

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Fifth Report

Mr. Ian Wishart (Vice-Chairperson): I wish to present the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Fifth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 8)** – *The Pension Benefits Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension*
- **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*

- **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mr. FIELDING*
- *Hon. Mrs. GUILLEMARD*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. REYES (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. WASYLIW*
- *Mr. WISHART*

Your Committee elected Mr. WISHART as the Vice-Chairperson.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- *Mr. LAMONT*

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 12, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following 10 presentations on Bill (No. 8) – The Pension Benefits Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension:

*Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
Romeo Ignacio, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1505
Michelle Gawronsky, President, Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
Don Mackinnon, Private citizen
Martin McInnes, Co-operative Superannuation Society Pension Plan
Robert Moroz, Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals
Jeff Traeger, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 832
Mike Sutherland, Manitoba Nurses Union
Matt McLean, Canadian Union of Public Employees
Paul McKie, Manitoba/Saskatchewan Area Director, Unifor*

Your Committee heard the following six presentations on **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*:

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
 Romeo Ignacio, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1505
 Michelle Gawronsky, President, Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
 Robert Moroz, Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals
 Mike Sutherland, Manitoba Nurses Union
 Stephen Terichow Parrott, Canadian Union of Public Employees

Your Committee heard the following seven presentations on **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*:

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
 Romeo Ignacio, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1505
 Michelle Gawronsky, President, Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
 Curt Martel, Private citizen
 Robert Moroz, Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals
 Mike Sutherland, Manitoba Nurses Union
 Phil Kraychuk, Private citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 8)** – *The Pension Benefits Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension*:

Margaret Myles, Private citizen

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 8)** – *The Pension Benefits Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Wishart: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Fourth Report

Mr. James Teitsma (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and Accountability)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé (gouvernance et obligation redevictionnelle au sein du système de santé)*
- **Bill (No. 56)** – *The Smoking and Vapour Products Control Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation de l'usage du tabac et du cannabis et des produits servant à vapoter*
- **Bill (No. 67)** – *The Public Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique*

Committee Membership

- MLA ASAGWARA
- Hon. Ms. GORDON
- Mr. GUENTER
- Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)
- Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON
- Mr. TEITSMA (Chairperson)

Your Committee elected Mr. GUENTER as the Vice-Chairperson.

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 12, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- Hon. Mr. GERRARD

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following 16 presentations on **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and Accountability)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé (gouvernance et obligation redditionnelle au sein du système de santé)*:

Darlene Jackson, Manitoba Nurses Union
 Brianne Goertzen, Manitoba Health Coalition
 Michelle Gawronsky, Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
 Cory Baillie, Doctors Manitoba
 Sharon Nield, Private Citizen
 Leah Wiebe, Private Citizen
 Lori Amedick, Private Citizen
 Colin Mehmel, Private Citizen
 Ashley Rawluk, Private Citizen
 Jen Dyck, Private Citizen
 Elizabeth Dyer, Private Citizen
 Ashley McKague, Private Citizen
 Ken MacDonald, Private Citizen
 Liz Miller, Private Citizen
 Trish Rawsthorne, Private Citizen
 Irene Sheldon, Private Citizen

Your Committee heard the following five presentations on **Bill (No. 56)** – *The Smoking and Vapour Products Control Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation de l'usage du tabac et du cannabis et des produits servant àvapoter*:

Norman Rosenbaum, Private Citizen
 Katherine Legrange, Treaty One Nation
 Debra Smith, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
 Marc Lafond, Operating Engineers Local 987
 Arlen Dumas, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **(No. 67)** – *The Public Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique*:

Darlene Jackson, Manitoba Nurses Union
 Shannon McAteer, Canadian Union of Public Employees

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 56)** – *The Smoking and Vapour Products Control Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation de l'usage du tabac et du cannabis et des produits servant àvapoter*:

Chief Dino Flett, Island Lake First Nation

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and Accountability)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé (gouvernance et obligation redditionnelle au sein du système de santé)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 56)** – *The Smoking and Vapour Products Control Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation de l'usage du tabac et du cannabis et des produits servant àvapoter*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 67)** – *The Public Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Aunt Sally's Farm

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to talk about the reopening of Aunt Sally's Farm at Assiniboine Park Zoo. It is an exhibit worth visiting to reminisce or to enjoy for the first time.

The original Aunt Sally's Farm opened in 1959. It was built on the site of the zoo's original aviaries and featured a large picnic hut, a wishing well, a miller's wheel and a central lawn area. The animal enclosures were home to a variety of small animals that children could visit up close and interact with. The farm hosted thousands of visitors of all ages over its years of operation before it was closed in 1986 to make way for the construction of the Kinsmen Discovery Centre.

I would be remiss to not mention the great woman for whom Aunt Sally's Farm was named after and inspired by. Sally Warnock came to Winnipeg in 1911 from Ireland. Her life and diverse career in Winnipeg is well documented and recognized. Over her lifetime of tireless dedication to domestic and wild animals, she established herself as the city's best known animal rights campaigner. Her many accomplishments include being one of the founding members of the Winnipeg branch of the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, now the Winnipeg Humane Society.

The new Aunt Sally's Farm reflects the commitment to animal care and welfare that Sally Warnock stood so passionately for. It features a barn and a barnyard with a menagerie of animals including goats, llamas, donkeys, pot-bellied pigs and chickens. Parallel playgrounds offer the opportunity for children and adults to explore and interact with the animals at the farm. And if you're planning to visit, be sure to bring some pocket change; the original wishing well is open for business.

I encourage everyone to rediscover or discover this historic Winnipeg attraction that celebrates learning and creates lifelong memories for visitors.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Vaisakhi Festival

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today, many cultural communities in

Manitoba and around the world are celebrating Vaisakhi. The Vaisakhi festival has marked the spring harvest in India for centuries.

Vaisakhi is the start of the Punjabi New Year and also has religious significance as the day—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —when Sikhism was born. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh chose the festival as the moment to establish the Khalsa, the collective name given to Sikhs who have been baptized. At the festival that year, the guru baptized the first members of the Khalsa and they became known as the Panj Piare or the Beloved Five.

Vaisakhi is a time of vibrant colours, dance and community. To celebrate, many Sikhs will visit gurdwaras and enjoy special processions through the streets.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has changed that for the second year in the row. But still, Khalsa Aid is finding ways to celebrate by serving free food to staff at Seven Oaks, Grace, St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre campuses.

So, to all who celebrate, happy Vaisakhi, and I wish you all the best in the New Year.

At this time, take a moment to wish all those in Manitoba's Islamic community a blessed month of Ramadan. We know that this is a very holy time for those who practise the Islamic faith and we have many members of the umma right here in our great province.

Over the years, I have been privileged to witness the practice of Ramadan both in Muslim-majority countries and right here at home, in some cases being invited to break the fast in the evening with folks such as we did one memorable evening at Bilal mosque.

I also want to congratulate my friend Nilufer Rahman on her upcoming film, *The Year We Fasted Alone*.

So, to everyone who is observing, I wish you Ramadan Kareem, Ramadan Mubarak. May you have a good and meaningful fast this year.

Bryan Salvador and Ogo Okwumabua

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): Madam Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the contributions of Southland Park constituent Bryan Salvador and his business partner Ogo Okwumabua. Bryan and Ogo own Zueike, an

athleisure apparel brand that creates custom-branded clothing for companies and organizations.

Recently, Madam Speaker, Bryan and Ogo partnered with Councillor Markus Chambers to design and print more than 3,500 T-shirts. The Black History Month Know Their Names T-shirt campaign listed the names of pioneering Black inventors who made major contributions that impacted Canada and the world. The T-shirts were distributed to high school students to raise awareness of the contributions made by Black inventors in Canada and North America.

Through a partnership with Black History Manitoba Celebration Committee, these young entrepreneurs also developed a line for Black History Month, which culminated in the creation of the B. History fund. The fund provides scholarships for youth pursuing a wide range of passions and careers.

* (13:40)

In the past year, Bryan and Ogo also teamed up with Winnipeg Blue Bomber Andrew Harris to launch the Check In Challenge. The challenge asked participants to reach out to anyone in their life who may be feeling isolated. The goal of the challenge was to reduce the stigma of talking about mental health and encourage building connections and support for anyone facing mental health challenges during the pandemic.

Last winter, they also partnered with Don Amero and Main Street Project to donate their custom toques to help the Main Street Project provide warm clothing for its clients.

Please join me in thanking and acknowledging Bryan and Ogo for their significant efforts to build community and make positive change.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Catalytic Converter Thefts

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): The North America-wide spike in catalytic converter thefts have hit Winnipeg and promises to get worse as the Province sits idly by.

Organized groups of criminals are climbing under parked vehicles, sometimes in broad daylight, and cutting out the catalytic converter and selling it to scrap metal dealers for cash, no records kept.

Catalytic converters are a part of your vehicle's exhaust system that converts pollutants to less toxic material. The spike in thefts is due to the huge increases in the price of the exotic metals in them.

Precious metals like rhodium are valued at \$19,000 an ounce; palladium \$2,200 an ounce; platinum \$1,300 an ounce. It's no wonder scrap metal dealers will pay good money for a catalytic converter. In fact, catalytic converters are priced to the vehicle and may be bought by scrap metal dealers for as low as \$120 and as much as \$800 for some larger ones.

These thefts are costing Manitobans about \$2,000 for each catalytic converter replacement. MPI charges a betterment fee for new replacements so insurance doesn't cover the full cost of the replacement.

The needed rule changes aren't complicated. Sellers should have to provide government-issued photo ID and dealers would be required to record and retain this information for two years in case police need it and record details of the transaction. Scrap metal dealers would report to police all transactions involving commonly stolen metals, including copper and items such as catalytic converters. All construction sites face this, these risks. Payment would have to be made using traceable currency.

BC has long-standing scrap metal legislation along these lines, and Alberta passed new scrap metal laws last year. The question is, when is the Province going to take action to prevent these thefts?

Budget 2021

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, there was a lot missing from the government's budget last week, and I'd like to share what it is I'm hearing from my constituents as far as what this government's priorities should be.

Throughout the pandemic it has become evident that we need more money invested in our mental health resources. More attention needs to be brought to a pharmacare program, ensuring Manitobans are not having to choose between shelter, food and prescribed medications. And our nurses need a contract, as they have been without one for over four years.

This budget is a disgrace on early childhood education and our education system. Our K-to-12 teachers and school administrators have gone above and beyond to do an incredible job of adapting to keep students safe and educated, and we are being told time and time again that this government has left schools high and dry. And just last week, Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said he thinks it's right for teachers to have to invest their own money. This is ridiculous.

And, furthermore, post-secondary students are being affected too. Madam Speaker, there should be a limit on tuition increases, and the Province should consult with students. We have an opportunity to attract more students and future residents by investing in post-secondary institutions and making them more attractive rather than deter students from attending.

It is also clear, Madam Speaker, that senior care in our province is not a priority to this government, as it was not reflected in the budget last week. There needs to be investments for increasing staff as well as home care and home repair to ensure seniors are receiving proper care and are empowered to stay in their communities.

Madam Speaker, we are not impressed that this provincial government won't use our rainy day fund when there's a literal pandemic happening. And this Pallister government has caused Manitobans to lose out on tens of millions of dollars because of their inability to work with the federal government—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member the continue with her statement?

An Honourable Member: Absolutely not, no.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

ORAL QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Vaccination Rate and Clinic Hours

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): What's the plan to expedite the vaccine rollout?

Madam Speaker, you wouldn't expect that question, after more than a year in the pandemic, to send every PC MLA running for the hills, but just yesterday it did. You know, it's not fair to the hundreds of thousands of Manitobans who are still waiting to get a vaccine, especially yesterday when many showed up to a vaccine clinic that wasn't open, only to try and be rebooked when it was closed. Now, would the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) bring that concern of his constituents forward? No, no answers there.

All Manitobans are seeing is a Premier whose No. 1 priority is pretty much everything except the vaccine rollout, which is shameful when we look at the prospect and coming reality of a third wave.

So I'll ask the Premier: Why isn't he hiring the staff that he needs to ramp up the vaccine rollout and keep clinics open on Sundays?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): What is sad, Madam Speaker, is the member's continued attempt to wilfully misrepresent the work of a vaccine team that has been working diligently to get vaccines in arms.

Madam Speaker, the reality, of course, is quite different from what the member portrays. We have, currently, almost 300,000 doses of vaccine administered in this historic effort. We've partnered with our First Nations partners very effectively and in a genuine spirit of reconciliation. We're going to continue to do that, because getting vaccines in arms is what it's about.

I would also mention to the member that we have about a third as many cases, currently, week over week, as several other provinces here, and that's a tribute to the people of Manitoba for following the health orders he so blatantly disregards. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we are set to receive twice as many doses this week as we are on track to administer. The result of the infrastructure that the Premier has failed to put in place is that there will continue to be a growing backlog of doses sitting in freezers right across the province.

Now, of course, the Premier promised that we would be able to administer 20,000 doses a day on March 24th. There are more than 100,000 doses sitting in fridges, and yet the vaccine rollout hasn't come anywhere close to those stated goals.

We want this campaign to succeed, as does everyone in the province, but can the Premier please tell us, as an interim step: When will the vaccine campaign be able to deliver at least, say, 10,000 doses a day?

Mr. Pallister: As an interim step, the member might follow the health orders, Madam Speaker. That would be a good interim step.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, we'll run out of vaccines in about five days if we don't get more from the federal government. We've had delays in delivery repeatedly from AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines.

The vaccine team is ramped up significantly, and they continue to, and as those vaccines get here, they get put in arms. So, the fact remains, Madam Speaker, that the member is not in touch with the actual progress of the vaccine team, nor does it appear he wants to be.

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

COVID-19 Third Wave Projected Case Numbers

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Except, of course, when they don't, Madam Speaker; and except, of course, not on Sundays; and except, of course, not on days when the Premier's not up to thinking or talking about the vaccine rollout.

So, of course, if we put all those provisos, and we put all those asterisks in place and you're a member of the PC caucus, then maybe you would think that things are going well. However, for everyone else in the province, we want to see the vaccine rollout expedited, particularly when we have public health experts like Dr. Roussin saying that a third wave has now arrived.

* (13:50)

Given the fact that this government is floating continued restrictions at a time that their vaccine rollout is failing, Manitobans want to have a clear picture of what to expect.

Can the Premier today commit to releasing the modelling of projected case counts in the coming weeks for Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I think perhaps the member's confusion, wilful as it may be, is understandable, Madam Speaker, because it is a challenge to roll out vaccines across this province—and any, but more so with this one, I think, in some respects, because of the number of isolated northern communities we're trying to get those vaccines out to. So if the member has a suggestion on which reserve he'd like us to not ship vaccines to, I'd like him to come forward with that suggestion. Otherwise, he should expect that it will take a few days to get the vaccines rolled out.

He would also—if he'd like to listen—he might like to understand that the real-time data entry lags other provinces, that we only enter our data on northern Indigenous communities once a week so we can be sure that the vaccines are actually getting in arms.

Madam Speaker, nobody else does that. Nobody from Quebec to the west coast does that. They could read The Globe and Mail today if they like, and they would—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—find that we have the most transparent reporting in the country. BC's lags ours, Alberta lags ours, Saskatchewan lags ours, Ontario lags ours and Quebec lags ours.

We're being transparent and straightforward. I wish the member would do the same for a change.

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

Child-Care System Wait-List Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yes, you know, predictable as the Premier is, I did expect him to want to talk about transparency, so we are going to table a document that shows the extent to which his child-care plan is failing families across Manitoba.

Nearly 30 per cent—that's how much the child-care wait-list has increased since the Premier took office. If the Premier inspects the document, he'll see that there are now nearly—no, there are actually more than 18,000 families that are currently on the child-care waiting list today.

If you ask any parent looking for child care, they'll tell you that it's a real challenge and that they are waiting far too long.

Why does the Premier continue to make child care less affordable and less accessible for families in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We inherited the longest lines in Canada, we inherited a system that was floundering because it was ideologically—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—based, Madam Speaker.

The NDP didn't want to create child-care spaces, they just wanted bigger government and more red tape, and they wanted to keep private sector people from involving themselves in providing spaces. And that's why we inherited the mess we did, which we're clearing up. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, 2,600 new spaces. I repeat for the members opposite: 2,600 new spaces. The second lowest parent fees in Canada, and thanks to the work of our—diligent work of our Finance Minister and our minister of Child and Family Services, the fees won't go up for three years at least.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, I realize the Premier doesn't have the courage to face the facts, even when you put them right in front of him right in the middle of question period, so I brought another copy to table so that we could table it again, Madam Speaker.

And, again, what the facts show is that the child-care waiting list has increased to more than 18,000 spaces in Manitoba. That's an increase of more than 3,000 families looking for child care since the Premier and since this Cabinet took—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —office.

We know that, instead of trying to help those families by allowing them to get space more quickly, instead of trying to make life more affordable, what did they do? Well, they actually doubled the fees for thousands of families just this year—during the pandemic—alone. Beyond that, Madam Speaker, what else do they do? They give more than \$600,000 to a private consultant to come up with a plan to privatize more spaces.

Why is the Premier content to see the wait-list grow to more than 18,000 families in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: We created more spaces than the NDP ever did, and we're doing it by working strategically and co-operatively within the public service and with the private sector, as well, Madam Speaker, getting better results.

The member speaks about courage, but he didn't have the courage to apologize for involving my family in a political debate. He sends—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: He doesn't have the courage to go to my house and organize a protest, so he sends the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) instead. He's a user of other people, Madam Speaker. He doesn't have the courage to attack a civil servant on his own—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —so he sends the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) to do it instead. He uses a little minion, a little mini-me replica instead of going himself because he doesn't have the courage to stand up, Madam Speaker, because he doesn't have the moral fibre to stand up.

Madam Speaker, when his former spouse talks about his assaults, he doesn't have the courage or temerity to stand up and say, she's right, I'm wrong. Instead, he sends the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), so that he can intimidate and harass the woman yet again. That's the amount of courage that man has.

We'll fix the child-care system they broke.

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

Mr. Kinew: That's quite the made-up list that the Premier has there, but when we look at the real list that is confronting Manitoba families, we see that the wait-list for child-care spaces has grown to more than 18,000.

We know that the past two ministers of Families have been failures, and it seems as though the new Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) is on the same course, because there are more than 3,000 further children who are waiting to get a child-care spot in Manitoba today than when that group took office.

So, again, what is their proposed solution for this? Well, it's to blame everyone else, except for them, in question period, then to turn around behind closed doors and give more than six hundred grand to a private consultant, while freezing the operating grants for the people who actually care for children right across Manitoba.

Will the Premier simply admit that this is a failure, that 18,000 families waiting for child-care spots is just wrong and that he will call an election so we can take office and fix this mess?

Mr. Pallister: First, accountability, Madam Speaker, and then power after, maybe.

The fact of the matter is the member has been running and hiding from his own record for a long time. He talks about courage but he doesn't demonstrate it. He steals from a co-worker at work, when he's making six figures, Madam Speaker, but he leaves it out of the book, leaves it right out of the book. Beats up a cab driver, hurling racial epithets at him, and then blames the cab driver.

Madam Speaker, he can't stand up. He can't defend his record. He couldn't then. He didn't defend it when he ran for office, because he ran away from it. He deliberately hid it from the people while running against honourable people who put their record out there honestly. So, he hides his record. He comes in here and talks about bravery but doesn't demonstrate it.

We're ready to be accountable. The member opposite's only ready to continue hiding, Madam Speaker.

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Appointment Booking System

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, Manitobans aren't satisfied with the Pallister government's vaccine rollout. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: They see that vaccines are sitting idle for too long before being put to use and that the rollout has been plagued with problems and delayed.

Earlier this year, health staff getting the vaccine were sent to the wrong location not once, but twice. And then there were long lines at supersites. Now we hear that Manitobans traveled to a clinic in Steinbach, only to be told their appointments had been cancelled.

Why has the minister allowed this to happen, and when will these ongoing problems finally be corrected?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite is just wrong.

And what I will say, Madam Speaker, is that yesterday we reached a milestone in our province, where more than 20 per cent of Manitobans have received the vaccination. Of course, we won't be satisfied until every eligible Manitoban is able to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Until then, of course, we will continue to address challenges.

I will remind the members opposite: we are in the middle of a pandemic. This—there's no songbook for this or playbook for this, Madam Speaker. What I will say is that there are challenges that do arise and, as those challenges arise, we will continue to address them, to ensure that we roll out the vaccine so that every Manitoban gets it who needs, wants and deserves it.

* (14:00)

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, Shirley Noel tells local media that she attended the Steinbach pop-up on Monday. She received three email confirmations of her appointment, yet when she arrived she found dozens of Manitobans who had come for their scheduled shots, only to be turned away.

The Province knew that these shots needed to be rescheduled, but far too many Manitobans simply weren't notified. The rollout at clinics and supersites continues to be plagued by these problems.

Why has the minister allowed this to happen again, and when will these problems get corrected?

Mrs. Stefanson: I really want to thank the Vaccine Implementation Task Force for all the work that they're doing to ensure that, each and every day, as challenges arise that we address them.

The important part of all of this is that we're getting vaccines into arms of Manitobans. We reached a milestone yesterday: more than 20 per cent of Manitobans have received a vaccination. That climbs each and every day in our province.

That's what want—Manitobans want to see, Madam Speaker, and the Vaccine Implementation Task Force is delivering that for Manitobans.

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

MLA Asagwara: The Pallister government doesn't have the sense of urgency that's needed to address this vaccine rollout. It's taking too long to get shots into arms, and the rollout has far too many problems.

The minister said just last week that things were going, and I quote, quite well. Manitobans certainly don't agree; Shirley Noel certainly does not agree, and neither do the many Manitobans who were not directly notified that their scheduled appointment had been cancelled.

After attending the closed clinic, Shirley Noel called to book another appointment and—oops, I did it again—was given incorrect information.

This needs to be corrected and it needs to be corrected today, Madam Speaker.

When will the problems finally be fixed?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those who are working diligently to ensure that all Manitobans get the vaccine, whether it's in our

supersites or our pop-ups or FIT teams, Madam Speaker, or through our Indigenous partners in the province. It's very important that we work diligently towards that. Of course, the Vaccine Implementation Task Force is doing just that.

Obviously, there are some challenges that we face. We're not perfect like the members opposite apparently are, Madam Speaker, but what I will say—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, need I say more, Madam Speaker. The arrogance of members opposite never ceases to amaze me.

KPMG's Review of Child-Care System Early-Learning and Child-Care Legislation

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): The wait-list for child care has grown under the Pallister government to more than 18,000. We're five years into this Conservative administration and the problem has only gotten worse, not better.

The Pallister's government proposal now is to turn child care into a commodity, like trading stocks or bonds. Their KPMG report says that government should act as a market steward in a system making it wide open for for-profit child care. No one who cares about child care wants this.

Why is the Pallister government putting profit before children?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): And yet we maintain the second lowest parent fees in the nation.

So, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the approach to managing wait-lists. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: Under the NDP, this is how they managed the wait-list: they kicked nearly 30 per cent of all the recipients wanting to get into housing off the wait-list because they couldn't find their tax returns. That's their approach to dealing with wait-lists.

They—*[interjection]*—they—I know that they want to heckle over me—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: They don't want to hear the truth. They don't want to hear what's factual. They don't want to hear about their record for managing wait-lists where they kicked people off the wait-list and created such a

bureaucratic nightmare that people couldn't actually get on the list.

Our government is ensuring that we've got an accessible, affordable child-care system for everyone who needs it.

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

Ms. Adams: Let's try this again.

The list has grown by thousands, more than 18,000. Bill 47 in—before this House intends to open the door wide open for for-public—for-profit child care. The KPMG report says the government should act as a market steward, putting public funds to private benefit. It all adds up to a system that is being built for profit, not for the benefit of children.

Why is this government again prioritizing profit motives before something as important as child care? Will they withdraw Bill 47 today, yes or no?

Ms. Squires: Yes, Madam Speaker, let's try this again.

Our government is investing \$185 million in the early-learning child-care sector this year alone, which is \$25 million more than the NDP ever spent on child care. We are also creating—in budget '21 alone, we're creating 541 new spaces. This is in addition to the 4,500 spaces that we've created since we formed government.

We know we have a long way to go. That is exactly why we're creating a pathway to creating more child-care spaces, making a more affordable sector in the province for all families who deserve child care in Manitoba.

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

Ms. Adams: That just isn't the case. The wait-list for affordable child care has gone up by thousands, not down, and Bill 47 and the KPMG recommendations will only make that worse.

What is proposed is a system open to for-profit child care, a recipe for declining quality, higher fees and worse for child care. That's experienced in other provinces and countries who are moving away from this system. But the government is only interested in what KPMG has to say, not the advice from leaders in child care.

Will the minister listen now and reject the KPMG report and withdraw Bill 47 today, yes or no?

Ms. Squires: I'd like take this opportunity to remind members opposite that Manitoba's for-profit system is only 5 per cent; 95 per cent is non-profit.

Let's compare that to British Columbia under an NDP government, where they have 50 per cent for-profit and 50 per cent non-profit. Let's look at the national average of 26 per cent of all child-care spaces in the country are under the for-profit model. Manitoba's is only 5 per cent under the for-profit model.

We're making sure that we build a sector that is—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —is flexible and responsive to all Manitobans and that it is affordable for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Education Modernization Act Request to Withdraw Bill 64

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Last week, I brought forward some concerns raised in an open letter from Manitoba parents to the minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) on Bill 64. In their responses to me, both the minister and the Premier failed to even acknowledge these parents' concerns, simply saying that they will push the bill forward no matter what.

It is exactly this type of attitude that is causing parents to fear that local voices, along with inclusion, diversity, will be lost in Bill 64.

So I ask again: Will the minister listen to Manitoba parents and withdraw this bill today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): Well, Madam Speaker, Manitoban parents are telling us they recognize the failings of the previous NDP government. Just last week, I came across a pretty stark graph from an independent consulting firm where they recognized and tracked the NDP results on math scores.

Madam Speaker, if Manitoba parents see this I know they'll be concerned. This is exactly why we're taking on the challenges. We want to improve Manitoba math scores in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I'll table this to show the stark results of the NDP.

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

Mr. Altomare: Thousands of Manitoba parents have openly opposed this bill in the strongest terms possible. Their concerns are important. They want to ensure that local voices are heard and that they are respected. They are concerned about a loss of inclusion, loss of diversity. They want the best for their children in their community.

* (14:10)

The minister and Premier's response amounts to change for the sake of change rather than a sober assessment of how they might truly accommodate local concerns of parents and community members.

I ask the minister again: Will he listen to these parents and withdraw Bill 64 today?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is we've been engaging Manitoba parents, stakeholders, educators for several years now. We're not going to stop listening to Manitobans. In fact, an announcement later today, we're going to continue to engage with Manitobans.

Manitobans have clearly said education needs some help, and we're prepared to do the heavy lifting to provide better outcomes for Manitoba students. NDP didn't take on the challenge; we're taking on that challenge.

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

Education System Nutrition Programs

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): This government has systematically avoided tackling the socio-economic issues in our education system. Instead, the Premier and his ministers want teachers to now pay out of pocket to meet student needs.

We know the links between child poverty and educational outcomes have been studied and confirmed many times. However, within Bill 64 this government fails to address child poverty in any meaningful way, despite multiple suggestions from parents, educators and community members.

Will the minister commit to a universal nutrition program so that all kids can learn on a full stomach today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): Well, Madam Speaker, we had 17 years with the NDP at the helm. We inherited the worst child-poverty situation in the country.

Madam Speaker, we have made considerable gains. We've taken 25 per cent of the kids out of the child poverty tax area, and we're making strides, and we're going to continue to make strides.

Madam Speaker, I wish the member opposite would actually read our report and—where it talks about dealing with child poverty and dealing with those other issues, dealing with curriculum, dealing with outcomes for kids. They wouldn't take on the challenge; we're taking on the challenge. It's about better outcomes for kids, and we're going to make that happen. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

**Advanced Education Administration Act
Request to Withdraw Bill 33**

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, in the past four years, tuition has increased roughly 18 per cent. Just since the pandemic alone, tuition has increased twice for some students, up to 7 per cent.

This year in the provincial budget, this government cut \$8.7 million from colleges and universities. Who's going to pay for that? Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, it's going to be students.

Will this minister explain to this House, but, more importantly, to students and their families, why he's underfunding universities and colleges and forcing students to pay more? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): We know here in Manitoba—we believe, on this side of the House—working with our post-secondary partners. That includes our post-secondary institutions, our students, our faculty members, all our partners, all across the whole board.

We, once again, Madam Speaker, are funding post-secondary institutions over \$1 billion of direct and indirect funding once again.

I wish this member would get on side and stop fear-mongering Manitoba students and taxpayers, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Moses: Bill 33 gives the minister full control over tuition, the ability to override funding decisions made by administration, faculty and student leadership. The reality is that this minister will continue to

cut college and university funding, force tuition up, while also giving him the power to block proposals and improvements that come out of student leadership.

The minister is—says he is proposing an amendment to this bill, but will he finally be clear

Will he allow students to set their own path, and will he withdraw Bill 33?

Mr. Ewasko: I thought this was going to be the first question, Madam Speaker. But that's good. The member's full of surprises today.

Bill 33, Madam Speaker, sets fees by student unions and associations are not included in Bill 33. We are bringing forward an amendment—sometime tonight, maybe next time the committee sits, because we've got a lot of interest in the committee. We've put it as government news releases. It's stated in letters, the Winnipeg Sun, the Free Press, the CBC, the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko:—Manitoban, Twitter, Facebook. I'm not sure what this member wants. Maybe carrier pigeons?

Madam Speaker, I'd be happy to speak to the member about the great literacy and comprehension programs we have in this province.

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

Mr. Moses: Now, the minister says he's going to table an amendment on Bill 33.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Moses: Says it, yes, he says it.

Madam Speaker, students know, faculty know that that's not enough. This government has shown this bill was not developed in good faith. The fact is that their student—the student outcry is what forced this minister to make an amendment.

It proves that he did not do proper consultation. And if he claimed there was proper consultation, it was entirely insufficient.

Bill 33 should be—it needs to be scrapped entirely, Madam Speaker, not just amended.

Will the minister withdraw Bill 33 today, sit down and do proper consultation with staff, students and faculty?

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, students in Manitoba are happy to have the third lowest tuition in all of Canada.

We have consulted with students. We have—we are listening to students. I would just hope that this member—I was hoping that he would turn his team's canoe in a positive direction, but in—as opposed to him following his leader's attention-seeking behaviour, Madam Speaker.

Stop fear-mongering students. Get on board.

I look forward to the debate on Bill 33 and the presentations tonight, Madam Speaker. I know that it is going to be a fulsome discussion tonight.

Thank you. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MPI Agreement with Auto Repair Dealers Request for Conciliator

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We're concerned that MPI is using threats, lies and bully tactics to force 232 Manitoba businesses in the collision industry to sign a money-losing contract.

In an unprecedented move, MPI cancelled its trade deal on March 15th, and since then have pursued a divide-and-conquer strategy to strong-arm independent Manitoba businesses into signing a money-losing deal. MPI has threatened to cut off payments, pull accreditation, deny access to critical software and they've been lying about collision shops signing on when only glass repair shops have.

The Automotive Trades Association and their partners want conciliation, but when I wrote the minister in support, the reply told me to keep working with MPI.

Now, I'd be happy to, but are Manitoba collision shops going to have to keep putting up with MPI's unethical bully tactics, or will the Premier and minister send it to conciliation?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, Madam Speaker, these negotiations between Crown corporations and their suppliers are difficult ones, and they're important to have. In the previous government's situation, they ventured in—and they continue to do it with the new leader—on one side or another of the table, don't respect the process.

It's not a process that's easy for anyone, but it's an important process and we respect it.

* (14:20)

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

Mr. Lamont: It looks to us like the PC government has been interfering politically with MPI to use it as a slush fund. But don't take my word for it, it's the Premier, his Cabinet and caucus who say they are the ones responsible for taking \$179 million from MPI in press releases, budgets and fiscal updates. We have to wonder whether MPI's sudden strong-arm, bully tactics are because collision shops are being expected to make up for the PCs using MPI as a piggy bank.

Now, aside from the threats, we've also heard that MPI is offering signing bonuses to shops to sign their lousy contracts, but only over the phone. It's certainly unethical.

Now, we know the Premier will deny it. The question is: Will he investigate it? Because we have already asked the Auditor General to do so.

Mr. Pallister: Well, I won't bother denying it, Madam Speaker, because it's just patently untrue and it's a rumour that's foolish and foolish to peddle it, I guess. And the member continues to peddle these kinds of foolish things.

All I can tell him is some MPI rebates on their rates have gone out to Manitobans to give them the benefit of more money on the kitchen table during COVID, millions of dollars. The NDP was fond of lowering rates just before elections, we lower them after. And MPI has made that decision out of fairness to its customers and it continues to operate effectively and efficiently.

And we're for preserving our Crown corporations, and we're also for respecting their ability to manage. If the member wants to propose something else, he should do so, but he should do it by way of something other than patently false assertions.

Early Learning and Child Care Release of KPMG Report

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Yesterday, this government released another KPMG report, and this time it's on child care. In the entire report, the words literacy, numeracy, hunger, disability, autism and special needs are not mentioned once, Madam Speaker.

We know what is needed, and it is not another report made by an international firm who is out of touch with Manitobans. ECE workers are underpaid and have massive turnover. Centres need stable supports, not freezes to their funding. And early

learning and child care should be a public service under the Department of Education.

Why is this government letting international accounting companies dictate the child-care needs for Manitoba families?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): First of all, Madam Speaker, the representative for Liberal-west fails to acknowledge the reality that the federal government itself frequently uses international firms of some repute to investigate things like, for example, the SNC-Lavalin scandal. They also bring in firms to investigate misspending or violations of ethics by the Trudeau government. They continue to use these firms, because they are reputable and credible firms, to get to the bottom of false information or misrepresentations and things like that.

On the issues of poverty, I would mention to the member and to other members for their benefit: the first rent bank in Manitoba, \$5.6 million; 11,000 fewer Manitoba children in poverty than when we came to government; 32,000 fewer Manitobans in poverty overall; and the fact is, boosted employment income assistance, boosted Rent Assist to record levels now—my friend Molly McCracken referenced that in a recent column, saying—praising us for the great supports that we offer—and 713 new affordable housing units.

Madam Speaker, we're addressing the needs of the most vulnerable while the Liberals and the NDP support those less vulnerable.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Just another reminder to members that, when referring to other members, it should be by their proper titles or constituency names.

Better Education Starts Today Government Strategy

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Our government continues its commitment to engage Manitobans on the direction of our great province. We know the K-to-12 review was an extensive undertaking that highlighted the gaps in our education system. Manitoba spends among the most in education, but our students are last or close to last in literacy, math and science.

Can the minister update us on Manitobans' Better Education Starts Today strategy?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): I appreciate the great question from the member.

We recently released our Better Education Starts Today strategy. We are now in the next phase, we are—where we are continuing to engage with Manitobans. We launched our teacher idea fund and are tapping on—innovative ideas from teachers and staff on ways to improve education.

On Friday, we invited students of diverse backgrounds to apply for the student advisory council. We want to hear directly from students about their experiences and insights to ensure a vibrant future for Manitobans' education system, and today at 3:30, you're going to hear more great news.

Madam Speaker, by continuing to listen and engage with Manitobans, we will have the most improved education system in Canada.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Just on a point of order. I just want to note in the House that it is unparliamentary to use the name of an individual member in the House as an order of—a pun.

When the federal Liberals used to do this to the then-former opposition leader, Andrew Scheer, they would say things like, you know, the sheer arrogance of the member, et cetera, et cetera. And I do want to point out, Madam Speaker, that the federal Speaker would then call those members out and indicate that that was unparliamentary.

And I do want to just put it on the record that the minister, in answering some questions, did say the NDP leader's name and used it in a disrespectful, pun-like manner, Madam Speaker.

I would ask him to stop and also to apologize for said.

Miigwech.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I think if you review Hansard, the member was speaking about a common good, outdoor good that is used. And I think he referenced it in the—*[interjection]*

Well, I'm not sure what they don't like about the outdoors, but if you actually check, Madam Speaker, it is a common—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, the member shouldn't raise a point of order and then not actually want to hear anything about the point of order, Madam Speaker.

It was a common reference to something that is used in the outdoors, Madam Speaker, and it was used in the way that that particular item is used in the outdoors.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I'm going to just, you know, issue some cautions. We are—I'm finding that there is—there are times when people are trying to maybe be a little bit cute by half, and I don't think we want to go down that road. I didn't quite hear all of what had been said, but I think I've heard it come across in two different ways, so it's very hard for me to actually rule on something like that.

But I'm just going to caution members to be respectful that, when we are talking and making comments, that we do it in a respectful manner so that I can rule properly on these issues.

PETITIONS

Public Child-Care Grants

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible for all Manitoban families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet the funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many childhood educators leaving the sector.

While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and thousands spent on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial support.

* (14:30)

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of \$18 billion on the temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

The provincial government's cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax status amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector business.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the changes to the nursery school grant and to end the freeze for child-care operating grants while committing to keeping child care public and affordable, accessible for all Manitoban families.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

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

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

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoban—all Manitoba families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise the parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government's cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and 'stax' 'tatute' amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care's operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoba families.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Cochlear Implant Program

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

People who suffer hearing loss due to aging, illness, employment or accident not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, relatives or colleagues; they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

A cochlear implant is a life-changing electronic device that allows deaf people to receive and process sounds and speech, and also can run—can partially restore hearing in people who have severe hearing loss and who do not benefit from conventional hearing aids. A processor behind the ear captures and processes sound signals which are transmitted to a receiver implanted in the skull that relays the information to the inner ear.

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 45 devices per year.

There are no upfront costs to Manitoba residents who proceed with cochlear implant surgery, as Manitoba Health covers the surgical procedure, internal implant and the first external sound processor. Newfoundland and Manitoba have the highest estimated implantation costs of all provinces.

Alberta has one of the best programs, Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means

the patient pays only approximately \$1,500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available. The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

In Manitoba, pediatric patients under 18 years of age are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

It is unreasonable that this technology is inaccessible to many citizens of Manitoba who must choose between hearing and deafness due to financial constraints because the costs of maintaining the equipment are prohibitive for low-income earners or those on a fixed income, such as old age pension or Employment and Income Assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide financing for upgrades to the cochlear implant covered under medicare, or provide funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program to assist with the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

Signed by Ernie Joyal, Randy Janssens, Nicole Janssens and many, many other Manitobans.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or urine sample.

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at further risk in extreme weather, being—be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer wait times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they are able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all of the phlebotomy blood sample sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

* (14:40)

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over-capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over-capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Public Child-Care Grants

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoba families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While the child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with the lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial support.

The government has spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent's fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government's cuts to the nursery school grants in—is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, which moved the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the changes to the nursery school grants to end the freeze on child-care's operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitobans.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, just a few House matters.

Pursuant to rule 33(7), I'm 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 Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston). The title of the resolution is Parent Engagement in Manitoba's Education System.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for

Assiniboia. The title of the resolution is Parent Engagement in Manitoba's Education System.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, April 15th, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 47, The Early Learning and Child Care Act.

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* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call this afternoon resumption of debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the budget motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley, who has 16 minutes remaining.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I believe that when I left off yesterday I was talking about this government's appalling lack of leadership to fight climate change. I was speaking about the millions of taxpayer dollars this government spent on a lawsuit to fight federal carbon pricing. After flip-flopping for the past few years, the Pallister government has included a climate tax in their budget, but since they've changed their minds on this idea multiple times, it's anybody's guess what happens next.

It's important to note that the federal carbon pricing plan builds in a rebate that positively impacts low-income Manitobans, and the provincial carbon tax does not do this. So while we all hold our breath to see if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) will keep fighting the carbon tax—sorry—keep fighting the federal government in court, I'll remind this House that this government jeopardized \$67 million from the federal Low Carbon Economy Fund by refusing to sign onto the agreement in 2018. After this waste of time and money spent arguing with the federal government, the Pallister government has spent less than 9 per cent of that \$67 million, and on only one project, according to the documents I tabled in this House last fall.

This Premier has also cut Manitoba Hydro's hugely popular solar rebate program, ended transit funding. They've also cut funding for

not-for-profit environmental organizations like Green Action Centre, Climate Change Connection and the Manitoba Eco-Network, and then forced them to reapply and compete against businesses for their funding.

It's completely disingenuous to ask small not-for-profit organizations to compete with for-profit businesses for the same dollars. The organizations that I mentioned have a significant role in educating Manitobans and motivating them to make more environmentally responsible choices. It's ironic that we have a Conservation Minister on record insisting that climate change is primarily the responsibility of individuals, yet she has cut the very organizations that make a difference in individual behaviour and in promoting knowledge and skills to help individuals to do their part.

This government has also introduced Bill 57, the critical infrastructure act, which seeks to prevent people from standing up for what they believe in, and it is particularly targeted at Indigenous land and water defenders and could hamper the efforts of all climate strikers and environmental activists.

I want to remind the minister that the most amazing job she will likely ever hold is minister responsible for climate change. Due to the immediate crisis of the pandemic, many people have forgotten about the existential crisis of the climate. Unless we can stop the climate crisis, we will have even more devastating effects than the COVID-19 pandemic has had. Millions of people around the world will be displaced and will die. Fertile agriculture grounds will become desert. We will continue to see illnesses never known before and new pandemics will sweep the world.

I can understand why some individuals—in their grief, in their fear, in the immediate challenges they have with child care, job loss, COVID illness in the family or just trying to keep their small business open—may have temporarily forgotten the climate crisis, but I want to urge the minister to remember that it is her job to keep this topic front and centre in every single Cabinet meeting. And it is her job to make sure this crisis is not forgotten and that the Manitoba government steps up to do their part.

So far, this government has no real plan, no real targets or actual laws on climate change, but the little bit of accountability built into the plan has not been followed. The climate green plan implementation act says the minister must produce a report annually, but

there still has not been a report issued for 2018-19 or 2019-20.

Manitoba is not on track to meet the Paris climate accord or the targets of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. There are many environmental issues where the Pallister government has not stepped up. They've not stepped up to collaborate with other levels of government and protect Lake Winnipeg from nutrient and soil pollution.

The North End treatment plant is the largest single-point emitter of phosphorus, yet Pallister—the Pallister government wasted time arguing with the City of Winnipeg—

* (14:50)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. There's a lot of noise in here and I'm having some difficulty hearing the member.

Ms. Naylor: Yet the Pallister government wasted time arguing with the City of Winnipeg about funding and they aren't bringing anything more to the table to get this project done.

Instead, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) withdrew from legal action with North Dakota, allowing waters to flow into Lake Winnipeg without proper assurances about water quality or the possibility of invasive species.

In 2019, the Pallister government told the City of Winnipeg to redirect \$34 million of funds previously allocated to the City for the North End water waste treatment plant to other projects. Clearly, the health of Lake Winnipeg is not their priority.

This government also continues to pave the way for parklands and certain park services to be broken up and privatized. Now more than ever Manitobans need access to trails, camping, fresh air and nature opportunities. This budget does not commit to enhancing these services and opportunities for Manitobans.

And, finally, while on the topic of the environment, I must acknowledge how deeply connected environmental justice is with the sovereignty of Indigenous people and how deeply connected reconciliation is with environmental justice.

Manitoba has a Premier who unapologetically uses racialized language to speak about Indigenous and Métis people and refuses to adequately consult with Indigenous communities on issues that impact

them directly. The same Premier refuses to acknowledge the existence of systemic racism in our provincial institutions—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Please continue.

Ms. Naylor: The Premier used racialized language when describing blockades, saying he will not stand back while two-tier justice happens in our province. He also used the blockade protest language as an opportunity to fundraise for the PC party, profiting off of this racialized language. And, as I mentioned previously, the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) now trying to criminalize protests at so-called critical infrastructure sites, such as roads and railways, through Bill 57.

The Manitoba NDP held back this bill specifically because it is undemocratic and seeks specifically to violate the rights of Indigenous people, climate strikers and all environmentalists to protest or defend their land.

Again, this is not climate leadership. Real leadership would respect the rights of Indigenous people.

The constituents that I represent have suffered from this government's lack of investment in health care, lack of investment in child care, education, small businesses and personal-care homes and home care.

There's so much missing from this budget, yet I only have a short time left to address all of the failures of this government. So I want to speak a little bit about poverty, housing, and addiction, which are of a significant and growing concern in the Wolseley constituency.

This past weekend there was an important article in the Winnipeg Free Press by author Shaun Loney. Mr. Loney noted how frequently homeless folks are in contact with emergency services. Mr. Loney [phonetic] stated, and I quote: Typically, a call to 911 about someone struggling in the cold or sleeping in a bus shelter summons a police car and a fire truck. An ambulance ride is then initiated to take the individual to an emergency room and an eventual stay in a psychiatric bed. Often, people are charged with offences such as disorderly conduct, which 'triggles'—triggers Legal Aid, court appearances and jail time.

He then calls on both the municipal and provincial government to, quote—and I quote—to move money that shifts these emergency systems away from expensively managing problems towards affordably solving them. Non-profit supportive housing agencies

can be paid by emergency service providers based on the value of not—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I'm trying to hear the member in debate. I would ask for everybody—it's quite difficult hearing when somebody's remote, so could I please have everybody's co-operation.

Ms. Naylor: Not having to deploy the resources in the first place. A key difference is instead of funding, non-profits should be paid the actual value of lowering workloads on an outcomes basis. This allows the true value of non-profit work to be realized and will lead to meaningful impact. When comparing the costs of responding to crises to the costs of avoiding them, emergency service providers will quickly see the financial benefits of paying non-profits to lower their workloads. End quote.

Mr. Loney then notes that, and I quote, "The premier should well know that 75 per cent of the benefits of reducing homelessness are going to be felt in provincial systems, including courts, jails and in visits to emergency rooms." End quote.

Madam Speaker, a government that treated homelessness as a priority would be able to make significant gains in ending homelessness while also balancing the budget. However, this budget basically ignores poverty. And, certainly, their entire Bill 64 that overhauls the education system entirely ignores the impact of poverty on learning.

A simple first step at working towards ending child poverty is implementing a universal breakfast program, but the Premier and his caucus think that feeding kids is a bad idea and have not made this a priority in addressing barriers to learning.

While this budget establishes a new Department of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, I note that the department had no money or authority of its own for the first two months after the Cabinet shuffle, that was a result of the former Health minister's poor performance.

Addiction workers have long called on the Premier to take action, and Manitobans with addictions and their families deserve a government who takes a growing drug crisis seriously. The PC government does not take addictions seriously, despite the new department. The words harm reduction do not even appear once in the 2020-'21-22 provincial budget speech.

The Premier is failing to act on the crisis of addictions and continues to deny the facts placed in front of him by experts and his own government department. In confidential documents the WRHA revealed that there is a lack of provincial leadership on addictions. The Premier abandoned the Safer Consumption Spaces report in which one service provider said, we don't have a Province that is particularly interested in harm reduction or prevention, for that matter. And he dismissed the findings.

And despite the addiction crisis facing this province, the Pallister government is moving ahead with allowing the private sale of liquor. This change will take money away from schools, from addictions services, hospitals and sports programs, moving it into private hands. This move doesn't help the addictions crisis. In fact, it will likely make it worse. Profit should not guide our public policy approach to alcohol.

Amongst western provinces, Manitoba has the highest revenue and net government income per capita from the sale of alcoholic beverages, while also doing the most to mitigate the harm done by alcohol. Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries profits are around \$280 million every year. That means higher public investment, good jobs and less harm from alcohol. Moving to a privatization model is irresponsible. It will lead to financial loss for the government and does nothing to mitigate the harms of alcohol.

Also contributing to the homeless crisis is this government's inaction on housing. Manitoba Housing has disposed hundreds of social housing units. The wait-list for social housing is growing fast, increasing by 35 per cent in one year between January 2019 to January 2020.

Under the Pallister government, homelessness has increased. According to the last Winnipeg Street Census, homelessness had increased to 1,500. Homelessness during the pandemic has created a horrendous rise in addictions challenges and recent incidents, such as the explosion at a homeless camp.

Shelver-shelters are operating at half their capacity because of COVID-19, yet the Province has provided no additional support to offer more beds and the Pallister government has not built a single new social or affordable housing unit to date. And the budget for the repair, maintenance, modernization and improvement of existing social housing has been cut by nearly \$100 million annually.

It's been over two years since they signed on to the National Housing Strategy and they have still not built a single unit. Instead, they've sold off social housing, including Smith Street for \$16.2 million, eliminating 373 units of social housing.

This government transferred hundreds of units of rent-gear-to-income housing to third parties with no guarantee they will remain social housing. They transferred the management of public housing units to the private sector, making Manitoba Housing the regulator, not the operator. And they've issued an RFP to assess the value of Manitoba Housing, getting it ready to sell.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Manitoba residents have also seen their rents climb from 25 per cent of their income in 2016 to 30 per cent in 2019.

In health care, the funding they're claiming to increase is all below the rate of inflation, meaning a de facto cut.

It's easy to see why this government failed at responding to COVID-19, when they spent the five years leading up to the pandemic slashing resources from our health-care system.

And I know I'm running out of time, but I have to mention how this budget makes no mention of Maples Personal Care Home or the review and recommendations that followed the tragic deaths that occurred in fall of 2020. There's actually no mention whatsoever of care-home outbreaks in Manitoba.

During the second wave, Manitobans had the highest number of deaths per capita in the country in long-term-care and retirement homes. This is a tragic result. The pain and suffering in long-term care was foreseeable and preventable.

* (15:00)

The former Health minister's response will never be forgotten by Manitobans. Deaths of seniors in these facilities was unavoidable—according to him—was unavoidable, and he questioned the motivations of health-care professionals who spoke up.

The Pallister government hasn't finished a single personal-care-home bed since they started, despite promising in the 2016 election to build an additional 1,200 new beds. In fact, they cancelled 80 PCH beds in Lac du Bonnet and a 120-bed project in Bridgwater as part of their \$1-billion cuts to Health capital.

In times of crisis, leadership makes a difference. Our side of the House is focused on helping Manitobans, and this budget is not. I will not be supporting this budget, and I implore this government to seek to centre the needs of those they represent, and to amend their budget accordingly.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): Well—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome to the Chair. You know, since 2016, the honour of rising in this House is certainly a pleasure and should never, ever be taken for granted. And to that, I would like to thank the great constituents of Red River North for providing myself and our government to serve, and certainly we don't take that responsibility lightly.

To that note, Budget 2021—of course, the first priority in Budget 2021 is to continue to protect Manitobans throughout this ongoing pandemic. Our second focus of Budget 2021 is to advance jobs and the economic recovery, of course.

We will continue to invest more than—per capita on health care, education and social services combined—more combined than any other province. Budget 2021 increases funding in these priority areas by nearly \$1.5 billion. That includes \$156 million more for health care, \$91 million more for K-to-12 education and post-secondary and \$34 million more for social services.

As we announced in our budget speech, this includes \$1.18 billion in 2021-22 for COVID-19 costs. Economic growth and job creation remains at the centre of our plan for a stronger, more prosperous Manitoba. A record \$2.1-billion investment in strategic infrastructure will help drive construction jobs and stimulate our economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're also delivering in full, again, our 2020 tax rollback guarantee one year earlier than planned, including keeping our promise to phase out education property taxes—roughly \$400 per household will be recognized back on the kitchen tables where that money belongs.

Budget 2021 protects our environment for future generations through more action and climate change, and protects our clean energy advantage with securing Manitoba Hydro.

The pandemic has a significant impact and has had a significant impact on this year's finances, but thankfully, COVID-19 will be not—will not be around forever, we hope.

We will grow our way out of our deficit and back into balance by investing in more jobs, tax relief and economic growth.

We take a whole-of-government approach on our recovery and building—and rebuilding our economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and with that, of course, we have a number of whole-of-government areas that I'd like to put on the record today, starting, again, with Health.

The health-care funding is the highest level in Manitoba history: \$6.98 billion, and the key—some of the key investments, I might add; \$812 million in capital commitment for rural and northern health care under five-year clinical and preventative services plan, triple our original commitment of \$270 million; \$50 million to speed up wait times for surgeries and services; an extra \$23 million for cancer treatment coverage; \$9 million to add more than 120 personal-care-home beds; creating a program to cover the cost continuous glucose monitors for eligible youth under 25 years, increasing insulin coverage for—to age 25.

Under our new department, again, keeping in mind the whole-of-government approach, mental health and wellness recovery, Budget 2021 includes an initial \$342 million for programming and services within the new Department of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery. We've committed an additional \$5 million to engage with communities and stakeholders on a whole-of-government approach and an additional \$1.7 million for Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, and—we're not finished yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker—\$1.8 million more for 24-7 housing supports for mental health.

Moving on to Families, Mr. Deputy Speaker: we are freezing rent control guidelines through 2023; an additional \$22 million for Rent Assist is committed to help Manitobans pay rent; renters will see their benefits increase by up to 11 per cent to make housing more affordable and help lift Manitobans out of poverty; \$12.5-million increase for community living and disability services; more than \$2.5 million for wrap-around supports for Manitobans experiencing homelessness; nearly \$4 million more early-learning and child-care operating grants of \$1.6 million to child-care centres that will support nearly 400 spaces that opened over the past year; approximately 150 new spaces in capital projects opening over the coming year; plus another 50 home-based licensed

child-care spaces. This, of course, will help families cope financially at this difficult time, and we are freezing child-care fees for three years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not finished yet. In Education, we are making a record investment in above \$3 billion in our public school system: more than \$78 million for COVID-19 costs through Safe Schools Fund; investments in implement or—Better Education Starts Today; \$5.5 million for special needs funding—very important

Nearly \$4 million to support online, distance and remote learning—we know the pandemic has shown us that we need to—something the NDP didn't do is increase connectivity to particularly northern and rural regions in the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know more people are at home working; more of our kids are at school in their homes on Internet. We know that needs to be improved.

We're introducing a new refundable teaching expense tax credit so that educators in child care and kindergarten to grade 12 can claim a 15 per cent refund or up to \$1,000 eligible supplies to reimburse by their employers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

School capital projects funding increases by \$100 million to accelerate construction of the guarantee of 20 new schools.

Now, another area I know the members opposite don't pay much attention to, and that's called tax relief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We'll reduce education property taxes by 50 per cent over the next two years for residential, and farm properties 25 per cent per year. Other properties will see a reduction of 10 per cent. Homeowners across Manitoba can expect an average rebate of approximately \$800 over the two-year period.

We are also removing the retail sales tax on personal services and are reducing vehicle registration fees by another 10 per cent.

Strategic infrastructure, again, was devoid from the NDP. In the 17 years they were in power they underspent their budget. Manitobans know that; we know that and they know that. And we are really excited about the strategic infrastructure announcements in Budget 2021.

To name a few, a record \$2.1-billion investment in strategic infrastructure; nearly \$630 million for road construction and maintenance, includes \$107 million of Restart money. Safety improvements at the intersection of Trans-Canada Highway and

Yellowhead Highway—we know that is a serious intersection. We know it connects our two major highways east and west, and we know that that investment needs to be made and that's exactly what we're going to be doing in Budget 2021.

Construction of the South Perimeter interchange on St. Mary's Road, another area that has been highlighted over the several years. We know that that investment needs to be made and in Budget 2021, we're going to make it.

Budget 2021 commits to a three-year horizon of a minimum of \$500 million per year. More than \$292 million for health infrastructure, including the start of construction of the new St. Boniface Hospital emergency department.

*(15:10)

A hundred and one million set aside for Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba outlet. We know the importance of the outlet, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know the devastation that was caused in 2011: a number of homes and farms and businesses, billions of dollars lost in that flood. We know that we can protect—help protect folks around Lake St. Martin, our First Nation communities north as well, and we know that this investment needs to take place to ensure the flood of the century in Lake Manitoba never happens again.

A hundred million dollars for potential emergencies such as floods, forest fires and drought, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know up to a week ago we were looking at serious, most serious, drought conditions Manitobans faced. Fortunately, we're—well, fortunately and unfortunately, it's looking more like winter today, but we welcome the moisture. I know our farmers welcome the moisture, and I know that it'll definitely help to 'replemish'—replenish our soil moisture, particularly in our forested areas as well, so we can protect folks right across the province from forest fires with this extra moisture, so it's wonderful.

Making a commitment to new electric buses infrastructure in Winnipeg and an extra \$103.5 million for priority strategic infrastructure projects that match federal funds through the investing in Canada infrastructure project. We know how important those projects are. We continue to invest and partner with the federal government. We're looking forward to getting shovels in the ground sooner than later. And also under strategic infrastructure, established a \$25-million trust to protect the heritage value of Hudson's Bay building—just an iconic building in our

city, a building that needs to be invested in, and certainly we are looking forward to partnering with other levels of government and the private sector to see that building remain a jewel.

Under economic development and jobs, more than \$62 million to help businesses retain employees and develop e-commerce platforms. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of more e-commerce. We know that that's an area of the economy that will grow and continue to grow. We want to make an investment in it, and that's exactly what Budget 2021 does.

Twenty-five million for youth jobs programs, get our young folks back to work again. We do have—we did have a great youth program last spring, and we continue to do that and build that to get our young folks working.

There will be wage subsidies similar to those from the last summer, again, as I mentioned, to help businesses staff up and reopen and get ready to get our economy rolling again.

A couple of notes I wanted to put on the record too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is how proud our government is on—the not only the investment that our Crown corporations have made during this global pandemic but simply the way they have stepped up to help Manitobans survive and get through what we all know now is—been the pandemic of the century. And I wanted to put these areas on the record, so I'll do that now.

First of all, Manitoba Public Insurance: on April 23rd, 2020, MPI announced that the corporation would be returning \$110 million back to policy holders. We know how important it is to continue to have money on the kitchen table, and we're proud of Manitoba Public Insurance providing that opportunity. Furthermore, again, MPI was able to issue a second rebate of \$69 million to approximately 675 policy holders. This rebate was announced on November 30th, totalling \$179 million in rebates in 2021.

MPI also: a three-month deferral on—and a 12-month interest-free payment period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, realizing that there are a lot of folks hurting. They've lost their jobs, they were laid off, and we—Manitoba Public Insurance stepped up in a big way, waiving all late fees and interest fees for six months. Total financial relief tied to provinces, April 3rd news release, amount was \$2.76 million in waived late fees and interest as of January 4th, 2021.

MPI also: the integrated resource plan, request three monthly deferrals by the MTA, the Manitoba Trucking Association has been honoured and implemented, saving upfront costs to our very well-known and very important industry, the Trucking Association, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're—certainly, I have a little bit of a background on that, and I can appreciate the fact that these folks needed that little step up, and they certainly got it from MPI.

Also, 71 employees were redeployed to Shared Health to assist with personal protective equipment, or PPE, and also warehousing and logistics.

Manitoba Hydro also stepped up in a big way. Hydro offered the following supports to Manitobans experienced financial challenges from COVID-19 pandemic: flexible bill payment schedules, suspension of late-payment charges for up to six months; if appropriate, refer the customer to programs at Hydro—Manitoba Hydro or other community partners offer, and the discontinuation of all residential service disconnections related to overdue accounts until the spring of 2021. Manitoba Hydro stepped up.

And lastly, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries again will not be charging interest on receivables for six months. As you know, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries supplies alcohol throughout the province, and vendors purchase the alcohol, and they are deferring those interest charges on receivables for six months to give Manitobans a step up.

On March 30th, 2020, MBLL and our government announced that we would authorize the sale of liquor to takeout—with takeout and delivery meal service by licensed establishments to help restaurants significantly impacted by COVID-19. We know the impact that that had to restauranteurs that were struggling, and one of our most hardest hit sectors of our economy were the restaurants and the hospitality sectors. So, certainly proud of the support that MBLL provided Manitobans in their time of need.

And also, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries introduced and streamlined markup structure for small producers and 'catterers,' taking effect July 1st, 2020, to help small businesses struggling during the pandemic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's certainly—I know that a lot of my colleagues are anxious to get up and talk more about the great things that our government are doing in Budget 2021, and certainly I will make room for them to get up and make those—and put those items on the record.

Certainly, again, as I opened with, it's a pleasure to be able to rise in this House on a regular basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of Manitobans, but also on behalf of constituents of Red River North. And with that, I thank you.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Really pleased to have an opportunity to put some words on the record about this budget. A budget is an opportunity for a government to demonstrate that it understands the priorities of the people that it serves, and by that measure, this budget has fallen way short.

It's also an opportunity, especially in the context of the situation that we're in, for a government to demonstrate that it has learned over the past year, learned some lessons and learned about ways that it can better serve the interests of Manitoba. But, again, it's really clear that this government has not learned any lessons over the past year.

To the lot of things I'd like to talk about, but unfortunately with time limitations I'm going to have to stick to a few key areas here. I'd like to start by talking about this government's failure in immunizing Manitobans. You know, this is really what Manitobans care most about right now, more than anything. And they have a right to expect that above all else, that their government would be focused on ensuring that they get those vaccinations and they get them as quickly as possible. Nothing is more important to helping our families to get back together, to allow small businesses to be able to get back to where they need to get and to allow our lives to return to normal. But nothing in this budget suggests urgency on this file.

You know, they've administered 60 per cent of 410,000 doses that were received. We've got 125,000-plus doses that sit in a freezer, and we've got, according to this budget, no new funds to move towards greater degree of openness for our supersites. We've got pop-up sites and focused immune teams that aren't working on Sundays. Large numbers of the AstraZeneca doses are sitting with pharmacies across the province. We've got no drive-through clinics and no sign of innovation or learning from our neighbours or provinces that have figured out better ways to deliver the vaccines to their population.

We're clearly in need of more urgency. The government had said that we'd be targetting 20,000 a day, and we are not even close. Those vaccination failures are now being compounded by bad decisions that this government is making in relation to opening

up as we're right on the cusp of a third wave overtaking this province. We have variants of concern taking hold in this province, and yet, again, the government continues to make more and more bad decisions and make clear that they did not learn the lessons of the second wave.

So this budget fails on this most important task. This should be what is commanding total focus of this government, but they're failing and they're putting all of us at risk, and they're putting the future of Manitoba's economy at greater risk by that failure.

* (15:20)

More lives are on the line due to this failure in the province. We're going to have less time with family, loved ones, friends in the coming months, and our small businesses will continue to suffer.

The time for excuses is over. We need this government to take action, and this is a huge failure to put the resources needed to do the job that needs to be done in this province.

Now, moving to seniors care. Again, Manitobans have a right to expect that their government would be focused on ensuring that seniors get the support, the care that they need, not only in regular times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but also—especially—during a pandemic. And what we've seen in this budget is that they've shown that they have not learned the lessons of the pandemic or any lessons over the past year, because there's no mention of the Maples Personal Care Home disaster, no mention of the review or the recommendations that came from it and no mention of any focused efforts on ensuring that we keep our seniors safe.

There's no mention of how they're going to respond to the huge shorting staff—the staffing shortages in our personal-care homes or in long-term care in this province. This is even though vacancies in PCHs created a crisis throughout the pandemic, and it's even though home-care vacancies have been out of control for an extended period of time, with 15 per cent of those roles in Winnipeg being vacant, and a 27 per cent vacancy rate in the southern region.

The well-being and dignity of seniors in this province are in the hands of this government. It's literally in their hands, and there's still no plan to secure our PCHs, no plan to ensure that long-term care is properly staffed, no plan to ensure that home-care roles are properly staffed.

We look back at what happened over the pandemic, and we saw that we put our seniors at huge risk. We failed to do the one job that we needed to do to ensure that those lives were not put at risk: to ensure that those residences were locked down. We had staff moving between those facilities. We know that there was some efforts to slow the movement of staff on the nursing side, but we know that other staff were moving between facilities, creating significant increased risks to seniors in this province, and that is a shame.

And we now know that Manitoba had among the highest number of deaths per capita in this country for long-term care, according to the C-H-I report that came out recently. And there's an expectation that government would have learned from this, that we would have learned the lessons that this pandemic had to teach us, and that we would have seen a response to those lessons in this budget.

There's also an expectation that government would have learned about the impact of those home-care shortages. And I'm thinking about folks that I heard from even in my own community. One residence called Kiwanis courts, we received calls from residents who hadn't been able to have a shower for over a week. They hadn't been able to get a change of clothes. They hadn't been able to get any of the help that they needed because of this government's failure to invest adequately in home-care supports. That is an absolute shame, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we let those seniors down in their time of need, all because this government refused to make adequate investments.

There's a basic expectation among Manitobans that we'll get this right. This isn't a partisan issue. We want the government to succeed on this front to ensure that we're taking care of those that need to be taken care of. That's something that we all agree on, but unfortunately, as we've seen through the pandemic and now with this budget that's been put out, they have not learned those lessons, and we still have seen no evidence that they're interested in ensuring that our seniors get the supports that they need. Our seniors deserve to be treated with dignity and decency, and we're not seeing it from this government.

And education. You know, one of the greatest failures of this budget is that it fails our kids. It's the first time in a generation that education funding is not keeping up with inflation. It's not keeping up with student enrolment, the growth in our economy. And provincial funding for the 2021 school year was

increased by five–0.5 per cent when enrolment went up by 1 per cent and inflation went up by two.

So we don't really think that this government understands the way that inflation works. The Minister for Education likes to brag about how they've marginally increased their spending in education, without reflecting on the fact that, yes, costs will go up over time. The basic fact is: this government is not investing in education in accordance with the rate of inflation.

And there's still no accountability on the \$85 million that was sent to Manitoba by Ottawa to support our kids in our schools. We still don't have any clarity on how that money was spent or where it went. Where did that go—that money go, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We are yet to find out.

Well, let's talk about basics here. Why are we all here? We're all here to improve life for Manitobans, and we're all here, of course, because we want to ensure that our students and our kids have the best chance at making a good life for themselves and their families.

But this government talks about wanting to improve the quality of education and improve educational performance of our students, but eight out of 10 are performing at a level that is absolutely on par with the levels of performance that we're seeing in other provinces across this country.

But unfortunately, we do have two out of 10 kids that are not getting to where they need to get. And we know why. The reason is because those kids don't have the tools and supports they need to succeed. And that is tied to poverty and it's tied to socio-economic considerations. And this government does not seem to have any concern for responding to those issues. That's very clear, because this budget does not show any evidence of wanting to invest in reducing poverty or in any way responding to the key issue that's driving poor educational outcomes for our students.

Instead, the PCs have chosen a different focus. They've chosen to defund education; they've chosen to centralize power and shut down local voices—except in Hanover, of course—and they've chosen to move us down a path that'll ultimately head towards charter schools.

Privatization of our education system. The Betsy DeVos model. That's where we're headed with education in this province: families getting tax vouchers so they can decide where they want to send their kids to school, which private school they'll send them to.

That is not a model or a path we should be heading down.

But what's the marquee announcement from this government and this budget on education? It was to defund education in Manitoba, to transfer the burden of funding of education onto regular Manitobans' backs. And, as we know, wealthy people like the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his family will save thousands of dollars through their defunding of education.

But when this plan is enacted, this province is going to be short \$800 million of funding for our education system. So where's that going to come from? Well, we know it's—where it's going to come from. It's going to come on the backs of regular Manitobans who are going to have to fund the Premier's \$4,000 tax cut to himself. That is an absolute embarrassment.

This government's approach ensures regular Manitobans will just continue to pay more, and that story sounds, I think, really familiar to most.

What's going to happen as a result of this government's approach to education? The wealthy are going to get wealthier and regular Manitobans are going to pay more; their services are going to get worse; we're going to have less access to the education quality that we all deserve.

And you know what? Let's not forget about the other marquee investment that this government has announced in this budget in education: they're offering a 15 per cent tax rebate to teachers who are forced to pay out of pocket for school supplies that they need to purchase in order to do their jobs. This is what they chose to highlight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a big announcement that they somehow thought would go over well with Manitobans?

I think we've seen how that went over: absolutely deaf to the needs and the actual opinions of regular Manitobans in this province. It perfectly encapsulates everything that's wrong with this budget and everything that's wrong with the way that this government thinks.

Manitobans are waking up to this government and everything that's wrong with them, and they're starting to get attuned to what's happening right in front of their eyes. They're learning about the programs—I know in west Winnipeg, folks are increasingly aware of what's at stake here. We're going to lose a lot of important local programs in west Winnipeg—government doesn't like to talk about that.

But that's the path we're headed towards; this huge centralization, this loss of local voices will ensure that communities like St. James and west Winnipeg will lose access to the important programs that have been designed to meet our local needs.

We should be investing in education, not defunding education, and we should be standing up for the kids in this province that need help.

This shifted child care—one of the biggest lessons we learned throughout this pandemic is the importance of child care to regular families in this province. We saw that when we couldn't access child care, that people's worlds fell apart. And for the first time, I think, a huge percentage of Manitobans really started to see just how fundamental and essential child care was in this province.

* (15:30)

The lack of investment that's been demonstrated in this budget is a huge missed opportunity. This is a budget—this is not a budget from a government that understands the importance of child care to families.

At the very moment when the federal government is coming to the table with funds to support a universal child-care system, we are going in the opposite direction. We're going in a direction where government will become a market steward, which is—of course—is KPMG—speak for privatization. And this is, of course, the direction that this government has been hinting at with Bill 47. But this is an old chestnut.

We know what KPMG is recommending and what Bill 47 is telling us in terms of the direction this government wants to take in child care is an old chestnut, that the problems in child care can somehow be solved by just moving responsibility over to the private sector. That'll take care of everything. How incredibly innovative. What an innovative proposition that is.

We've all heard that before and we know how this story goes, and we know that it's going to result in higher costs of service for Manitobans, and we know it's going to reduce accessibility to child care in this province, and we know that it's going to also reduce the quality of child care.

Bill 47 fits hand in glove with this KPMG report that was just released yesterday. We know that Bill 47 will allow for private businesses to buy and sell child-care licences, that it will no longer need to be approved by a provincial director. This will allow child-care businesses to become profit-producing

businesses that can be bought and sold and will significantly increase the interest in privatization of child-care services in this province.

It also allows for the very first time—and this is totally unprecedented—for government to give public dollars to private child-care businesses, to give them operating grants, to give them capital grants so that the public can help to support private businesses in making a profit. It's a pretty attractive proposition that's being cooked up here on our dime. We know that this is the wrong direction.

We don't need a market steward cutting red tape for corporate child-care providers. We need government investment in child care. We need child care to be affordable for all families: low-income families, middle-income families, all families need to be able to afford it.

We need early-childhood educators to be paid living wages and they need to be paid in accordance with their experience, their skills and the incredible value that they produce for us as Manitobans. We don't need a system where decisions are going to be made about the locations of services, about the wages of ECEs, about parent fees, about which kids get served and which kids don't get served that are made by private businesses. That's not a future for child care we want.

Even KPMG admits that child care is a public service. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we agree, and that's why enriching corporate providers by making child care less affordable is not a path we should be taking.

This budget is a complete disappointment to anybody who cares about publicly funded child care. This is the fifth consecutive year in a row that child-care centres are seeing operating grant freezes to their budgets—fifth year in a row. They're struggling to continue on. Many of them are barely scraping by.

The government is bragging about freezing parent fees. Meanwhile, daycares are barely able to remain open because they've faced five years in a row of funding freezes. That strain means lower quality services for our kids, it means lesser-trained staff delivering supports to our children and it means lower quality snacks, programs right down the line. It's an absolute shame.

And this budget also clarified that the government does not intend on reversing their cut to the enhanced nursery funding program—or nursery grant program. That program provides access to nursery programs for

low-income families that—as a result of this government's cut, as a result of the cut that's being made by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), by his Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), is going to result in hundreds of low-income Manitoban families, many of them BIPOC families, that will no longer be able to access child-care supports, that will no longer be able to benefit from the huge developmental benefits that they could—they would gain had they been able to continue accessing that. That should be a basic right, and the government should be really embarrassed about the fact that they're making that cut, that they're taking that away from those families. It's a huge shame.

We need serious investment in child care in this province. We need to invest in universal child care. Child care should be affordable, it should be accessible and it should be high quality, and we need more investment now.

Shifting to climate. This budget, again, is a huge concern for any Manitoban who's worried about the future of climate change and the way that it's going to impact our kids and our grandkids.

There is no sign that this government believes that climate change is real in this budget. They've cut the Climate and Green Plan Implementation Office budget by 2 per cent. They've cut funding to the Environmental Stewardship office by almost 2 per cent. And their biggest focus right now seems to be fighting the federal government in court over the carbon tax instead of focusing on decarbonizing this province.

There are three key buckets of emissions that we need to be worried about: stationary heating, automobiles and transportation, and agriculture, and I see not one bit of evidence—not a shred of evidence—of any plan from this government to make even a dent in our carbon emissions in any of those three buckets—not one iota of planning has happened here.

This government has completely forsaken our future. There's no sign that they have any intention on taking any action on that. We've heard the minister responsible for this say that she's completely satisfied with the performance of their government. We've decided that we're going to manage this with a rolling carbon account that allows the bucket to just be kicked down the road endlessly with no accountability for actually doing anything to reduce emissions.

This government is putting all of us at risk. We need investment in decarbonization. It also happens to create a lot of good jobs. I have no idea why this

government won't make this a focus, but they continue to demonstrate that they're not concerned about our kids or our grandkids' future. That is a shame.

So, no, I will not be supporting this budget.

Thank you very much for an opportunity to put comments on the record.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): I'm pleased to rise to put some comments on the record about our Budget 2021.

The effects of untreated mental illness and the challenges associated with addictions and access to recovery supports require a more focused and co-ordinated approach to ensure that individual and societal impacts are mitigated. Our approach includes a framework that highlights a significant delivery component in our health-care system with a focus on integrated services, treatments and supports from partnering agencies and from other government departments, including the departments of Families, Justice, Education, and Indigenous and Northern Relations.

So I want to talk a little bit about creating the Department of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, which is a Manitoba first. The next of many steps in our government's response to improve life outcomes for Manitobans through recovery and healing was the establishment of this stand-alone department. Indeed, Manitoba is only the second province to create a dedicated ministry for mental health and wellness in Canada.

The mission of the department is to set a strategic direction and policies, fund services and perform effective oversight of mental health, recovery and wellness programs within the province. This includes services and programs for those Manitobans who are particularly vulnerable, diverse communities and that span across homes, schools and workplaces.

Our work will address the findings of the 2018 VIRGO report—Improving Access and Coordination of Mental Health and Addiction Services: A Provincial Strategy for all Manitobans—which illustrated the difficulties in accessibility for mental health services and supports, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

To accomplish these objectives, the new department will align and integrate services across all departments and agencies through a whole-of-government approach. It will deliver improvements and investments to increase access and provide additional services for Manitobans through wellness, healing and

hope. This shift to a centralized service delivery is intended to reduce duplication and costs, connect care more efficiently, improve collaboration and the use of technology and innovation.

* (15:40)

So, I want to talk a little bit, as well, about actions—Manitoba's actions in mental health, wellness and recovery. Our government recognizes that programs and interventions that span service areas and communities are needed to address the mental health and well-being of all Manitobans. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why our government has invested nearly \$50 million in 29 different initiatives to improve mental health and recovery services throughout the province. This includes programs and services for youth through community groups and in schools, supports provided through the justice system and acute health-care services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, mental health supports in the child-welfare system is very important to our government. We're committed to transforming Manitoba's child-welfare system, and we recognize that supporting the mental health of vulnerable children and their parents and caregivers is critical to preventing children from entering the care of Child and Family Services.

Key investments made by the Department of Families to support community-based mental health initiatives are some that I would like to highlight. Working in partnership with the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth and the Canadian Mental Health Association, our government funds Thrival Kits. They incorporate evidence-based mental health promotion practices, and I'm so pleased to say that these kits are distributed in Manitoba schools for children in grades 4 to 6.

Through the StreetReach program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're responding to the immediate safety needs of sexually exploited children and youth, integrating mental health and spiritual support into existing Winnipeg outreach teams. Through a partnership with the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, clinicians are supporting the program. And Neecheewam Inc. has partnered to hire a spiritual adviser. Additionally, in partnership with Macdonald Youth Services and Awasis CFS agency, StreetReach continues to be expanded to northern Manitoba, and we know how important it is to get services into the North. Additional funding is also being provided to

enhance the service model for mental health assessments for vulnerable youth with complex needs in Thompson, Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to highlight some of our community-based wellness supports. There's an integral need for community-based programs to mitigate CFS involvement and improve outcomes for at-risk children and families. In 2021, we matched the \$1.5 million raised by the United Way of Winnipeg towards supporting the For Every Family Initiative, which enhances preventative and community-based supports for families through increased funding to family resource centres and the development of an interagency network of resource centres in Winnipeg.

And we went further, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Additional funding support has been provided to Granny's House, a community-based home in Winnipeg's core area that provides temporary out-of-home respite for families. This approach provides timely and culturally relevant support to families with children who are not in care to prevent child-welfare involvement. The initiative is part of a community-driven approach to preventing children from entering care developed by a consortium of community organizations in the North End of Winnipeg that supports children and their families to prevent or reduce involvement with the child-welfare system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, investing in recovery programs for vulnerable Manitobans is also a priority for our government. We've made a number of recent investments to address the growing need to support Manitobans who are transitioning to recovery. We provided \$2.1 million to Siloam Mission, Riverwood Church Community Inc. and Tamarack Recovery incorporated to develop 70 supportive housing units, including on-site support services for people completing their addictions treatment. New provincial funding of \$2.8 million to the City of Thompson to establish and operate a sobering centre will offer an effective alternative to the police service and hospital-based responses to public intoxication while keeping Manitobans safe.

We also recognize the importance of mental health and addiction supports. Our government is making many, many important strides to enhance the continuum of recovery-related services for vulnerable children and their families. This includes supporting through providing \$3.8 million for a new, Indigenous-led treatment facility to support sexually exploited youth with complex needs, incorporating Indigenous ways of healing to reduce impacts of colonization and

break the cycle of intergenerational trauma. This facility is set to open in the spring of this year.

Financial support of \$1.9 million is also provided for the Métis Child and Family Services Authority to work in partnership with their CFS agencies to develop a community addiction response team, which connects family mentors to at-risk families with CFS and mental health and addictions support services to prevent CFS apprehensions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recovery initiatives are also important for our vulnerable adults. Our government recently made legislative changes to how the drug Naloxone is classified to remove barriers to access and reduce opioid overdose deaths. This change improves accessibility for this high-risk population. The Department of Families will administer a new program with community-based agencies, co-ordinating purchase and distribution of Naloxone through these—several of their agencies.

And we also have a focus on mental health in the justice system, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Manitoba Justice supports initiatives that improve mental health and addictions services for communities across the province by providing supports to individuals and their families experiencing the negative effects of substance use and/or mental health challenges.

And I want to share some of those investments that enhance community mobilization and hubs that bring together agencies and resources to help people in crisis. Community mobilization is effective, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in helping individuals improve their ability to address the issues that contribute to their criminal behaviour and support the overall well-being of the community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the expansion of problem-solving courts, including the addition of the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder court and expansion of the Drug Treatment Court. Outcomes achieved in Manitoba's courts have been positive in addressing the root causes of criminal activity in some offenders before the criminal justice system.

The Walking Bear Therapeutic Community at the Women's Correctional Centre provides trauma and addictions therapy to women in provincial custody, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This initiative is modelled on the successful Winding River Therapeutic Community at the Headingley Correctional Centre.

Therapeutic communities offer programs that address areas of risk and other areas of need, including education, cognitive behavioural interventions, life

skills and cultural supports. The treatment of alcohol abuse and other drugs is an important component in reducing the return to addiction and alcohol abuse.

The Health IM risk assessment tool is software that is also installed in police vehicles and mobile devices. It is being expanded across the province to assist in assessing the risk of an individual in a mental health crisis and supports communication with community mental health sites on the most appropriate response. The system supports our police systems to provide a more empathetic and evidence-based response to individuals suffering from a mental health crisis while protecting the safety of police and medical staff. It also substantially frees up police time by triaging individuals to more appropriate and mental health and other supports in the community.

And mental health and wellness in the education system is also important to our government. The COVID-19 pandemic, as we know, has magnified the importance of engagement and well-being on student success and the importance of schools being equipped to provide the necessary supports for both students and staff.

* (15:50)

Key investments to support mental health initiatives in K-to-12 schools—I just want to highlight a couple. Beginning in January of 2020, the Manitoba Remote Learning Support Centre was launched, including mental health clinicians who are accessible by school staff, students and families to support well-being and positive mental health. Kids Help Phone received funding to add up to 70 more classrooms for its Counsellor in the Classroom Program and additional staff to respond to increased contacts for children and youth via text and Facebook.

The Manitoba-Canada partnership on mental health and addictions. Our government is also partnering with our federal agencies through a \$400-million, 10-year bilateral program to improve home and community care and mental health and addiction services. This agreement has played an important role in supporting some of the above-noted initiatives related to mental health, wellness and recovery.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the MLA for Southdale, I can tell you first-hand, from the number of individuals that have called my office, that have reached out to share their concerns about our province and the needs that families and individuals have, that our budget is responding to those needs.

Budget 2021 includes \$1.6 million in operating grants for child-care centres to support 392 new licensed spaces that opened over the past year and 149 new spaces that will open over the coming year, for a total of 541 spaces, in addition to 50 new home-based licensed care spaces.

Our budget includes investments of more than \$2.1 billion for strategic infrastructure across Manitoba, including \$630 million for highway and road construction and maintenance, including over \$292 million for health facilities infrastructure, allowing us to begin construction of the new St. Boniface Hospital emergency department and continue strengthening our other emergency departments. And that is very important to families in my community.

Budget 2021 establishes a new program to pay for the cost of continuous glucose monitoring devices for eligible children and youth under the age of 25. In addition, Budget 2021 increases the age limit on our insulin pump program from age 18 to 25, so that clinically eligible young people with type 1 diabetes will have access. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've heard from many individuals in my constituency of Southdale that have applauded our government for these additional investments.

Budget 2021 focuses on the needs of students, and I think of the four high schools in my constituency that will benefit, and the students, through the more than \$680 million to post-secondary institutions that they will attend, plus \$10 million to support priority maintenance to their facilities and increase funding by nearly \$4 million to Manitoba Bursary Fund to help students access post-secondary education.

And then, the new classroom investments to support the Better Education Starts Today, the BEST strategy, which is anticipated to provide up to \$40 million more in classrooms for students, including \$5 million to advance our better education strategy today, \$5.5 million for special needs funding to ensure every student can succeed, along with \$4 million for a virtual learning strategy and program to support online, distance and remote learning for all Manitoba students.

Budget 2021 also showcases our government's commitment to preserving the environment with a \$1.2-million commitment to the Climate and Green Plan Implementation Office to advance our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's very important to the constituents in the—in my constituency of Southdale. And I will tell you, just this past weekend, four groups came together to do a very extensive community cleanup because they are so concerned about the environment and want to preserve our forests and our walking trails and the areas that their families are using during this pandemic to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, new initiatives include increasing the Conservation and Climate Fund by \$400,000 to \$1 million to fund projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions—this is really thrilling in investments—along with establishing a new \$1-million organics Green Impact Bonds, the first of its kind in Manitoba, to divert organic waste from landfills, create green jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are investments that Manitobans can be proud of and I'm certainly glad to stand today and put these positive comments on the record regarding our government's Budget 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Manitobans are not satisfied with the actions of this government and that they've taken throughout this pandemic.

This government was elected to do a job. Deputy Speaker, that job is to look out for the best interests of the people of this province: the children, the families, the elderly Manitobans and the young people who are just getting their start.

Right now, strong public services are needed more than ever to make life better for all Manitobans. Right now, Deputy Speaker, strong public services are truly a matter of life and death.

I honestly believe when this—I honestly believed, when this pandemic began, that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government would be able to set aside their political agenda of cuts and privatization and actually take care of Manitobans.

Instead of taking care of Manitobans, what have they done? They haven't supported our brave health-care workers and their right to develop an efficient and timely vaccine plan for COVID-19. This government has done nothing but prioritize their own interests. Despite this global pandemic, Deputy Speaker, this Progressive Conservative government has continued

to spend less and less on health care, barely keeping up with the rate of inflation.

At a time when we should be rallying around our most vulnerable, this government has ignored seniors. Not only has funding for long-term-care homes remained close to stagnant despite increased needs, but these facilities have been allowed to become extremely dangerous under this government's watch. When private Revera care homes were so overwhelmed and understaffed that experienced paramedics were shocked by what they saw entering these facilities, we wanted to take action. We wanted to take the responsibility for our treasured seniors, but this government said there simply wasn't enough money in the budget.

Teachers were also ignored and left out in this government's never-ending search for nickels and dimes. When teachers told this government the real costs of operating the education system in the pandemic, they were simply brushed off. Teachers have been asked to seamlessly switch back and forth between remote and in-class learning, they have been given public orders and social distancing requirements but almost no support to actually make it happen in classes.

When teachers were dropping out from being overworked, high levels of stress and COVID-19, what did this government do? They would not even spend a dime to support them. In fact, they underspent by \$8 million during a pandemic, when teachers needed it most.

Not only that, Deputy Speaker, but they siphoned money away from other people—other people who need it right now. They've cut funding to universities and colleges, they've raised tuition year after year for students who are struggling and being left unsupported by this Pallister government. This government even used this pandemic as an opportunity to privatize the industrial training centre.

With every important project going on, like privatizing education institutions and public services, I guess this government hasn't had time to work out its vaccine plan. It's clear that vaccination just isn't a priority of this Progressive Conservative government, Deputy Speaker. When they should've been getting Manitobans vaccinated en masse, they've been attacking the people that they're supposed to help.

They must have been—there must have been no time for this Premier to work on the vaccination plan when he's been so busy spending millions of dollars

to get his friend, Brad Wall, to rubble–rubber stamp his government plan to privatize Manitoba Hydro in an expensive report–\$2 million that could've been used to fight this pandemic and get Manitobans vaccinated in a timely manner—a report, I'll add, that willfully covered up billions of dollars worth of transactions.

* (16:00)

And to add insult to injury, Deputy Speaker, the government has froze wages of civil servants, school staff and Hydro workers. How can anyone possibly justify taking money off of—as the government always says—kitchen tables of workers who are doing their best to serve the people of this province and feed their families?

I don't have an answer to that question, Deputy Speaker, and honestly, I don't think the Premier (Mr. Pallister) does either. This pandemic has been hard on all of us, and it's definitely been a test of this Premier and his government's leadership, and there's definitely been a lack of it.

Well, Deputy Speaker, they get an F from me, and they get an F from nurses, teachers, front-line workers, seniors and Manitobans. If there was an election called today, this government would be kicked to the curb.

This government has failed; they've attacked working families with a myriad of cuts while giving themselves pay raises—pay raises during a pandemic. When families are struggling, have lost their jobs, some have lost their homes and are now homeless, they give themselves raises.

They're continuing to cut health care and education while nurses and teachers are working themselves half to death every day and showing up back to work in the morning anyways, because they care about Manitobans, something that this government should take a lesson from them.

Life is more expensive for the average Manitoban family under this government.

Despite all that, this government and the Premier still have the audacity to claim that they're doing a good job, that they're actually doing what it takes to keep—to help Manitobans through this pandemic with as few deaths or as little damage as possible.

In times of crisis, leadership makes a difference. That's why we, the NDP, have focused on helping people. We know that a fast and strong recovery for Manitoban—for Manitoba is possible, and the

Manitoba NDP can be trusted to deliver with a—with compassion and focus that this government just doesn't have.

They've—we're focussed on listening to educators, Hydro workers, nurses, front-line workers and all kinds to create a plan that's focused on helping everyday Manitobans.

For some reason, this government thinks that increases to the health-care budget—don't even match the rate of inflation are something to brag about.

Underfunding health care, especially during a pandemic, Deputy Speaker? I was hoping I wouldn't have to explain basic math to the Premier or to his ministers, but a funding increase below the rate of inflation is actually a de facto cut.

Maybe if the government had remembered that before they created the budget, they would—have decreased the budget for acute-care emergency services by \$13 million in a pandemic. It's frankly irresponsible to cut funding to health care while COVID-19 is being contracted by hundreds every day in our province and many lives have been lost.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they've also froze both the Physician Recruitment and Retention program, the nursing recruitment and retention initiative. We desperately need health-care workers to stay in our province right now. Vacancy rates have been skyrocketing up, up, up, and health-care workers are draining out of energy and of this province to work where they'll get paid better and treated properly, yet this government has frozen recruitment and retention programs, signalling that they lack the leadership to care about such a desperately important issue.

We would not make the same mistake, Deputy Speaker.

The government didn't even bother to mention the Maples Personal Care Home or the review and recommendations that followed the deadly outbreak in October last year. Come to think of it, Deputy Speaker, there's actually no mention at all of home-care outbreaks in Manitoba. Fifty-six elderly Manitobans died unnecessarily in the Maples care home outbreak, and yet this budget doesn't even mention them. I couldn't blame a family member of one of those 56 elderly Manitobans if they took that to mean that this government simply doesn't care.

We need to start caring about our elderly folks in this—in Manitoba. They have helped to bring this province to where it is today.

It's easy to see why this government failed so miserably, and why, in their COVID-19 response. They spent five years making constant cuts to our health-care system year after year after year; they've closed so many emergency rooms, urgent-care centres, QuickCare clinics, community clinics/vital outpatient programs, vital—or, privatized parts of our health-care system and thrown out vital health-care infrastructure right before the pandemic.

The Premier cut 10 ICU beds a year before the pandemic. If only we had those beds now, more Manitobans might be alive today. The Premier cut 56 in-patient surgical beds after the pandemic started. I guess the Premier thought Manitoba would be some—would, for some reason, be exempt from a global pandemic the likes of which the world hasn't seen in 100 years.

But, of course, Deputy Speaker, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has shown time after time that he is failing to show leadership, especially during a pandemic, and has put private for-profit in front of Manitobans.

This Premier has cut 131 beds across Winnipeg in 2019 and then cut another 27 beds just as the virus was hitting us. Through his actions, Deputy Speaker, the Premier left us woefully unprepared for a pandemic that is claiming so many loved ones' lives.

We know that Manitobans are proud of the fact that our health-care system is based on compassion, not on profit. In this province we give everyone the care they need, when they need it, because—and I cannot stress this enough—it's the right thing to do. We here in the NDP know what Manitobans want from their health-care system: not a brutal, uncaring private health-care regime like the one this government seems to be so focused on bringing in.

The problem with this Premier and his health-care system go beyond this pandemic and this budget. In his first term, the Premier and his government closed three emergency rooms—Victoria, Seven Oaks, Concordia—and 18 ICU beds; closed Misericordia urgent care centre; closed five QuickCare clinics; closed primary community clinics; closed the Mature Women's Centre; closed obstetrics in Flin Flon; privatized Lifeflight; pushed for the closure of 26 of 53 Dynacare locations; began closing 23 EMS stations; closed CancerCare locations at Seven Oaks and Concordia and closed the community IV clinics at the Transcona ACCESS Centre.

Deputy Speaker, that's not even touching on the cancellation of the planned health projects. How can this Premier, in good consciousness, tell us that he's trying to build for the future when he's actually sabotaging new initiatives to improve care for Manitobans?

This government has cancelled a new facility for CancerCare Manitoba, a private care home in Lac du Bonnet, a St. Vital primary care ACCESS clinic, The Pas primary care clinic, the Bridgewater primary care clinic.

Even worse, Deputy Speaker, the Premier shows absolutely no sign of slowing down. I mentioned the \$13-million cut to acute-care emergency services already. Well, he's also closed ERs in Roblin and Grandview for months. He even proposed a permanent closure for some emergency rooms across rural Manitoba.

Deputy Speaker, we're talking about the lives of Manitobans. They're being put in danger by this government's reckless agenda of austerity. It's unacceptable, and Manitobans will not stand for it.

Communities in rural Manitoba need their health-care facilities. If ambulance drivers have to travel an hour or more to get care for a patient, it may be too late to save them.

The operating room in Flin Flon was closed in April 2020 and five nurses were simply fired. No wonder that nurses are leaving our province for better jobs when this government treats them like that. Shameful.

It's obvious to everyone that this government's intentions are to reduce and cut and privatize as much of Manitoba's wonderful health-care system as possible, if they can, before Manitobans throw them out of office. But it's time to put that agenda aside and do the right thing and shell out the money to save lives. People before profit. When people are dying, when seniors are living in fear, there are more important things than saving money.

As I mentioned, this budget doesn't even mention the Maples Personal Care Home outbreak or the review recommendations that exposes government's absolute failures. The disaster was preventable, Deputy Speaker. It happened because this government cut long-term care and left seniors vulnerable.

Personal-care homes have seen an increase in the basic cost of accommodations of over \$5,000 per year under this government. Despite that, this government

thought it was a good idea to cut \$2 million from personal-care funding between 2017 and 2019. No wonder why they were unprepared when the pandemic strike—struck.

We were all left unprepared for this pandemic, Deputy Speaker. Manitobans were blindsided and left with not enough financial support from this government and nothing but uncertainty with constantly changing and often confusing public health orders.

For many low-income Manitobans, those with precarious work or minimum-wage front-line workers in particular, the economic fallout the government has allowed to happen has been devastating—devastated. Many have ended up on the streets or in severe debt because of this government's mismanagement, yet they still have made no attempt to fix these problems.

* (16:10)

The Families Department underspent their budget by \$36 million. We know that their money—that money comes from—where that money comes from, Madam Speaker. When low-income Manitobans rely on EIA through their lockdown layouts collecting—collected CERB, often mistakenly or due to a misunderstanding of the extremely complex requirements, this government punished them. They cut them off. They've clawed back their EIA dollars from individuals and families who desperately needed them and directly left them homeless on the street, which has increased our homelessness population in this province and left them living in bus shacks.

It's hard to believe that a government is supposed to be caring for Manitobans through a pandemic could be this cruel. However, Deputy Speaker, it makes sense that you remember that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) described the EIA program as a crutch.

This budget also freezes Children's disABILITY Services, actively decreases financial assistance by early—for nearly 0.8 per cent and cuts collective funding for child protection and CFS agencies by 1 per cent. Child welfare has a—tantamount in this highly uncertain times. Instead, the government is lumping many different important programs and funding streams together with the thoughtless block funding and forcing agencies to put dollars before prevention and making families—not having families look at reunification plans, because they don't have the dollars, simply because this Province has put money before children.

With all that in mind, no wonder that legislation is buried in BITSAs and has taken away the rights of

children to sue the government for stolen funds which were designated for children in care. Shame. This government is obviously completely careless when it comes to our children. They blame human error for a breach that shared the personal information of about 9,000 vulnerable children in Children's disABILITY Services.

Parents are right to be worried. Instead of doing the sensible and right thing by investing in non-profit daycare, the government is leaving parents and kids out in the cold. Of the \$18 million this government set aside for home daycares, this government spent only \$63,000. The government watched and did nothing as thousands of child-care spaces remained closed because they simply didn't have enough support or provincial funding to make it through. Working parents and kids need these spaces, and this list just continues to rise under this Premier and his minister.

The government has expected working parents to return to their jobs but just didn't do enough to ensure that child-care spaces could operate. It's simply—Deputy Speaker, kids should come first, and their parents. If a parent can't find child care, they can't go to work. It's this kind of short-sightedness in this pandemic response-budget—in this decisions made by this government for years—that have put us in the position that we're in.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Even before this pandemic, this government had inexplicitly put child-care centres in their sights, with constant funding cuts year over year, with these kinds of decisions that cause immense stress on Manitobans. Yet, our mental health services are still stuck, underfunded and underappreciated by this government. It's true that, after years of pushing from the NDP government, this government has finally created, specifically, a focus on mental health. However, the \$342 million transferred from the department of health and wellness for programming service represents only about 5.4 per cent of the total health-care budget.

For some reason, this government loves to refer to the VIRGO report from 2018, despite the fact that they have completely failed to implement recommendations of this report, one of which was to increase funding for mental health and addictions services to 9 per cent of the health-care budget.

The new department is a nice gesture, Deputy Speaker, but addiction workers have been calling for far too long for this Premier to actually take real

action. Enough mothers have lost their children to this poorly handled epidemic of addictions, and this Premier has done nothing but congratulate himself.

The 2021-22 budget doesn't even include the words harm reduction one time, and we're expected to believe that this government takes the issue seriously. Even the City of Winnipeg's police chief, Danny Smyth, said himself, our city is in a real crisis. If you look around, you see evidence of meth and meth use all over, around us and in all corners of the city. The president of the Manitoba Nurses Union, Darlene Jackson—she also said the same thing, that there's four to five patients per shift with meth-related issues. They need help, Deputy Speaker, and this Province has a duty to act.

And we will not be supporting this budget. This Province—or, this government needs to go back to the drawing board and they need to make real investments that are going to make meaningful impacts in Manitobans' lives.

Miigwech.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): Now, a few positive comments about the 2021 budget that we're debating here, and I will keep my comments mainly focused on our department here. We have a very diversified department.

But first of all, I guess I should say, Madam Speaker, that I certainly thank the voters of Midland constituency for their continued support. This was—2019 was my fourth election, and I certainly enjoy support of the—of my constituents and try to serve them in the best manner that I can.

I should note, too, that in another six days, it will be five years since we came into government and I had the honour and—of being asked to serve in Cabinet from the start. I was in Infrastructure and then in Growth, Enterprise and Trade, and then, in October of 2019, moved over to the newly created Department of Agriculture and Resource Development.

And as I said, it's a very diversified department. We've got agriculture, mining, petroleum, forestry, fisheries, wildlife, Crown lands, water management, and now, just recently, we have taken on the conservation officers that serve our province so well in managing our game and fish populations across the province. And we—they have—conservation officers certainly fit in with our forestry and fisheries and wildlife divisions within the department.

And certainly, when this budget was announced last week, talking to my constituents, they are certainly excited to hear about the education tax 25 per cent reduction this year, 25 per cent reduction next year, for our homes, for our farmlands, for our businesses. This has been—we're one of the last provinces to still tax property for education and we're going to move it into general revenues—or, general expenses, where it should be, and it's about time that we did it. We said we would do it. We keep our word when we make campaign promises.

Certainly, there are record investments in Health, Education, Families and Infrastructure, but I'm going to—as I said, I'm going to concentrate my comments mainly on the department which I have the honour to lead. And in terms of agriculture, 2020 was certainly a record year in many ways and a memorable year for everyone.

In spite of COVID and the pandemic which—it's been with us over a year now—our farm communities, our agricultural producers, food processors have kept working throughout the entire pandemic. We never missed a beat in this.

I want to give a shout-out to companies like HyLife and Maple Leaf Foods, who, very early in the pandemic, set up protocols for their workers. They set up extra facilities to be able to keep social distancing when workers were on breaks, so: Plexiglas between work stations; testing—temperature testing their employees when they came to work; and extra pay for employees to come to work and—because there was a lot of anguish from everyone, and certainly, the workers were the same.

I think our Health Department actually learned a lot from these two companies in setting up the protocols for employees, and so I give a big shout-out to them. We never missed any production that we saw. Production stopped and slowed in other provinces because of COVID outbreaks, and that never happened in Manitoba to date, and hopefully, it remains the same.

*(16:20)

Our farmers had a very good year this past year. We had very good crops, very good quality. Prices are—for crops and livestock right now, are unprecedented. The movement of grain in this past year that our two main railways have been bragging about how much grain they've been moving, and that's thanks to the farmers to be able to deliver it there, too. And I'm sure the milder winter helped the rail companies to

move it, but it—grain movement's been good, prices are strong. Prices are strong into this year, when they can forward contract in there.

Cattle prices did take a hit during the early days of COVID, when there was some down—plants that were down in other provinces, but they've come back strong and even pork prices right now are reaching some record highs right now. So, it's good news in the ag industry.

We've—have very good participation in our Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation. In crop insurance, we have something like 90 per cent participation. We made improvements to the forage insurance, in order to have more producers participate in forage insurance, which is very timely, given the dry conditions that are out there. I know people think that it's snow now and it's—we're past the drought. We're not past the drought by any means. It takes much more than one precipitation event to get past that.

We've increased our wildlife compensation to over \$4 million now, to help compensate for damages that wildlife create to crops and affecting livestock.

We made changes to the AgriStability program. We removed the reference margin limit and I should mention, too, that in the amendment that the NDP brought in to the budget, section X is wrong. They accuse us of cutting risk management. We've actually improved risk management through the AgriStability. And they accuse us again, which is not true, of cutting funding for Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation. That is not true. There—the funding remains the same and slightly increased into MASC and the programs are running strong in those programs.

We are—our protein strategy is very well. We are being recognized worldwide as a global supplier of sustainable protein and that's something that we need to brag about here in Manitoba. Merit Functional Foods has just now completed their first commercial production of protein—canola-based protein products. They built, in CentrePort, a plant that's gone up really in record time and now is producing food-grade protein products. And it's a very specialized protein product in—that they are producing and, of course, companies like Roquette, the pea protein plant—world's largest plant—pea-processing plant, is up and getting into production now. So this is—it's exciting times to be in agriculture right now.

I know—I was speaking to one of the grain companies yesterday and again today. They're very excited about—very bullish on where the markets will be in the next two to three years. They see food as a major economic driver in our—in Manitoba and across the food production industry, and also, not just in primary production but in food processing, too.

It's a good time to be in agriculture and we certainly thank our agricultural community for being so strong this year, to help keep the economy going in Manitoba, when many other businesses were really seeing tough times through this past year.

Our mining and petroleum industry continues to grow in Manitoba. Petroleum industry has remained relatively stable in Manitoba despite the drop in oil prices, which has affected provinces like Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Our mining industry is growing by leaps and bounds. There is over 10 projects right now that are under way, being developed across the North, as well as, you know, when you talk about mining, most people think about Vale and HudBay and 'tantium'—'tantium' mine out of—by Bissett, but there is—they're continuing to grow. Vale is going to invest, I believe it's somewhere around \$25 million this year in another drilling project, core sampling, to expand their mine. And that's good news for Thompson. HudBay is shifting their operations away from Flin Flon over to Snow Lake.

But it's good news there; they just can't get enough workers. And if you are able to travel in the North—which is very difficult these days—and try to get a lodge near Snow Lake, you're out of luck because the workers are taking up all the lodges—lodging that's in and around Snow Lake. So it's good news for that community there, too.

The Chambers of Commerce is doing our mineral development fund, which is funding of many mining—prospective mining projects across the North. The quarry rehab program for rehabilitation for our spent gravel pits and limestone pits, we started again last year, we—there—we had to suspend it. The Auditor General did an investigation into that, which we look forward to having that report come to committee. We've made many changes to the quarry rehab program; got it started last year, and we'll be running it again this year and mindful of the recommendations brought forward by the Auditor General.

Forestry: we've got four main companies in Manitoba. They've been doing well. If you happen to

go and buy a piece of lumber these days, the price of lumber has gone through the roof, and it's difficult for those who are building, but it sure has been good for our four main companies in Manitoba that do lumber and paper products; it's been very good. There's two more companies that are in early stages of forestry development in Manitoba, and we look forward to continuing to work with them.

We've got conservation and GROW Trusts that are—and our watershed districts that are doing tremendous work across the province in terms of water management. They are now the experts that the agricultural community goes to, to the watershed districts, to develop projects for retaining water—retaining wetlands, and it's been working very well and that—conservation and GROW Trusts mean that they have stable funding going forward. We've increased the funding on that—in that department too; there's more municipalities that are joining the watershed districts, so it is good news in there, too.

Our fisheries is continuing to grow. The commercial fisheries is steady; it saw some real challenges in markets when COVID first hit, but the markets are starting to come back. But what's really fundamental to the commercial industry right now is eco-certification, and if you're not doing eco-certification on your supply of fish to the market, you could be out of a market, and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation has finally realized that, and it's starting to move. But we're working with our fishers across the province to—we're—we put more money into places like Cedar Lake and Lake Winnipeg in order to work towards eco-certification. It is a long step to get there, but they've started that, and we're trying to maintain these markets by moving to eco-certification.

The recreational fishing industry's taken off. When people couldn't travel to wherever their destination was, they've taken up fishing or e-licences; we had record number of fishing licences last year. Go to Hecla Island or go to Gimli on any weekend, and you're lucky to get your boat in the water because the lineups are pretty long there. But we've also brought in more conservation measures in order to keep the stable fish populations in these lakes. And so we look forward to even more conservation measures coming forward.

The wildlife file is—you have—Manitoba lodges and outfitters have been really hard hit because they were very dependent on US hunters coming up, whether it's for waterfowl or whether it's for bear. But

they—Manitobans have stepped up there somewhat to fill in the gap, and we certainly want to continue to work with them. We've modernized regulations in there. And with the conservation officers, we also have a \$300,000-budget increase in the conservation officers in order to do enhanced enforcement against—and this will be for aerial surveillance, against that illegal practice of night hunting. It is a shameful, shameful process to go out there with spotlights and—it's unsafe, and there are—you know, our Indigenous community still has the rights to do that, but it is—we've limited that into where they can actually do that in order to keep safety.

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I'm calling for some respect here, please.

Order, please.

There are times when respect for this Chair is sorely lacking, and I'm very disappointed to see that, because this Chair represents something far bigger than just a person sitting in it. When I stand, I'm representing something that has been in place for hundreds and hundreds of years, and it is about democracy. And while not everybody's going to agree with each other—and that's okay, because that's what this is about, is, you know, opportunities to be able to debate and put ideas forward, and it's—people don't always agree, and I encourage respectful, exuberant debate.

What I don't like—and I don't find it's very helpful—is some of the roads we're going down lately. That has just really put a, I don't know, a black cloud over some of the proceedings in this House, and it's very unfortunate, because it's—you know, when a Speaker stands, it's—there's supposed to be respect, and that has really, really dwindled in the last while.

Very disappointed to see that. It's being noticed by the public as well, and I do hear comments back from that. People are quite astonished at the lack of respect and civility in this Chamber, and I'm just going to encourage people, please, when you are in the House, I know most of us wouldn't like to be heckled down, and, you know, so, in turn, don't heckle back.

And, you know, all of us need to remind ourselves what this is all about and the significance. We are just placekeepers here. We don't own that position and that title and all that comes with it. We are here elected to represent people. We are placekeepers. We're here as

their voices, and to think we're anything grander than that is a fallacy.

We're here because people believed in us in an election, and I think we need to rise higher than the bar is right now, rise higher and be more kind to each other, as they're saying, in—you know, with the pandemic. And that certainly needs to be reflected upon in this Chamber, because, you know, without rules, we have chaos. And that's why in schools, there's rules; in boardrooms, there's rules.

There's Robert's Rules of Order; there's rules in all of our lives. And the reason we have rules is so that there is no chaos; we don't deteriorate to a level that is below the expectations of the public.

And—just remind everybody, you're all here representing thousands of people, and they don't want to see this. They don't like what is happening right now. And I'm going to encourage everybody to bring decorum back into this building, because that is really important.

Mr. Pedersen: There is only one moose population in Manitoba, and with that, we're—have a shared management committee so that there'd be—everyone can get together, whether you're Indigenous, whether you're non-Indigenous, a hunter, a non-hunter, a tourist who wants to see moose on—in—when they tour Manitoba.

We're going to use the shared management committee to be able to build that moose population back to where it's sustainable, where we can have a limited hunt again for those who wish to do that, and also for those who want to see if there will actually be moose out there. Moose are under a lot of pressure, both naturally and from human and climate change. It's all affecting our moose population.

So we're looking forward to having this shared management committee up and running and with everyone's involvement.

Madam Speaker, one of the very exciting things that we got going on right now, and we'll look forward to an announcement very soon, is our water strategy. Water is—it's the staple of life, and there is many uses of water, whether it is—talking about the quality of water—whether it's for recreational, potable, industrial, for agricultural. We need to manage our water supply sustainably and making sure that we have both quantity and quality, and that's certainly been brought home. We see that in years of flooding and we're in the middle of a drought right now and we need to have that.

So we'll look forward to getting all Manitobans' input into the water strategy, whether you—for whatever use you have for water or whatever you think of water. We want to encourage everyone to be able to participate in our water strategy so that we have the foundation for a strong province going forward, whether it is for whatever use you feel is for water in Manitoba.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I just want to end again on a very positive note. I was involved in 4-H back many, many years ago, and I was a 4-H leader for many years, and when we announced a \$1-million trust for the 4-H for bursaries and scholarships, this is—what better way can we help our young people, our 4-H youth that come out of the 4-H program that can now apply for a scholarship or bursary in order to continue their education and be citizens of Manitoba—continue to be citizens of Manitoba and participate in our provincial economy.

And so with that, Madam Speaker, we—I feel that this is just a very positive budget for Manitoba during very tough times for everyone. I wish everyone to stay safe, keep your social distance, do your handwashing. We all know that wear your mask; we all know the routine, but we will get through this and Manitoba will be ahead in economic development from many other jurisdictions because of the actions of this government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): It's a pleasure to be speaking today, this afternoon, in debate. And I'm very happy to be speaking on this budget. It's, you know, interesting to be speaking on such an important topic as our annual provincial budget and think about the choices that a government would have to make in order to make the decisions on how we, as a province, spend our money.

And, you know, listening to the previous speaker, the minister, speak about agriculture and what that means, you know, it makes me reflect on my time working in agriculture and the history that had for me and what it meant to my career.

And, you know, there are some disappointments, I think, from the agriculture sector on producers and the farmers in this year's budget, namely, the closure of many MASC offices. I know that when I worked with producers and farmers they often told me that they were looking for services closer to home, not further away.

So closing down offices makes it more difficult, more challenging for producers to get the services from our province, and I think that's a disappointment from producers in the budget.

Additionally, I think it's also a challenge that, you know, that I've heard from many producers, is talking about, you know, getting their grain to the—market and to mill and moving it from their farm out to the grain elevator, and that's a challenge. And what makes that easier is having a strong infrastructure plan, a strong plan to invest in roads and highways to make it easier for producers to get their grain to the elevator so that it can be sold and marketed across the world.

And that's something that I've heard, and I know is important to our producers, but, again, has been a failure for this government to provide an adequate infrastructure plan to make it easier for producers who are doing a remarkable job over the last many years in producing grain products and livestock products for, not just our local economy, but for our Canadian and international sales and market.

* (16:40)

And I wish that this budget showed a true investment in infrastructure to make it easier for those producers.

And then third on the agriculture sector, I think it's also important to know that many rural communities and many farm families are very concerned about keeping their tradition in their farm community, in their rural community and maintaining that aspect of that family farm.

And how do you go about having that family farm and that rural culture when so many services for families are being centralized and being taken out of rural communities? Things like having, you know, access to child care for families on farms, things like having a good quality education and things like having access to health-care services on a level that is close to and available for farm families.

You know, we've seen this right across the board where rural health amenities have been closed and some educational facilities have been closed all because of the priorities and the choices this government has made to make it more difficult for rural families. And it's a bit disappointing, especially knowing that so many of the members on government side are—represent those rural Manitobans. And it's disappointing that they've made those choices to make their lives of their constituents a little bit more difficult. And, you know, I would urge the minister to

kind of heed those words, because it would improve the lives of some of his constituents.

But I'll move on, Madam Speaker, to a slightly different subject that I'd like to speak about regarding this year's budget, and that's mainly around leadership and the choices that a leader would have to make in order to present this type of budget and the choices being made in such a difficult and unprecedented year where we faced a global pandemic.

People have been confronted with life and death choices and life and death issues with friends and family members, people close to them. Even if it's not them, they've been hearing this daily in the news and it's brought not only a lot of angst and stress in people's individual lives, but it's also been collectively, as us—as community members in my community in St. Vital and our residents—and residents across our province who have experienced this know that the stress level and the things that they've had to deal with on a daily basis have been more challenging this year than in any year before.

So I commend them for their hard work, their steadfastness, their willingness to understand and respect and obey the rules that we have to keep all of us safe; of the guidelines that our health officials have put forward. And so I'm thankful for those community members who have taken the extra steps in their own lives to listen and show leadership in those regards when it comes to respecting the health authorities, keeping themselves, their families and their communities safe.

And in my community in St. Vital, we have many leaders who have stepped up. And I think as—particularly of the leaders at one of our local institutions called Teen Stop Jeunesse. Teen Stop Jeunesse has many strong workers. They work to help young people who might need assistance as they're getting older. You know, they've got a fantastic staff there, people like Pat, Sandy, Margaret, Kelly-Anne, Celina, Miranda, Mario, who all work hard every day to make the lives of young people better.

They work in such programs as maintaining a line—an access line—24 hours, where kids, young people, can call if they have challenges or difficulties. They have computer labs; they have homework clubs; life skills for young people. They have transitions to employment to make—provide more opportunities for these young people to truly find their path and to find their footing as they're growing up.

They have rotary club—rotary leadership, which I'm proud to have said that I've actually met with and spoken with on a few occasions. Last time was about the questions over the past summer over racial and racial inequality, which was very much and still is a topic of conversation in the news. And I was proud to speak with them to share my own personal experiences with that issue, and those are some of the same experiences that they have and will have in their own lives. And so it was very—a proud moment for myself to have an opportunity to speak with them. But also, I'm happy that these people are having the opportunity to now make a better path and make better choices and better themselves and their communities around them.

You know, Teen Stop also works on fantastic ways to engaging youth through their School of Rock. And this School of Rock helps to bring people in through music by bringing students and young people into this School of Rock by teaching them music school skills. By teaching them how to work together as a band, they really form a community but beyond that, they actually help them engage in system, help them to find connection in the community which allows them to, at a later stage, be willing to give back to that community, and it's such a positive cycle of giving and benefiting the community. They also run youth co-ops, visual arts and crafts and so much good work that comes out of Teen Stop. So I'm very thankful for all they do to help our community in St. Vital.

Now, Madam Speaker, you know, this budget, again, has many very different challenges for people in our community and I think among them is mental health. And mental health is a very serious issue that, you know, we now have a minister responsible who is, you know, taking on that challenge of trying to tackle the variety of mental health issues that our community has faced over the past many, many years. But I think it's really escalated in terms of a conscious issue that our society has been talking about over the last few years, never more highlighted than in this year.

The changes that people have had to go through, not only in their personal life but in their work life and in their family life—whether it's education for kids, whether it's a change of employment, maybe lost employment; maybe it's working from home for many people—all these changes, regardless of what it would be for people's lives but especially because these are, at many times, critical changes, and necessary changes add stress and worry into people's lives

which, as we know, Madam Speaker, add to many mental health challenges in our communities.

And that's why, Madam Speaker, I'm so glad that in St. Vital, we have fantastic mental health supports. We have a fantastic organization in St. Vital called Sara Riel. Sara Riel is a mental health institution that provides fantastic services for residents not just in St. Vital but right across our province.

Tara, David, Cameron, Willy and Danielle of Sara Riel work so hard to provide our community with supports that will help them overcome mental illness and their mental health challenges. You know, they provide others with diagnoses, help them prevent—get rid of the stigma of mental health. They provide them hope when they need it. And, you know, these are not just things that they'll learn on a one-time, but will help them on their journey dealing with mental health issues as they go on in their life. They provide more than just a one-time benefit for mental health but ongoing support.

One of the programs that they provide that I think is very needed now and has been used by more Manitobans in this past year than any other year is their Seneca Warm Line. It's a 24-hour warm line, Madam Speaker, that provides any caller with mental health resources when they call there. They are getting the services to help them stay and be functioning as positive members in our community by calling this 24-hour line.

Not only do they get the help they need when they call, but they're actually going to be speaking to—when they call—people who have had mental health illnesses and challenges themselves. And the workers who work on this line have had those challenges and are best able to help other people work through these challenges and find success and find fulfilment through these challenges because they can speak through first-hand knowledge when they're dealing with mental health issues.

Now I'm glad that the Seneca Warm Line has been active. They get over 1,000 calls a month, Madam Speaker, over the past year, and to help tens of thousands of Manitobans this past year. They also work with mental health counselling and case management, and as they do this, they're also looking at ways to get these people into employment services and community mentorship.

These programs that Sara Riel provides for our community are needed now more than ever, and so it's important as a community that we respect their work,

we help to encourage their work and ensure that it can be properly funded so that it can be here for Manitobans now, Madam Speaker, when we need them most, but also into the future, so that we're going to be sure that they'll be available for us when we need them again. So I'm very thankful for all the staff at Sara Riel.

*(16:50)

And now, Madam Speaker, what we're doing here in the budget is very important—a very important debate. And that debate cannot be ignored when it comes down to priorities that this government is making on every decision when it comes to the budget.

You know, I was out for a walk recently with my kids in St. Vital, beautiful day. It was gorgeous over the weekend. You know, it's hard to remember the warm weather when we're experiencing such cold weather right now, right? Isn't it? *[interjection]* Yes, it sure is a long winter when we get snowfalls in the middle of April, but I remember the walk and it was just a few days ago, on Saturday. We decided to walk with my kids down the Bois-des-esprits and it was beautiful.

It was gorgeous weather out there. There were many other people walking through St. Vital and enjoying the day. And, you know, on our way back, you know, we saw some neighbours, you know, across the way. And I thought about, you know, my kids and their kids and really put into perspective some of the reasons that we come and do this job; to represent our communities, put into perspective some of the things that we're working toward to build a better Manitoba for our future when you're looking and spending time and with our kids.

It really got me thinking about what kind of future we're building. What kind of future is there going to be there for my kids and other kids in the future? And it—you know, I can't help but thinking about the supports that we're going to be putting in place for them. Choices and priorities that this government is making to choose to go away from some of the supports that I think would help young people, like my kids and like my neighbour's kids and, like all other kids in St. Vital, such as the choice that they're making in early child care.

I think that directly goes to make the life more difficult for children who are trying to prepare to get into—trying to prepare themselves for the K-to-12 system. You know, there's studies out there that show

that the more prepared a child is in early childhood education, the better they'll be able to perform in kindergarten, and that has a direct correlation with their graduation rates in grade 12.

Now, if you're thinking about that and you want to have a successful K-to-12 system, why not put strong investments in early childhood—'childhood' education? Why not, right? Making strong investments, ensuring that all families can get affordable, accessible child care, quality child care, where their children have opportunities to learn and grow individually, will prepare them to enter into our K-to-12 system. And as they enter that system, providing them steps such as smaller classroom sizes and classrooms that have the supply so that teachers don't need to buy them on their own, will allow those students to be best prepared to graduate and have the best tools to succeed in our education system; by providing those kids resources, such as meal programs when they need it in school, such as trying to alleviate poverty in their community so that they have the tools to succeed in school. And the backbone to—the backbone of success to succeed in school allows these children to only further the heights that they could reach. And I feel like this budget, as presented, fails on all those accounts.

Sadly, the resources aren't put in our early childhood education. They're not put in our K-to-12 system when it comes to investing in meal programs, when it comes to alleviating poverty, when it comes to addressing housing challenges, which students face. And when I think about the kids and the people in my community in St. Vital, I can't help but feel like the future that the kids in my neighbourhood are going to be looking at in 10 years because of the priorities that this government has been making in this budget and previous budgets will have a significant detrimental impact to their futures. And it's for that reason that I have much concern.

And, you know, I think about, you know, my neighbourhood and the different parts of my neighbourhood, and I can't help but think about one very unique part of my neighbourhood and that is around Marlene Street. And that is the Marlene Street Resource Centre. They have—provide a fantastic resource centre for one community in my neighbourhood, Marlene Street, with some fantastic workers there: Angela and Samia *[phonetic]*, and Angela and Samia *[phonetic]* work very hard every day to provide services for that community through the Marlene Street community resource centre. You know, they, you know, are funded through United

Way to provide services for people who live in the neighbourhood.

You know, there are over 80 families housed in that development, nearly 40 per cent are Indigenous families and 16 per cent are newcomers.

You know, often, there are many single-parent families in that—in the neighbourhood, but their vision there is to support young youth, adults and families to realize their capacity for growth and success. And they work very hard. The way they do that is by creating inviting spaces, respectful in all ways, inclusion and ensuring that there are safe environments for those families to come to the resource centre and get services that they need.

You know, some of these, you know, services are not just for the kids but for the adults who live there, such as, you know, the computer lab to help them with computer services, access to phone and printers and other technology and for—and working with them in a—frankly, in a non-judgmental way, in a way that is a confidential setting, that they have room to feel comfortable to engage in our community.

They also provide many youth programs, such as the junior girls' youth club, arts and crafts, boys' club and, you know, older boys' club. And these clubs help to ensure that our youth in that—in the Marlene Street community resource centre are going to be engaged in a positive way to help sure that they are going to make that community, while they're living there, a better place for all its residents.

For adults who are there—and like I said, there are many newcomers who live there, there are newcomer women connection programs. There are men outreach programs and family-positive programs and skill-building.

You know, these are all very essential for the Marlene Street area residents, and I'm so thankful that in St. Vital, we have Angela and Samia [*phonetic*] who work so hard for the Marlene Street community resource centre to make our community a better place.

Madam Speaker, finally, as I wrap up my budget debate, I am very thankful for all residents in Manitoba, specifically the ones in St. Vital, who have made the proactive choice to follow the health restrictions during the pandemic, who have made this the sacrifice in many regards in—whether it's to, you know, forgo a travel or a vacation, to maybe change their work habits and work more from home, to not go

out and take advantage of the beautiful amenities in St. Vital and throughout our province and choose to stay home and follow the health restrictions.

I am also looking forward to the continued—and hopefully expedited—progress of our vaccine rollout, so that so many more Manitobans can put this experience of the pandemic behind them and be—know that they are being as health conscious, as safe as they can.

So, Madam Speaker, with that, I thank you again for the opportunity to speak in budget debate. Thank you.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I know we're just going to get started here today, but I can always do it today and I can do it tomorrow, maybe, is—just say what a great privilege it is to represent the Dauphin constituency and acknowledge the real privilege to serve in this House and represent the region.

The budget is another solid and stable budget, without question, and it's especially important at a time when the world has been dealing with far-reaching effects of this global pandemic for over a year now.

I think it is very important that the budget is presented as a strong and stable protection budget, but it also has an eye on advancing our growth past COVID, and that's really important thing for us to consider. And, of course, there remains many uncertainties ahead, but we're—done an excellent job of—and I can say, for—in the Dauphin region especially, they've done a wonderful job of adhering to Dr. Roussin and Manitoba public health orders, the government of Manitoba and the Manitoba public health teams, and everybody's that been trying to help us get through this pandemic.

There's been tremendous amount of positive work and efforts made by all Manitobans, and I can certainly say Dauphin region has done an outstanding job of—through this time, and I think they're looking forward, just like everyone, to get past this and then move on to bigger and better things.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 18 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

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