanted better from their public administration.

But the chaos of the previous administration was not the only thing that drove people for this desire for change. It was the conduct in the recent election

campaign, too. Manitobans were invited by another political party to turn away from one another, to focus on the things that divide us. And, I am so profoundly proud of the people of Manitoba for rejecting that, and for, instead—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: And instead, embracing a vision that we can come together. That we don't have to agree on everything. That we don't all have to be alike in order for us to do the big things together.

Was a great leader, spent time in southern Manitoba more than 100 years ago, Tatanka Iyotake, Sitting Bull. And he said, in order for us to live together, it's not necessary for eagles to be crows. And there's profound wisdom to that. But, on the most simple level, I'm very proud that we get to tell our kids that Manitobans are not distracted by wedge politics, and Manitobans have the intelligence, the wisdom and the spirit to stand together and to say, we want strong health care and a more affordable economy.

And so I try to encourage everyone on our team to talk about humility, because what else can you respond to when the people of this great province task you with such an enormous responsibility, that is, to serve the public. What else can you respond with, other than to say, I will humble myself before this gargantuan task and devote every single waking hour to deliver on this mission.

And, of course, there's some time for fun along the way. And I'm so proud to be surrounded by such a happy, smiling team of joyful warriors who are leaning in to fixing health care and making a better economy and more opportunity for all of our kids.

And this budget is a road map for the first full fiscal year of our administration to be able to make good on our election commitments. I invite Manitobans to look at our platform document that we campaigned on last year and to look at the budget document that our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) tabled this year. You are going to see so many of the things that we talked about and designed in conjunction with you, articulated in the pages of these documents.

First and foremost, health care. We know that fixing the health-care crisis in our province requires resetting the relationship with staff, but also, importantly, resetting the culture in government.

And so that's what we have done under the leadership of our Minister of Health, and I'm so happy that these budget pages do exactly that, with 1 billion new

dollars for the health-care system. That billion-dollar investment in the front lines is going to do just that. It's going straight to the front lines.

And where our team is willing to work with our partnerships in municipal governments, Indigenous governments and the federal government, our commitment to you is to always—to return the results of those efforts to where they actually make a difference, which is at the bedside, at the community level and in the schools right across our province. So \$1 billion in new federal transfer payments equals \$1 billion more invested at the bedside.

And so we know that the task of reforming health care requires us to invest in staffing: 1,000 new health-care workers. It's a tall order. It's going to take significant work, but our team knows that you, the people of Manitoba, deserve nothing less than the best. Now, the challenges that we see in our health-care system are not going to be solved overnight. But hiring 100 new doctors, 90 new paramedics, 210 new nurses and 600 health-care aides this year, it's a good start.

And when we spread those resources across the province, of course, it's not going to miraculously repair the damage caused by the cuts and chaos and pandemic and all of the other challenges that folks on the front line have had to endure. But I'll tell you what: it's a start, and nobody can undermine that.

And so people across Manitoba are going to start to see the difference behind these investments this year. They're going to see the difference in south Winnipeg; they're going to see it downtown; they're going to see it in the North; they're going to see it in the Westman, the Pembina Valley, the Interlake, Eastman, everywhere across Manitoba.

And not just better health care, but how about better health cards? No longer are Manitobans going to have to carry around the ripped-up, torn, frayed piece of paper—was printed on a dot matrix printer that I'm sure is really difficult to procure the ribbons to replenish. And so new plastic health cards are an important government service improvement that our team is proud to bring forward, but it's symbolic of the no-nonsense approach to making life better to you that we're bringing forward in the health-care system each and every day.

We're doing the careful work of ensuring that there's the staff and resources necessary to sustain a bunch of health-care facilities currently in progress.

But we're also making targeted investments to bring a new emergency room to the Victoria General Hospital.

* (16:10)

We know that this will serve the members across south Winnipeg, but also neighbouring communities, like Niverville and Lorette. We also are bringing a new emergency room to the Interlake, to repair the facilities at the Eriksdale health centre.

We're connecting Manitobans with care in other situations too, with new minor injury and illness clinics. Of course, there'll be some here in Winnipeg, but I was very proud that our team announced the first one in the province is going to Brandon.

It's pretty cool to spend time in the city and to hear folks at Coffee Culture, folks in uniform, folks out for the morning cup of joe, folks who are visiting friends say, you know what? This clinic is going to make a real difference in our community. And so we're proud to make those investments.

When it comes to seniors and elders, we know that you deserve the best. You are the generation that gave us the quality of life and this province that we so cherish. And now that you require health-care services, we're going to be there to ensure that they're there for you. System-wide, province-wide, but also targeted in local areas. And that's why we were so happy to announce that our government is going to build a new personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet.

The pompoms were out when we announced that project, and it was great to see members opposite attend this good news announcement as well.

But really, every commitment in health care starts with staffing; 1,000 new health-care workers. How do you do that? Well, you do it through common sense steps like restoring the rural doctor recruitment fund. It's inexplicable why this thing was ever cut, but it made sense for us to restore this so that local communities who want a doctor in their hometown will have a provincial government that matches their commitment and matches their recruitment dollars.

Along the way, we're investing in training. Large training facilities. For the first time ever, there's going to be doctor training seats in Brandon. We're expanding in local communities, like Neepawa and Virden. But importantly, along the way, we are retaining the staff who are working on the front lines now. It's about changing the culture in health care. It's about sending a message that you have a government that supports you, and that, while we may need some time to be able

to fully implement the course of action that we're articulating the early steps of in Budget 2024, that our message to those on the front lines is clear: we value you, we respect you, help is coming and let's work together to fix health care in Manitoba.

Now, over the last seven years, we've heard from Manitobans who've been struggling when it comes to the economy. Inflation at record highs over the past two years, and to this very day, interest rates higher than people my generation or younger can ever remember. Beyond that, a former government that took steps seemingly to go out of their way to make life more expensive.

And so we're different. Our government is acting right away to deliver you help in the ways that you appreciate, and the ways that you can see. And that's why I will never apologize for the fact that our government's first course of action was to cut the provincial fuel tax to zero to help you and your family get by.

We could quote the economic experts who explain how this lowered inflation in our jurisdiction. I could talk about the federal party leaders who have come here and asked questions about how could we replicate the economic success of this measure at other levels.

But the most important story to me is one that I heard at the hockey rink, at the Century Arena in south Winnipeg. Another hockey parent came up to me after the game and said, you know what? On the way to the game tonight, we filled up the truck and I was able to buy my kids dinner with the money that we saved.

That's what politics is about; making a difference for people, everybody in the province. We're going to help low-income Manitobans, we're going to help young people in the province, we're going to lift the gargantuan boulder up the hill that is reforming the child-welfare system.

But along the way, every single day, we're going to serve you, the people of Manitoba, wherever you live in the ways that matter to you. So we're extending the fuel tax holiday by three more months.

And I'm very proud of the difference that this makes for the working class, the blue collar, the person who takes a risk, puts their last name on a truck and goes out into the economy to create a better tomorrow for themselves, their family, their kids and the people who work for them. That's what this province is all about.

We also know that home ownership is absolutely integral to building wealth. Where many of us came

up in an environment where we inherited intergenerational trauma, our government has a vision of giving Manitobans the tools so that they can build intergenerational wealth.

One of the key steps is a \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit. This is the progressive measure that is going to help you. It's going to help ensure that so many Manitobans are so far better off than they ever were under the previous government's cheques-for-billionaires plan.

Now we also know that Manitobans are going to benefit; 100 per cent of Manitobans, in fact, are going to be better off by having a provincial government that invests in health care and education, and that's what this plan is all about.

And while I recognize that the members opposite are now waking from the slumber of the shame that was their recent election campaign to heckle, I will invite Manitobans watching to pull out the old cheque stubs that you got from the PCs and compare it to the \$1,500 tax credit that we're bringing in to help you. You're going to do better off under our plan.

And in our conversations with Manitobans, we've heard about the need to do better for the people in our province. One of the things that I've heard from folks who live in the core areas of Brandon, Thompson, Winnipeg and so many other communities is the same thing that I've heard from the business leaders, whether the headquarters of the companies they own are here in the city or in Steinbach or in other parts of the province.

They're asking us to do better by chronic homelessness. They're asking us to address the overdose deaths and the addictions crisis that we see evidence of in far too many of our communities, and in a heartbreaking way; far too many of our families. And folks from these walks of life are asking for us to make communities safer across this great province. I'm very proud to say that this budget delivers in all of these areas, in the areas that matter most to the people of Manitoba.

It includes the steps to build more social housing, a \$70-million capital investment as part of \$116 million to get people out of tents and bus shacks and into hotel rooms and social housing, and to get people in social housing into rental units and people in rental units into their own homes. There is a path to success there, but it's going to require the wrap-around services to ensure that when somebody takes a step forward, that life's intervening events don't force him to take a step back out into the cold and out onto the street.

And so that's why our funds invested into this budget will see the beginning of the work on a supervised consumption site as well as more detox beds to help those Manitobans who are ready to leave addictions behind.

* (16:20)

And at the same time, we know that in addition to being tough on the causes of crime, we have to be tough on crime itself.

And so this government, this new budget, brings forward the resources to crack down on those who are trying to bring toxic drugs into our communities. If you are trying to make money off of human suffering, our government is going to hold you accountable. Not only are there investments for law enforcement—not only are there new resources for law enforcement, there are new tools for law enforcement to build the cases, to put people away who are putting people in danger in our communities across this great province.

One of the things that I am most proud of is one of the areas where we're most clearly different from the members opposite. You can call me a wild man, heckle whatever you want, but I will say every single day of my political career that when a kid is hungry, we should give them some food.

And I may have seen more than some and lived to tell the tale more than most, but you know what? I've made the observation over the course of my life that so many of the people that we see getting into trouble during their teenage and adult years are the kids who were roving the streets hungry when they were young.

And we have a chance to reach them at the Boys and Girls Club. We have a chance to reach them at the community centre. And those are places that put out the food and put out the resources to build the relationships and offer the young people a positive path, and we have the chance to do that in our public school system. And we have so many great educators and educational assistants and school leaders and community volunteers in schools right across this great province who are doing the important work of extending that path towards positivity for young people from every walk of life.

But this investment in young people—that is an investment in community safety, that is an investment in our economy, that is an investment in our future—is not something that can only be left to volunteers and to charity. This is the crucial role of government: to step in and to say when young kids are going hungry, we're going to step up and ensure that they have the

resources to eat, to learn and to be successful for years to come.

So this budget has the money for a universal school nutrition program so more kids can have a pathway to post-secondary instead of falling into a pipeline to prison. In this budget, we're charting a path forward. It's a path forward that's built on compassion, it's built on listening to the evidence but, most importantly, it's built on listening to you, the people of Manitoba.

This document reflects the opportunities, the challenges, the thoughts, the hopes, the dreams of so many Manitobans that we've had the great privilege of being able to talk to. This is a document that has something for everyone in our province.

And while the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and every member of our team, along with the public service and everybody who's laid their hands on this document, has invested in it so much, I also just want to point out that there's a lot of really important numbers in this document: 1,500 for the \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit; 1,000 for the 1,000 new health-care workers; 14 for the 14 cents a litre that you'll save; four for the four years to balance the budget; two for the two new emergency rooms.

But the most important number in this budget is one, and that's because this document is the road map for us to say to the people of Manitoba that we have one future, we are one people and we are one province. So the most important number in this document is one, because we are one Manitoba.

The Speaker: The question before the House is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance.

Do members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

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

regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) introducing measures that were not raised during the recent election campaign just six months ago; and

- (b) dividing Manitobans into winners and losers through taxation, thereby creating two Manitobas; and
- (c) neglecting the critical area of investment such as economic growth; urgent medical capacity; the construction of new educational and child-care infrastructure as well as roads, highways, bridges, waterways and other infrastructure; environmental conservation and protection; and public safety; and
- (d) inadequately addressing the current cost-of-living crisis, the rising provincial debt load, and effect of increased interest costs; and
- (e) not fully accounting for all the costs of government decision-making and spending since October 3, 2023; and
- (f) violating the trust of Manitobans—have placed in this new provincial government for all of the above reasons.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it. I declare the amendment lost.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): On division.

The Speaker: On division. The motion is lost on division.

* * *

The Speaker: So now the question before the House is the motion of the honourable Minister of Finance, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the Ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Recorded vote, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: A recording—a recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Altomare, Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Lamoureux, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Piwniuk, Schuler, Stefanson, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Ayes 32, Nays 22.

* (16:30)

The Speaker: The motion is accordingly passed.

* * *

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, can you canvass the House to see if it's will to call it 5 p.m.?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? [*Agreed*]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

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<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>