

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 213—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines)

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I move, seconded by the MLA for Notre Dame, that Bill 213, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 213, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act.

Currently, under provincial guidelines, personal-care homes must provide each resident with 3.6 paid hours of care each day. Depending on the number of residents, up to 35 per cent of the care must be provided by nursing professionals. The hours of paid care include time that is not spent providing direct care to residents of a personal-care home.

Bill 213 will require the minister to ensure that the current standards for paid care set out in the guidelines are maintained, compliance with the standards is reported annually and establish standards to ensure that the direct care provided to residents is adequate.

I look forward to unanimous support for this bill.

Thank you.

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

Bill 229—The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Keewatinook, that Bill 229, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Lindsey: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce Bill 229, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act.

This bill will legislate a requirement for the minister to establish standards for adequately clearing snow from provincial roads. These standards must meet the minimum requirements set out in a schedule and must be published.

Manitoba is a province that experiences extreme winter conditions, and, although we may be used to this, we have to be prepared to keep our roads safe for everyone. Bill 229 will help protect Manitobans from dangerous road conditions, and I hope to see this bill passed unanimously.

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

Bill 232—The Catalytic Converter Identification Act

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), that Bill 232, The Catalytic Converter Identification Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Maloway: Bill 232, The Catalytic Converter Identification Act: this bill requires a motor vehicle dealer to mark the vehicle identification number for

every vehicle sold by the dealer on that vehicle's catalytic converter. This will include new and used vehicles.

Amendments to Bill 9, The Scrap Metal Act, requires scrap metal dealers who purchase a catalytic converter with a vehicle identification number on it to record that number and provide it to the police and Manitoba Public Insurance.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Second Report

Mr. Jim Maloway (Chairperson): I wish to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions:

- July 9, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. (3rd Session, 40th Legislature)
- September 8, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. (3rd Session, 40th Legislature)
- April 19, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. (4th Session, 42nd Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- **Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature – dated March 2014**
- Chapter 4 – Helicopter Ambulance Program
- Chapter 7 – Manitoba's Framework for an Ethical Environment
- **Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014**
- Section 7 – Personal Care Homes Program
- Section 8 – Pharmacare Program – Part 2
- Section 23 – Wireless Network Security

- **Auditor General's Report – Manitoba Home Care Program – dated July 2015**
- **Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015**
- Section 10 – Wireless Network Security
- **Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated May 2016**
- Wireless Network Security
- Helicopter Ambulance Program
- **Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2017**
- Helicopter Ambulance Program
- Manitoba Home Care Program
- **Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2018**
- Helicopter Ambulance Program
- WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices
- Manitoba Home Care Program
- Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students
- **Auditor General's Report – Forensic Audits – dated October 2018**
- Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities
- **Auditor General's Report – Management of Foster Homes – dated November 2019**
- **Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2019**
- WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices
- Manitoba Home Care Program
- Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students
- **Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2020**
- Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students
- Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities

- ***Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations – dated March 2021***
- *Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the July 9, 2014 meeting:

- Mr. DEWAR
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. FRIESEN
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER (Chairperson)
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)
- Ms. WIGHT

Substitution received prior to committee proceedings:

- Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS for Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Mrs. DRIEDGER for Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. EWASKO for Mr. SCHULER

Committee Membership for the September 8, 2014 meeting:

- Mr. DEWAR
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER (Chairperson)
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Mr. MARTIN
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. SARAN
- Mr. SCHULER
- Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)
- Ms. WIGHT

Substitution received prior to committee proceedings:

- Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS for Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Mr. SARAN for Mr. JHA
- Mr. MARTIN for Mr. FRIESEN

Committee Membership for the April 19, 2022 meeting:

- Mr. LAMONT
- MLA LINDSEY
- Mr. MALOWAY (Chairperson)
- Mr. MARTIN

- Mr. MICHALESKI
- Ms. NAYLOR
- Mr. NESBITT (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. SMOOK
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WASYLIW
- Mr. WISHART

Officials Speaking on Record at the July 9, 2014 meeting:

- Mr. Norm Ricard, Acting Auditor General
- Hon. Ms. SELBY, Minister of Health
- Ms. Karen Herd, Deputy Minister of Health

Officials Speaking on Record at the September 8, 2014 meeting:

- Mr. Norm Ricard, Acting Auditor General
- Hon. Ms. HOWARD, Acting Minister of Finance
- Ms. Lynn Romeo, Acting Deputy Minister of Finance and Civil Service Commissioner

Officials Speaking on Record at the April 19, 2022 meeting:

- Mr. Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Ms. Michelle Dubik, Deputy Minister of Families

Agreements:

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Chapter 4 – Helicopter Ambulance Program of the Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature – dated March 2014.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Chapter 7 – Manitoba's Framework for an Ethical Environment of the Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature – dated March 2014.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 7 – Personal Care Homes Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 8 – Pharmacare Program – Part 2 of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 23 – Wireless Network Security of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 10 – Wireless Network Security of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Wireless Network Security of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated May 2016.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Helicopter Ambulance Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated May 2016.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Manitoba Home Care Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2017.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Helicopter Ambulance Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2017.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Manitoba Home Care Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Helicopter Ambulance Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities of the Auditor General's Report – Forensic Audits – dated October 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2019.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2019.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Manitoba Home Care Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2019.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2020.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2020.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations – dated March 2021.

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature – dated March 2014*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014*
- *Auditor General's Report – Manitoba Home Care Program – dated July 2015*
- *Auditor General's Report – Management of Foster Homes – dated November 2019*

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015 (Section 10 – Wireless Network Security – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated May 2016 (Wireless Network Security - Helicopter Ambulance Program – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2017 (Helicopter Ambulance Program - Manitoba Home Care Program – concluded consideration of)*

- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2018 (Helicopter Ambulance Program - WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices - Manitoba Home Care Program - Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Forensic Audits – dated October 2018 (Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2019 (WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices - Manitoba Home Care Program - Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2020 (Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students - Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations – dated March 2021 (Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities – concluded consideration of)*

Mr. Maloway: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the Estimates supplement for Manitoba Justice for the fiscal year 2022-2023.

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Estimates supplement for the Department of Agriculture for the financial year '22-23.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Estimates for the Department of Labour, Consumer Protection and

Government Services for the year 2022-2023; and also pleased to table the Supplementary Estimates for the Public Service Commission for the year 2022-2023; and the Supplementary Estimates for the Employee Pensions and Other Costs for the year 2022-2023.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

* (13:40)

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I rise today to acknowledge national organ and tissue awareness week that takes place from Sunday, April 24th until Friday, April 29th. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the national awareness week and also marks 10 years of electronic service for Manitoba's online organ and donor registry.

Since 1997, national organ and tissue awareness week has been recognized across the country to acknowledge and promote awareness, education and discussion about becoming an organ, eye and tissue donor. This week is also a time to honour those who have become donors and are providing a second chance for someone in need and hope for so many that are still waiting.

Sadly, in April 2018—oh, I'm sorry, yes—in April 2018th, a bus crash involving the Humboldt Broncos hockey team resulted in the tragic loss of 16 lives, including Logan Boulet, a young man who chose to be an organ and tissue donor and whose parents honoured his decision.

As news of this terrible tragedy and selfless act were brought to light, thousands of Canadians responded by registering across the country. In a wave of generosity, they registered, Madam Speaker, to be donors. Donations were pouring in like never before and more than 100,000 Canadians registered, and it became known as the hashtag #LoganBouletEffect.

In Manitoba, more than 7,500 Manitobans registered their donation decisions by using the Province's online organ and tissue donor registry, signupforlife.ca. In honour of Manitoba's 10 years of

online organ and donor registry, a goal has been set to add 10,000 new registrations by the end of this year. The registry currently holds more than 60,000 Manitobans.

To mark the 2022 national organ and tissue awareness week, the Winnipeg sign at The Forks will be lit blue and green to represent Transplant Manitoba's gift-of-life colours, and on the evening of April 25th and 26th, the signupforlife.ca logo will be projected on our Legislative Building.

I ask all the members in the House today to please join me in recognizing national organ and tissue awareness week and for all Manitobans who have signed up to become organ donors. And for those who have not, I encourage you to sign up today at signupforlife.ca.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, today during national organ and tissue week this Assembly stands united in commending all Manitobans who have signed up to become organ donors and, in particular, salute the seven Manitobans who, after passing away last year, donated their organs to save the lives of others.

We also pause to remember those whose lives would have been saved or drastically improved had their transplants not been delayed over the past two years. The backlog for procedures necessary for organ transfers—transplants, like ultrasounds, have increased by almost 2,000 since the last Doctors Manitoba update.

An example of this took place last December. While other Manitobans were doing last-minute gift shopping, the 33-year-old Matthew Laferriere was spending his evenings hooking himself up to a home dialysis machine as he waited for a kidney transplant that he was originally scheduled for in 2020. Because of the extensive delay, his condition has deteriorated to the point where he now needs a heart transplant as well.

Madam Speaker, we can and should continue to encourage all Manitobans to sign up for life. And we must honour their brave and generous gifts by ensuring that our health-care system can facilitate the necessary transplants. On national organ and tissue awareness week, the Manitoba NDP and I not only recommit to the movement to register more organ donors, but also to end the organ transplant backlog so that Manitobans like Matthew can get the life-saving gifts that they so desperately need.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, this coming week, the last full week in April, is national organ and tissue awareness week. Originating in 1997 on an initiative of Dan McTeague, then-Liberal Member of Parliament, this week brings attention to the urgent need for more people to indicate they're willing to be organ and tissue donors.

The latest information on Transplant Manitoba's website shows that there are more than 200 Manitobans waiting for a kidney transplant alone, not including other types of transplants. The high number is likely due in part to delays and backlogs.

The story of Matthew Laferriere raised by CBC reporter Lauren Donnelly in December 2021 illustrates the problem. After six years of waiting while on home dialysis, Laferriere was due to get a kidney transplant in 2020. He found a living donor, been cleared for the procedure and only needed the hospital to schedule the operation. But complications since a—as a result of the wait, have meant his health deteriorated to the point he needed a heart transplant first and then the kidney transplant. A simpler procedure became much more complicated because of the delay.

Ideally, the backlogs and waits for procedures like Matthew Laferriere's should have been managed better, in part through better allocation of resources by the government to the transplant program.

The lives of people like Matthew Laferriere are on the line every day. It would be far better to move to a situation where there is a presumption of consent to donate an organ and an opt-out for organ donation instead of an opt-in.

It is a concept now supported by the Manitoba Law Reform Commission. It is a concept supported by Manitoba Liberals in the 2016 election. In March 2017, Judy Klassen, the former MLA for Keewatinook, seconded a bill to achieve this goal. Unfortunately, the bill was not then supported by the Conservative Party. I hope that that has changed and that the legislation could now be brought forward successfully here in Manitoba.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Transcona Rotary

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Service above self, Madam Speaker. That is the Rotary way.

The Transcona Rotary is a small club on the east side of Winnipeg that has big ambitions. They recently celebrated their 40th anniversary, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them on that: 40 years of regular meetings, 40 years of giving back, 40 years of helping our community, 40 years of having a positive impact on the world around them, 40 years of service above self.

Each member who joins the Rotary does so for the opportunity to serve their local and global community, for growth and development in ethics, world understanding, equality and peace and for the fellowship of like-minded members with a common purpose and goal.

I joined the Transcona Rotary about seven years ago and I want to thank one of its 40-years-ago founding members, Dr. David Marsh, for the invitation to do so. Together with his wife Helene Marsh, they have welcomed me into the club and encouraged me to stay involved.

Transcona Rotary has had an oversized impact, sponsoring community playgrounds and parks like the beautiful new playground at—in Waterside Estates, helping purchase a van for L'Arche Winnipeg, providing scholarships to area high schools and hockey teams and even working with Rotary International to help with the global eradication of polio.

So when the club recently decided to ask its members to contribute to ShelterBox Canada to provide aid and humanitarian relief to—in the Ukraine, I was confident that they would respond well. At first, I had hoped that the two dozen members would be able to come up with as much as \$5,000, but I quickly had to revise my estimate to \$15,000. Well, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, the club collected an astonishing \$29,000 in support of Ukraine.

Joining us in the gallery today is Transcona Rotary president Steve Lipischak, together with his wife, Lindsay Jennings. So, please join me in congratulating them and the entire Transcona Rotary club on 40 years—40 amazing years—and in thanking them for their incredible support, humanitarian relief efforts in the Ukraine.

And I'll add all the 'memberds' of the Transcona Rotary into Hansard.

* (13:50)

Members of the Transcona Rotary: Conrad Desender, Holly Fjeldstad, Robert Frances, David George, Tom Goodfellow, Alanna Horejda, Alexander Lifshits, Steve Lipischak, David Marsh, Paul Minsky, Steven Mintz, Garrett Morrison, Modestus Offor, Mercy Okeke, Ben Okwudili, Constance Oranu, Jay Pauley, Bernadette Romance, James Teitsma, Jim Trann, Diane Truderang, Larry Vickar, John Vis, Alex Yaworski – members; Yvonne Desender, Helene Marsh – honorary members.

Supervised Consumption Sites

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, opioid overdose deaths in Nova Scotia have declined 33 per cent since 2017 and they've dropped every year from 2019 to 2022. It simply wasn't true when the Minister for Mental Health and Community Wellness said yesterday, and I quote: Overdose deaths have been increasing across all jurisdictions regardless of government in power.

During this same time period of declining opioid overdose deaths, the Nova Scotia government was investing in supervised consumption sites, giving the workers key tools they need to save lives.

In contrast, addiction workers in Manitoba are making it clear they feel abandoned by this government. One RAAM worker recently told the press, I quote: I really wish the Health Minister would come down and spend a half day with me, come see the children who come with the parents that are addicted and stop throwing driblets and drabs of money. End quote.

I hope the minister will take the RAAM worker up on this offer and spend a day on the front lines.

The steps we need to take here in Manitoba are clear. When a treatment worker tells the media that, I quote, I can't get someone into, say, a treatment program tomorrow, end quote, it's obvious they need more funding. The worker went on to say, and I quote: Every person that we don't see or have to turn away, there's a little voice in the back of my head saying, is that the one we're going to read about in the obituaries on Saturday? It's hard and breaks my heart. End quote.

Imagine how difficult this must be. Imagine how heart-wrenching it is to care so much and know how to save lives, but know you can't because you don't have—because you lack the tools you need because of the lack of funding.

The government and the minister will not listen to anyone, not even Nova Scotia, who is saving lives and addressing overdose deaths. This minister should retract her statement, spend a day with addiction workers and commit to supervised consumption sites that are proven to save lives and give the front-line workers the tools that they need to save lives here in Manitoba.

Joan van der Linde

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Today, I rise to acknowledge the incredible work and volunteerism of Manitoba resident Joan van der Linde.

The COVID-19 pandemic left many Manitobans feeling isolated and alone. Joan recognized, however, that while COVID-19 prevented her from physically convening with friends and family, there were still ways for the community to keep connected.

Joan started baking homemade bread out of her home on March 23rd, 2020, under the moniker The Bread Basket. What began as a project for close friends quickly grew into community-wide campaign, allowing any local resident who wanted wonderfully braided bread to reserve up to 12 loaves at a time, free of charge. As friends, families and neighbours contributed goods and covered expenses for the developing endeavour, a personal journey quickly evolved into a community-wide movement.

Joan celebrated a huge milestone one year later on March 23rd, 2021, when she baked her 1,000th bread loaf. The initiative gained a lot of traction at this point. Around this time, Joan and The Bread Basket coined the slogan Taste the Hug, which referred to a metaphorical hug for those receiving the bread at a time when actual contact was difficult.

The Bread Basket today has baked over 3,100 loaves as of April, 2022, feeding mouths all over southern Manitoba and as far 'asway' as Edmonton. Joan can currently bake 12 standard loaves and one gluten-free loaf at any given time. When asked when she plans to retire her initiative, she stated emphatically that she will continue to bake as long as there is demand of the community.

Joan exemplifies what it has meant to be a Manitoban and a good neighbour.

Please join me in thanking and acknowledging Joan van der Linde for extreme generosity and hard work. She continues to show us the value of breaking bread.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

St. Vital Schools—Activities and Achievements

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, I am always in awe of the excellent students and staff of the many schools in St. Vital.

A job well done to the Dakota Collegiate who was named one of the top fundraising schools in 2021 for the Terry Fox Foundation. In athletics, the Dakota Lancers varsity girls basketball team won the Manitoba high schools athletics AAAA provincial championship against the Westwood Warriors. In addition, Dakota Collegiate girls soccer team won the indoor high school soccer league championship. Go, Lancers, go.

I want to commend the students at Glenlawn Collegiate for the—leading the charge during Black History Month in February, inspiring the student body and the school community with the power of Black history.

At the end of February, at St. George School, they kicked off their breakfast program to ensure that all students have a nutritious start to their day. Educators know that, beyond filling stomachs, school meal programs foster feelings of self-worth, belonging that lead to better outcomes.

Lastly, I'd like to highlight the LRSD's René Deleorme Centre. They partnered with Mobile Vision Care Clinic to host a community vision-care clinic. Madam Speaker, 54 community members who otherwise may not have been able to receive this service were able to get comprehensive eye exams.

While we celebrate the excellent achievements by students and the educators in St. Vital, we also call on the government to do more for education. The government should increase funding for education above inflation; support initiatives that would reduce child poverty, like meal programs in schools; and support local school-based programs promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and representation in education. This all would go long way to ensure that the future of education is as bright as the 'accomplishment'—accomplishments in our schools today.

Thank you.

Assiniboia Chamber of Commerce

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Today I want to recognize the Assiniboine chamber of commerce. I'm pleased to welcome Chamber president Kristi Meek and manager of member relations Brittany Odger, who's in our Chamber here today.

Located at 2061 Portage Ave., the Assiniboine chamber of commerce has been a strong business and community advocate for west Winnipeg for over 92 years. They have a long and rich history of encouraging meaningful connections with—and providing education and networking opportunities to promote economic development and a vibrant place to live in St. James.

The chamber is known for their public awareness campaigns, especially over the last two years, Madam Speaker. During the pandemic they connected a local pharmacy with the Winnipeg Airports Authority. The small business was able to provide rapid tests to one of the largest employers in west Winnipeg.

They're a safe place for businesses to share their stories and ask questions. From these conversations, they created a shop-local campaign that put money in the hands, directly and 'indirectly'—directly, of businesses and individuals during the pandemic. This is done by, mainly, many hours and hard work by dedicated team of the chamber.

Recently, the chamber worked with the soon-to-be opened Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada providing a hard-hat tour and networking opportunity. The relationship of—the chamber's created with the royal aviation museum allowed—provided a back-scenes, first-time experience of a wonderful landmark in west part of Winnipeg.

On Thursday, May 19th, the Assiniboine chamber of commerce is proud to present the 2022 AGM and business excellent awards. This event really creates a celebration of the achievements of the growth of west Winnipeg and shows the appreciation for the business community, sharing stories of our local businesses and individuals.

Madam Speaker, I want to personally thank president and executive director Kristi Meek—again, who's in the audience here—for her regular communications and dedication to success of our community and businesses. Her commitment to advocacy and working with community members, government, businesses is second to none.

I also want to recognize the executive board of the Assiniboine chamber of commerce, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Use of Private Agency Nurses Investment in Public Health Care

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, according to media reports, the Premier is just fine with spending \$40 million a year on private agency nurses. Just like Brian Pallister, the Premier is spending more and more money on private health care.

That's wrong and, of course, on this side of the House, we have a different plan. We have a plan for more nurses working at the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —bedside in the public health-care system.

* (14:00)

I know that they object any time we talk about public health care, but they need to hear it because that's what Manitobans want.

Why does the Premier think it's okay to spend \$40 million a year on private nursing agencies?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Investing in nurses, regardless of public or private, is obviously what we need to do in madam—in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, to ensure the most important thing—and what I did say, which maybe wasn't reported—what I did say is that we will do whatever it takes to ensure that Manitobans get the health care that they need, when they need it.

And that's why, in our budget—in our plan, Madam Speaker—we're investing more than \$110 million this year to reduce the diagnostic and surgical backlogs.

That is our plan. The question is, what is the plan of the Leader of the Opposition? Or does he have one? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Just want to draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to a significant mistake the Premier just made.

She says that it doesn't matter if health care is delivered in the private setting or the public setting. Absolutely not. It matters to every single Manitoban that health care stays public in Manitoba. In fact, it's a

fundamental Canadian value that we have public health care here in Canada.

So, yes, we object over and over again to the Premier every time that she says it doesn't matter if they're investing in private health care or public health care. We say that Manitoba's government should have a plan to invest in the public health-care system with publicly hired nurses working—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —at the bedside.

Why doesn't the Premier agree?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, what Manitobans want is a plan to ensure that they get the health care that they need, when they need it.

That's why, in our recent budget, we announced more than \$110 million towards reducing the surgical and diagnostic backlogs, Madam Speaker.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition can criticize and he can be negative all he wants, Madam Speaker. I know that he aspires, perhaps, to be premier of this province someday. But what I will tell you is that Manitobans—he can't do that without a plan.

Manitobans want to know, what is his plan, Madam Speaker? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, through you, the Chair, to the people of Manitoba, our plan is simple: invest in nurses in the public health-care system, not the private health-care system.

And, you know, I apologize, but we can't let the Premier off the hook for the comment that she said first—in her first response in question period today. She stands in the Chamber and says that it doesn't matter if we hire nurses in the public health-care system or in the private health-care system.

Let's go to the people of Manitoba and see what they think. I'll tell you right now what the people of Manitoba want. They want more nurses in the public health-care system, and it absolutely does matter to them whether this government keeps investing in private health care.

And there's more: Why does the Premier continue—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to invest \$40 million in these private agency nurses when—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: This is how out of touch the Leader of the Opposition is, because what Manitobans want is access to health care when they need it, Madam Speaker. That's why we have a plan to do just that—more than \$110 million.

We've heard from Manitobans that they want access to the surgical and diagnostic procedures that they want and need, Madam Speaker. We have a plan to ensure we deliver just that for Manitobans.

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

Public vs. Private Health-Care Systems Apology Request for Premier's Comments

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, Madam Speaker, the Premier can come here day after day and say that it doesn't matter to Manitobans whether we invest in private health care or in public health care, but we know, absolutely, it does matter. We need to invest in the public health-care system.

We're talking about a fundamental Canadian value, Madam Speaker: the guarantee that if you need health care, if you are sick, if you have something that ails you, what is going to determine your health care is not the size of your bank account but what actually your medical needs are.

Will the Premier apologize to the people of Manitoba for saying it doesn't matter whether we invest in public or private health care?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, the Leader of the Opposition should apologize for not having a plan for Manitobans when it comes to delivering health-care services, Madam Speaker, in our province.

And what is the Leader of the Opposition—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —saying? He knows that there's a shortage of nurses across the country—indeed, in North America, Madam Speaker. Is he saying that we shouldn't have contracted out to the—those services to there's—those nurses to help deliver those services for Manitobans?

Is that what he's saying? Yes or no, Madam Speaker?

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, the Premier can launch the personal attacks all she likes, we'll keep getting up and fighting for health care on behalf of the people—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —of Manitoba.

And you know what? She might think that it's out of touch to say that we want public health care, but I guarantee—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —that the vast, vast majority of Manitobans agree that public health care has to come before private health care.

And so, for the Premier to stand up today, after all the scrutiny for the health-care mistakes that we've seen under the PC watch, and to say it doesn't matter whether we invest in private health care or public health care—again, this is fundamentally at odds with what the people of Manitoba want. The people of Manitoba want public health care.

Can the Premier simply admit that it does matter whether we invest in public health care before private health care?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition can get caught up in ideological debates all he wants, but the fact of the matter is the people of Manitoba want to have access to health care when they need it. And that's exactly 'wha' we're doing: investing in nurses to ensure that we deliver those services for Manitobans.

Is the Leader of the Opposition actually suggesting that we should not have invested those services—to deliver those services for Manitobans? Is that what he's saying, Madam Speaker?

I don't think that's what Manitobans want.

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

Mr. Kinew: What we're saying is that under her time as Health minister we shouldn't have been firing and cutting nursing positions, nor should we have been creating working conditions that caused thousands of nurses to leave the profession. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: And what we would add to that is to say that, during her time as Premier, that it absolutely does matter whether we invest in public health care or private health care because, again, the thing that should determine your priority in the queue shouldn't be the size of your bank account, it should be what your medical needs are, how sick are you, when do you need to get that appointment.

It is a eye-opener and it is refreshing to hear the Premier honestly say that she supports private health care, but we still say that that is wrong.

Will she apologize for saying that private health care is as important as public health care?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that we shouldn't have invested in the services of those nurses who delivered much-needed health-care services to Manitobans. That is out of touch with what Manitobans want.

The fact of the matter is there is a nursing shortage across this country—indeed, in North America, Madam Speaker. And we will continue to invest to ensure that we have the nursing services that we need to deliver the service—surgical and diagnostic procedures that Manitobans need and deserve in our health-care system.

Opposition to Education Modernization Act Apology Request for Minister's Comments

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Last year, the current Minister of Education wrote a column praising bill 64, and I'll table it right now. The headline read: Bill 64 will improve education. He called opposition to bill 64 fear mongering by special interest groups spreading false information.

* (14:10)

Now the minister wants a mulligan on bill 64 and his vicious attack on teachers and educators. It's not going to happen, Madam Speaker.

We know what this government cares about. It's not our students. It's not our teachers.

Will someone on the other side there finally apologize for that minister's horrible article last year?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Our government'd be very proud to announce our plan for the future in terms of education.

We know that's something the NDP don't have. They don't have a plan, Madam Speaker, on the finances, on education, on health care.

And our plan'll be revealed later on this afternoon, a plan that's going to make a difference for Manitobans, a plan that's—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —going to lead to success.

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

Mr. Altomare: The minister last year called opposition to bill 64 fictitious and false. He said he was very pleased with their government's efforts through bill 64. He blasted those concerned about the future of our kids' education as special interest groups. It was vicious and unbecoming of a minister.

And now the minister wants us to forget. Again, not going to happen.

He says he wants to repair the damage. This government can do that right now and apologize for those horrible statements last year.

Will somebody over there do that today?

Mr. Fielding: Our government will not apologize for listening to Manitobans, and that's exactly what we've done. We are going to be introducing a plan later on today, an education path forward for success in education.

Our question is, do the NDP have a plan? We know they don't have a financial plan, we know they don't have a health-care plan and, Madam Speaker, my guess is they don't have an education plan for Manitobans as well.

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

Mr. Altomare: The current Minister of Education loudly supported bill 64, and that's a fact; called opponents special interest groups, called their concerns false, misinformation and fear mongering. But we knew what it was: just another step by this government in dismantling our education system, brick by brick. And that's their plan.

The minister now wants to wave a wand like we'd all forget, but again, that's not going to happen. This government and this minister haven't begun to repair the damage.

So I'll ask one final time: Will someone apologize for these horrible statements and will they do so today?

Mr. Fielding: Our government's not going to apologize for listening to Manitobans. That's what our government does routinely as we're making changes to the education system. We're also not going to apologize for increasing the funding of the education by over \$127 million year over year—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —and we're also not going to—*[interjection]*—we're also not going to apologize, Madam Speaker, for building 22—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —new schools that the NDP never did, Madam Speaker. That's a part of our plan. Let's hear their plan.

Emergency Medical Services Response Times

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, in 2019, right before the pandemic, emergency personnel in Winnipeg described EMS response as the worst they had ever seen. In December of that year, there were seven hours where an ambulance in Winnipeg was not available. The situation is now much, much worse.

Through freedom of information, which I'll table, we found in January of this year that there were zero EMS units available for over 28 hours—28 hours, Madam Speaker.

Why does the minister think it's acceptable that no EMS response is available for 28 hours in just one month?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member opposite for the question.

Our government is committed to ensuring that EMS services are available for Manitobans across the province when it's needed. That is why I have—I'm so pleased to have shared in announcements, across the province, opening new garages in Portage la Prairie, and more to come in terms of our clinical preventative services plan, Madam Speaker, hiring more paramedics, being at the table focused on solutions instead of focusing and staring at the problem.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, when there were seven hours without an ambulance available in December of 2019, veterans of Winnipeg's paramedic force said, and I quote: I have never seen it this bad. End quote.

And now it's gotten far worse than that. In January of this year in Winnipeg, there were no EMS units available for over 28 hours. There were 588 times in that month where an emergency response was simply not available. The problems were known long before the pandemic, and the minister and the government did absolutely nothing to resolve it.

Why did the minister not listen and meet the needs of front-line emergency response in Winnipeg?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, it was our government that reduced the ambulance fees, not their government. We listened to Manitobans who were facing large fees as a result of calling an ambulance, and we responded by making it more affordable.

We continue to work with our rural and northern partners to ensure EMS services are available, opening new garages, having more ambulances in the system, hiring more paramedics, working with our Advanced Education Minister to ensure there are seats available for more paramedics to be trained.

We will be there for Manitobans in their time of need, even in the EMS system.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, what I'm trying to make clear to the minister is that they are not there for Manitobans in their time of need.

In January of this year, service in Winnipeg was degraded 66 per cent of the time. In 588 cases, there was no unit available. What good is not having to pay a fee if there's no ambulances to get to people when they need help, Madam Speaker? In total there were more than 28 hours where no EMS was available at all.

It was a crisis in 2019 that is four times worse right now. Emergency responders in Winnipeg were pleading for help before the pandemic.

Why hasn't the minister listened to them and met the need, and why does she think it's acceptable that no EMS is available for 28 hours in just one month in Winnipeg?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the EMS professionals, the leadership, the Manitoba

municipalities. I've met with many of them in the last few weeks, talking about how we ensure that services are available to Manitobans in these communities.

It is our government that's hiring 35 more paramedics across our province. We are listening, we are taking action and we will continue to sit at the table of solutions, Madam Speaker.

EIC Medical Aviation Services Contract Request for Premier's Recusal

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): We have established that the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) believes she is above the law when it comes to conflict of interest.

Earlier this year, the Premier—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —just failed to disclose the sale of real estate worth \$31 million, calling it an oversight. And despite her family having a financial interest in the Exchange Income Corporation, she helped award them a contract—another violation, Madam Speaker.

Now the Province has issued a notice of proposed procurement for medical aviation services, an industry in which EIC is directly involved.

Will the Premier do the right thing and recuse herself from awarding any contracts to EIC?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, we know the tactic of the member opposite.

She comes into this House to make an allegation. She has absolutely no facts. After she's made that allegation, she runs into the hallway, into the arms of a waiting reporter, repeats those allegations, then it gets reported without any evidence or any facts. And then we never hear anything about it again from anybody who actually investigates these things because there's nothing to them, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, Madam Speaker, EIC's executives and related lawyers contributed over \$43,000 to the Premier's leadership campaign—nearly 8 per cent of the total fundraising. This is the same company that the Premier's husband has a financial interest in. And now EIC has an opportunity to secure an additional contract from this PC government.

* (14:20)

Our mediation—medical aviation services should not be determined by who—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —donated the most to the Premier's campaign.

Will the Premier follow the rules and recuse herself today?

Mr. Goertzen: I think there's even members who support the NDP who donated to the leader's campaign, Madam Speaker, if they wanted to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: A big tent—it's a big tent, Madam Speaker. But despite that big tent—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —it doesn't absolve the responsibility of the member opposite. She comes to this House. She slams the chamber of commerce, Madam Speaker. She accuses them. She accuses business people in the community. She accuses well-meaning donors within the community. She accuses ordinary Manitobans. She accuses NDP supporters. And then she goes into the hallway and she tries to repeat those allegations.

When these things are investigated, if they ever are, nothing comes of it because there's nothing to it, Madam Speaker. The member should hold herself to a higher standard.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Medical aviation services is an important industry, and EIC has the potential to secure a massive contract from this PC government.

At the same time, the Premier's family has a financial interest in EIC. When EIC benefits, so does the Premier and her family. That's a clear conflict of interest.

Will the Premier recuse herself from any dealings with EIC? It's very simple, Madam Speaker: yes or no?

Mr. Goertzen: Again, Madam Speaker, this is a well-worn tactic by the member opposite. She comes to the House. She brings forward allegations. There's nothing to the allegations. She repeats them in the hallway. She tries to get a story. If they're ever investigated, nothing ever comes of it because there's never anything to it.

Now, the member opposite might be concerned about investigating certain things, and there's certainly things on their side they may want to investigate. If the member opposite wants to play a game of whose crime is it anyway, we can do that and we'll start with members of her party on the next question, if she wants to continue with this.

Child-Care Wait-List Infant Spaces Available

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): There are 18,000 families waiting for child care in this province. Last year, the PCs axed the centralized child-care registry.

Through freedom of information, which I table, we've learned that the cost just to dispose of the child-care registry was over \$500,000.

Why is the minister spending more while parents and children wait longer?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Our government's very proud of the initiatives we've taken with child care.

In fact, we are one of the first provinces to sign on with the federal government to deliver a number of things in child care: moving towards \$10-a-day child care, creating thousands of spaces for Manitobans and also ensuring that child-care workers are paid a good wage—salary. That's something we're very proud of. That's something that we did.

The NDP, course, don't have a plan, never had a plan and couldn't get it done under their administration.

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

Ms. Naylor: The minister responsible for child care hasn't risen to provide any facts to Manitoba parents, so I'll do it.

I've looked at the new child-care search. There's hardly an infant space to be found in a quality, non-profit, regulated child-care centre. What the minister has done is introduce a patchwork system and a mad scramble for parents, 18,000 of them waiting on multiple lists trying to get child care.

Why did the minister spend \$500,000 for a longer wait for parents and families?

Mr. Fielding: Our government's not going to take an ideological approach, like the NDP, when it comes to child care.

We've done a number of things. We're willing, No. 1, to partner—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —with the federal government. That's something that the NDP could never do. They could never partner with another level of government to create \$10-a-day child care, to create over 23,000 spots and to pay appropriate salaries to ECEs.

Our government is very proud of that. That's one of the highlights of our budget in terms of creating hundreds of millions of dollars of more spaces, more initiatives in terms of child care. That's something that's very important to our government.

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

Ms. Naylor: I would like to refer the minister—all the ministers—to their own child-care search.

The following members have no infant care available in their constituencies: the member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon), the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Fielding), the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard), the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith) and the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma). And, of course, the member for Riel (Ms. Squires) and many, many more.

There is no infant care available for quality, non-profit, regulated child care.

Madam Speaker, they have nothing to offer, but why spend \$500,000 to prove it?

Mr. Fielding: Well, here we go again, Madam Speaker. We got an NDP—N-E-P—that are trying to be government that have no plan for child care.

We have a plan for child care. In fact, our plan will ensure people that are eligible for a subsidy increases from over 6,000 children to over 18,000. We've got a plan to reduce child-care costs for families to \$10. That's something that can work to make life more affordable for Manitobans. We also have a plan to create over 23,000 more spots and pay ECEs an appropriate wage.

That is our plan, Madam Speaker. Where is the NDP's plan?

Education Action Plan Criticism of New Plan

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's unfortunate that, once again, the democratically elected members of this House will be among the last to learn about what's actually in the new PC plan for education until after question period.

But on Monday—on May 2nd, 2021, a—less than a year ago—the then-minister of Education and current Deputy Premier wrote an op-ed, which I table, accusing bill 64 critics—quote: school boards, trustees, union leaders and political opponents—of spreading misinformation for the sole purpose of creating fear and anxiety in order to protect their own monopoly and vested interests.

Bill 64 may be gone, but the talking points remain the same.

Can critics of the new plan also expect to have their honesty and character called into question?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Our plan will be announced this afternoon in terms of our approach to education.

We're a government that wants to listen to Manitobans, and that's exactly what we did. We're—have a plan that will ensure that we're having appropriate amount of funding—in fact, our funding went up by over \$127 million on a year-to-year basis. We also plan to build schools—20 new—22 new schools that the NDP never did, Madam Speaker.

That is part of our plan. We'll be announcing the rest of it later on today when the minister speaks.

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

Rural Education System Funding Pandemic Enrollment Disruptions

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I don't know if the PCs are tired of boasting that six years and a pandemic after being elected, they're spending more than the NDP, but we're sure tired of hearing it.

The pandemic created unprecedented 'disruptions' in costs and in enrolment. September 2020, folks in education warned that temporary—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —enrolment disruptions in one year would affect school funding for the long term, and it

looks like that's what's happening. I table reports from four rural school divisions that are all—that together are cutting 45 positions in teaching: Hanover, Garden Valley, Interlake and Rolling River.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain why rural school divisions are facing cuts that will guarantee that when enrolment bounces back schools will be short teachers and resources?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Our plan, which will be announced later on today, include—with the budget, includes over \$127 million more for education on a year-to-year basis.

There's more than 22 new schools that are going to be built under our plan, Madam Speaker. That increase over the last two years is equivalent of over 17 per cent increase to the education system.

We want to make sure the funding is there. We want to make sure the right 'prorobing' is there. And our plan for the future is something that Manitobans can look forward to because we—it's based on what we've heard from Manitobans.

* (14:30)

Constituent Health Concern Access to Rehabilitation Care

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Mr. Stanley Shymanski, a fit 77-year-old senior who worked out at a gym twice a day, was admitted to Grace Hospital February 25th with a minor infection in one foot. Two weeks later, he was operated on and received a below-knee amputation on his left foot.

Leaving aside the issue of whether the amputation could have been prevented, what Mr. Shymanski needs now is rehabilitation, which he would like to have at Deer Lodge, so that, hopefully, he will be able to have a prosthesis and be able to walk again.

Why has there been a five-week delay in starting rehab to enable his recovery, and why has he been told today that no rehab can occur until at least May the 6th?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for raising this issue. The issue has been raised several times in the House as well as with my office.

I can assure the member that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, as well as the facility, is in constant contact with the family. They are working

with the client, and more information will be provided to the family, but due to Personal Health Information Act and the provisions within that act, I cannot discuss the specific incident of this case in the Chamber.

Orphaned and Abandoned Mine Sites Remediation Funding in Budget 2022

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, Budget 2022 showcases our government's priorities, and a prominent component of this is a commitment to protect the environment.

Can the Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks outline some of the significant investments this budget makes to accelerate the remediation and rehabilitation of orphaned and abandoned mine sites?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): I'd like to thank the member from Swan River for that great question.

Protecting and investing in the environment is one of our main priorities in Budget 2022. The budget includes an additional \$50.7 million to further expedite the remediation and rehabilitation of orphan and 'aband' mine sites.

Madam Speaker, activities over the next few years will include accelerating cleanup of selected sites, completing additional site investigation work and creating a new long-term-care maintenance surveillance program for remediation sites.

Unlike the NDP, Madam Speaker, we will fix our orphaned and abandoned mines. Where they spent nothing, we'll get it done. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Thompson General Hospital Hot Water Service Repair

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This government's cuts to northern health care hurt people in the North.

The hot water is disrupted at the Thompson hospital. I spoke with a constituent who has been there since December and, apparently, the hot water has not been working his entire time there. So it hasn't been working properly since December, and yet this minister didn't even know anything about it until last week when we brought it up to her, and still hasn't answered as to when exactly it's going to be fixed.

So will she do that today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I do want to highlight for Manitobans that a total of \$7.2 billion for health care has been invested in

Budget 2022. This is the most significant health-care investment in the history of the province—\$1 billion, Madam Speaker, more than the previous government ever invested in health care.

I look forward to ensuring that monies are allocated to the North; pleased to say that we already have allocated \$812 million to the clinical preventative services plan that will ensure 38 projects across rural and northern Manitoba, and looking forward to more good news for the North very soon.

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

MLA Lindsey: Madam Speaker, that minister should apologize to the people of Thompson, to the people of Tadoule Lake, Lac Brochet, all the other northern communities that are forced to send their residents to a hospital that doesn't have hot water.

She stands up and gives some meaningless answer.

We want to know: When is that hot water going to be fixed? We want to know that today.

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I want to, again, thank the leadership of the Thompson General Hospital, as well as the leadership of northern regional health authority—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—and all the tradespeople that have been working on this issue, Madam Speaker, to rectify it as quickly as possible.

As we all know, we've gone through two years of a pandemic. The supply chains have been severely impacted and everyone is working around the clock, as manufacturers, supply chain individuals, to resolve this issue and I thank them for all the efforts they've made.

And I commit to Manitobans in the North that we are—the health authority and the hospital is working as quickly as possible to rectify this.

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

MLA Lindsey: Madam Speaker, perhaps the minister could enlighten us as to just exactly how long the Thompson General Hospital has been without hot water, because, clearly, the answer she gave the other day didn't say that it had been off for months. Clearly, the answer that we got from the Northern Health

Region didn't say it had been malfunctioning for months.

So can the minister tell us today how long the hot water at Thompson General Hospital has been malfunctioning, and can she tell us when they ordered the parts?

Ms. Gordon: In Budget 2021, our government committed \$812 million, the largest health-care commitment in Manitoba's history to improve rural and northern health care.

Madam Speaker, more monies will be directed to the North in the 2022 budget, and this is an opportunity for us to look at the infrastructure in the hospitals and health-care facilities across the North. And we are sitting together—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—at the table in May to look at solutions, Madam Speaker. And I'm hoping by then, the plumbers would've had an opportunity to fix the hot water issue. That is a situation that is being rectified—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order.

Budget Impact Reporting Act Request for Government Support

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Manitobans want provincial budget decisions to make progress on climate change, social and economic inclusion. However, the Province doesn't currently outline how budget decisions will impact these indicators.

That's why I've introduced Bill 230, The Budget Impact Reporting Act, which requires the Province to outline how budget decisions impact these indicators. If the Province is confident in their decisions that these things will make progress, supporting this bill should be rather easy.

Will they commit to supporting the—Bill 230 today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, you always know your getting down on the list of questions in question period when the NDP asks a question about accountability and finance.

Madam Speaker, we're happy to take any question from that side when it comes to accountability on budgeting and finance because we know what their record is. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Their record was to jack up taxes each and every year, like when they widened the PST in 2012 and then increased it in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen:—2013. So even now, when they try to scream and shout and shout down the answer, they know that they don't have any credibility on this.

But we are keeping our promises on reducing the tax load for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Wasyliw: Provincial budget decisions have the potential to make real progress on issues Manitobans care about, and Bill 230 will increase the government's accountability on these decisions.

This bill will require the government to report on how and to what degree their budget decisions alleviate gender inequality, assist in eliminating systemic racism and racial inequality, reduce poverty and social exclusion and the impact of greenhouse gases.

Will the government increase transparency and accountability by supporting Bill 230?

* (14:40)

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, we know, Manitobans know what their approach is: ideological, the politics of division.

They also know what our approach is. We made a pledge in 2019, and we said, if elected, we will work hard to be able to help every Manitoban to keep more than \$2,000 of their own money by this year. And, Madam Speaker, ahead of schedule, we have kept our promise, reducing the PST, sending back even a larger education property tax rebate.

They're looking for results. This deliver—this government is delivering results for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Are there any petitions? No petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, House business.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Goertzen: Like to announce, in addition to the bills previously referred, that Bill 31, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022; and Bill 32, The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act, will be considered at the April 20th, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced, in addition to the bills previously referred, that Bill 31, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022; and Bill 32, The Victim's Bill of Rights Amendment Act, will also be considered at the April 20th, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

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Mr. Goertzen: Could you please resume debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on—I hope I said orders of the day, government business. Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health, who has 14 minutes remaining.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to rise and continue to put on the record an overview of the Health budget and the allocations and investments our government is making in Budget 2022, Madam Speaker.

We—\$630 million to strengthen the fight against COVID-19 and prepare for other variants and pressures on our health-care system, \$30 million to add 28 additional beds to our intensive-care units, Madam Speaker. So, this will bring our true ICU bed baseline up to 100 from the 72 we had pre-pandemic.

Mr. Brad Michaleski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I also want to take a few moments to talk about the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force. Budget 2022 includes \$110 million to address the surgical and diagnostic backlog. That is in addition to the \$50 million last budget totalling \$160 million.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no higher priority in our government than clearing the backlog,

and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has been clear that all resources necessary will be made available.

We're expanding Concordia Hospital's orthopedic surgery program with a \$4.9-million investment, building an additional operating room that will add 1,000 surgeries annually.

We invested \$400,000 in the spine assessment clinic to increase the number of assessments for Manitobans, ensuring 900 patients receive their treatment or care plan sooner.

We expanded Misericordia hospital's cataract program and entered into an agreement with Maples Surgical Centre to increase gynecological surgeries for hundreds of women.

We entered into a master services agreement with Sanford Health in Fargo, North Dakota, for spinal surgeries. Eleven patients have completed their surgeries so far, with 55 more just around the corner to have their surgeries completed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we're doubling the number of anesthesia clinical assistants in the province to help fight against the national shortage.

And I want to talk about our FIT testing in Manitoba. Also this will be beginning very soon this month, helping to screen Manitobans against colon cancer.

To date, we've also completed five requests for supply arrangements for surgical services to address the backlog of procedures due to COVID-19, 11,000 additional procedures have been contracted, and I'm pleased to report that all \$50 million of last year's funding dollars will have been spent on procuring priority procedures through this R-F-As-RFSAs and with our partner-in-service delivery organizations.

And then we will move now—we will now be moving into our sixth request for supply arrangement, another plan by this government. And it will include endoscopy; cataracts; pediatric general surgery; dental; and ear, nose and throat; outpatient spine procedures; adult ear, nose and throat; and general surgery, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our government also announced a new mobile CT unit and two new mobile MRI units, which will soon deliver nearly 12,000 CT scans and over 7,000 MRIs annually.

And I just want to share about our surgeries and diagnostics in terms of the numbers. Since December,

we have completed 2,430 CT scans, 3,766 and 1,712 MRIs. That's a total of 7,908 scans and diagnostics.

I'm pleased to report that last week there were 790 non-emergent surgeries completed and 224 emergent completed. This means we have hit 122.5 per cent of pre-pandemic levels for non-emergent surgeries when compared to 2019, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and just under 100 per cent for emergent surgeries.

And, since January, we have completed 8,507 non-emergent surgeries and 2,537 emergent surgeries. That's the total of 11,044 surgeries in these last three months. As well, 146 staff still remain redeployed from their program areas due to COVID, and this is the least number of staff redeployed and reassigned due to COVID since the height of the third wave. And there are plans to return all remaining redeployed and reassigned staff to their normal duties by April 25th.

And I also want to turn my attention to the vaccination campaign. I'm proud to report that over 1.1 million Manitobans have rolled up their sleeves to receive two doses of the vaccine. That means over 82 per cent of eligible Manitobans are fully vaccinated, the highest rate among the Prairie provinces. Over 44 per cent of Manitobans have received a booster shot, 74,277 children under 11 vaccinated.

And now, the nurses and internationally educated nurses, as well as our paramedics: our government recently announced \$19.5 million to add 259 nurse training seats this year. This would see seats made available at five post-secondary institutions as part of our larger plan—a plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to add close to 400 new nursing education seats. Budget 2022 adds an additional \$11.6 million to add the next phase, permanently expanding our nursing seats in Manitoba.

On top of these investments, we're hiring 35 more paramedics across our province. And 149 nurses have completed their ICU nurse training program since last April; 93 nurses in the last year have completed the 12-week critical-care orientation program to be able to help support our ICUs; 30 more nurses have signed up for the program in February. And I was so pleased to join the faculty of nursing last October to welcome 115 nurses that had graduated in October to our health-care system; \$4.3 million was also announced for 37 additional nurse training seats at the University College of the North. So again, we'll be welcoming

more nurses into the system in the northern parts of our province.

* (14:50)

And we are supporting hundreds of internationally educated nurse applicants to obtain their licensure and start practising in Manitoba, and that is being done through the aid of \$23,000 for each individual to help with fees, English language training and to remove the challenges and the barriers to licensure.

Undergraduate nurse employees program, as well, was launched last year. Last December, 63 third- and fourth-year nursing students joined care teams to support delivery of health services for Manitobans while gaining valuable, paid experience in a clinical setting; 159 more nursing students will join this program and start by the end of the month.

And I want to just highlight some of our capital projects. Our health-care capital plans invests \$2.3 billion in targeted health-care capital projects. That includes over \$100 million for the St. Boniface Hospital emergency room redevelopment, tripling the size of its ER; \$8 million for the new acute stroke unit at Health Sciences Centre, which will open this year and provide stroke patients with the world-class treatment they deserve.

Continuing over future years, we're investing \$8.2 million to build, expand and fix our health-care facilities in all regions of our province in support of Manitoba's clinical and preventative services plan. We've invested \$283 million for a 90-bed new hospital in Portage la Prairie; \$127 million for a 60-bed new hospital in Neepawa; \$70 million to enhance and add 30 additional beds at the Brandon Regional Health Centre; \$32 million to enhance and add 23 additional beds at Steinbach's Bethesda hospital; \$64.4 million to enhance and add 24 beds at Boundary Trails; \$31.6 million to enhance and add 30 additional beds at the Selkirk Regional Health Centre; \$5 million for a new ER in Dauphin; \$10.8 million to enhance and add 12 additional beds at the Lakeshore General Hospital in Ashern.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I hope all members of the House will support this budget that leads to investing and building and strengthening our health-care system.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Come on. *[interjection]* There you go. Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. It's always a pleasure to—well, you had to make sure, right? The member from Assiniboia

had to make sure people were paying attention, and so here we are.

I'm always humbled, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, to be here to speak on behalf of the constituents of Transcona. And just to expand a little bit, Transcona now is becoming a very large community, one that is expanding to the east and to the northeast. And with the expansion, of course, comes a demand for critical government services—services that constituents of mine certainly deserve to receive and deserve to have a government that ensures that it is there.

You know, I want to frame my comments, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, on the following—and this has always resonated with me. It resonated with me when I was a teacher and when I worked in the school system in some leadership positions. It's a statement by Maya Angelou and it goes like this: I've learned that people will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but people will never forget, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, on how you made them feel.

That is something that I based my career as a teacher on, my career as administrator. That is something that I base my work as an MLA on. People want to be treated with respect; people want to be valued; people want to be heard.

But right now, after six years of this government, what we've seen, and especially the citizens of north-east Winnipeg, what we've seen is a deterioration of services that really concentrated on our area, our area of the city that was decimated, in many ways betrayed, ignored and left behind by this government, disproportionately impacted by cuts and decision making, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

We have a surgical wait-list at 170,000. We have—and I have, and many of my colleagues, everyone in this House has—heard from citizens that are languishing on this list. And while, yes, this government said they had, first \$50 million, then it was discovered that some of that money, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, was spent on regular services. They didn't actually tackle the wait-lists because it's becoming now so large that it's an 'unmanageable' situation, and that has many of my constituents concerned.

Diagnostic lab services—there was a time in Transcona where if you were east of Plessis Road you had access to three diagnostic lab services where people that may have had mobility issues, that may have had the need to contact family to get them to testing, could do that quite easily. Some could even walk.

Right now, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that number is zero—zero diagnostic labs east of Plessis Road.

Now everyone is shifted to a lab at the corner of Regent and Lagimodiere, busy area, that is inaccessible to many with accessibility issues, that they have to rely on now family and friends to get to those labs, whereas before they had the dignity of the ability to get there by themselves. That has now been removed. And what that creates, then, is even more fear, more anxiety and unnecessary stress for people that require the regular services of these diagnostic labs.

I can tell you what the closing of the Concordia ER has done—we've gone over this—and the, of course, ICU beds associated with that. That Concordia Hospital was a hub for northeast Winnipeg and areas surrounding—Selkirk, Anola, Dugald, Oakbank—all relying on a full-service hospital that is now no longer that.

I will say, too, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that it was quite a blow when CancerCare had to leave Concordia because of the cuts. Reorganization—supposed to make it better.

An Honourable Member: Care closer to home.

Mr. Altomare: I can tell you—yes, closer to home, member from Flin Flon. What an oxymoron.

An Honourable Member: Not the member from Flin Flon.

Mr. Altomare: Not you, but the closer from home.

I will say, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that at Concordia, when you were able to pull up for chemotherapy treatments, you were able to pull up right at the front; again, have the dignity, by yourself, even though you're undergoing treatment, to walk from your car a short distance. I don't know if it was 400 metres. You were able to get to your chair and receive the therapy that you needed. That's now been removed.

I can tell you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the walk, when you go to CancerCare at St. Boniface, because of all the restrictions now, and I will tell you, every person wants to do that walk that is undergoing treatment because that's the one thing they can control, but it's a long walk. No one wants to ride in a wheelchair. You want to get there on your own, and you do everything you can to do that. Having a shorter distance, of course, allowed you to maintain some control over your life and what was happening.

These are the consequences that, really, when we make decisions that impact the daily life of our citizens, of our constituents, these are the consequences of systematic cuts that have forced impossible decisions on organizations like CancerCare Manitoba.

Because if there's one thing that needs to be maintained throughout all of this—*[interjection]*

Yes, I will stay in front of the mic. Thank you for the reminder, Mr. Clerk. I kind of start to wander. Just—I think some of the former educators around here would know about that, right? Moving—always want to be a moving target. He never wanted to be in the centre of things.

* (15:00)

But to get back to what I was saying. It's the dignity that is—always needs to be maintained, and that's been difficult. The one thing that I notice that was a glaring omission was there wasn't even a word to talk about the issue of patient transfers.

I will say that patient transfers in the age of COVID, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, have a devastating impact on family because they can't get to the place or hospital where care is being provided to their loved one. Unfortunately, we have cases of people the—with dementia that have to leave areas that they're familiar with and go to areas that they're completely unfamiliar with. And that adds an unnecessary layer of stress, concern on family members. Because they want to be part of the care team. And when a person is moved two, three, four hours away from the care team, it make it exceedingly difficult, difficult because everyone wants to do their part in ensuring that they are doing the best that they can for their loved one.

Again, it's all about dignity. It's about how you're made to feel. Like my earlier quote by Maya Angelou, right? They'll forget what you do, they'll forget what you said, but you'll never forget how you're made to feel. And that's the piece that resonates when you read a document that doesn't even mention that.

I also want to talk about personal-care-home space. I know the government mentions that they're doing that, but there's nothing for—and has been nothing since 2016—for our area of the city, an area that is noted, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, having the lowest per capita personal-care-home beds in the city. Long-standing issue at the one personal-care home in Transcona—affiliated with West Park Manor, actually, and ours is called Park Manor.

Still have four to a room, some twos, and very few single suites. There was a plan, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, back in the early 2010s that went up to about 2013-14 where they were going to do an addition, an addition that was going to be more of a tower piece just to the west of the current facility. During the election of 2016, the former premier actually stood on that corner of Redonda and Kildare announcing plans to tackle the personal-care-homes shortage in north-east Winnipeg.

We had—then we were asked to adjust those plans, and so in 2016 the plan was adjusted to follow the new standards that were set aside that—where you create what are called hubs, and you have a central kitchen area with single bedrooms around a common area and a kitchen area. So the plan was adjusted.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, one of the first steps of this government was to cut that construction. We are standing here in 2022, still the highest need in the city, with no plan to address personal-care-home space in Transcona; also impacts Radisson, Rossmere, Concordia, Kildonan-River East, all of these areas.

And people want the dignity, of course, of aging in place, and we're not able to do that with any certainty in Transcona. Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there is nothing like being close to home. Now, we're lucky enough as a family, we have our aunt at Park Manor receiving great care. But that was the luck of the draw. Originally, it was supposed to be out at Poseidon. Fortunately, a space came open and we were able to move her there, but in a quad, four people to a room, and these rooms were constructed in 1967. I think you can imagine the level of care has changed since then. The standard that people expect has changed since then.

And so I implore this government to come up with a plan to really address this issue right now for north-east Winnipeg. It's an important one, not only, like I said, to my constituents, but to others.

I want to talk about child-care spaces in Transcona.

We all know of the wait-lists, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. There are hundreds-deep: Canterbury Park Day Care centre, over 400; at Prairie Nature daycare centre at Westview School, over 200-deep. Many people, of course, aging out; they'll start kindergarten before they even get a spot in a licensed child care. That is a challenge that has to be tackled.

There was a bit of a—you know—a bit—some—a bit of a bright spot coming. There was the planned

DFSM—DSFM school in Transcona. That was going to be built in Canterbury Park, and, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, as you know, when new school construction is undertaken in this province, there is a commensurate amount of child-care space created. That school was cancelled, moved out of Transcona to some other location. So there went those licensed child-care spaces that were potentially being built.

Because the area is growing, there is further demand and people are wanting to see a plan that really tackles the space need for licensed, quality child care in northeast Winnipeg. And that's going to be an important part, and it's an important part that was missing from this budget.

And as I wrap up, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I just want to say something about the education tax rebate. In their own surveys, in this government's own surveys, it was quite clear that Manitobans were very, very precise in their communication in saying that they want the restoration of core government services as being the top priority of this government. And what do they do? They go back to the same old playbook; we're going to write you a cheque and hope you don't notice, hope you don't notice the cost to health care, to public education, to the welfare of our senior citizens, to child care.

So when I opened with people forget what you say, people will forget what you did, people will never forget how you were made to feel—and with those comments, I hope that the government reflects on this budget and makes the appropriate adjustments for a better, stronger Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): It's been just over two weeks since I first took my oath and sat here. I know I'm new here and I have a lot to learn and I look forward to the journey. However, in my brief time here, I've noticed a few things. And one of those is that people are here to serve, to serve Manitobans. The decisions here, made in this Chamber, are here to serve the interests of Manitobans, and that's exactly what this PC government is doing in this budget.

The budget last week is a strong step in bringing Manitobans together, moving forward and doing whatever it takes to get out of this pandemic stronger and together. To the surprise of some people sitting in this Chamber, no budget can cover absolutely everything. That might shock some members in this room, but it can't cover absolutely everything.

However, this budget puts forward by our government provides a great path for recovery out of this pandemic. Budget 2022 invests in key areas which will help make a difference in the lives of the people living in my riding of Fort Whyte and throughout this province. The budget shows that there's a lot of work to be done, and this government will keep working and will do whatever it takes to help Manitobans.

* (15:10)

Now, before the last two weeks of having the honour and 'privilege' to sit here, I spent the last three and a half months knocking on hundreds, if not thousands, of doors and making thousands of phone calls. And if we are truly here to serve people, we should ask: what were they saying, what are their concerns?

I can't imagine anyone that's talked to more people than me in the last three months door to door or over the phone. People are worried about health care; people are worried about senior care; people are worried about economy, cost of living and small businesses; and people are worried about their community.

I want to speak to all Manitobans, but especially my constituency of Fort Whyte: this budget addresses those concerns. This budget allows for \$7.2 billion in total health-care spending, a significant investment into the sustainability of our public health-care system. In fact, this is the most significant health-care investment this province has ever seen under any government.

To date, our government has invested over \$3.1 billion in pandemic support to protect the lives and livelihoods of Manitobans. And as a result of those amazing efforts, over 82 per cent of eligible Manitobans are fully vaccinated, the highest rate and amount of any province in the Prairies.

And although we all want this pandemic to just be over and go away, we know that COVID-19 will continue to impact our communities. This is why our government is committing an additional \$630 million to strengthen the fight against COVID and prepare for other possible future variants and pressure on our health-care system—\$630 million in this budget.

We know that the surgical and diagnostic backlog must be addressed, and our government is doing that. We are listening to Manitobans and we are doing that. We are investing \$110 million—that's a big number—\$110 million to make sure that, no matter what,

Manitobans are able to get the procedures they need as quickly as they can.

Another step our government is taking is to strengthen our emergency rooms. We are investing another \$30 million to add an additional 28 beds in our intensive-care units—\$30 million for 28 new beds.

And although the physical buildings and health-care centres mean nothing without our front-line workers, this is why we're investing another \$11.6 million to add 400 permanent nursing seats to Manitoba's post-secondary education.

This budget is addressing the needs of Manitobans.

I can stand here all day and read about the many more investments this budget outlines, but know this: our government is fixing our health-care system where—and I might be new here, but I know that under 17 years of NDP government, they never addressed any of those concerns; they actually broke the health-care system.

Seven point two billion dollars—that might be a big number for some people, but \$7.2 billion.

The pandemic was hard on everyone, but it was especially hard on seniors. Fort Whyte is a constituency—is my constituency—where many seniors live. Nearly 20 per cent of the population makeup in Fort Whyte is of seniors. I'm proud to say that this budget reflects the needs of seniors.

For the first time ever in the history of this province—not in the 17 years of the NDP—in this province, first time, we created a new Department for Seniors and Long-Term Care.

But this isn't just a title or a selling feature. This government is putting its money where its mouth is and it's allocating a budget of \$54.3 million for this department: \$32 million of this is earmarked for initiatives stemming from the Stevenson review. Our government listened to this review and took all 17 recommendations in this review and is committed to addressing each and every one of them—\$32 million.

We know that long-term care is not the only way to support our seniors, and which excites me a lot about this new department is the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston) now has \$20 million in which he can identify for actions related to senior strategies—\$20 million.

As I get older, I don't want to leave Fort Whyte—I love living in my riding. And this \$20 million is addressed to do exactly that: to keep aging Manitobans in their homes and their communities.

Now, as we start to come out of this pandemic, we have a lot of work to do, no doubt about it. Not only do we need to strengthen our health-care system, but as I heard on the doorsteps and as I hear people yelling across the way from me, we need our economy to bounce back. We've seen early optimistic signs of this coming out of the pandemic. I know personally how hard it is to operate a small business, and we're coming out of this pandemic and they're starting to open slowly, but these small businesses need more help. These businesses are the backbone of economy.

Two major issues every small business has is taxes and finding good workers. Our government is committed to focusing on tax competitiveness for Manitoba businesses and investors as a part of this budget is focused on reducing the payroll tax for 970 businesses. These changes to the payroll tax will provide approximately \$7 million in savings to small businesses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, tax breaks simply aren't enough. We need workers. We need good workers. We need great workers. We need to grow this province and help grow our economy.

Our government will be matching a record level of more than \$33 million in the Manitoba Bursary Program to support students in post-secondary institutions in Manitoba; continued support for up to 6,275 provincial nominees through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program—which some members might not know that this PC-government started—and setting aside an additional \$5 million in immigration programming to help attract newcomers to Manitoba. These are all great steps to rebuilding our economy with a strong workforce.

Lastly, I'll speak to the value of community. If small businesses are the backbone of our community, then communities are, for sure, the heartbeat of our society. We need healthy, thriving, inclusive and growing communities, and this budget does just that.

As I mentioned earlier, seniors make up a good portion of Fort Whyte, but Fort Whyte also has a large population of young families. I'm excited that this budget is investing \$326 million over two years to make child care more affordable and accessible for parents, creating 716 spaces in new child-care centres and supporting 50 new home-based spaces this year.

The budget places a major emphasis on the importance of healthy community and it's time for us to come together as a community. This PC government believes in that so much that we're investing \$100 million—\$100 million—over the next three years and supporting community arts, culture and sports community fund.

And if that wasn't enough, we're adding in an additional \$10.3 million for a total investment of \$25 million in just 2022 and 2023, and the ever-so-popular and oversubscribed building sustainabilities community program.

There is so much more I could speak about on this budget, but, at the end of this day, this budget sets out to address the needs of Manitobans, the needs of the people of Fort Whyte that I've had the pleasure and honour of meeting over the last three, four months, and I'll continue to work for.

This PC government is committing to doing whatever it takes to get the job done and this is just one step forward and many more to come. I can't wait to see what the rest of '22-23 holds for this great province and this great budget.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): The honourable member for St. Vital. *[interjection]*

Yes, the honourable member for St. Vital.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm glad to be speaking on the budget this afternoon and put some of the thoughts on the record in regards to the budget that was brought forward by this PC government, and I think it's only appropriate that we start our discussion and debate today when we talk about health care. That is by far the No. 1 issue that Manitobans have.

As we come through the pandemic into this current stage we're on, Manitobans are looking for hope. They're looking for a vision of our province, a vision of a province that can see some of the problems that they've faced over the past few years solved, where they can see surgical wait times and wait-lists go down.

* (15:20)

Manitobans are looking to see that wait-list shrink and have their operations not only get booked and scheduled, but get completed. Manitobans are looking to wait to see our ICU and our ER wait times go down, return to where they were before the pandemic started. Manitobans are looking for care close to home.

They're looking for improvements in our long-term-care facilities.

And as we know, the budget put forward by provincial government is this opportunity for the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and their team to outline their priorities for our province. And, sadly, all of those interests, all of those wishes and hopes and want to see for a vision of what Manitoba could be in terms of an improved health-care system sadly was not a part of this government's priority.

This government, sadly, failed to put forward a plan in this budget to reduce and eliminate the surgical backlog. This is one of the No. 1 issues that Manitobans are facing: the wait times. Whether it's hip and knee surgeries, whether it's a cardiac procedure, whether it is cataract procedures, Manitobans are waiting and have been waiting for years. And we don't see the type of investment from this government in this budget that would eliminate a wait-list.

And how do I know this? I know this because the government still refuses to put a date on when the surgeries are going to—backlog is going to be reduced. If they were confident in their investment in this budget, if they were confident that the investment in this budget would actually make a significant dent in reducing the surgical wait-list, then they would have no problem putting forward a date as to when surgeries would get completed and when the wait-lists would disappear. But we have not seen that date from this government because the investment does not meet the challenge that we're facing when it comes to surgeries.

And not just surgery—surgical wait-lists, but we see this throughout our health-care system. When it comes to nurses and the nursing shortage that we are facing, where we're seeing not just 5, not 10 per cent, not 15, not 20 per cent, but higher per cents of vacancies in nursing positions in our province, with some health regions reporting vacancies of 25 per cent. How can our health-care system function and survive, let alone thrive, with vacancies like that?

And so it's disappointing to see this government not only put forward a budget that doesn't address or solve these issues, but then double down on privatization of our nursing positions through agency nurses and have our Premier support that idea of private health care when we know that Manitobans are searching and are calling for an enhanced and improved public health-care system and investments to improve that public health-care system so that all

Manitobans can get the health care that they need, that they deserve, close to home.

And so this budget does not meet the needs of Manitobans, especially when it comes to health care.

And when it comes to health care, we cannot look too far without mentioning the massive failures of this government during the pandemic. We've seen, time and time again, over the many years and the many different Health ministers that have been in charge during the pandemic, time and time again, this government failing to be proactive and proactively support the challenges of the pandemic and the needs of Manitobans.

When it came to providing the needed supports and ramping up the needs in our ICUs, the government was lacking and was behind. When it came to the needed time to add restrictions in, the government failed to listen to the experts. And when it came time to ensure that all the necessary resources and supports were in place, the government was behind the eight ball, even though we had the warning from many other provinces in our country. This government failed to listen to the experts, failed to listen and show Manitobans the data and are simply—were simply behind the eight ball when it came to pandemic response. And after all those lessons, after two years of being in this mess, has the—this government listened? No. Again they failed, even today.

When Manitobans have been calling for data on COVID cases to simply be put up on the public website on a regular basis, as they were throughout the entire pandemic, this government has failed to do so and failed to put up accurate information on its—on the COVID situation in our province right now. This is clearly against the interests and the wishes of Manitobans, who are calling for and looking for accurate information on what the COVID situation is in our province.

COVID doesn't go away just because the Premier chooses a particular date. It doesn't disappear because of what the Premier says. It's here, and the least we can do to help all Manitobans stay healthy is to provide them the informed information on what the situation is. And even though this government has had many opportunities to be proactive and do right by Manitobans when it comes to the pandemic, again and again this government has failed.

And so, you know, I understand the call for a change in government. I understand the call and why Manitobans are eagerly looking for the next election

cycle, because they've seen this government fail and fail again and they no longer trust in this government's ability to change and improve the situation that we're all in.

And when it comes to changing the situation that people are in, they're looking not only at a health-care system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but also at the affordability issues that Manitobans are facing. When it comes to affordability, we see no action from this government. When this government had an opportunity to make life more affordable for Manitobans, did they take the opportunity? No, they chose not to invest in things that would improve the affordability for Manitobans.

Where am I talking about specifically? Well, first of all, let's look at Manitoba Hydro. Not only did they, already, during the pandemic, through legislation, increase Manitoba Hydro rates, but they put forward further legislation which would dictate 5 per cent rate increases for Manitoba Hydro.

It's plain and simple: no longer do they want to rely on the expert advice by the PUB, but they want to legislate increases for Manitoba Hydro. And that's disappointing because Manitobans are calling for affordability when it comes to energy, and affordability is what Manitobans are looking for. This government is not seeing that, is not doing that, especially through their continued increase of costs and expenses through Manitoba Hydro.

We also look at the affordability for people who are now, throughout the pandemic, looking to re-educate themselves and perhaps gain a new skill or take on a new career, but this government has not taken action. They have continually, year after year, increased the rate of tuition, increased tuition across institutions in this province, making it more challenging for people to get an—post-secondary education.

This year's budget calls for a revenue increase through tuition of \$35 million. That's going to be thousands of dollars' increase for individual students, hundreds of dollars of increase, at least for individual students, this coming year while the grant for institutions stays relatively flat—certainly below the rate of inflation. And so while the government does not meet the challenge of funding post-secondary institutions on one hand, on the other hand they ask students to pay so much more.

* (15:30)

This is a government that does not have a vision that matches the needs and the wants of Manitobans who are calling for more affordable education; more affordable child care—as was so eloquently put by the member of Transcona—more affordable hydro costs and for Manitobans who are calling for a higher minimum wage.

A higher minimum wage would make a significant increase to the affordability of so many Manitobans who are working poor. Since when did it become okay for Manitobans to expect to be working one, two, three, four jobs just to pay rent and food for their families?

That's happening because the minimum wage in this province is too low, because not only does the minimum wage that—system that's set up by this government, pegged to the rate of inflation, actually perpetuate the system of poverty for the working poor, what the delays in the implementation—the effective date of the minimum-wage increase only on an annual basis based on the previous year's inflation rate says that minimum-wage workers will always be behind with this government. This government will never allow minimum-wage workers to get ahead. And that is not right.

The same way every other cost is increasing in our province, we also must respect minimum-wage workers and ensure that they are—have opportunities to get ahead through increases in minimum wage, but also through affordable education when they are interested in perhaps changing careers or looking for new opportunities; that when they're living their lives they can afford to have an affordable place to live and pay affordable energy bills through affordable hydro rates and affordable child care with lower rates.

But this government has failed on so many of these areas and has not made life more affordable for Manitobans, so we're very disappointed in that.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to end—close my remarks off by just making one more comment in respect to the budget. This budget was a—simply a disgrace for the post-secondary students in Manitoba. Not one mention of students in this budget; no help for students who have faced extreme challenges over the last two years of online classes, increased mental health challenges, and we see almost no programs or initiatives for students in this budget—not even a mention by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) in his speech. And I think that's a real disrespect to those students who have not only such a difficult time

during the pandemic, but are still working extremely hard to be the future leaders in Manitoba.

And one—particularly, one category of students in our province that I want to highlight is the international students, who have, for years, been calling on this government to restore health coverage for international students. When this government removed health coverage for international students in 2018, it was a shock for many students who had to navigate the private insurance system.

Now, after a few years, we've seen those costs increase and balloon. And even during a pandemic—a global pandemic—when the opportunity came for the government to do what is right and provide health insurance—public health insurance—to international students, those students who come here and are seeking Manitoban to be their home, their home of the future, did this government do what was right by international students?

No, they refused their calls for help. They put them on a private insurance plan and forced them to get private insurance which, in some cases during the pandemic, was a substandard set of care for the needs that they were seeking during the pandemic.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's quite clear that, after many years, this government has no interest in respecting the interests or the wishes of international students. Again, I'll make the call for this government to restore health coverage—public health coverage—for international students. We didn't see that in the budget, but I'll make that call again because then it would be what is right for the international students in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I could go on with the many more areas where this government has failed in this budget, I'll leave my comments there and allow the next speaker to go ahead and say how this government has not succeeded in providing a vision or any hope with this year's budget.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): It's good to have a supportive team and supportive colleagues. You know, yesterday marked six years since many of us in this Chamber were elected to office and, certainly, since we formed government and when we took over from the then-governing NDP.

And over those six years, certainly—I've certainly been very grateful for the opportunity to serve. I enjoy the opportunity to serve people in my constituency

and I look forward to continuing to serve them for as many years as they'll have me, going forward.

And, Madam Speaker, one of the—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather, one of the things that I do pride myself on in my community is being able to help explain, you know, sometimes complex topics and conversations and help people understand a little bit more about how government works and how policy development works and how the numbers work when you're dealing with a budget, when you're trying to allocate funds.

I know that for some, math might be hard. I don't know, it seems to be that way, I think, for the members opposite. We were trying to figure out what N-D-P stood for, but I think the consensus arrived at, maybe, no demonstrable plan. That seems to be where, certainly, question period has been headed.

And, you know, the members opposite—just as example of how important math skills are—general math skills—I think when we were talking the other day about the use of agency nurses. It's an important topic. It's something that's worth talking about. I think nurses are vital to our health-care system. I know that first-hand. My own daughter is working towards being a nurse, and I'm incredibly proud of her.

But when we had mentioned that, you know, the previous NDP government—outside of a pandemic, just in—just a regular year—had spent \$46 million on private agency nurses, and I believe the number tossed back at us that we had spent \$40 million during a pandemic. The Leader of the Opposition remarked: Well, that's still less.

So I don't know if it was his ears that weren't working or his head or maybe he hit his head or something, but last I checked, 46 was more than 40. And I just want to put that on the record for the member that—the party of no demonstrable plan.

Indeed, 46 is more than 40, just like 100 is more than 72, and 100 is the number of ICU beds that this budget is going to be paying for. I think that's the right decision and it's the right thing to do, and it's something that's going to help serve Manitobans very well for the many years to come.

Now, another thing that N-D-P could stand for, I suppose, was nearly doubling the PST, because that's actually what it would take for them to finance the kind of plans and the financial outlook that they have.

You know, some of the members here are saying that they don't have a plan, I know that—no demonstrable plan. I used the word demonstrable deliberately, because demonstrable means something that you can show and something that you can share.

I'm convinced—I know not all my colleagues agree—but I am convinced that the NDP do have a plan. They have a plan, and they are perhaps not forthright in sharing it with this House. They're not forthright in sharing it with Manitobans, and we've been here before.

If you can remember back in 2011, I believe back then the NDP also had a plan; didn't share it. And, in fact, when that plan was given to them, they reacted and asked of them, will you increase the PST? The answer was, oh, no, that was a ridiculous suggestion. And yet, it was their plan all along, and that is, in fact, what we have here with the members opposite.

And you know what, to their credit, some of them have actually said some stuff that makes you realize that they really do have a plan to increase taxes. I think the member—or, the Leader of the Opposition, he speculated about perhaps what Manitoba needs is a death tax so that when Manitobans are at their most difficult time, when they're dealing with the death of a loved one, that's when the NDP would like to come on in and just add an extra burden to what they have to deal with already, right there at the bedside or the morgue or the funeral home. That's where the NDP want to reach into Manitobans' pockets and take out—I don't know how much money, but I can only assume that it would be a substantial—substantial amount.

* (15:40)

Now, and as I was saying, you know, math is hard for some. As another example, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), I think a few weeks back, I think it was about a month ago, in this 'houthse'—House, was talking about the provinces in Canada and where Manitoba ranked. And then he said that we ranked low on this particular scale—I'll get into what it is—he said we ranked low, but when it actually came to fruition, it was that we were fourth lowest on a list of 10.

Now, most people, including my kindergarten-age son, would tell you that being fourth last on a list of 10 is known as the middle of the pack, not low. But the member for Fort Garry said, no, no, no, that was low, and, in fact, I believe he said it was a shame—it was a shame—that we were in the middle of the pack.

And the stat that we're talking about specifically here is the ratio between taxes and GDP. Now, that's an interesting academic argument that we can get to about what's the appropriate ratio between taxes and GDP, but I can tell you that Manitoba is roughly middle of the pack, coming in fourth lowest, according to the member for Fort Garry—I haven't independently verified that but I will take him at his word on that.

Now, what was really ironic was that, right after that, the member for Fort Garry followed it up with a statement that Manitoba is a low-tax province. Now, maybe that's what they think they're going to put on their next brochure, but I'm fairly certain I could find hundreds of thousands of Manitobans that would disagree with that assertion. They would disagree with that assertion. They would say that it is becoming lower, and that's because of the government on this side of the House.

We've got lots—we have lots of measures in this budget that are committed to making us lower, but when you're already high, going lower doesn't make you low; it just gets you to middle of the pack. And middle of the pack is an appropriate place to be, now, when it comes to things—measures like ratio of taxes to GDP. That's the appropriate place to strike because it's sort of like Goldilocks; you know, not too hot, not too cold, somewhere in the middle.

Now, the member for Fort Garry, he went on. He went on and he had said, what Manitoba needs to be, what Manitoba needs to become—[*interjection*]

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Order. [*interjection*] I'm standing.

I would just say the level of heckling on both sides is getting a little high and it's hard for me to hear, so I would just say the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) has the floor, and I think we'll give him the respect of anybody from this House who has the floor to listen to what he has to say.

Mr. Teitsma: I thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, for your attempts at restoring order to this Chamber.

Now, as I was saying, the member for Fort Garry, about a month back—you can check the Hansard yourself after—he said that Manitoba was a low-tax province, went on to say that Manitoba needs to be a moderate-to-high-tax province.

So, as I was saying, I know that it's no demonstrable plan, I know that it's somehow hidden, but we

can find these nuggets if we look hard enough. And that's one of the nuggets, because this member for Fort Garry isn't just one of the random NDP members who's pontificating—no; he's the Finance critic. It's his job to visit the Finance Minister in his office and receive briefings on what's going on with the budget and to receive information and have a conversation with the Finance Minister about what the budget is and what it means. This is a person in the NDP caucus that has as much access to information and as much responsibility to deal with that information properly as anyone in that entire caucus.

Now, I think the members opposite are somehow thinking that I—perhaps I don't understand math or understand finances. I can assure them that I do. I've been on the Treasury Board for a good long time and I managed to—and I was serving there. And also, before I even came into this House, I grew up poor. I know some of the members opposite like to represent poor neighbourhoods while living in wealthy homes and driving Lexuses, but I'm not that kind of a guy, all right. I'm the kind of a guy that actually grew up actually knowing what it was like to be poor.

I didn't really, actually realize that we were poor until I delivered a Christmas hamper to my neighbour just down the street, only to find out that they had nicer shoes, a nicer TV, a nicer kitchen than me, but somehow they were getting the Christmas hamper and I was going back home to eat whatever we could afford, which was probably some—yes, liver, quite frankly, when it came to the meats that I was getting when I was younger.

Now, I've had success in business, as many of you may know, but that success wasn't just because of business prowess by any means. There was a strong team of individuals that I got to work with. But the success that I had was actually in developing financial planning software.

So, looking at finances and understanding finances is what I've been doing my whole life, and it's something that, you know, I kept—I still have, I believe, my little record of incomes and expenses that my parents had me start when I was five.

And when I was five years old, my income was a result of delivering flyers around the neighbourhood. My mom had to come with me so that I could reach all the mailboxes. It was a little bit tricky to get to. But even then, I knew how to balance a chequebook and how to record what I was doing.

I ended up delivering papers for The Winnipeg Tribune. I sold potted plants that my dad developed in the—in our backyard greenhouse, I sold those through the community. And, you know, folks would buy flowers from—when they—and tomato plants from me when they didn't even have a garden.

I guess I was a better salesman then, going door to door, but, you know, the member—the new member for Fort Wryte [*phonetic*] talked about how many doors he's knocked on. I was knocking on doors before I even thought about politics, trying to sell newspapers and potted plants as I went around my community.

But, in any case, the party of no demonstrable plan, the party of needs-to-double-the-PST, that party cannot—unless they are actually going to be open and transparent with Manitobans—cannot, should not take government until they can be honest with Manitobans and be forthright.

And in order to do that, they need to look at a budget like this and go, you know what? It's actually a good budget. It's actually a good budget. Budgeting is a matter of understanding balances. There's choices that have to be made. The members opposite don't seem to think that they need to make choices.

They want to say, oh, we won't, you know, fill in the blank, raise hydro rates. But then they won't say how they'll make sure that Hydro is—remains a profitable business, and how they're able to pay off the billions and billions and billions of debt. And that's because they have no demonstrable plan.

So, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I don't want to speak much longer. I do really much value—I very much value the priorities of this government. And I think, you know, when you look at the budget-in-brief document, there's a lot there, and I think a lot of my colleagues have mentioned a lot of it.

I just want to end on a personal note, because I think what's most important to Manitobans that I've spoken to is they want to ensure that our health-care system is strengthened. They do. And when I speak to the members and the people in Radisson, they want to ensure that our health-care system in strengthened.

They understand that a global pandemic has had a profound effect on our health-care system. They understand that no amount of money, really, was going to make that stress any different or better. The stress that came upon our health-care system was a consequence of a pandemic.

Now, they—what they do appreciate is that this budget is committed to doing whatever it takes to address the surgical and diagnostic backlogs. That's why there's \$110 million set aside in this plan. That's why our Health Minister has, again and again, listed off the many agreements that have already been entered to, and given hints of what more agreements may be coming down the pipe and what other things that we are going to do to address that surgical and diagnostic backlog.

I'm very excited to see that because I—what I see in it is hard work. What I see in it is careful deliberation, not blanket statements that sound good on paper but when you dive into them you find out that no, in fact, this is just a hollow plan, if a plan at all.

No, this is the hard work of governing that is being done by this Health Minister, that is being done by this Cabinet, and I want them to continue to do it.

And another—you know, I said, on a personal note, also, the \$11-million investment to increase nursing enrolment in Manitoba's post-secondary institution—I'm so impressed with that. I'm so pleased with that.

* (15:50)

I've been able to get a bit of inside perspective from my own daughter, who's studying at the University of Manitoba to be a nurse, about some of the challenges and some of the struggles that she goes through, that students go through there, that the Nursing Students Association is advocating for as they meet with the dean and as they look for ways to ensure that more students can graduate from the nursing program at the University of Manitoba; that more students can graduate from other nursing programs.

I'm excited to hear about the northern nursing programs, about some of the rural nursing programs and the opportunities to allow people who already live in these communities to be educated on how to serve as a nurse because that's the best place to grow and to retain and attract new candidates to work in our hospitals.

So, as I said, I'm not going to go on much longer. I do want, again, thank all the people in Radisson for entrusting me with this office; I take it very seriously and I intend to continue to do my best to serve in this Chamber, not just the people of Radisson but people all over this province and to do what is right for Manitobans.

This budget does what's right for Manitobans. I'm committed to doing what's right for Manitobans. This party and this Cabinet is committed to doing right for what's—for Manitobans, and that's our plan.

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): The honourable member—*[interjection]*—Order. Order.

The honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you.

Richard Henry Dana, in his book, *Two Years Before the Mast*, describes his experience as a seaman on a sailing ship which went all over the world, through storms and challenges during a two-year period from 1834 to 1836.

In spite of the storms and all the other challenges, he makes the point that the ship was at its very finest, its most fittest, its best ever at the end of the voyage; and this was because the ship was very well looked after when it was at sea. And it was improved every step of the way until it reached its best functioning state at the end of the voyage.

In Manitoba, we have a Conservative government which has not learned the way of improving every day, of keeping matters in health in Manitoba in ship-shape and even better. We've been through two years of the COVID pandemic and, sadly, our health-care system, instead of being in better shape coming out of the storms of the pandemic, is looking ragged with too many health-care workers exhausted and burned out, with waiting lists for surgeries and diagnostic tests at almost unbelievable levels, as the backlogs have been built up and up instead of trimmed down.

Instead of using the time and the challenges to ensure we have the best-ever health-care system coming out of the pandemic, we have a government which only makes excuses for its failures.

In the last two years, Manitobans have been on the very brink; indeed, flowing over the brink at times of our hospital and ICU capacity. The government has been forced to transfer seniors for hundreds of kilometres all over the province and, in more than 50 cases, to other provinces for care that could not be provided locally because the health-care system here in our province wasn't working adequately.

There is an estimate of more than 160,000 Manitobans currently waiting for diagnostic tests and for surgeries, and with about 10,000 of these waiting for eye surgery.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Liberals believe in far better planning, including improving our surge capacity. Liberals believe in treating nurses and other health-care workers with respect, supporting skill upgrades and making sure that health care is working well so there's not the mandating of nurses to do second shifts; a mandating which saps a person's reserves, which leads to exhaustion and burnout and nurses leaving the profession. There can be hardly a greater need than to treat health-care workers with the dignity and respect they deserve so they can be fresh and enthusiastic and caring when they are at work.

The lack of attention to the needs of health-care workers has led to far too many nurses and others leaving the health-care system and working for private agencies instead of the public health-care system. Instead of building up the health-care system over the last two years, the government has let it run down. It is a sad testament to a tired government which doesn't have the vision, the understanding or the knowledge to manage the department which should be at the very jewel of Manitoba's departments.

They are not letting people use local initiatives. We have called numerous times for the removal of the caps on surgeries for hips and knees and eyes. This type of Conservative micromanagement is part of the reason that the system is not working as well as it should.

One of the really critical areas of health care to get right is ensuring a robust system for helping individuals with mental health and addictions issues. We need a system in which individuals can get help when needed, a patient-centred system rather than the current, part-time RAAM clinics. Psychological services need to be covered under medicare, and addictions care needs to be provided in integrated and seamless fashion starting with access to care when it's needed, not an hour later, not a day later, not a week later or more, as is currently too often happening. Indeed, poor Mr. Lee Earnshaw tried for weeks to get help, and the system wasn't there for him.

Prevention—keeping people well instead of taking second fiddle to acute care—needs attention in parallel to addressing issues in acute care. We will never have an affordable health-care system if our approach to diabetes is focused primarily on providing more dialysis and more heart and kidney transplants. Preventing type 2 diabetes is possible, but it needs a focused, effective province-wide effort.

In the last 24 years, there have been major plans developed and never implemented. We've seen the

diabetes section in Health eliminated and folded into an all-chronic diseases. We've seen a government in the last several years which has said it will start addressing prevention after it's got acute care under better operational management, and six years later it's still trying and not doing very well in acute care.

Acute care will always struggle for sufficient resources so long as preventive health care is inadequately supported. Prevention is not only for diabetes; there are so many areas where action is urgently needed: in preventing the decay of hips and knees to reduce the number of hip and knee replacements needed; in preventing lung cancer by reducing radon exposure; in preventing mental and physical health issues by reducing lead exposure and lead toxicity; in preventing osteoporosis; in preventing substance abuse; in preventing suicides; in preventing medical errors; in preventing dementia and attending to things like making sure that cochlear implants and their processor replacements are properly supported, and that should've been in the budget but wasn't because of Conservative neglect of one of the most important things for seniors, that is being able to hear.

And back to diabetes. It is simple but is something the Conservatives don't seem to be able to do: to ensure in Thompson that people with diabetes can get the critically important foot care, which is such an integral part of preventing amputations and worse.

* (16:00)

One of the major challenges of our time is reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change. The IPCC has made it very clear that there is urgency of action. Action taken today takes time to have an impact. You can't just click a switch and all of a sudden greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced. It has to be something that is well-planned and well-executed, and it's not just about reducing emissions. It's also about preparing our province for the economy of the future, an economy based dramatically less on fossil fuels and much more on electric vehicles, on improved energy-efficient buildings and retrofitting buildings, and on improved farming practices.

Yet, for more than 20 years, governments in Manitoba have failed to act adequately to what is needed. Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions have gone up 5.6 per cent since 2005. Other provinces are leaving us behind. Almost all provinces are achieving significant reductions in greenhouse gases, but Manitoba is in ninth place, almost at the bottom. Over

the period from 2005 to 2020, Canada's greenhouse gases, as a nation, dropped more than 9 per cent.

It is, as I've said, not just about being left behind in addressing greenhouse gases. We are being left behind in building the economy of the future. It is sad to see this budget was not good enough. There was very little in it with respect to addressing greenhouse gases and building the economy of the future. Indeed, curiously, the minister yesterday, in response to my question about climate change, parroted the government line that money was being spent on cleaning up mine sites.

Now, while that is worthwhile to clean up old mine sites, it will have minimal impact on climate change in Manitoba. Let the government show us their information to 'shay' that it will actually improve climate change. There is far, far more other things that need to be done to make the big difference that we need in terms of climate change. Clearly, the government has lost its focus, and clearly, the government poorly understands what's needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

With disasters around the world and, of course, most notably, recently in Afghanistan and Ukraine, there has been a focus on the need to make Manitoba receptive to immigration; and yet, for all the government's talk, it is not happening anywhere near the extent that it should. We have an opportunity, and opportunities like this need just not a passive approach as this government is taking, but an aggressive approach where we're reaching out, where we're involving the members of the Afghan community and the members of the Ukrainian community effectively in bringing their relatives here.

The government needs to better understand how to bring people to Manitoba, building on the ties and family links between those in the Ukrainian and Afghan communities in Manitoba, to bring people here who will stay here and who will help to build our province. Too many of those who are coming for other reasons are staying here for a short while and then moving on somewhere else. What we want to do is to build the province and have people stay here longer term.

I see the opportunity in working with people in the Afghan and Ukrainian communities in Winnipeg, and we can and we must do better.

And part of this needs to be to restore the health-care coverage to international students. We saw how important of this was when we had a boy from Kenya

who got very sick and sadly died. We need to get rid of the \$500 PC tax on immigrants coming to Manitoba and welcome them rather than tax them as they come in and land at the airport.

We need, clearly, in this time to be doing what we can in terms of reconciliation, addressing and working in partnership with Indigenous communities to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students province-wide. We need to recognize and be honest about the money that was stolen by NDP and Conservative governments through the children's special allowances program, and return that and help it to build up the opportunities for kids.

We need to complete all the truth and reconciliation calls and the calls from the missing and murdered women inquiries that are based and require provincial action.

With seniors, as my colleague from Tyndall Park has spoken so often and so eloquently, we need a seniors advocate. We don't need another budget where seniors are missing. We need a good enough plan for long-term care to address the staffing to plan for the future, and yet we're not seeing it. It is more of the same and with very little really changed.

In fisheries—we know how important it is to have sustainable fisheries. We need a real solid effort to eco-certify the fisheries on our great lakes: Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis, Lake Manitoba. There's been some tinkering under this government, but there's not a credible plan to make sure that they are actually eco-certified. And it needs action because right now, we're losing dollars for white fish fishermen because the fishery is not eco-certified. It's time we improved.

On education, the government is failing—failing to make the kinds of investments in education at all levels which are needed to make sure that our students are doing well. And these are needed especially for those children with learning disabilities, with aspects of neurodiversity, and for areas in post-secondary education. There is a failure of this government to ensure that children attending Manitoba's schools receive a minimum of one meal each day. Straightforward, simple, but not being done.

On the economy, the government has put forward a \$50-million plan to venture capital funding, but it's not clear that this will be distributed on merit. We are quite concerned that this will be considered and distributed through political influence. We've seen the conflicts of interest that have already been present in

many of the measures that the Conservatives have taken over the last several years. When it comes to provision of capital for business, we prefer the proven and established—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —Alberta model. It at least is an approach that has worked and shown that it's worked in Alberta.

On justice, there was a problem during the pandemic. The PCs were appeasing lawbreakers who blocked transportation at the border, in Emerson. This happened for days, blocking one of our major transportation routes. Manitoba Liberals believe in enforcing provincial laws, especially when it's having such a detrimental effect on our economy and especially when we're dealing with issues of 'hathe'—health and safety.

When it comes to democracy, we've watched the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) fail to consider and promptly report conflicts of interest. We are concerned about this. There has not be the substantial improvement of conflict of interest legislation that this province deserved. And we need and must have that if we're going to move forward. Well, corruption and conflict of interest have too often eroded support for governments in the past and they are doing this now with the Conservative government when people who are looking closely.

* (16:10)

When it comes to emergency measures, we are situation right now where there remains some concerns about floods. And this is particularly true because we've just had a spring blizzard and we have a forecast where there is more rain and snow to come over the next week or so. And yet, we have yet to have a ministerial statement this spring on flood conditions, on the government's planning. We don't know whether government is actually planning and ready if there were a flood.

The government says, what flood? Well, it's possible we may get bet without—by without a flood. But on the other hand, if we have a flood, it sure helps to be ready and prepared, and we haven't seen the preparations that the government has done or has not done. And it's time that the government be more open and accountable so that Manitobans can have a little more confidence when it comes to emergencies.

We saw what happened with the disrespect to people in the Emergency Measures Organization in

the early days of the pandemic. We think this is a very important area and that it is really important that we are more ready than sometimes we have been in the past.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): It's my honour to rise in the Legislature today to share my thoughts in regards to Manitoba Budget 2022.

Madam Speaker, it is my honour to represent the diverse constituency of Waverley in the Manitoba Legislature. On behalf of my constituents, I am pleased to support the Manitoba Budget 2022 that will be making key investments in health care, education, social services, infrastructure, post-secondary education, immigration and all other major departments of the Manitoba government.

Madam Speaker, as outlined in Budget 2022, our government will be investing \$7.2 billion total for health care. That is the most significant health-care investment in the history of our province. It is over \$1 billion more than the 'preious' government ever invested in health care.

Madam Speaker, to date, our government has invested over \$3.1 billion in pandemic support to protect the lives and livelihoods of Manitobans. We are proud to report that over 1.1 million Manitobans have rolled up their sleeves to receive two doses of the vaccine. That means over 82 per cent of eligible Manitobans are fully vaccinated, the highest rate among the prairie provinces.

Madam Speaker, our government is investing more than \$630 million to strengthen the fight against COVID-19 and prepare for other variants and pressures on our health-care system.

As outlined in Budget 2022, our government will be investing more than \$30 million to add 20 additional beds to our intensive-care units. To help staff those units, we are investing \$11.6 million to add 400 permanent nursing seats to Manitoba's post-secondary institutions.

Our government's health-care capital plan invests \$2.3 billion in targeted health-care capital projects. That includes over \$100 million for the St. Boniface Hospital emergency room develop—redevelopment, tripling the size of its ER, and \$8 million for the new acute stroke unit at Health Sciences Centre, which will open this year and provide stroke patients with the world-class treatment they deserve.

Over future years, our government will be investing \$812 million to build, expand and fix our health-care facilities in all regions of our province in support of Manitoba's Clinical and Preventive Services Plan. We are building new hospitals in Portage la Prairie and Neepawa, and we're expanding existing hospitals in Ashern, Brandon, Dauphin—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reyes: —Morden and Winkler—Morden-Winkler, Selkirk and Steinbach. On top of these investments, we are hiring 35 for pandemics across our province.

Madam Speaker, I was pleased to see that Budget 2022 includes \$110 million to address the surgical and diagnostic backlog. We are expanding Concordia's hospital's orthopedic surgery program with a \$4.9-million investment, building an additional operating room that will add 1,000 surgeries annually.

Madam Speaker, these are historic investments in the health-care sector, and I'm proud that our government is making these investments in the health-care system in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2022 increases funding for the K-to-12 system by \$130 million for the 2022-23 fiscal year, of which \$125 million directly relates to funding for schools over the fiscal year.

Funding for the Manitoba school system will increase \$120 million in the 2022-23 school year, plus \$7 million for special-needs funding directed to school divisions. The \$120-million increase includes an increase of one—\$41 million in annual funding to public schools, an increase of \$2 million for independent schools and an additional \$77 million in one-time funding for public schools to assist with their financial pressures; increase of—by \$10.3 million for the 2022-23 year for the teachers' retirement fund.

An increase of \$1.6 million has been allocated to implement the elders and knowledge keepers in school initiatives. The expanded \$1.6 million builds upon the pilots initiated last fiscal year in 33 schools across Manitoba.

The mental health and wellness in Manitoba school strategy was launched in August 2021. A key component of the strategy leverages bilateral mental health and addictions funding to the Canadian Mental Health Association to oversee mental health supports for the education workforce. The bilateral agreement expires March 31st, 2022, and \$550,000 is being

provided to continue the CMHA supports into the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support that—the Budget 2022, which will be delivering our commitment to build 20 new schools—22, actually—including new schools in my constituency of Waverley.

Madam Speaker, as outlined, Budget 2022, our government will be investing more than \$2.08 billion in the Department of Families. These are historic investments to support social service programs in Manitoba. Budget 2022-23 will add—will allocate an initial \$10 million towards supporting front-line wages in the sector, further strengthening the direct-service workforce and ensuring that program participants receive quality services from service delivery partners.

As demand for services continue to grow, Budget 2022 provides an additional \$5 million towards Children's disABILITY Services. This funding is to reduce wait times and build additional capacity for improved case management and therapeutic services.

Madam Speaker, in Budget 2022-23, Manitoba Housing will prioritize national housing strategy funding to help the most vulnerable households access housing and achieve stable tenancies. Our government has established a new Indigenous reconciliation initiatives fund in '22-23 as part of a continued commitment to a sustained whole-of-government approach to advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities.

Starting in 2022-23, a \$5-million allocation is available to advance progress on reconciliation achieved through relationship-building activities, guided by the principles of respect, engagement, understanding and action in Manitoba's Path to Reconciliation Act. The activities include, but are not limited to, enhancing partnerships with Indigenous communities across sectors like health, education, business and industry; maintaining and strengthening connections with Indigenous cultures, language and ways of life; building supportive and safe community networks that promote diversity and inclusion; addressing the harms done by the tragic legacy of residential schools; decreasing knowledge gaps on the past and present experience of Indigenous peoples in Manitoba, actions that respond to go beyond the Calls of Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to Canada, Madam Speaker, the principles set out in the United Nations declaration of the rights of Indigenous peoples and calls for justice of the

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

This funding will be budgeted centrally with enabling appropriations internal service adjustments. However, Manitoba's Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations will administer and oversee these resources. These funds will be made available to all government departments to support related initiatives that advance progress on reconciliation.

Madam Speaker, as outlined in Budget 2022, our government will be making around \$400-million investment in the Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness. In Budget 2022, funding will be increased by \$830,000 for the '22-23 fiscal year support expansion of the Winnipeg RAAM clinic and opiate-opioid 'against' treatments.

* (16:20)

Our government will be investing \$304,000 expand the Women's Health Clinic's Provincial Eating Disorder Prevention and Recovery Program to reduce wait-lists and to respond to increased needs for this program.

Through a whole-of-government approach, the department will move forward with implementation of initiatives identified in the roadmap, including investments in front-line core services to ensure the right supports and services are available as close to home as possible for all Manitobans.

Key priorities for the first year: increasing the capacity of mental health and addiction services throughout the province, improving access and in co-ordination of the mental health and addictions system and decreasing wait times for services.

Madam Speaker, our government has shown its 'commitment' to seniors in Manitoba by appointing a minister, establishing a new Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care. The budget of \$54.3 million includes funding of \$32 million for initiatives stemming from the Stevenson review; \$15.3 million of the funding was already announced on April 6th.

Approximately \$20 million identified for actions in '22-23 related to the seniors strategy and further funding establishes the department will support the engagement and project 'manamint'—management of the Seniors Strategy as well as the oversight of the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Stevenson's review.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2022, recovery together, is a historic budget for Manitoba and introduces for

the first time in our province's history a three-year capital plan with key priorities to strengthen, invest and build on the provincial infrastructure. The three-year horizon for capital investments brings Manitoba in line with all provincial and large municipal governments in Canada, commits over \$2.5 million in strategic and infrastructure investments between 2022 and 2024.

Over the next 10 years, Manitoba will be recognized as a national transportation hub, linking east to west, north to south and enabling strong economic activity within and across our borders.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister responsible for Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, I am pleased to support the key investments in the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, as outlined in Budget 2022.

Russia's unprovoked attack on the Ukraine is tragic and our government condemns the events taking place right now. As part of our support for the people of—for Ukraine, we have expedited applications and waived the \$500 Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program application fee for citizens applying from Ukraine.

Our government will continue these efforts and work closely with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to implement enhanced measures for Ukrainian citizens that will—facilitate the movement of Ukrainians who want to leave their country temporarily or permanently.

As outlined in Budget 2022, our government will be investing more than \$5 million in the newcomer integration support program to find newcomers good jobs in the community.

The pandemic has changed our world and economy in ways that we could not have imagined. Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration continues to adapt, and through our collaborative approach with our post-secondary, industry, Indigenous and immigration partners, we will recover together.

Our Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy is the—foundational for helping increase the pathway to employment and better economic opportunities for Manitobans. Significant work is under way on many of the targeted actions under the four pillars to build stronger partnership between post-secondary institutions, immigration, training and employment services, and labour market needs.

As outlined in Budget 2022, our government will be investing \$11.6 million to add 400 permanent nursing seats to Manitoba's post-secondary institutions. Attracting and retaining skilled workers, business investors and international students, while also ensuring newcomers can work in their regulated profession is a key theme in the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy and a core focus for our department.

Madam Speaker, immigration continues to contribute to strong communities and a strong economy and we will do that. The newly established Immigration Advisory Council will review the entire continuum of immigration to provide recommendations to strengthen Manitoba's immigration programs, building on the success of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

This expert panel will help address shortages and bring in international talent and investment to Manitoba. This includes fostering Manitoba's settlement and integration program and services, as well as foreign credential recognition programs to encourage labour market attachment, improved foreign credential recognition and bolster immigration retention.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to advocate with the federal government to expand our annual immigration levels with the aim of 'welcomaming'—welcoming more new Manitobans to contribute to the growth and prosperity of our province.

Madam Speaker, the department continues to work with Manitoba's post-secondary institutions to ensure that programming is aligned to meet Manitoba's skilled labour requirements. We will work 'collaboratey' to advance a modern apprenticeship system and through ongoing 'gagement' with stakeholders build on post-secondary accountability to encourage stronger outcomes for students while addressing the recommendation included in the Auditor General independent audit report, audit of the Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba is in the 'pross' of aligning with the Canada Student Loans Program, including integrating the IT system used to administer the loans. The department provides Manitoba Student Aid as an interest-free loan, increasing access to post-secondary education or—for Manitobans while also administrating interest-varying Canada student loans on behalf of the federal government.

Madam Speaker, as outlined in Budget 2022, our government will be matching a record level of more

than \$33 million in the Manitoba Bursary Program—support students in post-secondary institutions in Manitoba.

Scholarships and bursaries allow more students to access and complete post-secondary education. The Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative and Manitoba Bursary Program provide financial support, leveraging partnerships with the private sector—support students achieve positive outcomes.

The Manitoba Bursary and the Manitoba Bursary for Low-Income Indigenous Students provide eligible students with up-front, non-repayable bursary—assists them with the cost of their education. Students are automatically considered for these programs when they submit their application for Canada and Manitoba student loans, reducing red tape for students.

Madam Speaker, our support to adult learning and literacy programs also helps Manitobans pursue education pathways to develop the skills needed to participate fully in the community and contribute to our growing economy. We'll continue to work with Indigenous communities and stakeholders advance post-secondary outcomes and provide full opportunities for Indigenous students to participate and successfully complete post-secondary education and training.

Madam Speaker, as outlined in Budget 2022, other key investments include \$50 million of venture capital fund investment, \$100 million to a new community arts, culture and sports community fund and additional \$200,000 to support animal disease diagnostics, disease risk assessment and response and \$150,000 to continue support for Project ASPIRE for Protein Advantage Strategy.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2022 focuses on the five key priorities: strengthening health care, making life more affordable, building our economy, investing in our communities, protecting our environment.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I am pleased to see all the investments our government is making in Budget 2022, and I'm pleased to support this budget on behalf of my constituents of Waverley.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to share a few words on Budget 2022.

First off, it's extremely disappointing. This government consistently goes out and makes these grand

gestures and these grandiose announcements. But that money that's being announced, time and time again, the programs that are being announced, that money just simply doesn't make it to the bedside, to the roadside, to the classroom. This government has been falsely advertising and misleading Manitobans when they are actually reducing, cutting, laying off workers and services and then later coming out with these grand announcements about reinvestments when they're not actually reinvesting even up to the limit that they cut.

Just one example of that, is the claim of hiring more nurses than ever before when, in fact, there are less nurses than ever at the bedside because of the layoffs of this government. Yet this government conveniently blames the pandemic when they're called upon to be accountable and they're called out for their failings. And yet here they are hoarding money, doing the pandemic on the cheap.

Madam Speaker, I simply ask the question. I've asked it many times now. We had Brian Pallister go to Ottawa, hat in hand, asking for more dollars, and now we have the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) doing the same. And the question was simply asked of the first minister—the former first minister, the current First Minister: Are you, in fact, spending the money you receive already in health care on health care?

And to me that's a simple question and should have a simple answer. The answer should be, yes, instead of the double talk back and forth and trying to play with the numbers so they, in fact, look like they're spending that money when they're not. They're saving it for some kind of rainy day.

* (16:30)

Well, Madam Speaker, it's been raining and pouring and storming, literally and figuratively, in Manitoba for years now. So why are we waiting? Instead, there's announcements that are made up and then re-announcements later on that make up for the cuts.

As an example, there's programs for \$1 million and then slowly it gets cut to \$900,000, then \$800,000, then \$700,000, and eventually, it gets down to be maybe a quarter of that—\$250,000—and you have to look in the Estimates books; you have to truly dissect the Estimates books to get to the bottom of that.

Well, maybe I should clarify that. Maybe they're not called Estimates books; they're more like Estimates pamphlets, because even the reduction in the reporting has become so much significant that

they're just simply pages now; they're no longer books.

But getting back to that example of that million-dollar program, for example, be now cut to \$250,000, and then all of a sudden the government comes up and announces, hey, we're doubling our investment now. Now we're at \$500,000.

Well, the fact is it's still half of what it used to be. But you're trying to get up there and have this announcement come out there and say this is what we're doing. We're investing double—more than ever before. Well, that's also to compensate for more cuts than ever before—[interjection]—here, here. Thank you very much.

And, Madam Speaker, that's just one example. That's just one example, and that's just an example on health care. It also goes into justice. It also goes into education. It also goes into conservation. It's across all departments. It's a—shameful to be able to say that the false claim of investing more than ever before when, in fact, isn't true. In fact, trying to pull a fast one over on all Manitobans because all Manitobans don't have access or the ability to come and get really—dig deep into the Estimates books or the Estimates pamphlets, mind you, to be able to say this is actually what's going on.

And some real figures that are in that budget are shameful—\$5 million in the Indigenous reconciliation—that's just shameful. I cautioned my communities. I cautioned Indigenous people that I've spoken to over this past year when we've had a number of issues, when we had the discovery of the graves in Kamloops, saying we can't let this just be the cause of the day and it'll go away. And that's simply what this government is hoping that it does; it goes away. Madam Speaker, \$5 million in that file is shameful. Also, when it comes time to investment in the infrastructure of Indigenous communities, \$100 million for the channel—again, shameful.

Brian Pallister—and make no mistake about it, this is still Brian Pallister's government—stood on there and told all the communities and all the stakeholders, saying I'll get this done in my first term. Didn't happen. Then, again, he didn't even last a whole second term, so, I mean, you can't really blame him in that way. But, again, didn't happen because that drive and that desire to work with those Indigenous communities and those disaffected communities in that area just wasn't there, and it continues on in this government.

To be able to say we're going to invest in that, let's get that done. And I know the infrastructure of the new Infrastructure minister was just hoping, hoping, hoping—like we all were—that the storm that we received last week didn't cause major flooding. But that channel project, if there was major flooding we would have had a catastrophe there. And, again, that catastrophe would have been due to the inaction of this government to act on that file. Years, Madam Speaker, not months, not days, but years of inaction on that file, so that's something that absolutely had to be done.

The hype in the budget is this so-called record investment in health care and, again, Madam Speaker, that's just non-existent. There's no real northern commitment to health. The minister can't even turn the hot water on in the Thompson hospital, yet they're talking about record investment. It's just not there.

I'm not a plumber, but how hard can that be to get that done, to make that a priority, to make that a priority for the patients and the citizens of the Thompson and surrounding areas to say, you're in a hospital and you can't have access to hot water. Again, sitting here in 2022, Madam Speaker, that's just shameful.

The pandemic response when it came to northern health care for Indigenous communities in the North just was not there. Again, on their own.

Brian Pallister shames First Nation communities when it came time to vaccines, when it came time to the rollout of the vaccine, when it came time to pandemic response. Again, shamed First Nation, Indigenous communities, to say they were getting at the expense of somebody else, when in fact, we're all Manitobans; we're all Canadians. But again, trying that divide and conquer.

Madam Speaker, I've seen in the budget, they also speak about investments in education system. And again, while there may be certain numbers played out there, there are still issues that need to be addressed, issues that are specific. Sometimes northern-specific or mode-specific.

Connectivity is an issue. We still have that to this day. We still look up on Zoom screens; we still have yesterday and today; we still have our colleagues' difficulty to connect. And they're in rural areas of Manitoba.

So, when we want our students to be able to do that, to be able to have that access that somebody in downtown Winnipeg, or southern Manitoba, or central Manitoba, if they have to have that—require or

need that access from a remote community, that connectivity is just not there.

And again, putting all the eggs in the basket in Xplornet and those issues, too. We need to address those issues with Xplornet to begin with. Because, Madam Speaker, I'm hearing that loud and clear in our communities that there is a problem with that system. That system needs to be addressed.

Classroom sizes in remote and northern communities are something that needs to be addressed. Some communities and some schools in southern Manitoba and rural Manitoba may have the privilege of having a 10-to-one ratio, a 12-to-one, 14-to-one, 15-to-one ratio. In most communities in the North, and in remote communities, that ratio gets to be 25-to-one. In some cases, 30-to-one.

And again, where's that reinvestment? Where's that investment in the hiring, recruitment and retention of teachers? That needs to be there, and that's not addressed in this, Madam Speaker.

The budget, when it was being read out, there was a whole bunch of departments that went flying by in there. You know, some of them got a little bit more attention; some of them got maybe 10 seconds announcements. I know the minister kind of looked around the room and was looking for a thumbs-up from the minister in terms of, you know, I invested in your department. And it was very few and far between that we seen the thumbs-up. From the members opposite even.

And there is a number of different files that required a lot more attention. Justice was a file that required more attention, Madam Speaker. Restorative justice in the communities. It was—a number that was thrown out that—and forgive me if I'm off by a few dollars here—but incarceration: \$120,000; \$95,000 to incarcerate somebody for a year. A restorative justice program in my home community: \$240,000, and that's total—\$120,000 from the provincial government. So, that's the cost of one person being incarcerated for a year, to run that entire program for a year.

So let's do those investments. Let's do those culturally appropriate investments. Let's do those investments to now look at root causes of why people come in contact with the justice system. Let's have those dynamic investments.

Let's just not have: here's the number, let's check the box; we've done this for this community; we've done this for this part of the province. Let's think

outside the box. Let's be dynamic. Let's not just play with the numbers and move the numbers around.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, you think about it like a Transformer: you still got all the same pieces but it comes back looking like the same thing. It may look like something different today, something different tomorrow, but that's still all the same pieces because you're not thinking outside the box.

There was also very little—and again, trying to dissect that—the budget—there was nothing about infrastructure in the North in terms of roads, upkeep, existing roads, maintenance. And in fact, I believe it was the member from Concordia that pointed out that it, in fact, has been historically underspent.

So, why are we not—we have the roads crumbling, Madam Speaker. Figuratively, literally crumbling. But we don't have that investment. Why aren't we investing that in the North? We're getting into climate change, global warming, a winter road season for a lot of communities. That window gets shorter and shorter and shorter.

Madam Speaker, when I was a kid, and to this day, my father still is, surprise, on a winter road—83 years old, he's still doing that, still did that this past season.

* (16:40)

But again, that window gets shorter and shorter and shorter. So he's seen that in his 50-60 years of working that, he's seen that window shrink, shrink, shrink. And not shrinking by a day, mind you, Madam Speaker, it's shrinking by weeks and weeks, if not months and months.

So, we need to invest in that infrastructure to be able to say that if global warming is something that's going to dramatically change and affect that ability of that winter road system, then we need some kind of commitment to an all-weather road network that joins up these communities.

And not just when it comes time for industry to say hey, I want to build a mine there or I want to have a development there so now let's do the road. Let's do that road now so it's in the best interest of communities.

Another word that I didn't hear, Madam Speaker, when we talked about—when I heard the budget, was a strong 'focus'—focus on affordability; Manitoba Hydro. Those were also—perhaps there was a list of words that—let's not discuss this, let's not talk about this. So, let's not talk about Manitoba Hydro and its

effects on Indigenous and northern communities, because that track record that exists from this government is just not there.

I came into question period one day, Madam Speaker, an hour after meeting with the Keeyask communities and they specifically raised concerns, questions, on the failings of this government and the information that was not going back and forth. And I came in here and raised that question, and it was absolute denial on that side in terms of oh, this great, we have a great announcements, great connections, great working group. It's non-existent.

So, those kinds of things need to be addressed, Madam Speaker, and Budget 2022 just failed to do that. These—again, I keep referring to them as so-called because that's exactly what they are—the so-called investments.

I've heard it and I've heard it a number of times just in budget debate here, Madam Speaker, about investments in the—addressing the surgical backlog. If these investments are so great, and they're sufficient and they're perfect, give us a date. Simply give us a date. Because if you're looking to invest \$100 million to address that backlog, are you not looking for a deliverable? Are you not looking for an answer to say okay, we're going to invest this and we're going to put this there and this is the date.

They don't want to because that date's just going to keep on changing, because there's no real concrete investment to be able to say we're going to address this. Because that backlog, Madam Speaker, is going to continue to grow and it needs to be addressed. Not just terms in plugging it up a little bit—let's address it.

Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to say a date. If that date is tomorrow, if that date is next year, then give Manitobans a date. Give them the respect of saying we're going to address this. If you're a government truly working for the people, then say we're investing in this, we know this is a problem, we want to address this and we're going to fix this by this date. But you can't give that date because you know you're not going to meet it, because that investment just simply is not enough.

Madam Speaker, when it comes time to Budget 2022, just like many other times that I've had the opportunity to speak in this House, it just does not go far enough and it doesn't go to address the real needs of Manitobans.

So with those few words, Madam Speaker, thank you for your time.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): It is an honour to stand today and rise and put a few words on the record about Budget 2022. And this, of course, is the sixth budget that I've had the opportunity to speak to and probably the one that I think is most significant for communities—vulnerable communities, in particular, in the province of Manitoba.

And so I will be focusing some of my remarks on some of the investments that we have made in the Department of Families, which, of course, has one of the largest budgets on a per capita basis in the country for social services and this year was certainly in keeping with that trend in seeing significant increases in the budgets for the Department of Families and the vulnerable communities that we serve.

I would also like to highlight that since our government took office six years ago, according to a Statistics Canada report, nearly 80,000 Manitobans have been lifted up out of poverty and that includes 35,000 children.

Now, Madam Speaker, I know I've said before that this figure—these statistics were taken in a pre-pandemic era and in the early part of 2020, and we know that during the pandemic, there were situations that were really—the cracks in society were certainly widened and, certainly, many situations were made worse because of the pandemic. And that is why we've made some significant investments in key areas to help stabilize certain communities.

One of them—probably the most vulnerable community in our society—are youth who are aging out of care. And our government put resources in place so that no children or youth would have to age out of care during the pandemic.

And we've extended those benefits. Budget 2022 extended those benefits to March of 2023, so that we can continue to serve children and youth in care during that time while we're looking at long-term strategies to transform the entire CFS system.

We are in a new era for child welfare in the province of Manitoba with the implementation of federal legislation that would help Indigenous governing bodies have—take—resume jurisdiction over Indigenous child welfare.

And we were really pleased to attend a ceremony earlier this year, in January, with Peguis First Nation as they were the first Indigenous governing body in the province of Manitoba to sign a co-ordination

agreement and to assume jurisdiction—rightful jurisdiction—and have their children repatriated to Peguis First Nation.

This was a historic agreement because it was dealing with children who were in the system on-reserve and off-reserve, and I believe that was the first in the country in that capacity. And so, really excited about the other Indigenous governing bodies that we're working to help support capacity, so that they, too, can assume jurisdiction over their child welfare.

Budget 2022 also is looking to implement the recommendations that we're going to see very soon from our homelessness strategy. Our government undertook a first-of-its-kind, whole-of-government strategy towards combatting homelessness, which we know has certainly been exacerbated throughout the pandemic. We consulted with more than 400 people with lived experience and who were working in the homelessness sector on what supports needed to be made for supporting people who are unsheltered or who are precariously housed.

And we also knew that we needed to move towards creating additional shelter space. We were very pleased earlier this year, in the start of winter, to partner with some private enterprise as well as End Homelessness Winnipeg and the Aboriginal health authority to establish a new shelter that was helping keep people out of the cold and offer people a place of warmth and a place of comfort. And we know that that has been a very successful shelter, and we are looking forward to partnering with our community partners on a go-forward basis.

But we also know that investing in housing is a significant undertaking when we're talking about our—dealing with people who are homeless or precariously housed. And that is why our government is investing \$138.7 million into Manitoba Housing to ensure that low- and moderate-income Manitobans have access to safe and affordable housing.

In addition, we'll continue to invest and repair and maintain our affordable and social housing units, and have more than a \$60 million capital funding budget to ensure low-income Manitobans live in safe, quality housing.

And we're very pleased to also partner with our other levels of government on housing, and really pleased to work with the federal government, particularly with the Rapid Housing Initiative, which we're seeing have some good results.

And earlier this year, we saw some investments in the West Central Women's Resource Centre is moving forward in acquiring a housing unit and managing housing units to help transition particularly women and gender diverse people who are precariously housed and undergoing treatments, and to stabilize them and provide them with that core housing; as well as the North End Women's Centre. Where a federal program was pulling out, we were able to step in and provide them with \$400,000 so that eight units of housing for women in transition would be maintained.

And I certainly applaud those two organizations for their investments and then, when it comes to the West Central Women's Resource Centre, I certainly applaud the federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative commitment to helping that. And the provincial government was very pleased to come out and have \$800,000 investment in that project, so that they can also do the necessary renovations.

I do want to highlight another initiative that, yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending Makoon Transition housing facility in the community of Fort Richmond and see first-hand the dramatic work that is happening there with that non-profit entity and their board of directors, and the work that they've done. They are taking housing units and turning them into not just a housing unit, but a community, and a community for people who have need for wraparound supports, and particularly people who have had a CFS involvement and have their children removed from them.

* (16:50)

And in order for them to get their children back they need to have stable housing, and they may also need to address other issues in their life. And Makoon is providing them with that stable housing, providing them with the wraparound supports, and they have, in the very short period of time that they've been operating, they have prevented 43 children from having to go into care by reuniting the family and giving those families the support. And yesterday I was really pleased to provide a commitment of another \$500,000 which, of course, would go towards the housing for these individuals, and I applaud them for the work that they do.

I also just want to highlight two social enterprises that we work with in Manitoba Housing, and Makoon was also working with them—that's build and purpose. They are social enterprise where they're employing people who are perhaps coming out of incarceration

or perhaps are on—in the EIA system but also not connected to the labour market. They're giving them jobs; they're giving them skills and training, and our government is investing in these entities to provide the skills and training for individuals who are otherwise not connected to the labour market and then going in and doing repair and maintenance on these units.

And when Makoon had called them and they had recently acquired these properties, they needed to quickly get the units ready to be occupied. And so, 20 units in 20 days were renovated and repaired by build and purpose construction. They rapidly were painting walls as families were moving in with their children, and I had an opportunity to tour some of the units. There still is a little bit of work to be done but we know that they're in good hands and that work will continue. And it was just a real delight to meet some of those families and to meet some of the real heroes that are spearheading this program and providing strong leadership to help reunify families and keep kids with their parents, and give parents the supports that they need.

That is one of the things that our government is moving forward in more investments for respite. You've seen our government make a commitment to Granny's House, and then we committed more dollars towards building a second respite—Granny's House 2.0—so that we can ensure that families that just need a little bit of support can get it. And then also investing in programs like Super Dads, which is giving tremendous supports for individuals to help them parent and prevent their children from being CFS involved.

I do want to pivot a little bit to one of the things that we're doing on wage and wage enhancements. We know that the Community Living disABILITY Services and as well as the Children's disABILITY Services sectors were greatly strained during the period of the pandemic. In our CLDS homes there was a challenge with the COVID pandemic and the number of people that were getting sick from the pandemic and we needed to make sure that there was always somebody at work every day, caring for our most vulnerable. And I just really want to salute everybody who went to work and cared for our most vulnerable people living in CLDS community homes at a time when it was fraught with risk.

And so, two things that our government did immediately is we created a pandemic staffing support program and then a wage enhancement fund to incentivize workers to continue to work in this sector. And Budget 2022 is making an additional \$16 million

in supporting the front-line wages in the sector, further strengthening that direct service workforce and ensuring that program participants receive high quality service from their service delivery partners on a regular basis.

These are unprecedented investments in stabilizing that workforce. And we also know that this workforce is predominantly made up of women, and so this is putting more dollars in women's pocketbooks for the—and paying them for the work that they do, mostly because they love that work and they're committed to the individuals that they're serving. And so, really pleased to be increasing those front-line wages for these individuals.

We're also investing \$5 million more towards the Children's disABILITY Services. This is to get more assessments, more diagnostics and more treatment for children who have disabilities. This is also the biggest increase that this program has received in decades. And we certainly know that we have some great community partners. St. Amant is doing phenomenal work and so many others.

This is following along with an \$8-million pilot that we'd announced earlier this winter that would go towards creating a bridge program for adolescents and children with developmental disabilities where their families have really run out of options, their families are completely exhausted and they need more respite.

And, historically, the tragedy of—for many of these families was they were given the option of signing their child over to CFS when there was no protection concerns raised whatsoever; it was just a means to get more respite and more support for their 'developmenty'—developmentally challenged adolescent or child. And we found that that was absolutely heartbreaking, that a parent would have to make that decision to place their child into CFS care when there is no protection.

And so this \$8-million bridge program will keep families together and give parents that support. If they need additional respite, if they need additional supports, whether in the home or at a community service provider, they will receive those supports, and it is with the goal of lessening the number of children that are going into the CFS care and also keeping families together and supporting people with disabilities. That is one of our government's commitments is to ensure that we've got enhanced quality of life for all people that are—that have disabilities in the province of Manitoba.

Earlier this year, we implemented bill 72, and we'll be moving forward with a phased-in approach to moving people who have disabilities off of an EIA income stream over into an integrated and separate stream for people with severe and prolonged disabilities and looking at enhancing benefits for those individuals through that new income support program.

We know that there's more to do when it comes to people who have disabilities. We are implementing the third of fifth standards under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and moving forward to ensure that businesses and governments and municipalities are all in compliance with the requirements that are placed and laid out in The Accessibility for Manitobans Act to make sure that people with disabilities can access information from websites, that they can receive services not only from government but from businesses, from non-profits and municipalities.

And our government made available a \$20-million Accessibility Fund that—and every year, we have an intake. Right now I know that there were a lot of people who applied for the first inaugural intake that opened up this spring and are looking towards receiving some benefits that would help them invest in their company so that their company or their municipality or their non-profit is completely able to offer services to people with disabilities.

We know that there's a lot more work that needs to be done on serving people with disabilities in the province, and our government is committed to getting that work done, and we thought Budget 2022, particularly with the way—with the increase in wages was a really good first step.

We are also moving forward with enhancing and rolling out a new model for the Family Violence Prevention Program where we're seeing increased investments in specifically the wages. We know that in our domestic violence shelters and our Family Violence Prevention Program, the people that work in that industry, they were also experiencing unprecedented conditions during the pandemic. And to recognize some of their efforts as well as to stabilize that sector, our government has committed—in the Throne Speech, it was \$5 million and very soon we will be rolling out how that will be implemented throughout the province.

But each of our family violence shelters, all 10 of them, have received significant increases that they can put towards specifically the wages of the people that work in there. And once again, this is a woman-dominated industry, and so we're very pleased to be

seeing more money going towards women and raising the wages from these women-dominated sectors.

Madam Speaker, there's so many other things that I could say about Budget 2022, but with—I know there's others that want to talk about the significant investments that this budget made in our community, and with that, I will close my remarks.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, debate will be open.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

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