

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
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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, May 18, 2021

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Pivniuk):** Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Introduction of bills. Committee reports. Tabling of reports. Ministerial statements.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Christian Brunel

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Christian Brunel has been a physical education teacher at Collège Béliveau for 13 years. He developed a passion for physical education through participation in school and community sports, both as an athlete and as a coach.

Last month, Christian was one of four LRSD physical education teachers honoured with the Physical and Health Educators of Manitoba Innovator Award for their leadership in the LRSD EdTech Mentorship Program. This initiative began in 2019 to incorporate technology into physical education programming, allowing students to develop a better understanding of their physical activity.

When the pandemic started, he was able to keep his students active from home because of the innovative uses of technology that he and the EdTech team had already developed.

Christian has also led the outdoor education program at Collège Béliveau since he began teaching in 2008. In this course, he leads students on a three-day backcountry camping, canoeing and hiking trip to promote understanding of the benefits of reconnecting with nature and appreciation of the natural beauty of our province. Under Christian's leadership, this program has become very popular at Collège Béliveau, with three quarters of the graduating class signing up every year.

Christian has adopted the Indigenous Circle of Courage as a holistic model in his teaching, encouraging students to develop the principles of generosity, independence, mastery and belonging. Christian's daily motivation is simply to get students moving, having fun and respecting one another.

Please join me today in congratulating Christian Brunel for his commitment to promoting youth physical activity—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister's time is up.

#### JoAnne Small

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Mr. Deputy Speaker—just waiting 'til he shows up.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Union Station?

**MLA Asagwara:** Sorry, the camera—I just wanted to wait 'til—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay, sure.

**MLA Asagwara:** Yes, yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I rise to celebrate my former teammate JoAnne Small, an incredible athlete, Union Station educator and recent inductee to the Manitoba Basketball Hall of Fame.

Originally from Bedford, Nova Scotia, JoAnne's success in basketball started young. She played for the junior national basketball team before being recruited to the University of Winnipeg Wesmen in 2000.

During her career, JoAnne was named top rookie, four-time Canada West all-star, First Team All-Canadian for three straight years, and Academic All-Canadian in each of her five years. JoAnne was the second-ever Wesmen to receive the Nan Copp Award for national player of the year in 2005; and that—her final year with the Wesmen, she also led the country in scoring, led the Wesmen to a runner-up finish at the national championships and became fourth place on the Wesmen all-time career scoring list with 3,082 points.

Last year, JoAnne was named one of U Sports Top 100 women's basketball players of the century, and today we celebrate her induction to the hall of fame.

I had the privilege of playing alongside JoAnne for three seasons, and I saw her drive and leadership first-hand. She's easily one of the most humble players that I know, and true to form, she says she considers herself fortunate to have played with so many great

athletes. I say we're fortunate to have played alongside JoAnne, a superstar athlete and superstar person.

These days, JoAnne is inspiring future generations of athletes as a guidance counsellor and coach at the University of Winnipeg Collegiate. Her passion has helped others go on to achieve their own notable successes.

I hope all members will join me today in congratulating JoAnne Small for her impressive career and lasting impact on the basketball community right here in Manitoba.

### **Aurora Farm**

**Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River):** Aurora Farm has been part of the St. Norbert landscape for many years. The farm boasts of a variety of activities and promotes well-being and health throughout the sale of their many environmentally friendly products.

Over the last 16 years, owner Louise May Campbell [*phonetic*] has grown a business from the many locally grown and farmed products on her farm. For years, people have been able to visit the farm and view the many animals, sample homemade products, browse the gift shop and learn an appreciation for the environment and how Louise May has blended business with eco-sustainability.

Aurora Farm has always run a small-scale garden food box program, featuring all the food products from the farm, such as garden produce, eggs, honey, preserves, dried herbs and goat-milk products. They wanted to expand and make a full-scale online farmers' market to feature as many Manitoba food producers as possible. Louise May reached out to fellow farmers' market friends and started an online market.

While being primarily a face-to-face operation, they continue to do as much as possible through their popular programs such as baby goat yoga, summer youth farm camp as well as personalized tours.

The success of the garden plots has welcomed many local gardeners. Now in its second year, there are over 20 gardeners planting a garden. In addition, Louise May has four acres of garden space that has been expanded to intensive food and medicinal herb crops.

When the pandemic began, Louise realized that to continue to offer products to Aurora Farm customers, the business model and an addition of products were necessary. One of their main products is goat-milk soap, which has a creamy, moisturizing and soothing quality which benefits hands suffering from the drying

effects of hand sanitizers. With Health Canada's approval, homemade hand sanitizer was sold to customers and donated to community organizations.

I want to acknowledge and applaud Louis May and Aurora Farm on their success. I encourage people to go the Aurora Farm website and check out her products.

### **Indigenous Consultation on Hydro Projects**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Last week, the Pallister government issued the final licences for Manitoba Hydro's Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg projects.

For decades, the Indigenous peoples living on the shores and traditional territories affected by these programs have seen their livelihoods, land, community and health suffer. The Augmented Flow Program has decreased local fish populations such as whitefish and sturgeon. To make matters worse, the remaining fish also contain concerning levels of mercury due to ongoing shore erosion.

Tataskweyak band councillor Robert Spence said that his people share the same fate as the sturgeon, and Les Dysart from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation has called granting the final licence a death sentence for his people.

The Minister of Conservation and Climate (Mrs. Guillemard) claimed her government did meaningful consultation; Indigenous communities have said the opposite.

What these communities asked for was not unreasonable: suspend the Augmented Flow Program, allow higher flows down the lower Churchill River, no more massive flushes, support measures to recover whitefish and sturgeon and—most importantly—meaningful say in the operation of the Churchill River Diversion.

The Pallister government had an opportunity to advance reconciliation, but they instead did what they always do: they ignored their constitutional obligations, went over the heads of concerned Manitobans and made the wrong decision.

The minister can withdraw the final licence and do the right thing by engaging in meaningful consultation, and she should do so today.

Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

The honourable member for River Heights, your mic is on mute.

### Child-Care During Pandemic

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Okay. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I honour Brenda Still and all those who work in child care and early childhood education in River Heights and in Manitoba.

COVID-19 has been an incredible challenge. Indeed, providing services for young children and keeping the virus away from them and from staff has been a challenge far more than most of us can imagine. You can't put plastic shields around kids; you can't effectively use masks, and yet the service that child care and early childhood educators provide is essential in order that so many other essential workers can work, including those in health care, in grocery stores, in emergency services and in transportation, and in so—and so many other occupations. It is a challenge like no other.

\* (13:40)

There is also joy in spending time with young children. At the same time, it is a challenge to be flexible under constantly changing rules and often without nearly enough support early on when schools were closed and child-care centres were to remain open. It sent shockwaves through the system.

At another point, there were several changes in a single day in what was communicated. Yet, Brenda Still and others working in this area have persevered. And, more than this, Brenda has advocated at a Legislative Assembly committee, written op-eds, and made numerous calls, emails and texts to me, her MLA.

One of these was about the lack of attention in Bill 47 to school-aged children. In this quest, my colleague, the MLA for Tyndall Park, worked with child-care workers and was able to bring forward two critical amendments, which have been accepted by the government and are now part of Bill 47.

Thank you, Brenda, for bringing this to our attention. Thanks to all who work in child care and early childhood education in our province. You are helping raise the next generation. You are helping to ensure the future for all of us.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Time for oral questions.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Grace Hospital Staffing Concerns Request for Out-of-Province Workers

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Manitoba is the worst COVID hot spot in North America. That's evidence of a failed approach. And now those who care for Manitobans at the bedside—doctors, nurses, health-care professionals—are speaking out.

I'll table the latest letter that we've received. It highlights some very concerning failures of care, and I quote: Missed meds, rushed and skipped assessments, delayed hygiene, falls, bedsores are daily occurrences. End quote.

These failures of care are made worse by the fact that we're facing perhaps the most serious health crisis in our province's history. This is an emergency. It is particularly acute at the Grace Hospital.

Will the Premier take every step to immediately fix the staffing crisis at the Grace and province-wide?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** When Manitoba had the lowest case numbers, for the last number of weeks consecutively, outside of the Atlantic bubble, the member had nothing to say about the work of our vaccine team that was positive, nothing to say about the work of our health-care advisers that was positive, nothing at all.

Now he calls the system that protected Manitobans more effectively than any other jurisdiction from Nova Scotia to the west coast a failed system. I don't agree with that at all. He's talking about case numbers that are unaccountably high, and there are reasons for that. And, of course, this government's taken every step possible to prepare our province, to educate, to work hard, to get ready for the circumstances that have arrived.

And this is an unprecedented global pandemic, not a time to try to achieve some political advantage at the expense of fairness and objectivity.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** What I'm talking about is the fact that our ICUs are at a breaking point and front-line staff are crying out.

It's patients across the province who are feeling the impacts. It's their care that is at risk. I'll quote from the letter from these health-care workers again, and I quote: Code blues and seizures in the triage hallway

are common because nurses are stretched so thin they are unable to monitor patient conditions close enough to catch when a patient is declining. End quote.

This is a crisis made by political decisions. This is a crisis as a result of understaffing caused by health cuts made by this Cabinet. It's bad enough that none of the Cabinet speak out against this damage, but it's worse that other provinces, in a similar situation, asked for help. Ontario had the humility to ask for help.

Will the Premier ask other provinces to send front-line health-care workers to help relieve the stress in our hospitals?

**Mr. Pallister:** You know, we had the worst wait times in Canada under the NDP after four terms in office. Patients were walking out of emergency rooms, without being seen, in record numbers. People were being admitted after eight hours at the Grace Hospital and then shipped to another hospital to get care.

The health-care system that we inherited from the NDP was in a state of crisis. We took the advice they were given but didn't act on; we acted on it. We continue to act on the advice of medical experts now.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Manitobans are waiting for days in the hallway at the Grace right now.

What are health-care workers at the Grace saying right now? I'll quote: It is a humanitarian crisis that has been fabricated by a government who has cut funding to our health-care system and does not care about its people. End quote. *[interjection]* You can heckle me all you want, but those are the words of a nurse in west Winnipeg. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Those are the words from the front lines of our health-care system.

We need a government that will recognize that they have made a mistake so that they might have the ability to correct it as we deal with this third wave.

Will the Premier act? Will he ask other provinces and the federal government to send front-line health-care workers to help at our ICUs, including at the Grace Hospital?

**Mr. Pallister:** Our government has worked diligently and co-operatively with the leaders of every other

province and the federal government throughout this pandemic and before to address shared concerns about health care, about wait times. We're the only province that's actually making progress on reducing wait times, which is testament to the failure of the previous NDP administration.

But if the member would like to embark on an example—a good example of how to correct mistakes, he might rise in his place in his next preamble and apologize for breaking public health orders in the middle of a health crisis. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order.

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

### **Systemic Inequality in Health Care Establishment of Triage Protocol**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It's clear the situation in our ICUs is very serious. We're exceeding the worst numbers we saw during the second wave. That's why we urgently need a triage protocol to help physicians and front-line staff make decisions if our health-care system's capacity is exceeded.

Now, we first raised this issue in April 2020. I'll table that letter. We revisited the issue again at the height of the second wave in November 2020. And again, today we've called for the development of such a protocol. Here we are, it's the third wave, 15 months into the pandemic. Still there is no action on this front and no triage protocol.

That's surprising. That's very worrisome. These decisions should not be made at the last minute.

Why hasn't the Province developed a triage protocol to help those working in ICUs?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** You know, the ethical framework that was developed by our health-care leaders that has been in place for significant period of time—I believe a year or more—provides the framework necessary for people to make difficult decisions in the health-care system, as they do every day.

But I would say again to the member, the ethical framework that guides our physicians should guide us here, as well. And when I took my mask down to speak to Andrew Scheer, who I hadn't seen for a couple of years—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** The member is—the member failed to wear his mask, organized a rally which broke public health orders and has yet—has yet—speaking of an ethical framework—has yet to say that was a mistake.

Just say it was a mistake and be done with it. I think Manitobans are forgiving people. But deny it and set a horrible example for the rest of the people, including his own caucus members, and he has nothing to say.

That's too bad. The ethical framework of our health-care leadership is in place to make difficult decisions. Here, it isn't being followed by the NDP leader.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Now, we've seen throughout the pandemic that some Manitobans face worse outcomes with COVID because of systemic factors—seniors, Indigenous people, to name but a few.

Now, if our health-care system's capacity is exceeded, then those folks' challenges will be exacerbated.

Now, it's not fair to ask health-care workers to weigh these systemic impacts while they try and save lives at the bedside. That's why we need a system-wide response. That's why we need this triage protocol.

'Addressing' systemic inequality on health care is not something that should be done on the fly. We need action. Action would be to develop such a protocol with Indigenous health leaders, experts in seniors care and representatives from the disabilities community.

\*(13:50)

Will the Premier take action today?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member's a day late and a cup and a half short, Mr. Speaker.

We've taken action on this and many other issues—hundreds of other issues—throughout this pandemic. *[interjection]* The member may heckle from his seat, as he chooses to do, but it just shows the lack of structure, the recklessness of the member opposite.

I can only say, here's a quote: You can't ask Manitobans to go into another lockdown, leave folks out who are breaking these public health orders and have no consequences for these individuals. End quote. That's a quote from the NDP Justice critic, House leader and leader-in-waiting, who said that

those things should apply to others but I think also meant that they should apply to the NDP leader as well.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Now, only those folks who live with systemic inequity can fully appreciate its magnitude, and that's why those folks' voices need to be heard. Indigenous health leaders, gerontologists, those who advocate, people living in the community with disabilities. They deserve to have their say as these triage protocols are developed.

This is a conversation whose time is long past due and this issue is far too important to be decided behind closed doors. This issue is far too important to be decided on the fly. In this situation, let's make the protocol before it's needed, and only the government can make that happen.

Will the Premier engage with representatives from Indigenous communities, seniors groups and Manitobans with disabilities to develop triage protocols?

**Mr. Pallister:** Our willingness to engage in a meaningful way on meaningful topics of joint concern, of singular concern, with Indigenous communities has been well established, not just during this pandemic.

The tremendous co-operative work of our Indigenous team, in terms of rollouts of vaccines in northern communities—but the follow-up work, the educational work that we partnered on and I'm very proud of the—our Indigenous team's leadership and I'm also proud of our health-care leadership.

But I would emphasize to the member, the leadership on health-care decisions doesn't come from all-third-party groups. It comes from health-care experts.

#### **Grace Hospital Staffing Concerns Request for Out-of-Province Workers**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been in contact with nurses at the Grace Hospital. They provided me with this letter, which I table, and they explained that, due to rushed consolidation, they have patients waiting for days to get a hospital bed. And I quote: Waits reaching 50 hours are not uncommon. End quote.

Nurses are stretched too thin, patients are missing meals and there's gridlock in the hospital. The

Province's cuts and consolidation have left hospitals poorly prepared for this serious health emergency.

Will the minister intervene to address the serious concerns at Grace Hospital?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** Well, I thank the member for the question, and, certainly, we're working very closely with our health-care partners to ensure that the capacity is there for those that need it within our health-care system. That's why we're increasing the ICU capacity. That's why we're increasing nursing staff.

We have already announced that we will be adding 60 new full-time nursing positions to ICUs. More than 12 of those equivalent full-time employees will be dedicated to the Grace Hospital alone. We have also graduated, just last month, 39 new full-time positions for ICUs, 28 started the course just last week and 14 more started this week and there's more to come.

We recognize that there is a need for more ICU nurses. That's why we have been training those nurses—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister's time is up.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 1,300 vacant nursing positions right now, today, in Winnipeg. Nowhere is that more apparent than the Grace Hospital. Nurses write of code blues and seizures in hallways, patients missing meals, waits of 50 hours for a bed, gridlock across the hospital. Cuts and consolidation are taking their toll and the load on this particular hospital is immense.

Now, unfortunately, hospitals and health staff are completely out of time. They need reinforcement today.

Will the minister call upon assistance from other provinces to help shore up our health-care system today?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I know that health-care officials have been working diligently to prepare for this third wave. Efforts have been focused on ensuring that we have sufficient staffing, sufficient supplies, equipment and space to ensure that we have that availability for Manitoba patients when they need it.

It's why we've increased our ICU capacity. It's why we've increased our nursing staff. It's why we

have made improvements in patient flow throughout our acute-care system, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, I will, in my next answer, go back to the dark days of the previous NDP government where people were waiting not just in hallways, but lined up in highways, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We don't want to go back to those dark days.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Union Station, on a final supplementary question. *[interjection]*

Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would really like for the Minister of Health to focus on the dark days that are right now.

Hospital foundations, including at the Grace, are making a plea for help. They don't have what they need. And Grace nurses, too, in their letter, explain that they're completely overwhelmed in the hospital: long delays, patients on stretchers and a return of hallway medicine.

An internal survey shows that half of the staff at the Grace are looking for positions elsewhere. Yet Grace is facing a very serious test right now.

Manitoba is the epicentre of COVID-19 in North America. Help is needed. Help is being requested.

Will the minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) call on assistance—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member's time is up.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll remind the member opposite and all members opposite that we're in the middle of a worldwide pandemic.

We recognize that there are challenges. That's why our health officials have been working diligently for the last number of months to increase the ICU capacity, to increase the nursing staff. That's why we've added 60 new ICU nurses, and more than 12 of them alone for the Grace Hospital, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, back in the 2000s–2014–15, at Grace Hospital alone, they had the longest wait times. They were the worst in Canada at the time. And I will remind the member opposite that there wasn't— *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.



**Mrs. Stefanson:** –a worldwide pandemic on at the time. So what was their excuse back then?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order.

### COVID-19 Third Wave Projected ICU Cases

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Last year, when physicians raised serious concerns about the Pallister government's cuts to intensive care, the previous failed minister said, and I quote, we got this, and that he questioned the motivation of our front-line physicians.

We know that, in fact, he did not have control of the situation. Manitoba ended up with a high mortality rate, nearly double that of our-neighbouring Saskatchewan.

Now, in this third wave, Manitoba is already projecting ICU use beyond the worst-case modelling, Deputy Speaker.

Critical-care doctors are once again raising the alarm.

Will the minister listen, or does she, too, question their motivations?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** No ministerial team's ever dedicated itself to a task more—in a more focused way than this particular ministerial group has.

And the member speaks about dedication. All she has is blame-placing, but she won't place the blame in the right place, not appropriately, not directly, on her leader for setting a horrible example, for ignoring public health orders, for decrying the work of public health leaders. This is not what we're focused on doing on this side of the House.

What we're focused on is testing, tracking, enforcing, educating, vaccinating. What we're focused on is a global pandemic, as the previous minister was, as this minister is, as all these ministers are.

We're focused on fighting the pandemic. What are the members on the other side focused on? *[interjection]*

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order.

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

### Systemic Inequality in Health Care Establishment of Triage Protocol

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Consolidation and cuts left intensive care badly prepared for a regular flu season, never mind a global pandemic. And it is still not prepared.

Lanette Siragusa rightly told media yesterday the limit is not beds, it's staffing. The system is stretched. The Pallister government must ensure a triage protocol in place, in conjunction with Indigenous health leaders, experts in seniors care and representatives from the disability community.

Will the minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) ensure that this is done today? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** What I will say to the member opposite is that we meet very regularly with our doctors in Manitoba. We meet regularly with nurses. We meet regularly with all of those in our health-care system and we meet regularly with Manitobans.

We're hearing loud and clear from them that the important thing right now to focus on, for all of us, is to ensure that every single Manitoban has access to the vaccine and gets the vaccine, and that is what will bring us through these very difficult times.

Now, we have also been increasing patient flow through our hospital system. We have increased the number of nurses by 60 in our acute-care hospitals to manage the ICUs and we will continue to work with health-care officials to ensure that we have a health-care system that's there for Manitobans when they need it.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary question.

**Ms. Fontaine:** This issue is too important to be done behind closed doors.

Impact on ICUs is flashing red: far beyond the worst extreme-case scenarios, Deputy Speaker. The situation could deteriorate very rapidly. Intensive-care doctors are begging this government to do what must be done to ensure that ICU beds aren't overwhelmed and they must not be forced to make last-minute triage decisions.

Will the Pallister government engage representatives from Indigenous groups, seniors and people with disabilities in the development of a triage protocol today?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been working with health-care officials to ensure that we do everything we can so that doctors don't have to necessarily be put in that position to make those very difficult decisions.

That's why we have been focusing on our vaccination campaign. That's why we've been preparing our hospital system. That's why it's—we've implemented some of the toughest restrictions in all of Canada.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an ethical framework for COVID-19 has been developed to guide clinical decision-making. That document has been publicly available on the Internet for more than a year, and that will be used by our doctors to ensure that they follow that framework when making those decisions.

It's doctors that make those decisions. It's not politicians, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

#### **Health-Care System Nurse Staffing Levels**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is seeing the worst nursing shortage in decades. In fact, the president of the Manitoba Nurses Union, Darlene Jackson, says that nurses are, quote, overwhelmed. They're stretched thin and they've been forced to put in extreme overtime, worse than anything she's seen in the last 40 years.

In the midst of this pandemic, this government continues to deny nurses the safe staffing levels that they need to get their jobs done. This is resulting in major burnout. This is—this government has failed to come up with a real strategy to address the vacancy levels across this province.

Will the minister listen to the front lines, acknowledge that nurses need additional support and commit to fixing the nursing shortage today?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** We're listening to nurses and meeting with them all the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And what I will say is that we know that the nursing shortage is something that we inherited as a government as a result of the previous NDP government not fixing up the problem back then. We know that—from previous ministers of Health under the previous NDP government, that there were challenges that they faced back then. I will remind the members opposite again, we—they weren't in the middle of a worldwide pandemic at the time. We are.

There are challenges right now that we are facing, and we are working with our nurses to ensure that we overcome some of those challenges.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Wiebe:** The minister can try and spin this however she'd like, but the numbers don't lie. Right now, 1,300 positions vacant in Winnipeg hospitals, hundreds more across the province. And in this year's budget, this government cut funding for acute-care services by \$13 million.

This is reckless. This is irresponsible. We're in the pandemic. We're in a full-bowl-blown nursing crisis and our ICUs are overwhelmed, and this government's top priority continues to be cutting costs. This is shameful, and the government must act to fix this immediately.

Will the minister recognize these staggering vacancy numbers, invest in our health-care system and commit to safe—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member's time is up. *[interjection]*

Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, we are continuing to make investments in our health-care system each and every day. In fact, in the last budget it's—we're spending 17–\$750 million more than the NDP ever did when they were in power.

At that time, back in those days in the early 2000s—in the mid- and late 2000s, Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite had the chance to fix the problem with the 'nurthing'—nursing shortages at the time. I know they don't want to acknowledge—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —what happened in the past, but we are in the process of trying to clean up the mess from the previous NDP government.

We are in the middle of a pandemic. We will listen to our nurses, we will work with our nurses. We'll work with our doctors, we'll 'wowk'—work with all of our health-care professionals to ensure that we have a health-care system that's there for Manitobans when they need it.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Wiebe:** If this minister was serious about listening to nurses, they wouldn't be—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —on their fourth year without a contract from this government. In fact, this minister's treatment of nurses has been so bad the MNU called her latest contract proposal, quote, far too disturbing to even consider.

Nurses are facing stagnant pay, unsafe staffing levels, extreme mandatory overtime, poor working conditions and a total lack of respect from this minister and the government. They deserve better, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Will the minister finally listen to the front lines, respect those nurses with a fair contract and tackle the staffing shortage in this province today?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** We have been encouraging those officials to get back to the bargaining table, and I believe they have, and I think that's good news. We certainly want to see positive outcomes come. I'm—we want to ensure that there is a fair and a long-term agreement when it comes to nursing—or, nurses for Manitoba, and we encourage—and—that process to take place.

That process doesn't take place here on the floor of the Manitoba Legislature, it takes place at the bargaining table. We respect that process. Certainly, we on this side of the House respect that process. The question is, do members opposite? I don't think so, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

#### Northern Health Care Nurse Vacancy Rates

**Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson):** Northern Manitobans have been raising their concerns about the declining health care in northern Manitoba for years. Nursing vacancy rates in northern Manitoba is far too high. It's unacceptable.

This government made a \$1-million cut to the northern patient transport program, forcing Northern Health Region to cut \$1 million in so-called savings and has cancelled the plan for the primary-care clinic in The Pas and the consultation clinic in Thompson.

Why has this government allowed the state of health care to erode to such a dire state in northern Manitoba?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** Well, I want to thank the member for the question. I know we had a chance to have this discussion back on Friday in Estimates, and I look

forward to continuing those discussions with the members opposite.

In fact, we have put an emphasis on northern Manitoba and put—*[interjection]*—and invested—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —many, many millions of dollars into northern Manitoba, into health care.

What I will say, and—in this budget alone, we announced a medium-care facility that will be up in northern Manitoba. We discussed that on Friday. The member opposite doesn't seem to want to mention that today, but we're—we will continue to be committed to ensuring that those in northern Manitoba have access to the care that they need closer to home.

\* (14:10)

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

The honourable member for Thompson, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Adams:** During Estimates, the minister explained the use of agency nurses has again increased in northern Manitoba. Last year it was \$4 million. That's an incredible cost for agency care when we should be focusing on building and retaining health-care professionals in northern Manitoba.

This government spent the last five years with growing vacancy rates, which means less care at the bedside; it means increasing 'reliance' on agency nurses. This government doesn't seem to have a real plan to address this issue before the pandemic or since.

What will the minister do today to fill nursing vacancies in northern Manitoba?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll continue to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government where they didn't put an emphasis or a focus on recruitment or retention of nurses in northern Manitoba. So we'll continue along those lines.

In the meantime, we have been utilizing agency nurses. I would hope that the member opposite is not suggesting that we should not utilize agency nurses, because that would put patients at risk. So I ask the member opposite, is she not in favour of us utilizing agency nurses while we continue to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Thompson, on a final supplementary question.

**Ms. Adams:** I'm interested in the minister actually answering a question for once.

This government has failed to provide northern Manitoba with the same level of accessible, quality health care that other people in parts of our province can access. This government's cuts and consolidations are actually incredibly harmful to communities in northern Manitoba. Health care is less accessible. It forces many to travel unnecessarily during a pandemic to access the care they need, which costs all of us more.

Why has the minister allowed the situation to get to this point in northern Manitoba?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Of course, we continue to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government. Recruitment and retention is nothing—of nurses and other health-care professionals to rural and northern communities is nothing new. This has been faced by previous ministers of Health under the previous NDP government, who have acknowledged the challenges associated with that, but the fact of the matter is they didn't fix the mess back then, and we're having to do that.

We are in the middle of a pandemic. We will continue to work with all of our health-care professionals to ensure we focus on what's important. We're not going to focus on ideology like members opposite. We're going to focus on patient safety and patient care.

### Public Health Orders Consequences of Violations

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** We all know there's a toll that comes with following public health orders. People's lives and livelihoods have been turned upside down. That's why, for all of us who've been taking public health orders seriously since day one, it is both infuriating and discouraging to see the same people ignoring public health orders again and again, apparently without consequence.

I was working last Saturday at the Legislature when hundreds of pro-COVID protestors showed up for hours together to spread misinformation and, quite possibly, COVID variants.

The government is defending its public health orders in court.

If our orders are so tough, why are we allowing pro-COVID activists to stage superspreader events on the front lawn of the Legislature?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, this is a global pandemic and it's been a difficult time for all, to put it mildly. And having public health orders that stop people from doing things that they've been accustomed to do all their lives is a difficult thing to impose, but it's necessary. And so we're forced to defend, of course, ourselves in court, as the member had alluded to, in doing this.

It's not an easy thing to tell people they can't socialize with their family. *[interjection]* It's not an easy thing, except for the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), who has no friends—it's not easy—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —to spend time away from friends. It's not easy—it's a difficult time—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** So it is difficult for members, like the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for example, to understand why her leader would break public health orders.

But we have instituted—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —the best enforcement, the strongest enforcement program in the country of Canada because we're serious about defending the health and well-being of Manitobans, and we'll continue to do that very thing. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

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

**Mr. Lamont:** There does appear to be a contradiction at the core of the government's pandemic response and communications, because while the Premier says we have the toughest rules, fewer than 10 per cent of all the fines this government has handed out have been collected.

The Premier's staff, MLAs, and even the NDP have ignored public health warnings in code red with no real consequences. And, contrary to the Premier's tough talk, Dr. Roussin has repeatedly said the Province has taken the least restrictive means.

We are now facing a surge in cases that is worse than the worst-case scenario.

Is this government going to keep letting public health scofflaws put us all at risk and let them get away with it? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, again, nobody buys the thesis of the member. I won't defend the member's arguments, because they're indefensible.

The fact of the matter is we have introduced very strong restrictions. We've introduced them earlier in the cycle of COVID than any other province, from Quebec to the west coast. We introduced them, and strengthened them even further twice.

We did this in the hope that people would follow the public health orders, because it isn't just the orders, as the member's quite right to raise, it is the enforcement of and the following of those orders that is the thing that will determine how quickly we get through this third wave.

And so I encourage all members of this House at every opportunity to not do what the Opposition Leader did and disrespect public health orders.

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

#### **Education Modernization Act Request for Withdrawal of Bill 64**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Manitobans have made it loud and clear that they are against Bill 64.

Currently, over 4,000 Manitobans have signed our petition calling for a referendum. Thousands of Manitobans have put up signs on their lawns demonstrating their opposition towards the legislation. And hundreds of people have signed up to speak against Bill 64 at committee with the message that this is bad legislation and that it will have terrible repercussions for parents, students, teachers and education as a whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is clear that Manitobans are adamantly against Bill 64.

Has the government taken notice and will they withdraw the bill today?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Our education system is failing our children. We need to take necessary steps. They've been recommended by experts. They've been—elicited responses from thousands—tens

of thousands of Manitobans in the development of these changes.

The member is doing her job in opposing, but she is not doing her job in standing up for the children of our province. We will.

#### **Vehicle Registration Fees Reduction Announcement**

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere):** Last week, the Minister of Infrastructure announced that our government will be reducing vehicle registration fees for a second year in a row.

Could the minister update the House—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Could the minister please update the House on this exciting news and outline how this commitment will make life more affordable for Manitobans?

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Rossmere for that fantastic question.

And, as part of our government's Budget 2021 announcement, we've committed to protecting Manitobans' income by reducing vehicle registration fees by a further 10 per cent. That is \$15 million back onto the kitchen tables of Manitoba families. This was \$15 million taken by the NDP members off of the kitchen tables.

Families need relief today in this time of a pandemic. Who voted against this \$15 million? The same MLAs, the same NDP MLAs who took the \$15 million voted against \$15 million going back.

We will stand up for families while the NDP votes against families every time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Wolseley. *[interjection]* Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, if you could 'unmic'—unmute your mic.

#### **North End Water Treatment Plant Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** The City of Winnipeg has already done a review and concluded that the long-term private operation of the North End water treatment plant is not a feasible solution for Winnipeggers.

The Pallister government has that external report in their hands. Nonetheless, the government is forcing

the City to spend another \$400,000 on a study. All that will do is delay this project again by up to two years.

The deadline for provincial approval for infrastructure support is needed this month.

Will the minister quit the delays and get on with building critical infrastructure for our province?

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, actually, we're investing more in infrastructure than at any time in the history of our province. We're committed to continuing to invest in infrastructure.

We're putting infrastructure for Manitobans as a high priority, not ideology. The NDP appears to be willing to put ideology first and Manitobans last. We'd rather put Manitobans first instead.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Naylor:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, approval is needed this month for Investing in Canada plan dollars. The Pallister government has once again pushed an important project right against—until the last moment and then found another way to stall.

The City has already found that the long-term private operation of the North End water treatment plant is not a feasible solution. Further delays are going to set the project back up to two years and make the project more expensive to build.

Will the minister stop the delays and approve this project for ICIP funding today?

**Mr. Pallister:** I guess it's a question of whether you want to put CUPE first and the CUPE bosses first or you want to put Manitoba's best interests first.

That's the question the NDP has to address. That's what the NDP leader has to decide. Because Gary Doer liked the 3Ps. He's used them a lot. He used them on the Disraeli bridge, Bill Clement parkway, the Southwest Transitway, the RT—

**An Honourable Member:** Gary Doer?

**Mr. Pallister:** Yes, Gary Doer and Greg Selinger never missed a ribbon cutting. So I'll tell you what—and even Flor Marcelino said public-private partnerships can be an effective way of making investments for Manitoba. They're used all across Canada. The only provincial government that ever tried to outlaw them was the NDP here in Manitoba.

We're talking about \$70 billion of capital investment. We want—on this side of the House, we are committed to rebuilding the infrastructure of our province and filling the infrastructure deficit, and they're committed to tired ideology and catering to the CUPE union bosses. It's a shame, but it sure puts the difference on display right well.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Epilepsy Treatment

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) One in 10 Manitobans will have a seizure in their lifetime, and the incidence of epilepsy in Indigenous populations is double the national average. Epilepsy occurs just as often as breast and lung cancer world-wide.

(2) COVID-19 has cancelled epilepsy surgeries booked for Manitoba patients elsewhere in Canada because they cannot receive this standardly routine surgery in the province.

(3) Manitoba is the only province which has an inappropriate hospital environment to perform most epilepsy surgeries because it conducts epilepsy monitoring on an orthopedics ward with orthopedic staff, instead of an epilepsy ward with trained epilepsy staff.

(4) Patients in Manitoba have to wait three or more years for epilepsy surgery, which has resulted in them having to continue to suffer uncontrolled seizures, struggle with mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, headaches, general poor health and even death, in some cases.

(5) Since an epilepsy neurologist resigned in 2012, more neurologists have resigned due to healing—rather dealing with old and failing equipment, which has resulted in sending patients out of province, costing the provincial government millions of dollars.

(6) Epilepsy surgery is extremely effective, resulting in patients requiring less medication,

sometimes becoming seizure-free, enabling them to return to work, drive and live fulfilling lives.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to open a genuine, four-bed epilepsy unit, similar to the one recently opened in Saskatchewan, at the Health Sciences Centre, with modern equipment and adequate epilepsy neurosurgeons, neurologists, nurses, clerks and technicians.

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to formally establish an epilepsy program to ensure that all epilepsy staff can deliver care to patients in a co-ordinated fashion.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

**Mr. Deputy 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—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The member for Keewatinook, if you can unmute your mic.

Oh, we have a problem with the audio with the headset—with the mic. Could you put the mic down to your mouth?

**Mr. Bushie:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize. I was trying out a new headset there.

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) One in 10 Manitobans will have a seizure in their lifetime, and the incidence of epilepsy in the Indigenous population is double the national average. Epilepsy occurs just as often as breast and lung cancer world-wide.

(2) COVID-19 has cancelled epilepsy surgeries booked for Manitoba patients elsewhere in Canada because they cannot receive this standardly routine surgery in the province.

(3) Manitoba is the only province which has an inappropriate hospital environment to perform most epilepsy surgeries because it conducts epilepsy monitoring on an orthopedics ward with orthopedic staff, instead of an epilepsy ward with trained epilepsy staff.

(4) Patients in Manitoba have to wait three or more years for epilepsy surgery, which has resulted in them having to continue to suffer uncontrolled seizures, struggle with mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, headaches, general poor health and even death, in some cases.

(5) Since an epilepsy neurologist resigned in 2012, more neurologists have resigned due to dealing with old and failing equipment, which has resulted in sending patients out of province, costing the provincial government millions of dollars.

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We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to open a genuine, four-bed epilepsy unit, similar to the one recently opened in Saskatchewan, at the Health Sciences Centre, with modern equipment and adequate epilepsy neurosurgeons, neurologists, nurses, clerks and technicians.

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to formally establish an epilepsy program to ensure that all epilepsy staff can deliver care to patients in a co-ordinated fashion.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

#### **Personal-Care Homes—Quality of Care**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba elders and seniors built this country and our province and should receive the highest level of support, having earned the right to be treated with due respect, dignity, understanding and compassion as a fundamental human right.

Residents of personal-care homes deserve to have the best possible quality of life in their last few days, weeks, months or years. Yet family members are regularly left angry, frustrated, disappointment—disappointed and shocked at the care their loved ones receive in Manitoba's personal-care homes.

Seniors who reside in personal-care homes have the right to visitation by family members, especially those who provide day to day assistance in

augmenting the care of their loved ones as designated family caregivers. These individuals are essential partners in care, actively and regularly participating in providing care, and may support feeding, mobility, personal hygiene, cognitive stimulation, communication, meaningful connection, relational continuity, and assistance in decision making.

Legal representation, such as lawyers, powers of attorney, and health-care proxies, should always be allowed unlimited and unrestricted access to the residents for whom they're responsible, as they depend on their designated legal representative to ensure proper and adequate care and act as legal designate for care decisions on their behalf.

Most personal-care homes do not have enough health-care aides to adequately provide the aforementioned basic care for seniors with high and complex levels of physical and mental issues, such as those with dementia, coupled with multiple chronic conditions. Residents often require assistance in communicating their needs to overworked health-care aides, and most often this is accomplished with the assistance of designated family caregivers.

Because of the insufficient number of health-care aides, especially full-time staff available to personal-care home residents, often lack the most basic care, such as feeding, toileting, hydration, dental care, personal grooming, exercise and socialization.

\* (14:30)

The lack of such basic care often leads to health issues such as periodontal disease, dehydration, urinary tract infections, sepsis, pressure ulcers: bedsores, and more, which often lead to hospitalization when left unreported.

Family members who advocate for improvements of such basic care can be dismissed or are met with resistance because there is not enough staff or funding to provide proper essential care.

Family members who repeatedly put significant pressure on personal care home staff and management for the required basic care, according to the personal-care homes' own published standards, are often labelled as troublemakers and barred from entry into the home and/or contact with their loved ones. Care-home management will utilize The Petty Trespasses Act to justify their actions, rather than improve the level of care.

Under such circumstances, the additional stress and worry serves to increase the difficulty in the

relationship between the resident, the family member and the personal care home, resulting in increased tensions and fear of reprisals.

Concerns related to the above situation escalate when the barred family member receives information that their loved one's basic needs are not being met, further exacerbating the issue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to establish an independent, non-partisan seniors advocate to ensure that care standards are being met in all Manitoba personal care homes, and to resolve disputes before harm comes to residents of personal care homes.

To urge the provincial government to ensure residents of personal care homes receive adequate hands-on care to provide for their basic needs and ongoing physical care based on their individual requirements.

To urge the provincial government to ensure that the mental health needs of communication and socialization of personal care home residents are met through a combination of facilitated programs, sufficient staff on hand to provide these services, and adequate access to family members, designated family caregivers and other visitors, under all reasonable circumstances.

To urge the provincial government to enforce mechanisms that mandate operators to proactively and collaboratively work with designated family caregivers who augment care by ensuring they are allowed access to their loved ones under all reasonable circumstances, to provide active care and support to the residents' emotional well-being, health and quality of life.

Signed by Stan Bernacki, Terry Bernacki, Joseph Bernacki, 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 of 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 services 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, 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're 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 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.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

#### **Menstrual Product Availability**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Many individuals have faced challenges in obtaining and affording period necessities.

(2) In Manitoba, women, non-binary individuals and trans people have been denied free access to essential period necessities, such as pads, tampons, menstrual cups and reusable options.

(3) The lack of free access to period items results in the perpetuation of poverty and deprives individuals of reasonable access to a basic health necessity.

(4) This petition aims to ensure that these items are free to access in public schools and within Manitoba's health-care system, and that no individual who requests them can be denied on the basis of gender or sex identity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to implement free access to period necessities within public schools and Manitoba's health-care system.

(2) To *[inaudible]* of Health and Seniors Care to acknowledge the prevalence of people within Manitoba who are unable to afford essential period items.

And this is signed by many Manitobans.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Many individuals have faced challenges in obtaining and affording period necessities.

(2) In Manitoba, women, non-binary individuals and trans people have been denied free access to essential period necessities, such as pads, tampons, menstrual cups and reusable options.

(3) The lack of free access to period items results in the perpetuation of 'poverty' and deprives individuals of reasonable access to a basic health necessity.

(4) This petition aims to ensure that these items are free in-to access in public schools and within Manitoba's health-care system, and that no individual who requests them can be denied on the basis of gender or sex identity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to implement free access to period necessities within public schools and Manitoba's public health-care system; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to acknowledge the prevalence of people within Manitoba who are unable to afford essential period items.

And this petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Any further petitions?

Grievances?

**ORDERS OF THE DAY***(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****House Business**

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** 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 Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé). The title of the resolution is Recognizing the Provincial Government's Addictions Strategy.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to rule 37-7, the honourable Government House Leader is announcing that the private member's resolution be-considered for next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Dawson Trail. The title of the resolution is Recognizing the Provincial Government's Addictions Strategy.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Could you please call the remainder of the report stage amendments on Bill 71, followed by third reading on Bill 71, if we get to that point.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It's been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that we'll debate on report stage amendment of Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, then go on to the concurrence and third reading of Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, property tax and installation assistance act and the income tax act amended.

**DEBATE ON REPORT STAGE  
AMENDMENTS****Bill 71—The Education  
Property Tax Reduction Act  
(Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act  
and Income Tax Act Amended)**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** So now the honourable member for Notre Dame, which has the additional—has nine minutes remaining.

\* (14:40)

**Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** The report stage amendment 3, this amendment puts forward by—has been put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), and it prevents the name,

image or title of any Cabinet minister from being included with tax notices.

The reason why we in the opposition think that this amendment is necessary is because, as it stands, Bill 71 is moving us away from current traditional standard practice for a civil servant to sign cheques issued to the public. This is the way it's usually done to ensure that government payments are non-partisan.

With Bill 71, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) will send a cheque—big amounts for large property owners or small amounts and clawbacks for everyone else—and these cheques will be signed by the Premier and come with correspondence or with his photo and a letter to the recipient.

This will provide this government and this Premier with a new form of retail politics or vote-buying. A cheque with the Premier's name and his photo and a letter from him provides a touchable bread-and-butter symbol to voters right in their mailboxes.

In May 2020, Manitoban seniors got a \$200 cheque, regardless of income, and their cheques also came with a letter from the Premier. These cheques cost the provincial Treasury an estimated \$45 million for about 225,000 seniors. It was a flawed process because it was not targeted to low-income seniors. Even Manitoba's wealthiest seniors, like the Premier, all received cheques.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation called out this government on the Premier's move to sign an attached letter to cheques. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation called the move—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A little freeze-up here. Wait a few seconds here. We'll just have a—wait a minute here. We're just having technical difficulties with the honourable member for Notre Dame with her Internet.

Okay, so we have the honourable member for Notre Dame back online.

So, the honourable member for Notre Dame? Yes, I was wondering if the member from Notre Dame can unmute and maybe we can hear you.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Okay. You're just upside down, Mr. Deputy Premier, here.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Here you go. Whatever you did there, it worked.

**Ms. Marcelino:** We'll try again, thank you.

MacKay said that Manitoba should have an independent person, such as the Auditor General, to review government communications like the attached letters to cheques to ensure that they are not partisan.

In 2013, Nova Scotia's then-premier, Darrell Dexter, faced accusations from the public of campaigning on the taxpayer dime when he wrote a note that accompanied rebate cheques to low-income seniors shortly before a provincial election. In 2006, the Alberta government, under Premier Ralph Klein at the time, issued \$400 cheques to all residents as a prosperity dividend from high oil prices and a large budget surplus. These \$400 cheques were nicknamed Ralph bucks.

Manitoba's Premier (Mr. Pallister) has said he is far from calling an election. He denies that he is not pandering to voters. He claims he is not engaging in vote buying. He was; he did; but, going forward, I would hope that this PC caucus support the amendment put forth by the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) to put an end to the Premier's vote-buying.

I would ask the Premier and the PC caucus how would they feel if Manitoban parents who received the Canada Child Tax Benefit cheque every month had those cheques signed by the Prime Minister or Liberal Cabinet minister, Receiver General Anita Anand.

I would ask how—the Premier and the PC caucus, if they think that it would be right if, with every Canada Child Tax Benefit cheque that Manitoba parents get, that those cheques should be accompanied with a picture of the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, with his big hair and colourful socks?

I would ask the Premier and the PC caucus if they think that it would be—there should be a new standard procedure going forward that every month Manitoba parents receive Canada Child Tax Benefit cheques that they should be accompanied with letters from Prime Minister Trudeau or the status of women's minister, letters directed to Manitoba mothers thanking them for being moms.

I'm pretty sure that the Manitoba Premier and this PC caucus that put forward Bill 71 and the cheques with the PC letters last May, that they would have a

problem with the federal government doing that because it is obviously—it would be a partisan vote-buying move.

But they're not. Canada Child Tax Benefits are signed by Bill Matthews, a career public servant that is not pandering for votes. Bill Matthews is the Deputy Minister of Public Services and Procurement and a Deputy Receiver General for Canada. Again, cheques from the federal government are issued by a career public servant that is not pandering for votes.

This keeps the process non-partisan. This is the way it's been traditionally. This is a standard, and it should be kept this way going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is there any further speakers?

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

\* (14:50)

The question before the House is report stage, third amendment for Bill 71, brought forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry.

### Division

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

#### Yeas

*Adams, Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Moses, Naylor, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Reyes, Sala, Sandhu, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smith (Point Douglas), Smook, Squires, Wasyliw, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk.*

#### Nays

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Yeas 50, Nays 0.

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed.

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— AMENDED BILLS

#### Bill 71—The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Now we'll go on to concurrence and third reading of Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, the property tax insulation assistance act and the income tax amendment act.

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, and subsequently amended, be concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Fielding:** I am pleased to once again rise for a third reading of Bill 71. I'm very happy to see the legislation move through the approval process, as it allows for the first phase of our government's promised elimination of education property tax to begin rolling out to Manitoba property owners in the very

near future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with rebate cheques starting to arrive in the mailboxes in the next number of weeks.

This will provide significant financial supports to homeowners, farmers and businesses as we look towards beginning our recovery from the pandemic. As I previously indicated, this initiative is the largest tax cut in Manitoba history—25 per cent this year and 25 per cent next year—something that will improve our province's competitiveness as a place to live, a place to do business, now and into the future.

We know that for far too many Manitoba property owners, the elimination of education school taxes is long overdue, and we are looking forward to carrying out this commitment in full in the future years.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** I wanted to spend a little time this afternoon talking about some of the presenters we heard at committee, because the government didn't consult on this bill, and I think it's clear from—everybody in the House said it was sort of slapped together.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about how some of our community members view this bill and its impact on Manitoba. And the first group that we heard from were the school boards. We heard from Alan Campbell, who is the Manitoba School Boards Association president, and a former president, Floyd Martens, who is also a school trustee in Mountain View.

And, you know, the first thing that Manitoba School Boards Association did was call out government's oft-repeated falsehood that Manitoba is the last province that collects school property taxes in Canada. This is a patently false claim. Seven provinces continue to do so. The issue with those seven provinces is the rates are set by the provincial government and local communities have lost control—democratic control over the taxation.

And, of course, this government intends to do so even after this rebate. So this Province, provincial government, will be collecting taxes, and they've only committed to removing half of it in two years, and the minister has said that they may take the other 10 years to phase out the remainder.

And so that's a long time for this minister to decide what property taxes will be paid in—across the province, without any sort of local autonomy and input. And that's the school board's concern, is that

Bill 71 begins the process of taking financial autonomy away from local school boards and with it is a democratic say in how local schools operate.

The current system allows communities to have that say, and allows them to shape what their local school system would look like and make sure that it's actually responsive to the needs of their community. We have a very diverse province with many unique communities, and with the start of the removal of fiscal autonomy from local communities, we're going to see a one-size-fits-all approach, and decisions about how those taxes will be spent are going to be done by the PC Cabinet minister and—who's often, you know, never been to any of these committees, never spoken to any community members, has no idea what they need.

And those communities will still be taxed and they still will have to pay for this, but now they will lose control over their say as to how those taxes will be spent.

And school boards protect their local communities from provincial cuts, and we've seen that. We've seen that this Pallister government has cut education funding year over year for five years in a row and that they have reduced, you know, overall education spending. At the same time, we've seen a growth of about 10,000 students in this province.

And because school boards currently have local fiscal autonomy, they prevented our children from feeling the worst brunt of those cuts. They had the power to backfill the PC's education cuts in revenue with local taxation, and that's another way our local school boards protect public education.

They're also concerned about this adding complexity to our tax system, and confusion. And there was, of course, no consultation with local communities of where they're going to find the billions of—or the billion dollars to replace the money that they're planning to hand over to the wealthiest of Manitobans.

We've heard concerns about the removal of education property tax on commercial properties. This will result in an overall mill rate drop and it certainly could mean that residential home owners will see their taxes shift onto them. And we've seen that with cuts, that one time commercial properties paid the lion's share of education property tax and residences a smaller portion. That has now been flipped on its head with residential properties paying the lion's share of education property taxes. Under this cut, that system's going to get worse.

And it's perverse, because commercial property owners are paying less somebody has to make up the difference. That's going to be everyday homeowners and, in fact, you know, this government takes with, you know, one hand and gives a little bit back with the other.

And so what we're going to see with this is that there will be a tax adjustment here, and I suspect that the remaining years that people are paying education property taxes those will go up because of the mill rate changes. And there is going to be nothing to prevent this government from making sure the education system is cut for good.

So without local fiscal autonomy to save our schools, when they make a cut—and they will, they most certainly will—it will get carried through and it will mean larger class sizes for our children, it will mean less specialty programs, it will mean less support for our most vulnerable and needy children.

And what we're going to see is, money raised in local communities, there's no guarantee it will actually go to the local schools. Right now it does. So you will see some school areas where there was former school divisions raising this money, and the Province will ship that money out of those school divisions and put it to wherever they want, and that's going to create further problems down the road.

So it seems to be the real goal here is the Pallister government thinks that our public education system has too much funding. They want it cut and they don't want those pesky school boards getting in the way of their cuts. And so if you want to make sure that you reduce funding for good, you have to get rid of school boards.

We just have to look at what happens with that type of system in Alberta. Calgary high schools have 47 kids in a classroom. They have local school boards, but they have no fiscal autonomy to stop it.

\* (15:10)

You can look to Fort McMurray. They had a large influx of students. They were getting underfunded by the Province. They had no power to raise taxes to make up the shortfall. So what their solution was was to cut back the school week to four days. Wasn't going to save any money on teachers, but what it did is it cut a day out of busing and they only needed to bus for four days, and that saved them \$1 million and they were able to balance their budget on the backs of their children.

*Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

That was such a huge outcry when that happened in Alberta, the government was shamed there at actually finding the \$1 million, which, you know, for an economy that size, really wasn't nothing.

But that's where this Pallister government's taking us. This is their vision of public education. These are the things that we're going to be talking about in the future.

We heard from Evergreen School Division that they have had their funding cut five years in a row, and they make the point that tax rebates are a form of program spending by the government. So a tax cut is just the same as a policy choice. So the Province is spending dollars collected for important public services such as education and they're taking those dollars and they're diverting them to wealthy property owners. And, of course, they're very concerned at Evergreen School Division that there was no discussion about where the money is going to come from to replace it.

And the answer is, of course, there is no money. This is—an—the first step for permanent cuts to education funding and a reduction of the resources we put into public education.

And a school board's mission is to protect the public education system. They have no other job. That's their one and central job, and this government wants to get rid of that safeguard, that protection to the public.

And they make an important point that this tax rebate is going to shift money from public services to wealthy property owners, and that hurts low-income Manitobans because they rely on public services more than wealthy Manitobans do and they don't have the resources to simply pay for these public services—or services out of pocket, which wealthy Manitobans are.

So their school board pays for school supplies, nutrition programs, junior kindergarten—all of that will be lost through education cuts. And they properly point out that tax rebate is being made on the backs of Manitoba parents and low-income families. And they properly characterize Bill 71 as defunding education, and that's what it does.

We heard from municipalities that municipal governments, they have to collect property tax for both their own municipality and for school taxes, and if somebody doesn't pay their school tax, a municipality's still obligated to pay it for them and pass it on

to the local school district. Then the municipality becomes responsible to actually chase after the people who haven't paid their school tax.

Now, given that there hasn't been any sort of thought about this, Bill 71 is going to reward delinquent tax people, people who haven't paid their taxes. They will still get a cheque from this government. Even though they owe money to the government and haven't actually paid their taxes, they will still get a rebate from this government. I mean, how fair is that? And, of course, it isn't.

And this isn't about tax fairness. In fact, given it's a political stunt and it's been rushed through, there hasn't been these kinds of forethought and discussions with municipalities who are going to be on the hook to pay the Province now this money and chase after people who get rebate cheques and then don't actually spend it on what it's supposed to, which is their tax obligations.

We heard from the Manitoba Federation of Labour. They made the point that all this is borrowed money. The original plan was to do this over 10 years once the budget was balanced. That's now changed. It's rushed through with a 50 per cent reduction in two years. And it seems that this government no longer cares about balanced budgets—at least not when it comes to wealthy tax cuts—and this move is actually going to make it harder to balance the budget.

And they certainly properly have called this out as what it is: it's a political stunt. And the problem is it's a costly one and it—who's going to have to pay?

Well, young workers. They're renters or modest homeowners. They'll either lose out because of the tax changes, they're going to get a very small amount if they're a modest homeowner—and the vast majority is going to benefit people like the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Finance Minister, you know, large property developers, out-of-province real estate trusts, international agribusiness.

Young workers are going to have to pay the interest on the money that was borrowed to pay for these handouts to the wealthiest of Manitoba. That's going to go on for years, so it's a double loss. They're going to lose as renters and modest homeowners, and then they're going to have to pay the interest on this huge government handout to the wealthiest of Manitoba.

We heard from the Social Planning Council Manitoba that this tax rebate will hurt renters, and we know that. They're going to lose the \$700 education

tax credit; it's going to be phased out. And there's 30 per cent of Manitoba households who are renters, over 400,000 Manitobans: seniors, youth, newcomers, people with modest incomes; basically, the most vulnerable in Manitoba are being targeted by this tax change. Somebody has to make up the difference for this and they are going to.

And renters rely on this tax credit; it makes a big difference with poverty rates in Manitoba. It allows them a bit of money to get caught up with bills when they fall behind. It's part of their planning, and for somebody with a modest income, \$700 is a lot. You know, I appreciate the Finance Minister—that's what he'll spend on a nice, you know, bottle of wine and a meal with his family—but to regular Manitobans, that makes the difference between, you know, whether they're evicted or not.

So last year, every single above-guideline rent increase has been approved and many people were seeing 30 per cent increases in rent; 24,000—over 24,000 units. Many are getting rent evicted. This government has known about this problem for years; they've done nothing. At this point, they're complicit in it and obviously have no issue with it. And this bill is going to double down on that and make things worse.

They say, well, you know, if the landlords aren't going to do the rent freeze, you can always go to the Residential Tenancies Branch. Well, that's understaffed. Many people who are vulnerable don't have the wherewithal to take on an onerous, time-consuming, difficult legal battle with their landlords. So the system is rigged against them and it creates another barrier for them to get fair and affordable housing in Manitoba.

Of course, they know this, and this is all by design. This is all intentional. We heard from the Canadian centre of policy alternatives that made the point that property tax is Canada's version of a wealth tax.

And so what the real intent here with this bill is the Pallister government wants to reduce the tax on wealth, and this is going to disproportionately benefit wealthiest Manitobans, corporate landlords, agribusiness. And it's exactly those in the community who have the financial ability to pay, and removing them from the tax roll shifts the burden of taxation on those who can least afford to pay: low- and moderate-income renters. And they called on this government to make changes to the property tax so it's more progressive for seniors, low-income homeowners,

moderate-income-level farmers, and we certainly would echo that sentiment.

Homeowners—they make the point—have not been the hardest hit by COVID. It's been renters. And if government believes that they need to give relief to anybody, it should be those that have been hardest hit. But in the upside-down wonderland-world alternate reality of the Pallister government, they do the opposite: they reward the people who actually have gotten through the pandemic and recession with the least amount of harm.

So—and of course, they also make the valid observation that most Manitobans don't want this; this is not a priority for Manitoba. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) was proud to speak about 50,000 Manitobans consulted during the budget consultation; they took all these polls. They put tax cuts on the polls and they were overwhelmingly—okay—dead last in each and every poll of Manitoba economic priorities.

What does that tell you, when their own, you know, push polls come back and say that Manitobans don't want this and it's still the No. 1 priority of this government? I mean, what does that say? It just tells you how out of touch they are, the bull in a china shop, and they're just going to bowl through, rewarding their, you know, wealthy donors and ignoring the needs of Manitoba.

They make the point that we have a revenue problem in Manitoba. Revenue has fallen from 25 per cent of our GDP to 23 per cent.

The Parliamentary Budget Office says that Manitoba is not on a fiscal path—it's not sustainable; we cannot pay for our current level of services at this current level of taxation. So one of two things has to happen: we either have to raise up our taxes to pay for the services that we all need, or, as the Pallister government plan is, is you continue to cut services until it's sustainable.

\*(15:20)

And this is the Finance Minister who's had two credit downgrades back to back. We've never had that in Manitoba's history, and the reason for that is that, yes, they balanced the budget off the backs of Manitobans and by cutting services, but they also cut taxes to the point where it's still unsustainable, and it's completely fiscally irresponsible and reckless.

Education funding in Manitoba has been cut 7.6 per cent in the last five years. And, of course,

there's no plan to replace money being cut from the education system here. And like ICU-bed reductions, lowering the capacity of the education system to actually do its job creates future crisis and costs more in the long run—

**The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson):** You've muted yourself.

If you could, please unmute yourself and continue.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** Okay.

So, for the education system to keep what it has, the Province would have to add at least \$75 million a year, or 3 per cent, for education inflation. That hasn't happened once. They haven't even come close to that. Not only has—they've not met the consumer price index inflationary increase, they've frozen—or have actually given less to school boards.

And, of course, they point out, and there's damning studies that show that there has never been a jurisdiction anywhere that have reduced property tax and improved school performance at the same time. And that just makes sense. You don't cut your way to the top. You don't improve a school system by starving it of resources.

And then, of course, there is an issue with farmland here that needs to be addressed, which isn't by this government. A small portion of education property tax, about \$64 million out of the \$850 million. There's an issue here because we're seeing farmland concentration is skyrocketing assessment 'prizes' in the last five years. We have record low interest rates, cheap to borrow and to buy land and with international factory farming you have to get bigger and faster in order to survive. Sheer survival for many farmers means loading up on debt to buy bigger and bigger pieces of property just to stay competitive.

We're seeing large corporate farms of 10,000 acres here in Manitoba. The family farm is absolutely disappearing. And, again, this government could care less. This government has said pretty clearly that they're on the side of international agribusiness and they have never supported small family farms; and like small businesses, they absolutely have shown contempt and their policies have actually hurt small businesses and small producers.

So we're seeing huge out-of-province pension funds come in and buy up these big corporate farms, there's bidding wars, they're jacking up farmland

prices, and with higher the farmland prices, the more tax you pay on it. And this has nothing to do with education. And we have less than 54 per cent farmers now than we had 40 years ago, and that change is accelerating.

So we have a farmland concentration crisis that has nothing to do with education property tax, and this government continues to ignore it, it continues to see small farmers go out of business, it continues to see, you know, the mass concentration into these larger and larger corporate farms.

And, again, this is just their absolute contempt for rural Manitoba. This hollows out rural communities. If you have land concentration, there's less people actually living in the community, there's less farm families. So there's less people going into town to shop, the local stores are empty on main street. They can't stay in business because there's not enough people there. There's less retired farmers moving into town buying houses and it's 'devescating' for the local small-town tax base.

This rebate is not capped. So if you operate a 10,000 acreage with millions of dollars of revenue every year, you're going to get the same 25 per cent rebate as does the small producer on a 1,000 acres. And, again, the large-estate owner will get the most benefit from this rebate.

And, you know, the Pallister government says, well, renters, well, there will be a market adjustment to lower the costs and pass it along to tenants.

That's beyond ridiculous. Landlords don't actually compete against one another; they have a captive market. People get established in a neighbourhood, they have kids in schools, they have easy access to work, and they have, you know, they may have supports in the community of their friends or relatives that help them out. They just can't get up and move.

And so, oftentimes, they're stuck where they are and they want to live where they are, and their landlord can up the rent on them and it's too disruptive and too costly for them to move. And their quality of life diminishes, they—life becomes less affordable.

But this government doesn't know any of this because they're completely out of touch; they simply don't understand how people live. There's very little affordable housing in Manitoba. They've been selling off what we have, making it even harder for Manitobans to find affordable alternatives, which is, again, also raising rent on Manitobans.



And, of course, we know small businesses won't benefit from this and they were hardest hit in our economy from COVID, and really, the Pallister government has shown their true colours here. They're absolutely hostile toward small businesses. They abandoned them after they made all these sacrifices to keep us all safe by closing, and for their trouble their landlords are getting rewarded while they'll continue to see rent increases and no rebates. They're no friend to small business.

So, let's look at who will benefit from this. We know large-estate owners will benefit and—the more expensive the property, the more tax you pay, the more you get a rebate. We know that wealthy Manitobans who own multiple properties benefit, that they'll get a—the \$700 tax credit was only on principal residences, and if you're like the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and you have four homes or—you'll get, you know, more of a benefit.

And large corporate landlords will benefit, and it seems absolutely unconscionable that somebody who owns a 300-unit tower will be treated as a residential property owner just the same as somebody has a 700-square-foot bungalow, and they will be eligible for the same rebate. And, of course, you know, out-of-province corporate landlords, absentee landlords, people who are tax cheats who owe money to the government, real estate investment trusts—all these people are going to benefit from this tax.

So, you know, what does it say about the Pallister government that this is their No. 1 legislative priority? They were completely missing in action when it comes to the third wave. The vaccine rollout has been one of the worst in Canada. They have no economic recovery plan in place. Their entire legislative agenda has been Bill 71. We spent more days talking about this than COVID responses or recovery.

And you have to ask, why is this the No. 1 priority for this government in a pandemic? Well, we know the Premier stands to benefit personally. The conservative estimates are \$7,000 rebate cheques coming his way—15 times what the average Manitoban will get. He also has a holding company; he hasn't disclosed how many properties are in that, so that number might be very, very low.

We know that their caucus is filled with landlords, agribusiness owners and large-estate owners; they're going to stand to benefit a lot more than the average, you know, \$350 for northwest Winnipeg home.

And we look at the Pallister government's campaign donors; you've got to follow the money, here. Who funds this monstrosity of a government? It was an interesting report that came out from PressProgress on—did analysis of the top donor of the PC Party of Manitoba—30 per cent of their top donors have ties to Manitoba real estate and construction industries, 14 per cent had connections to agribusiness. So it's no accident that 44 per cent of their top donors will directly benefit from this tax change.

We have the CEO of one of the largest agribusinesses in the country, Paterson GlobalFoods; we have the CEO of Qualico, a major real estate developer; we have the director from James Richardson & Sons, a huge agribusiness and real estate company; we have the president of Ladco Company, a major Winnipeg developer; we have the president of Borland Construction that builds real estate developments; we have, you know, Marquess's developments, another large real estate developer with controversial Parker Lands development in my riding.

And it's no accident that they donate to the PC Party and, in turn, the PC bring in this tax changes that directly benefit their donors. I mean, all this is just, you know, it's how the PCs govern. It's crony capitalism.

We did hear from a couple members from the Manitoba Real Estate Association, and they're always very strong advocates for their members and do a great job, as always. It's great to see them. But some of their arguments, I think, need to be addressed.

They claim that this will help affordability with homeownership. But with the greatest of respect, it won't. There's a housing bubble right now with cheap credit and house prizes have been shooting up. Many young first-time owners can't even afford to buy a home right now, and so this rebate won't help them at all.

\* (15:30)

And if you do actually have money to buy a home, they take into account your situation with the home, and lower taxes will extend more credit to an individual buyer and that will allow the person to spend more on a house than they otherwise would be. And so, instead of giving that money to the government, they're going to be giving it to a bank and they'll be paying it in interest—higher interest charges. So the reality is is modest homeowners will not see a benefit from this.

Secondly, of course, municipalities have been cut and underfunded by this government for five years. They're starving for money. They've been advocating for the education property tax removal from municipal bills, and the reason is it's not out of the goodness out of their hearts; it's out of self-interest. They want to use that tax room to raise taxes to backfill the cuts and underfunding for municipalities.

So the minute that this tax change comes in, you're going to see municipalities raising their property taxes and taking up the space that was vacated by the education property taxes. People will not benefit from this in the long run and ultimately their taxes are going to go up.

So, by giving tax breaks to the wealthiest, we're concentrating wealth in a very tiny elite in Manitoba. You know, these people can only buy so many houses. The Premier's (Mr. Pallister) doing his part with four, but you know, at some point, he just doesn't need a fifth or a sixth. At some point, these people can't consume any more.

So, if you want to see more housing stock built, if you want to see more people actually purchasing housing, you have to get money into the hands of the people who don't currently have it because they will spend it and they will actually bring in economic growth in a way that hoarding money for wealthy people will not.

So everything about this bill is problematic: the speed in which it was introduced, the arbitrary deadlines that it had to pass by the end of May so cheques can come out in June, the fact that the Premier and his Cabinet disproportionately benefit from this tax while most Manitobans will be left behind, fact that major donors stand to disproportionately benefit from this, the fact that all Manitoba renters will be worse off from this change, the fact that there is no plan to replace this income in an already struggling and underfunded education system.

This all smacks of self-dealing. There's this sleazy undertone, unseemly aspect to this entire bill in how it was come into law and, really, it needs to be withdrawn and go back to the drawing board.

You know, we certainly will do our part to give progressive tax change recommendations that actually will help benefit Manitobans.

The government has been tone deaf every step of the way with this bill and they're pushing it through no matter how ill conceived it is or how harmful its

consequences are and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot, in any good conscience, support this bill.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Pleased to speak on Bill 71 this afternoon. and I want to thank my colleague for Fort Garry for his words and I think quite—do an excellent job of summarizing the issues with Bill 71. I do want to just bring up a few other points and just to talk about them for a few minutes regarding the issues around Bill 71.

First of all, I want to go back to the Premier's—how this idea came out for the Premier in terms of moving away from education on property taxes. This was a last-minute-ditch idea that the Premier had in the waning days of the campaign as his numbers were slipping and he looked for an announcement to bolster support in the last few days of the election.

This wasn't some well-thought-out, well-'consultated' idea that had experts on side about how it would—how it could be administered or with any leading, you know, any knowledge experts or community people who could really say that this is a plan that could work; this is a plan that would benefit both education and that—property owners. No, this was a last-minute idea that the Premier must have come up with some campaign staff in order to boost some support during the last days of the election.

Then—since then, he's had time to actually work out the kinks of this idea—since the 2019 election. We're on a year and a half since then.

This bill was introduced just over a month ago, but it seems that the Premier failed to do any work, to do any consultative work to actually plan out how this bill could be executed. It looks as though it went straight from the waning the days of that campaign as a last-ditch effort to bolster some low numbers directly into this to legislation and Bill 71, without any further research or study into how to actually properly administer a property tax change as such—as large as this.

It looks like they didn't consider the impact that it would have on low property—low-income individuals in our province; middle-size homeowner or small-size homeowners, which—where their property value isn't as high; looks like they didn't consider the impact that it would have on our real estate and our commercial business owners, our farmland owners.

And, as well, you know, when you look at all these things in consideration together, you look at a

piece of legislation that came out from a bad idea. And that's what it is. It's a bad legislation because it was based on bad idea that had no fully thought-out plan when it first being conceived, and as a result we see today a piece of legislation that not only doesn't benefit most Manitobans, it actually actively hurts financially many, many Manitobans.

On top of this, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has— chose to bring this forward in a year where they're also choosing to present a budget that is in—that puts us into deficit. Now, combining that with a tax cut—a tax cut for—which mostly goes to the wealthiest Manitobans—and I think that's indisputable—is a terrible decision for the outlook and—our economic outlook and our economic forecast.

Anyone who's done even a very basic level of research or study would know that especially during times when there's economic downturn, recession, such as what we're seeing now, our benefit—our economy benefits when it see financial boosts. And these financial boosts and—often come from state or government programs.

Now, this bill puts more money into the hands of the people who need it least, the people who are the most financially secure in our province. What those people do when they have extra cash is not to spend it and grow our economy and boost sales at local businesses, it's usually to either save it or to spend it out of province on, you know, vacation resorts or larger purchases that may be based outside of Manitoba.

Middle-income and lower income people tend to spend extra cash they have investing in their—benefiting their own lives, their own homes in needed supplies and services or themselves and their family. That's how our economy grows by individuals spending a little bit more in our economy, bettering their own economic outlook as an individual or as a family and building off that to grow all of our industries in our province.

But by this government making this, I think in my mind completely irrational decision by introducing Bill 71 with this current structure of a flat rebate, which disproportionately benefits the wealthy Manitobans, it has—not only will hurt the low-income individuals but it doesn't grow our economy. And I think everyone on the other side has an interest in growing our economy.

\* (15:40)

Many people on government's side come from business backgrounds, small-business owners or worked there. They know—they know how important it is for a community to have cash flow so that our small businesses can thrive. This doesn't add to Manitobans' cash flow a whole lot. It doesn't.

If you want to compare what the richest, the wealthiest Manitobans are getting out of Bill 71, and you want to compare what the low-income peoples—the ones who will drive and continue to drive economic growth in our province will receive, it's night and day. And members opposite should be very aware of that because its impacts are huge and they're quite frankly staggering that this government would take this approach, because of—not just because it's a bad idea but especially because of the timing.

This pandemic requires all of us—all businesses—to grow out of it together, requires us to make some strong and different choices about how we are going to grow out of our economy together. Because we know it's disproportionately affected people of different groups, disproportionately negative. And what I mean is it's very evident that women have been—suffered the worst aspects of, economically, of this pandemic. They've often suffered more job loss; they've had incomes decrease more; they tend to work in fields where the COVID virus has spread more quickly, such as in health care, long-term care, education, child care, where their work and their lives have been more disrupted.

And so as we're looking at ways to retool our economy so that it can be more effective into the future, a bill that would change the way property taxes work should have those type of considerations in mind.

Now, it's clear—as I mentioned off the top—that this bill was thought out well before the coronavirus came to our province. But you'd think that a sensible government would look at our current atmosphere and our current situation in our province and be adaptable and look at their proposed idea and see how it could better fit our current climate, our current atmosphere.

Considering that we're in a pandemic and considering the state of our economy and who suffered most as the economy declined over the last year, bill—a bill like 71, where you're making significant changes to our property tax, could have been an opportunity for this government to make a strong choice, make a choice to actually help Manitobans who need it the most, to help women who have had—suffered worse during—under this economic decline, minorities who

have consistently been underrepresented in many economic factors in our economy, to assist Indigenous people in our province who, again, are looking for this government to just listen and understand their concerns and be working partners with them.

And again, this is a failure not just of—you know—a bill that came from a bad idea, but a failure of this government to be adaptable, to listen and to understand what is going on in our province right now; and this bill is so out of touch. And I think, if anything else, that is the biggest theme, the biggest consistent message that I've seen with this government over the last few years: that they're simply out of touch with the actual needs of Manitobans, what people are actually concerned about.

And I bring this up as Bill 71 relates to education. Now, when I speak with people in my constituency—and I know this sentiment is echoed with people across certainly southeast Winnipeg, but across our city and our province—that they're looking for, you know, better education for their kids, for students in our K-to-12 system.

And when we talk about how do we get better education, we talk about things like more teachers in the classroom, with a smaller teacher–lower teacher-to-student ratio. We talk about things like ensuring that there are supports in schools for mental health, supports in schools for people with disabilities, ensuring that our schools can become sort of community hubs, where people can access resources and they—because they know they trust their school, they love their school, they like their school and they want it to be part of their community. They want to be somewhere where they know their kids—families know their kids are going to get a good education. And they want to be able to trust that system, trust the teachers, trust the principals.

But Bill 64, as it was brought in, strips a lot of that away. And Bill 71 goes hand in hand with Bill 64. As we cut and take away funding from our education system, as Bill 71 proposes, it really shows this government's true motives with education. And I think all Manitobans, so many Manitobans, in fact, thousands and thousands of Manitobans, have rightfully voiced their opinion and will continue to voice their opinion and objection to Bill 64, and I think rightfully so.

I also know that this government is, right now, trying to play a little shell game, a little game of—they say that with Bill 64 they'll save us \$40 million, perhaps, or put \$40 million back into education. They'll say that in the front but in their back what

they're going to do is they're going to take \$200 million in Bill 71 right out of your back pocket. So they give you 40 and take out 200. And then the next year they're going to take out another \$200 million out of education, another 25 per cent.

Now, in the time from 2019, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) first mentioned Bill 71, to today, has there been a clear explanation about where the education system is going to make up the remaining, those dollars, that roughly \$200 million that's going to come out of education with this 25 per cent? Have they clearly explained where the next \$200 million is going to come out of—come from—to our education system as a result of this bill? No.

Again, they've had months and months and months of saying this promise with no backup and no information on how this money is going to be made up. Is this just simply a way to cut money from education? You say it's not. You say it's going to be made, perhaps, through, you know, going to be made up through our income taxes and general revenue.

Well, we all know that the money's got to come from somewhere. So, I'd like, perhaps, after I have finished my debate today, that another member on government side, perhaps a minister, to step forward and clearly state where the money is going to come from. Is it going to come from education? Is \$200 million going to get cut from education? Or are you going to raise taxes, our income taxes, by \$200 million? Or is it going to come from somewhere else? Are you going to cut \$200 million from health care? Please explain.

It's not clear to us in this Chamber; it's not clear to Manitobans; it's not clear to administrators in schools, to teachers, to principals; it's not clear to parents; it's not clear to students, who are the ones who are going to be facing these cuts and feel the largest impact of these cuts.

You can't, you know—you've made, you know, such a large change in Bill 64—I think all these folks are rightfully so—that a lot of people are talking about 64 and, you know, they're not realizing that there's such a huge critical impact of Bill 71. Because \$200 million are going to be cut from our education system this year. And, you know, I'd like to hear if it's going to come from education. I think students ought to deserve—deserve the right to know what of their programs are going to be cut, if \$200 million is being reduced from education.

Are they going to have larger classroom sizes because they have less teachers in their school? Are their extracurricular programs going to be gone? I don't know. I really don't know, because, again, this government, even though they've had time to explain these things, they've chosen not to. They've chosen not to because perhaps they're—I don't know—ashamed of what they have to do to give their friends and the wealthiest Manitobans a bit of a tax break. Or maybe they just don't have a plan. It's quite possible they just haven't thought about it. Maybe they're realizing this for the first time or maybe they know and just think someone else will be—someone else will figure it out later on. I don't know.

I'd love for someone to explain how—where the money's going to come from, what programs are going to get cut or reduced and who will be feeling the impacts of Bill 71. Because while we talk about education and the minister says that they're realigning and adjusting and taking from the top, putting it back, taking \$40 million from the top of the education system and putting it back into the classroom, at the same time they're taking \$200 million right out. That's a fact that can't be ignored.

\*(15:50)

And I'll just wrap up my comments in debate today by really stressing that in this time and in this era we're in, there's a whole generation of people who are now watching these decisions. I think many people in the younger generations are politically active and are seeing the decision makers make decisions that are not in their best interests.

And I think that many people now—possibly because they've had a lot more, you know, time during the pandemic—are paying attention and they're aware of these issues, and they're seeing decision makers, legislators in this House consistently, time and again, fail to listen to Manitobans, fail to consider the impacts of their decisions and simply make decision after decision that hurts their lives. And Manitobans are, quite frankly, tired of this Pallister government repeating those mistakes again and again and failing to learn from their mistakes again and again.

And that's why Bill 71 along with Bill 64 not only go to radically shift our education system and strip away so much of the positive benefits that we get from having a strong K-to-12 system. Yes, it's a K-to-12 system that we know can be improved, but we know won't be improved with Bill 64. And along with what Bill 71 does to impact the finances in our education

system, there is no doubt that this will have a negative impact across our province for generations.

So I urge all members to strongly consider those facts that I've brought up and have been brought up by many members on my side and make the decision to vote against Bill 71 today.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** We have expressed our concerns about this bill a number of times over, but it's worth going over it again both to deal with the specific impacts of what's wrong with this bill, but also to look a bit at the bigger picture, because one of the reasons this bill is being brought forward despite the fact that we have a very significant deficit and that it will add enormously to the deficit, and that this is a government that has had, I believe, at least two if not—two credit rating downgrades, in part because they've—were communicating that they were going to cut taxes and—without being able to pay the debt. These are all a major concern.

And, you know, sometimes people like to say that government should be run like a business, and it's clear to me that there are certain very specific ways in which this government has decided to run government like a business in ways that are worrisome.

So one of them is—has to do with the degree of—to which we would say there's interesting accounting, but this is not new. I believe the Auditor General pointed out that there are three different definitions of deficit that this government currently hews to, with major disagreements over—between the Department of Finance and the Auditor General over whether this government was even running a deficit or not or a surplus.

The Auditor General's position was that as far as they were concerned, they—Manitoba government was in surplus despite the fact that this—we hear all the time about what a fiscal mess was left behind. The fact is that the government has received over \$1 billion a year more now in transfer payments than they used to receive five years ago, which is about the size of the deficit they inherited.

The deficit they inherited was also derived directly from the fact that the Conservative federal government had frozen—capped all transfers to Manitoba for six years, which—and, as I recall, the late Finance minister, Jim Flaherty, when the Conservative government in 2011 unilaterally opposed health—a freeze on—or a change in health-care transfers and a

freeze on other transfers, just told people to raise taxes.

So we're in this odd situation where the government made a commitment to say, well, we will start to cut education taxes once we've balanced the budget. So we have this claim that they balanced the budget, and if you look at how the budget was balanced, it was balanced in part by forcing various groups to pay much more than they previously did in fees, including seniors and First Nation students and others, that the balance was—the budget—the supposed surplus was only \$5 million. And it's the sort of thing that could easily been—have been achieved through, let's say, accounting ingenuity.

But it is a real concern, because one of the things you want with the government's books is not just for it to be an accurate position of the books to give you an idea of what's being spent and where money is coming in and where it's going out, but that it's in honest accounting.

So one of the things that's happened over the many years, and there's some excellent books about it, are about the ways in which accounting is used to deceive people, or that businesses arrange their affairs in order to appear to be making much less money than they actually are. So a business, or a corporation, might say, well, look at this, we're losing money—or they're claiming to lose money—and as a result, we can't—we have to ask our employees to take a wage freeze or we're going to ask our employees to cut. But, really, what's happening is that a huge amount of money is going out the door to what you might consider to be shareholders.

And something very similar to that has been happening under this government for the last number of years, is that we've been borrowing to finance tax cuts. So we're borrowing \$300 million a year every single year for a single point of PST. We are going to be borrowing \$250 million a year every single year for a number of years for this.

So we're adding multiple hundreds of millions of dollars and, in fact, billions of dollars, to debt in order to provide taxes—tax—we—it's called tax relief, but really we're—it's not tax relief because we're borrowing it all. We're not in a situation where the government was in surplus, that has a huge of amount of money. Our coffers were not overflowing, and we're all of a sudden in a position to sort of return a dividend, so to speak, to taxpayers. That's not what's happening at all.

Even when you look at the impact of this, we need to be very serious about distribution which is—we—just means that different people pay different taxes and different people own different amounts. And if we're not willing to be realistic about that, then we're not willing to be serious about policy.

But what's been happening is that this government has been presenting its books in a way to make it appear that it has less money than it does, so that it can then say—they can then justify cuts, justify privatizations, justify austerity, justify freezes, justify layoffs, all of which have been happening, even as revenues are increasing.

So revenues, especially federal revenues, and this is a—especially an issue—I'm not quite sure why the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has said many, many times, on the issue of health transfers, for example, that at one point it was 50-50. I've run through the numbers and I actually cannot find any point since at least 1975 that there was a 50-50 split between the federal and provincial governments in terms of health. It, in fact, since 1976 it's about—been about 25 per cent, and it's about 22 per cent now.

So we need—again, we need to be realistic and honest about the accounting that we're talking about. But when you have a government that is pretending that it has less money than it has, in order to justify cuts, but at the same time has no problem borrowing billions of dollars in order to provide politically motivated—and I think economically unwise—policies, it's a huge problem.

\* (16:00)

And there are lots of corporations that have run exactly like this, and they get into big trouble. Because aside from the fact that we're going to be borrowing billions of dollars that we do not have, the question is not just who's going to benefit, but who's going to pay it off?

And when you permanently take property owners off the tax rolls, it means those people are not going to have to pay this debt off. So when we borrow the \$240 million this year—the \$240 million or 400 or 500 million dollars next year—and year after year after that adds up, we are going to have to pay all of that back. But the people who are actually benefiting from the tax rebate are not the ones who are going to have to pay it back. Someone else is going to have to pay it back.

So this is not just a tax cut as it is a tax shift. It is shifting away from people who have—own property,

and some of those people own very small properties and some people 'own' many properties. It means those people who own the most properties, multiple properties, multiple businesses will be getting borrowed money that all the rest of us are going to have to pay back; and they won't have to, in the same way.

And I was even surprised a bit because the opposition said, you know, that they're interested with issues around property taxes. The thing about income taxes versus corporate taxes and property taxes, when it comes to the issue of tax avoidance, is that property taxes are one of the hardest taxes to avoid. And this is actually why people want to get rid of them, because they're hard to avoid. Because there are lots—it's one of the—might be one of the one taxes that people actually have to pay.

If they can engineer—successfully engineer their corporate earnings in a way that they don't have to pay corporate taxes and if they have to—can engineer their affairs so they don't have to pay personal income taxes, both of which are completely possible—and under our current system, there are nevertheless property taxes which tend to be much harder to avoid, because ultimately if a government—if you don't pay your property taxes, the government can come and take it—take your property from you.

So, property taxes are actually a profoundly fair tax for that very reason; that often people who are property owners are people who are—you know—they might own rental properties, they might have inherited rental properties. And that means they, in the words of John Stuart Mill, are the people who can earn money in their sleep. They are what you would call rentiers.

And even in committee, when this came up, there were lots of objections to this. But one of the most serious concerns that I have about this bill is not just ideological but that it will have unintended consequences—or perhaps they're intended consequences—but the consequences of this bill are not going to be what people think it's going to be. That when you cut property taxes—and a number of people said this, including representatives from the real estate industry—I specifically asked: isn't it the case—because others asked—isn't it the case that when you cut these taxes that there's a possibility a municipality might step in and fill that tax space, so to speak? So if these property taxes are no longer being charged by school divisions, then they might be charged by municipality instead.

But really what happens is it's not municipalities who step in and take that space over, it's banks, it's

mortgage lenders. So what happens is that this entire bill will do something which we don't need to be doing, which is continuing to overheat and already overheated property market that farmers actually don't benefit from having—or, a retiring farmer might have a wonderful benefit from being to sell of their farm at a very elevated price, which is great for them—but the fact is is that we are continually driving up the price of property and rents and mortgages and farms in ways that are bad for our economy.

And it means that we're paying massive overhead instead of paying overhead that's going to be going to taxes to actually help children go to school, to educate people, to make people brighter, to make—allow people to fulfill their full potential. Instead, we're going to be helping property speculators.

And Manitoba has been home to many property booms and it is—and it's pretty rare that they end well. There have been a whole series of them, and what happens at the end of the day is that a whole bunch of people end up going broke. And we have a situation already where you have young farmers who have to take on millions of dollars of debt in order to buy a relatively small farm.

So we're actually creating massive obstacles to entry, based on whether people—it's great if you're already a property owner, but if you're not, you're going to have a huge problem. And this is going to be true for renters, and this is going to be true for first-time home buyers.

So, with respect to the Manitoba Real Estate Association—and I did ask about this specifically, and they said, well, that's—it's a possibility; it is a very strong possibility that in doing this we are actually just going to drive up the price of property. And we are going to be—mean more debt for younger generations and more debt for start-up businesses, which is the opposite of what we need right now.

You're—that this bill will not provide relief. What it will do will be to drive up the price of property. Again, great for speculators, but for everybody else who's not a speculator—if you run a factory, if you have employees who need to be able to afford housing, which most people do, if you're a young graduate coming out of school, how are you going to be able to afford these things without taking on a massive mortgage?

And it's another basic principle. This is not an ideological point of view to say, look, when you spend a lot on an asset, the more you spend on an asset, the

less you're going to get out of it. So, if you're buying a house, a brand new house, for \$600,000, the chances are, at this point, that you're going to get a massive return when we're seeing—we're getting towards the end—or we're getting towards the end of a massive housing bubble, we're not going to see what we need. And this is a—this is—fundamentally this is about, in a sense, subsidizing speculation, which is a kind of gambling, on our end, and when those bets pay off well, it's great, but when they—when those bets go sour, it's a disaster for the economy as a whole because you have a whole bunch of people who cannot pay their mortgages.

So, I mean, this is—my frustration about this is that this is a bad bill at a bad time. There have been a number of things said about it that simply are not accurate, one of which is, for example, the idea that there are no other provinces that charge property taxes on—for education; several other provinces do that.

But, fundamentally, property taxes are an incredibly fair way of ensuring that people pay what they're contributing to society, but also because the value of property tends to be derived entirely from public investments, whether it's a road or a railway, hydro or water; whether something is serviced or not is part of what makes the difference between some—whether something is valued or not.

So, for those reasons, it's deeply—I find this is a deeply frustrating and, I think, damaging bill because it—everything it sets out to do, it will reduce our government's ability to bring in revenue.

*Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

It'll increase our debt. It'll make our tax system less fair. It'll raise the price of property. It'll make it harder for young farmers to buy farms. It'll make it harder for young people to buy a new property or a first home, and—but it will briefly—briefly anyway—make some—hand out some cheques to—some fairly large cheques—to a fairly limited group of people.

And for—the relief the—as they—as it tends to be called, that it will supposedly provide for a so-called average homeowner, it's not going to be enough because right now we're looking at—I think the claim is it's an average of \$400 a home—averages, again, are—society doesn't work on averages, but there are statistics out just this week that show that Manitoba's insolvencies—it's one of the top—it's the fourth—in terms of all the provinces, it is fourth for increasing insolvencies, personal insolvencies. And insolvencies across the country are starting to spike because the

relief that was provided over the last year is starting to dry up and people have amassed enormous amounts of debt just to keep themselves afloat in this pandemic.

And I know that I talk a lot about debt, but this is the single biggest threat to our economy, and it is not going to be solved by this bill. It is not going to be solved by something which is only going to provide the average family with two months worth of relief.

\* (16:10)

And I do want to say, because there's—there have been, in terms of opposition, the opposition has, you know, raised a lot of objections to this, but the fact is is that the NDP had very similar policies that, in 2008 they—the spring of 2008, they put out a very optimistic press release talking about all the taxes they had cut at the time up to that point. So up to 2008, they said they had reduced \$1 billion in taxes.

At the time, lower and middle-income Manitobans paid the highest taxes. The people at the top of the income scale in Manitoba are still actually not among the top. We actually have a lower maximum tax compared to several other provinces that are have-not provinces.

And the taxes that were being reduced by the NDP at the time were similar to the ones that are being reduced now, with the exception of the PST. They cut income taxes, which tended to benefit people at the top income range. They gave taxes—tax breaks to people, education tax breaks to people—on people who owned a second property. And, look, that is a huge advantage to anybody who has a second property.

So it actually means that if you can only afford one property, you are paying a greater share of—into your—into the education system than if you owned two. And there were a series of other tax measures which are also enormously beneficial by—to people who are at the top of the income scale.

And that was the track record of the NDP. And while there were increases to property taxes under—it was in part—by school trustees, it was in part because the provincial government was not keeping up with its commitment to fund things out of general revenue either. So it needs to be a balance and that balance is not there, it has not been there.

So just to, really, to wrap up, I think I've said everything I need to say, but this is not a bill that makes fiscal sense. It is not a bill that makes economic sense. It's fundamentally unjust. And the one other



thing about it that—is that it's also—it's coming at the worst possible time.

Again, if you're going to talk about running a government like a business, imagine having a business where you have, you know, a handful of customers who you count on, and they're good customers, they're—they give you most of your revenue. And you say well, you know what, I really like you as customers and you're responsible for lots of the revenue, so what I'm going to do is that I'm going to start borrowing money so I can cut your prices. So I'm going to—as a business, I'm going to take on debt so that the people who are my most reliable source of revenue don't have to pay me as much.

No business would do that. That doesn't make any sense. But that's exactly what this government is doing. This government is going into debt in order that the people who are going to benefit the most will never have to pay it back. That does not make sense and that's one of many reasons why we oppose this bill.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** I'd like to thank my colleagues from St. Vital and Fort Garry for the words that they put on the record; some good insights here into the concerns we have with Bill 71. And even my colleague for St. Boniface, I thought he made a number of important points regarding shortcomings of the bill.

I've already had a chance to put a few words on the bill previously, but happy to have a chance to put a few more, to highlight some of the big concerns that we have with Bill 71.

This bill is fundamentally similar to a Trojan Horse in that it's sneaking in this notion of a tax break for regular Manitobans while at the same time pushing through one of the biggest tax breaks in Manitoban history to the wealthiest people in this province.

So this bill is craven and it's really—it's certainly not in the best interests of Manitobans and it is a huge giveaway to wealthier people in this province at a time when we should not be incurring further debt, of course.

So not only is this a terrible bill, this is a terrible bill working in service of another terrible bill, which is Bill 64, which will seek to defund our education system and remove local voice in favour of centralized power, and that bill, overall, does nothing to improve student outcomes.

And so, this is just one bill, again, supporting another bad bill. And right now, more than ever, Manitobans need a government that is worried about their families, that will focus on serving the best interests of their families, and one of those needs of Manitoban families is to ensure that we have access to high-quality education here in Manitoba.

And that's not high-quality education just for some, but high-quality education for all of us. And we know that the proposed changes in 64 do not help to achieve that and this bill actually just serves to further undermine education in this province and further undermine the ability of our government to deliver education to all Manitobans and especially to those who need elevated levels of investment.

But, of course, that's the—that's not the direction that we're going with government; we're going in the opposite direction that Manitobans are seeking right now, and that's really concerning. And we can see that the PCs here are, again, moving forward with a huge giveaway, and it's really concerning.

We hear the story that they're telling Manitobans, that they're planning on reducing school taxes by 25 per cent over the next couple years, and they're going to be doing that by sending us rebate cheques instead of just simply taking those funds off at the top.

And, you know, when I speak with people in the community about how this government is planning on going about moving forward with this, I usually get a lot of concern, and people are sort of left in disbelief about the way that this government is going about doing this, especially once they learn about the long-term impacts on the provincial Treasury and the fact that ultimately the government is borrowing money to deliver this tax break to the wealthiest and are funding it in part by taking away tax breaks from renters.

But desperate times deserve desperate measures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, you know, it's clear that this government is using this as a means of responding to a really poor, you know, a poor performance over the last year and beyond. It's really clearly an attempt to buy votes and to have Manitobans come on-board at a time that the PC Party is in big trouble. We know the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) performance has been dismal—worst approval ratings in the country or almost—and now, of course, the worst COVID numbers in the entire country as well.

So this government has a lot of reason to want to respond to that with a bill that they think will buy votes in Manitoba and get people to forget about their

performance, but I don't think that Manitobans are going to forget about that just because this government is putting this on the table.

As with any bill involved in—with money or tax measures with the PCs, we have to watch really closely. And we've seen with—you know, today we heard that the Finance Minister bragged about this being one of the biggest tax cuts in Manitoba history. Of course, he didn't highlight who was the biggest tax cut for.

But Minister Fielding—or, sorry, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) did state—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Remind the person to—the member to always address by other positions or their constituency.

**Mr. Sala:** I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we have to watch carefully when this PC government is trying to push forward money measures, because we know that it's hard for them to resist benefiting themselves and it's hard for them to resist focusing on ensuring that benefits end up going to the wealthiest people in this province, as opposed to regular Manitobans and those who need it most. And this bill is no exception.

You know, this bill is fundamentally about moving away from—as many others have already stated really clearly—what is fundamentally a pretty progressive approach to funding education in Manitoba: basing taxation on property values, which tend to correlate pretty well to overall wealth and the means of Manitoban families, and moving away towards an approach that is regressive and ultimately moving to an approach that forces regular Manitobans to fund a much bigger chunk of education in Manitoba.

\* (16:20)

And so, you know, what does that mean for the rest of us here? What does this bill mean for the rest of us? Well, it means that the PCs are proposing to cut out hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue from the provincial Treasury and it means that they're proposing to cut out hundreds of millions of dollars from education funding in this province. And this is a gap that they've yet to explain as to how it's going to be filled, so at this point we're left to really just accept that it's clear that they're planning on removing these funds without any kind of plan for actually making them up.

But we still need to educate our kids. We—you know, next year, when this bill is enacted and hundreds of millions of dollars start to be taken out of education or education funding in the province, we still need to educate our kids. Kids are still going to be going to school and there's going to be still every need to ensure that we continue to deliver those important services to Manitoban families, but we're going to have a lot less funding.

And so this bill creates an important change and that change is the difference in who is actually picking up the tab over the longer term for paying for the course—for the costs of those—that education that we're going to be delivering to Manitoban families.

Now, we look at who really will benefit from this, which, as we've clearly stated, is wealthier families. But we look at the degree of the windfall that's going to come to families who happen to be property owners. Getting that huge reduction on property taxes on your first, second properties and on and on just creates a really palatable benefit here for some of our wealthiest in this province.

It also creates millions in savings for large property management companies in Manitoba and outside of Manitoba. This is something we haven't talked a lot about this bill, which is that this bill will ultimately funnel huge amounts of money outside of the province, send it to Ontario or wherever else those real estate income trusts are held. And those companies that happen to have a bunch of real estate in Manitoba that are going to be beneficiaries of this tax cut are going to gladly take those dollars. And those dollars will no longer be present in Manitoba, never mind the fact that they won't be being used to help fund education in this province. So it's a pretty good deal. It's a pretty good deal if you're a big property owner or if you're a commercial property operator here in Manitoba.

And so, you know, what do regular Manitobans get? That's an important question we need to ask. Well, they'll receive that 25 per cent reduction in their property tax bill in the form of a cheque, thankfully no longer with the PC stamp and signature on it thanks to the amendment that was passed earlier.

But for the average Manitoban, huge portions of that rebate will ultimately be eaten up by other costs and other increases in the cost of living due to the inaction of this government. I'm thinking specifically about the work that they are failing to do in controlling rent costs and also their increase in hydro, which are unaccountable and Manitobans have no idea whether

or not those increases are even needed. So, you know, this supposed cut is being gobbled up by other cost increases that are being facilitated or being allowed to happen as a result of this government's inaction.

You know—and on top of that, you know—and to add insult to injury, of course regular Manitobans also get to pay for the costs of sending these cheques to themselves. We saw a story in the Free Press that outlined it would cost an estimated \$1.3 million for Manitobans to send their own money to themselves, which is outrageous by any measure but, of course, par for the course for the type of thinking that we've seen from this government.

I mentioned it earlier, but one thing in—of huge concern here that this bill creates is the damage to the finances of people who are renting in this province. Renters are huge losers as a result of some of the measures put forward here in Bill 71. They're being asked to disproportionately fund a huge portion of the tax break that's going to wealthiest Manitobans to—that's going to the—help fund the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) \$7,000 rebate. Renters are helping to fund a big portion of that because they're losing out on hundreds of dollars a year.

So we know that there's a \$700 education property tax credit that goes to renters and a portion of that is disappearing as of next year once this bill gets enacted.

This is one of the most, you know, economically challenged demographics or groups in our province. A lot of renters are seniors or low-income families or people on fixed incomes. They rely so heavily on every dollar that they have coming in, and the idea of just simply taking away hundreds of dollars from these families without any concern about the impact of that loss, that financial loss on those families, is quite shocking, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's shocking to know that this government, in the midst of an environment where many Manitoban families are facing an affordability crisis, especially renters who are exposed to, you know, huge rent increases. We've seen that this government has failed to respond to the out-of-control of above-guideline increase issue.

This is not a group of Manitobans who have money to spare. This is not a group of Manitobans who can afford to lose out, when this is fully enacted, on the \$700 rebate that they're currently receiving. And I can tell you from speaking with people in my own community and knowing some of the stories that

have been shared with me, this will ultimately result in a lot of renters being forced to make decisions that no Manitoban should ever be forced to make, between paying their rent or buying groceries.

That's not a decision I think many people on the other side of the aisle here can appreciate, that they don't really have the ability to connect to regular Manitobans and to understand some of the challenges that they face, but that's the reality. That's the reality of taking hundreds of dollars away from a lot of renters in this province—again, especially seniors or people on fixed incomes—an absolutely outrageous decision to fund this tax rebate with money out of the pockets of renters in this province.

Small businesses, they don't fare much better, either, here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They won't really benefit from this tax cut, but their wealthy landlords will.

And, you know, we've heard suggestions from members opposite that there's going to be some, you know, amazing generosity shown here by landlords and they'll pass on this rebate in the—to their renters in the form of lower rental rates, but we have reason to think that that is likely not to happen and, you know, after a long year of struggling throughout this pandemic, this is just another example of government taking money away and making it harder for small business owners in the province.

So, you know, in summary, we've got—over the next two years, we're going to have the wealthiest Manitobans who are going to stand to benefit enormously, while the rest of us are left with a defunded education system with less local programs, bigger classrooms to save money so that they can help to fund education and just lower costs, lower quality education for our kids, and no additional help for those who need it. Forget breakfast programs; kids are going to be left to fight for themselves, and increasingly so under this government.

So, you know, those are some of the shorter term concerns. I think over the longer term it's worth focusing on, you know, what—where is this going; what does this ultimately mean beyond the next two years? This bill begins the process of defunding education, but it's important to ask ourselves, what does this mean over the longer term, and what does this mean in terms of how regular Manitobans will experience education in their communities?

Well, one of the ways that we know we'll experience a shift in our relationship to education in our

communities is the loss of representation. Right now, local voices—if we don't like the way a local school division is spending money, we have the ability to encourage local decision-makers to spend their tax dollars in a way that reflects local needs.

You don't like the way that the local division's using those bucks, they can go and actually speak with someone. You can actually make a difference because they're likely a decision-maker, and I'm speaking about, of course, trustees or other local people who are accountable to people locally regarding how funds are spent.

And that local accountability has been wonderful for us in a community like St. James. And the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston), of course, as a long-term trustee on the St. James-Assiniboia School Division would know how wonderful that has been, to be able to have that ability to direct those dollars locally and to have that local representation in those decisions.

But under this new system, we're going to have no local say over how education funds are spent—creates huge risks for local programs out here. I'm thinking of some of the great local programs we have in St. James that, under this, you know, this proposal, will likely need to be slashed.

\* (16:30)

I'm thinking about things like the Winnipeg Jets Hockey Academy, or we've got this incredible grade 3 swim class program, Literacy Links. But the PCs here with this bill are ultimately going to take away that voice and take away that opportunity for us to have a local voice. And this bill will contribute to that overall.

So, you know, this bill isn't about providing anything in the way of increased local decision-making, representation, and that's a huge concern.

And, you know, as much as they like to paper it over with this bill's reference to school community councils, et cetera, it's clear that there won't be any local decision-making about how we, as residents, can ensure that our investments as taxpayers are directed towards creating locally responsive programs, because they'll be taking away any real power or influence we have as parents or communities over that power we had in influencing local decision-makers and our ability to lobby local decision-makers. That was real power. That was actual power and that was power that we were able to use to create good in this province.

You know, I'm just going to maybe wrap up here by saying this bill is very clearly not about providing tax relief to regular Manitobans. We know the longer term impacts; we know that, over the long term, Manitobans are going to be—regular Manitobans are going to be carrying a bigger portion of the bill. And if there's any shred of truth to this government's desire to actually help regular Manitobans, this bill would have likely been structured very differently.

There are opportunities to improve the way that education is funded in this province, and we know there are concerns with the current system as it stands. But there are any number of ways that this government could have actually gone about reforming the way that education property taxes are structured, that they could have gone about this in a way that could have ensured that we continue to have a properly funded education system that was paid for by families according to their means and that it didn't, over the long term, threaten an erosion of the quality of education in this province by handing over a massive tax break to the ultra-wealthy and ultimately letting them off the hook over the long term for playing—for having a fair role in helping to pay for education in this province.

You know, Manitobans have pretty basic expectations of their government, and one of those core expectations is that their government will deliver quality education to their citizens. This bill—Bill 71—and Bill 64 together threaten the quality of education in this province; they threaten that core service, that basic expectation that Manitobans have. And there is a long list of reasons why we cannot support it.

I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** It's always an honour to rise in the House and to put some more words on the record. These past few days in debate we've had the opportunity to talk about what this bill really represents, and I want to thank my colleagues, the members from Fort Garry, St. Vital and St. James, and my other colleagues in the House that have put forward some very strong arguments in debate regarding Bill 71.

But let's look at—Deputy Speaker, let's look at the genesis of this bill and why is it being brought forward. There was a—it's caught many members by surprise, especially—not only because of the timing of this bill, when we're in a pandemic, when many people in the province are expecting a government to come

forward with plans to how we're going to emerge from the pandemic. Instead we have a bill that completely guts and builds into our provincial Treasury a structural deficit that will impact severely our public education system.

We are now debating a bill that is going to remove a significant amount of funding with really very little explanation as to how the provincial Treasury will be able to cover this significant amount of funding.

We would have preferred to have a debate on how the education system will be supported coming out of the pandemic, because we know that coming out of the pandemic, the education system will be certainly inundated with a tremendous amount of demands. I've outlined earlier in my debates of what these demands are and what they will be. And I really looked forward to being surprised by this government by bringing forward a bill to debate how the education system will be funded and supported to meet the challenges that we'll face coming out of this pandemic.

Instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're debating a bill that, really, has not only caught everybody off guard here, but really is quite a head scratcher.

And I do want to thank the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) for bringing forth an amendment that everyone in this House today really saw the merits of and certainly supported unanimously. Not one nay vote, and why is that? Because it brought some semblance of normalcy to a debate, really, that is quite difficult to have and is really a—like I said earlier, left a number of Manitobans wondering about what the priorities are of this government. You know, it takes a lot of courage to bring forward bills for debate that look after not only the welfare of a certain segment of the population but the welfare of every Manitoban.

I said earlier in debate in this House on many other bills, how important the public—a fully funded, vibrant public education system is, one that every member in this House has benefited from because governments past, in this province, have seen how valuable, and understood how valuable, a public education system is, one that, at its very core, lifts everybody out of poverty, provides them a roadway, a map, a guiding light, a real opportunity, to not only contribute to this province but also to understand that a good public service benefits everybody, not only those at the top but also those that are coming out and fighting to be part of not just our economy but also our communities and what it is to be a community member and a contributing community member. There's

nothing in this bill that looks after the welfare of the majority of Manitobans.

And I'll say it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we go through these types of bills and we see who these—who and what these bills benefit, we're again left to say, and to see, and just like my colleague for—the member from Fort Garry pointed out, how disproportionately this benefits people that are already doing very well—doing very well not only because we're in a pandemic but have always done very well.

It's incumbent on governments, regardless of their political stripe, to ensure that they bring bills forward that benefit a majority of Manitobans. And I will say that this bill, Bill 71, in the way that it's currently written, does not do that.

And there's a part of me that was really, really disappointed as a member of this House, when we saw what the true priorities are, that we can't even investigate properly, based on the flimsy Estimates books that we received from this government. I will say that we—when we were in Estimates in Education, it was very difficult to come up with an idea of how the supposed extra funding for education was being spent in this province.

It would, again, like I said earlier, it would have been great to have a debate in this House and ask how we're going to come out of the pandemic and how the public education system will be able to respond to the incredible demands that will be there. No, instead, we're debating this bill that disproportionately benefits those that are property owners—and wealthy property owners—real estate investment trusts that are often located out of this province that will get a windfall.

\* (16:40)

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this windfall will not be passed on to renters of those properties. I can tell you going up and down my constituency here in Kildare Avenue East where we have a number of apartment blocks, I will tell you their rent will not go down based on this bill. As a matter of fact, they're going to lose the one benefit that they had with that \$700 tax rebate.

We also have many rental properties that are—sprouted up along Dugald Road west of Plessis Road. And I can tell you, every one of those people won't be getting a rent decrease based on this bill. No, instead—just like my colleague from St. James brought up—instead, they will be sending their children to schools that maybe will have less support for their children,

when really, coming out of the pandemic, we would need more support for our kids in schools.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to make one more point, and one more point being—is this: when we enter into debate into this House and when we look at the Estimates books and when we look at the budget that has been brought forth by this government, we can really see where the priorities lie.

And I will—I can tell you with one one hundred per cent certainty that the moral obligation that we have to Manitobans is not being met by this, by a budget that was released, by Bill 71. Instead, what we have is—Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a—pieces of legislations that are cynical, pieces of legislation that really need not be debated in this House.

We needed to see a road map for how we're going to come out of the pandemic. I would have loved to, again, have been debating a bill that would have described how education and how education services will be provided coming out of pandemic because these are important things that Manitobans are talking about, these are important things that Manitobans are thinking about. And we had an indication of that during town halls and polls that my colleague from—the member from Fort Garry brought up and said that governments need to be focussed on services for the residents of this province, coming out of the pandemic. Tax cuts were last on those polls.

And what response do we get? Mr. Deputy Speaker, we get Bill 71. That's what we get. That's what you got—or we have now coming out of this.

I will say, I'm profoundly disappointed. I will say the constituents of Transcona deserve better, as do the constituents in every one of the constituencies in this province.

And with those few words, I will conclude my remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is there any further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, property tax and insulation assistance act and the income tax act amended.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

\* (16:50)

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, the property tax and insulation assistance act and the income tax amended act.

#### Division

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

#### Yeas

*Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.*

#### Nays

*Adams, Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Naylor, Sala, Sandhu, Smith (Point Douglas), Wasyliw, Wiebe.*

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Yeas 34, Nays 20.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed.

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**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Is it the will of the House to not see the clock until a few matters of House business have been resolved?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is there will of the House not to see the clock past 5? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

\* (17:00)

### House Business

**Mr. Goertzen:** Few matters of House business.

Just prior to getting into that, I will acknowledge that we'll be calling Crown Corporations committees for June, putting Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation, Manitoba Public Insurance, and we'll announce those committee dates tomorrow. We're just finalizing the dates with the CEOs of those respective corporations.

And the first part of what I'm about to announce will be related to the extension of the virtual sitting rules that we have agreed to. And I want to thank—and I've said it publicly—the co-operation of the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) on this issue of virtual sittings, and so that is what that will be in reference to.

So with that said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave:

(1) to amend the Sessional Order passed by this House on October 8th, 2020, and amended on November 19th, 2020, so that the first paragraph June 1, 2021, is replaced by December 2nd, 2021;

(2) to have the House sit until 8 p.m. on May 19th, 2021, in order to consider concurrence and third readings of specified bills;

(3) for the following conditions to apply on Thursday, May 20th, 2021: (a) at 4 p.m. when the Deputy Speaker interrupts proceedings under

rule 2(14), rather than calling the specified bills in the order listed on the Order Paper, the Deputy Speaker shall continue to call them in the order previously announced by the Government House Leader; and (b) at 10 p.m., for any remaining specified bills, the ministers shall move the concurrence and third reading motions and the Deputy Speaker shall put the questions immediately, without debate, and the division bell shall ring for no more than one minute on each request of a recorded vote.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is there leave to:

(1) to amend the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 8th, 2020, and amended on November 19th, 2020, so that the first paragraph June 1st, 2021, is replaced to December 2nd, 2021;

(2) to have the House sit until 8 p.m. on Monday, May 19th, 2021, in order to consider concurrence and third—*[interjection]*—(2) to have the House sit until 8 p.m. on May 19th, 2021, in order to consider concurrence and third reading of specified bills; and

(3) for the following conditions to apply on Thursday, May 20th, 2021: (a) at 4 p.m. the Deputy Speaker interrupts proceedings under rule 2-14, rather than calling the specified bills in the order listed in the Order Paper, the Deputy Speaker shall continue to call them in order previously announced by the Government House Leader; and (b) at 10 p.m., for any remaining specified bills, the ministers shall move the concurrence and third reading motions and the Deputy Speaker shall put the question immediately, without debate, and the division bell shall ring no more than one minute on each request for a recorded vote.

Is it—there leave? *[Agreed]*

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, May 18, 2021**

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