

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
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, Hon.	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>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

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.

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 33—The Addiction Services Act

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): That Bill 33—*[interjection]* Oh, I'm sorry.

I move that bill—*[interjection]* Oh, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development (Mr. Nesbitt), that Bill 33, The Addiction Services Act; Loi sur les services de traitement des dépendances, be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development, that Bill 33, The Addiction Services Act, be now read a first time.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: It gives me great pleasure to introduce The Addiction Services Act. This bill will enhance addiction services by establishing a licensing

fee to ensure that all public and private addiction service providers are required to obtain a licence and follow quality assurance and safety standards.

Currently, anyone wishing to provide addiction services in Manitoba is not obligated to be licensed, and there is no regulatory framework in place to evaluate the efficacy or safety of services delivered.

This act corrects that gap, ensuring that all Manitobans have access to high-quality, effective and safe addictions services that promote pathways to recovery.

Improving the capacity, quality and safety of addictions services is an important aspect of our government's addiction and overdose response and will reflect Manitoba as a national leader.

Thank you.

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

Bill 35—The Education Administration Amendment Act (Teacher Certification and Professional Conduct)

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Smith), that Bill 35, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Teacher Certification and Professional Conduct); Loi modifiant la Loi le sur l'administration scolaire (brevets d'enseignement et conduite professionnelle), be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: Our government takes the safety of our children and youth very seriously. Bill 35, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Teacher Certification and Professional Conduct) is being introduced to implement a transparent, accountable process to address and prevent teacher misconduct.

Bill 35 will establish an independent commissioner to investigate and respond to complaints and reports of teacher misconduct and a public registry of teachers to provide information on the status of a teacher's certificate. These initiatives build on actions already taken to improve student safety.

Bill 35 aligns Manitoba's legislation with that of other Canadian jurisdictions. The enhanced framework

also meets commitments made in the 2022 Speech from the Throne and our government's K to 12 Education Action Plan.

This framework was greatly strengthened by the feedback we received from stakeholders. Over the past few months, my department conducted two rounds of consultations with education-sector partners, including school administrators, teachers, students, advocacy groups, abusive–abuse survivors and Indigenous partners. In these sessions, we heard their concerns and priorities for the new framework.

I would like to thank our education partners for their input into this bill and look forward to continuing to engage to find additional ways to enhance student safety.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 34—The Police Services Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 34, The Police Services Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, this bill establishes a layered public safety model which establishes general policing services that are to be provided by every police service in Manitoba and specialized policing services that will be delivered in accordance with provincial standards.

The bill also includes much-needed reforms to the community and First Nation Safety Officer Program, which will provide municipalities and First Nations with greater flexibility to address public safety needs in their communities.

These reforms also begin the work of removing the extraneous public safety duties that police have long advocated for, which will allow them to focus back on their core policing duties. These program enhancements include additional enforcement authorities, expanded peace officer status and the ability to provide direct logistical and administrative support to police agencies in criminal and noncriminal matters, such as crime and accident scene management, mental health and prisoner transports, among others. Notably, it will allow for the development of a Winnipeg–city of Winnipeg transit security unit.

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

Bill 36—The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade (Mr. Wharton), that Bill 36, the fair registration in regulated professions amendment act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées, be now read for a first time.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, seconded by the honourable Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade, that Bill 36, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Reyes: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 36, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act. This bill intends to reduce, to remove barriers faced by labour mobility applicants to our province by ensuring that they are treated fairly and their application is processed in a timely manner.

Requiring professions to comply with language proficiency testing requirement regulations made under the act aims to streamline the registration process for internationally educated applicants.

These amendments have been drafted with the belief that we can improve registration timelines without compromising standards and public safety.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 32—An Act respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Related Amendments)

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke), that Bill 32, An Act respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Related Amendments); Loi concernant les services à l'enfant et à la famille (champ de compétence autochtone et modifications connexes), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: Bill 32 will amend 11 provincial acts to recognize Indigenous jurisdiction, support implementation of the federal CFS Act and provide provincial CFS agencies with more tools to better support all children and families.

These changes are in response to recommendations from Indigenous leaders and our CFS partner authorities and agencies.

I would especially like to thank MMF President David Chartrand, Grand Chief Settee, Grand Chief Merrick and Grand Chief Daniels and their staff whose feedback in this bill made it stronger for Indigenous children and families.

This bill represents another step towards addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and families in the child welfare system while enhancing services to all families in need of CFS supports.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased that Indigenous leaders and their representatives have joined us in the gallery today to witness the introduction of this bill and to present this bill to the House for consideration.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Committee reports?

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to the tabling of reports, I would like to take a moment to introduce you to some students who are in the gallery and who will not be in the gallery for very long, so, I wanted the chance to introduce them now.

We have seated in the public gallery from Niverville High School 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Danielle Marion. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler).

On behalf of all members, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Madam Speaker: There might be some confusion as to whether or not I actually asked the House about adopting the last legislation, so is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *Agreed? [Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

Madam Speaker: And with tabling of reports, I would like to table, in accordance with section 28 of The Auditor General Act, I'm tabling the Auditor General's

report, titled Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2023.

Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): I'm pleased to table the 2023-24 supplements on the Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Finance; as well as the 2023-24 supplements of the Estimates of Expenditure, Enabling Appropriations, Tax Credits and Public Debt for the Department of Finance.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2023-2024 supplementary Estimates for the Department of Manitoba Justice.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2023-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I'm pleased to table the '23-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Families.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): I'm pleased to table the '23-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Economic Development, Investment and Trade.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the '23-24 supplementary Estimates of expenditure for the Department of Advanced Education and Training.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2023-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the '23-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Agriculture.

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I'm pleased to table the 2023-24 Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for Labour and Immigration.

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to table the 2023-24 supplement Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the '23-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Municipal Relations.

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for the—for Natural Resources and Northern Development for '23-24.

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2023-2024 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness.

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2023-2024 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Consumer Protection and Government Services.

And I'm also pleased to table the 2023-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the department of the Public Service Commission.

And I am also pleased to table the 2023-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for Manitoba Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2023-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Hon. Kevin E. Klein (Minister of Environment and Climate): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2023-24 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Environment and Climate.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to table the 2023-2024 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Health.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I am pleased to rise to table the supplementary of 2023-24 expenses for the department of transportation, infrastructure.

*(13:50)

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Jim Knight

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I rise today to honour and recognize former community leader

James "Jim" Alexander Charles Knight, who passed away September 30th, 2022, at the age of 88 years.

Jim Knight was elected to the RM of Portage la Prairie council in 1971, where he continued to serve for 35 years, first as councillor, then an—as a reeve until his retirement in 2006.

During that time, he was on countless committees and boards, including the Portage and district hospital foundation.

Jim's foresight, along with mayor Ian McKenzie, led to a resource and revenue sharing arrangement between the RM and the City of Portage la Prairie that has been a great asset to our community.

Jim Knight was an honorary life director of Portage Industrial Exhibition Association. He was also an honorary life member of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, serving as vice-president and president.

Jim married Jean Craig in 1955, raising their family on a farm near Longburn. Jim volunteered with local hockey teams, with 4-H and with Manitoba Pool Elevators.

In his retirement, he spent many hours reconditioning old tractors and travelling across Canada and the United States with Jean in their RV. Ever the storyteller, Jim entertained his family, friends and community members alike with an innate ability to bring people together and to crack a joke at the right moment.

Portage la Prairie is a better place today because of Jim Knight's values and commitment to family, friendship and community.

Lovingly remembered by his wife, Jean; daughter, Beth; son, Brad; son, Perry; grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are with us today in the gallery.

Please join me in acknowledging and remembering Jim Knight, who is dearly missed by all who knew him.

Recruitment of Filipino Nurses

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): The recent nursing recruitment trip in the Philippines met with mixed reaction for many in Manitoba's Filipino community. On one hand, we are pleased that many nurses will settle here and receive direct government help navigating the accreditation system.

At this point, the Philippines is not on the WHO list of countries facing nursing crises. However, the

Province is just taking without giving back. As a basic, decent gesture of understanding of the poverty in the Philippines and what this brain drain will do, this government should have offered ways to give back through scholarships or medical technology in underfunded hospitals.

Manitoba has been recruiting IENs from the Philippines since the 1950s, but this latest nursing recruitment trip highlighted disillusionment. Some asked where the opportunities are for rural Manitobans. IEN advocates reached out to this government to say, what about the countless IENs right here in Manitoba who are nowhere near their goals of becoming a nurse again? Why is there no clear path forward for countless Manitobans stuck in jobs that have nothing to do with their nursing experience?

Due to unfair barriers to accreditation, due to Pallister cuts to bridging programs, due to the revolving door of failed Health ministers who did not understand or did not care about this file, these IENs did not—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —get accreditation.

Countless IENs have been struggling for years now. There is no clear path forward for them now. They have—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —no evidence of safe practice. They've been working at Tim Hortons, at call centres or as health-care aides instead of as nurses. Why are these Manitobans not part of a health human resource strategy?

If the ministers across this aisle think that they are done with this file, they are wrong.

We have the highest out-migration—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —numbers in decades. PC cuts have led to health-care breakdown.

It's time for a government that cares about communities. It's time for a government that understands health care. It's time for a new NDP government.

Cheryl Cheung

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Cheryl Cheung has been interested in fencing since she was six years old. Cheryl, with the support of her parents, joined the

local fencing club with her friend from school. Cheryl practices épée but identified there are three styles of fencing: épée, foil and sabre. The three are alike in that you earn points by poking your opponent, but the weight of the sword, scoring of points and type of contact vary. In épée, Cheryl uses the heaviest of weapons, points are awarded on pokes to the entire body and the contact must be made with the tip of the weapon.

Cheryl practises many hours perfecting her footwork and technique through one-on-one drills and sparring. Cheryl identifies patience and her faith as the key to her success in the sport. The practice and dedication to the sport have been crucial for Cheryl's success.

Moving to Manitoba from Hong Kong, Cheryl looked online for a club to continue her fencing. Cheryl connected with the coach from Team Toba, and the rest is history.

Cheryl has entered many tournaments. She has competed in the U14 Challenge Cup Fencing Championship in 2020, is a two-time reigning fencing champion in Manitoba, competed in the Alberta Cup, competed in the North American Cup in Minneapolis, the nationals in Toronto in 2022 and qualified for the Canada Games with Team Toba, where she won a silver medal.

When asked what inspires her to continue with the sport, Cheryl cited Vivian Kong, a former world champion, who still ranks in the world's top five in competitors. She said Vivian is like herself, in that she is left-handed, similar in height, practises a similar style and both women are from Hong Kong.

Cheryl would like to thank her coaches, Ayach Bounachada and Daria Palmer, who are here with Cheryl today, for all the support they have provided her on her journey.

Thank you.

Addiction Treatment Services

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The addictions crisis is a health-care crisis. Experts know it, people experiencing addictions know it and we know it on this side of the House. But this PC government continues to take an ideological approach to addictions that ignores this reality and it's costing Manitoban lives.

We are all aware of the catastrophe that this PC government's cuts to health care have caused in our province. After years of cuts and closures, our

health-care system is on the brink of collapse. Many of the service relied on people with addictions are simply not available anymore. The PC government has frozen funds to addictions Manitoba, and supports all across the province have been cut.

There have been a a rise in—there has been a huge rise in blood-borne disease due to the—meth in the last several years. And yet, this government closed QuickCare clinics, Dynacare clinics, meaning access to basic blood work, diagnosis and treatment takes longer and it's harder to access.

Overdose deaths have reached a record high. And yet, this government closed three emergency rooms and an urgent care centre here in Winnipeg alone, with many more being closed in rural Manitoba. Fewer emergency rooms means more travel and a longer wait for someone who has overdosed. And when it comes to an overdose, we know that time is of the essence.

There is no easy fix for all the complex and root causes behind the addictions crisis in Manitoba. But there are several steps that this government has repeatedly refused to take to save lives immediately here in Manitoba, such as opening a safe consumption site. The government claims instead to be focused on treatment, but there is an acute lack of necessary wrap-around supports, such as affordable housing and accessible health care, including mental health, once Manitobans have completed treatment.

We see you who are struggling, we support you—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Lucienne Loiselle

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Je suis si triste d'apprendre le décès de Lucienne Loiselle. Elle est une lumière si brillante et si passionnée par sa famille, sa culture et sa communauté. La Liberté a écrit que « Lucienne Loiselle, née Beaudry le 25 novembre 1942, femme métisse et pionnière dans la communauté francophone dans plusieurs domaines, s'est éteinte le 8 février à l'âge de 80 ans après une longue lutte contre le cancer.

* (14:00)

Lucienne Loiselle a marqué le milieu de l'éducation. Elle est à l'origine du programme alternatif au Collège Louis-Riel, mais aussi du centre de ressources qui porte son nom dans le même établissement.

Du côté culturel, Lucienne Loiselle a aussi laissé sa marque. Son fils Robert souligne : « Il n'y aurait pas

d'Ensemble Folklorique de la Rivière Rouge sans Lucienne Loiselle. C'est elle qui est allée au Québec prendre des cours de gigue pour ramener cette part de la culture traditionnelle au Manitoba ».

Son amour pour le patrimoine et la culture a mené Lucienne Loiselle à écrire, dans une perspective historique et sociale, un livre abondamment illustré à l'occasion du 50^e anniversaire du Festival du Voyageur. L'engagement de Lucienne Loiselle au sein du Festival du Voyageur en a fait aussi un membre actif de l'Ordre des Voyageurs officiels, avec son mari Lucien Loiselle et d'autres. Ils ont été Voyageurs officiels en 1967, 68, 69, puis de nouveau avec d'autres anciens en 1989 pour le 20^e du Festival du Voyageur.

Il y aura une célébration de vie ce dimanche, le 19 mars, de 13h à 16h à la Maison du Bourgeois.

Mes plus sincères condoléances à la famille Loiselle dans ce moment de deuil.

Merci.

Translation

It is with much sadness that I learn of the passing of Lucienne Loiselle. She was such a bright light and so passionate about her family, her culture and her community. According to La Liberté, Lucienne Loiselle was born Lucienne Beaudry on November 25, 1942—a Métis woman and a pioneer in many areas within the Francophone community. She passed away on February 8 at the age of 80, after a lengthy battle against cancer.

She left her mark on the education sector, as the founder of the Programme alternatif at Collège Louis-Riel, as well as of the school's resources centre which bears her name.

On the cultural side, Lucienne also left a mark. According to her son Robert, the Ensemble Folklorique de la Rivière Rouge would not exist without her: she is the one who went to Quebec to take jig-dancing classes in order to bring back this part of Manitoba traditional culture.

Her passion for heritage and culture led her to pen a richly illustrated book about the 50th anniversary of Festival du Voyageur, from a historical and social perspective. Her commitment to the Festival du Voyageur also made her an active member of the Ordre des Voyageurs officiels, along with her husband and others. Designated Official Voyageurs in 1967, 1968 and 1969, they were named again in

1989, along with other former Voyageurs, for the 20th anniversary of the Festival.

There will be a celebration of life for Lucienne this Sunday, March 19th, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Maison du Bourgeois.

My most sincere condolence to the Loiselle family in their time of mourning.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care System Funding Levels

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, here's a fact we can all agree on. This government cut health care in Manitoba. It started under Brian Pallister, and it's continued under this Premier.

That's why physicians at the Grace Hospital are speaking out. They're worried about their patients and the impacts of the cuts made by this government.

And yet, even though everyone knows that this government has cut health care, each and every day they come here into the Chamber and try to deny the facts.

So I'd ask the Premier simply: Can she tell the House how much she's cut from health care? Was it more or less than \$31 million?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): The answer to that question is zero.

Madam Speaker, we know, and Manitobans know, that we are investing record amounts of dollars in the health-care system in the province of Manitoba: \$668 million more—a 9.2 per cent increase to the Health budget this year alone.

That is more money for health care, not less.

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

Mr. Kinew: Actually, Madam Speaker, what the Premier just said is false, and we have the documents to prove it.

You see, this is a new freedom of information document that we asked for from this Premier's government. And, true to form, they tried to give us the same old talking points for a year and a half.

But finally, after that year and a half, they released this document, and you know what it says? It

says that this Premier and this government cut health care to the tune of \$61 million. Right there, in black and white, from this government's own hand, they cut health care by \$61 million.

The only question remaining is: Does the Premier still believe that cutting health care, like Brian Pallister, was wrong?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, right here in black and white, Madam Speaker, it says—and I did table this for members opposite the other day just in case they didn't have a copy of it, and if they want another copy, we'd be happy to table it again today—but I will say that there are record investments in health care in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, \$7.9 billion in the health-care system—a \$668-million increase to the health-care budget alone this year—that's a 9.2 per cent increase in investments in health care in the province of Manitoba.

For members opposite, that is more dollars going into the health-care system, not less.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, you just can't believe the PCs when it comes to health care, especially not during an election year. They've got their talking points that they're now going to try and march around the province, but Manitobans have seen first-hand all the cuts for the last seven years.

And you know what happened when we kept persistently asking this government to reveal the scope of their cuts to health care? They gave us this document. Right there, in black and white, it says they cut health care to the tune of \$61 million.

I'll table the government, so the Premier can see first-hand the true scope of the cuts that she's made to health care.

The only question she needs to answer now that we've confirmed she's cut health care by \$61 million is: Does she still support Brian Pallister's plan to cut health care in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: The Leader of the Opposition continues down this path with his litany of false accusations. He continues to put those false accusations on the record in the Chamber, Madam Speaker. It is absolutely false.

We are making record investments in our health-care system in Manitoba. These aren't talking points,

these are facts, Madam Speaker: a \$668-million investment more than last year in the health-care system alone, a 9.2 per cent increase. Those aren't talking points, those are just facts.

We will continue to make record investments in our health-care system so that health care is there for Manitobans when they need it.

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

Event Ticket Sales Request to Withdraw Bill 11

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): No, nobody believes the PCs on health care, especially not during an election year. Manitobans know better than that.

The other thing Manitobans like is a good deal. In fact, we're famous across the country for it. But this Province doesn't seem to share those values because they want to increase the cost of tickets for Manitobans to go see concerts and some of their most favourite forms of entertainment.

You know, I don't know if—what it's like when you got \$31 million that you can inadvertently forget to disclose on your conflict of interest form. But for the rest of us who want to go see entertainment at a decent price, this government's Bill 11 is the wrong move.

The question for the Premier is: Why is she making concert tickets more expensive for the average Manitoban?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that we are the last jurisdiction in North America to have these antiquated rules in place.

But I do appreciate any question from the Leader of the Opposition on affordability for Manitobans, because we know that in this budget—and the Leader of the Opposition and other members have the opportunity, probably later on this afternoon, to vote in favour of these affordability measures that we have put in this budget, record investments in tax relief for Manitobans.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite: Will they join us in this historic tax relief for Manitobans and vote in favour of our budget this afternoon?

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, it's an odd move during an election year for the Premier to go on the side of the big ticket resellers, people making money outside of Manitoba.

On this side of the House, the Manitoba NDP is on your side. We want your concert tickets to be more affordable.

For the Premier to step up in an election year and to ignore the voice of the average working person who's a fan of The Boss and who's been outraged by the sky-high ticket prices just doesn't make a lot of sense. But yet again, it shows how out of touch they are with the needs of the people of Manitoba.

The question for the Premier: Will she withdraw Bill 11 and stand with us in making tickets more affordable here in Manitoba? *[interjection]*

* (14:10)

Madam Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister. *[interjection]* The—*[interjection]* Order.

The honourable First Minister.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP cannot be trusted when it comes to affordability for Manitobans.

They made a promise to Manitobans; they knocked on every door across this province and made a promise not to raise the PST, just prior to the election. And you know what they did just after that, Madam Speaker? They jacked up the PST on Manitobans.

I can tell you, we have record tax relief for Manitobans. In fact, we are taking more than 47,000 low-income Manitobans off of paying taxes in the province of Manitoba.

That is making life more affordable.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, it would be one thing if the Premier simply recycled Brian Pallister's health-care cuts. But then she comes into the Chamber and recycles Brian Pallister's talking points.

And what does the PC government do? When they hear those Brian Pallister talking points, they all rush to their feet and start clapping, because they think Brian Pallister's going to come back one more time. These are the folks in charge of our health-care system? No wonder the health-care system is in shambles.

We are on the side of affordability.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: We've been listening to Manitobans who have been outraged by sky-high ticket prices. The government's Bill 11—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —will make tickets more expensive.

The question for the Premier is: Will she abandon Bill 11 and side with us and the people of Manitoba to make concert tickets more affordable again? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Chance for everybody to catch their breath.

Mrs. Stefanson: Manitobans know that the NDP cannot be trusted when it comes to making life more affordable for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that when the NDP chose to raise and jack up the PST on the backs of Manitobans, the very tickets that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about became less affordable for Manitobans because of their tax increases. That is unacceptable.

We will continue to make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

Women's Health Clinic Budget 2023 Funding

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Women's Health Clinic provides invaluable resources for women and gender-diverse folks here in Manitoba. This includes abortion services, contraceptives, birthing and much, much more.

Yet, in Budget 2023, funding for the clinic is not keeping pace with inflation, and they're being forced to cut services that people rely on. Chronic underfunding has been an ongoing issue under this PC government.

Will the Premier do right by Manitobans and adequately fund the Women's Health Clinic today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for St. Johns for the question. It gives me an opportunity to put on the record, once again, that our government is investing \$668 million more to strengthen health care for Manitobans, including women's health, Madam Speaker.

Always willing to sit down at the table of solutions to talk to our various health-care stakeholders,

including the women's clinic, because we want to ensure that all services that are available in this province for women is sustained and strengthened.

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

MLA Fontaine: When the pandemic started, the Women's Health Clinic and other community health clinics were given COVID-relief dollars. These dollars were much needed after years of austerity and PC cuts.

But now, the PCs are clawing back these funds, and funding for the Women's Health Clinic in Budget 2023 is not keeping pace with inflation, Madam Speaker.

Can the Premier explain why she's cutting funding to the Women's Health Clinic and other community health clinics?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, once again, the member opposite is forgetting that it is our government that is making the historic investment of \$8 billion into our health-care system—22 per cent increase since we took office in 2016. That is to help community health, acute care and many areas of the health system.

But particularly, Madam Speaker, women's health is a priority for our government—always willing to sit down at the table of solutions with our various stakeholders. And the WRHA is also willing to sit down with facilities such as the women's health to strengthen their supports.

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

MLA Fontaine: Manitobans haven't forgotten all of the cuts since 2016 that each and every one of these members have made towards women and gender-diverse health. They're not going to forget that at the election day.

Madam Speaker, Women's Health Clinic is dealing with a huge pandemic backlog and increased demand for their services.

Budget 2023 cuts funding from the Women's Health Clinic, and that is shameful. The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) knows this. Either she doesn't care or she is simply incompetent.

Can the Premier explain why she is failing Manitoba women and gender-diverse folks—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: –in respect of reproductive health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): We just finished celebrating international women's week and lifting women up all throughout the province.

Our Premier has put more money into women's health than any other government, any other NDP initiative ever. Our government is doubling funding for our women's resource centres. Our government is making historic investments in women's health. And, on this side of the House, we stand with women.

We lift women up and we celebrate the accomplishments of women, unlike members opposite, who continuously tear women down.

Madam Speaker: Honourable member for Flin Flon. *[interjection]*

Order. Order.

Conservation Officers Position Vacancies

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Manitobans don't trust this PC government. *[inaudible]* but they don't trust them to *[inaudible]*

Brian Pallister may be gone, but he's not forgotten, because this current PC government *[inaudible]* vacancy rates for conservation—continues to be a problem—year.

Will the minister commit to filling positions and actually hiring conservation officers in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): The member on the other side hit the nail on the head on this one. The Conservation Officer Service has been decimated over the years, courtesy of that side of the House.

Under the leadership of our Premier and our department, we're going to revitalize the Conservation Officer Service. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nesbitt: We've already put money into new equipment—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Perhaps the table could stop the clock.

I'm going to have to call to order the honourable member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) and the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew). And I will be

waiting for the next group of people who I am going to need to acknowledge as well, because I am having difficulty hearing the answers that are being said, and, today, I am going to start to be looking for more people to put on this list of hecklers.

* (14:20)

The honourable member for Flin Flon, to finish his question—or, oh. *[interjection]* The honourable—sorry, back up.

The honourable Minister for Natural Resources, to finish his response.

Mr. Nesbitt: As Manitoba's 'thirge' largest law enforcement agency, the Conservation Officer Service is an integral part of our plan to enhance public safety across the province and protect Manitoba's world-class natural resources.

Madam Speaker: We just need to pause for a moment. I believe the member for Flin Flon's mic might not be working, so we're going to stop the clock and just double-check this.

I think members need to be paying a little bit more attention when I stand, because when I stand, members are to be silent so that the Speaker can be heard.

Is there leave of the House to allow the member from Flin Flon to move his seat, so that he has a mic that works so that he can ask his questions? *[Agreed]* *[interjection]*

Oh, and I'll just—is that leave—could that leave just indicate that it would be for today only? *[Agreed]*

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

MLA Lindsey: Conservation officers are 'intregal' to ensuring that Manitobans are able to safely hunt, fish and enjoy our parks.

The minister's own legislation increases their responsibility for enforcement and investigation, but over 20 per cent of conservation officer positions remain empty despite promises by this minister and this government. They failed again, and nobody trusts that they're actually going to fill these positions.

So, when will this government stop the cuts and actually fill these vacant positions?

Mr. Nesbitt: Our plan will create an additional 37 officer positions by 2025 and ensure all officers are provided with the tools and training they need to maintain public safety.

The plan is already under way, Madam Speaker, with \$1.7 million invested to provide officers with new protective clothing, safety equipment, tactical tools and communications technology.

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

MLA Lindsey: The minister can claim that they've added new positions or that they're going to add new positions, but the facts—and I'll table this FIPPA—the facts make it quite clear they have not hired anyone.

In fact, they've had a net loss of 13 conservation officers, and the total complement fallen to the lowest level in two years. Clearly, the minister has not made this a priority. To him, it's just another promise to the people of Manitoba that he and his PC colleagues continue to break.

Nobody can trust that they're actually going to fill these positions. How can we trust them, when they continually break their word?

Will the minister actually hire conservation officers now?

Mr. Nesbitt: The member and his party had years to show that they support conservation officers. But their record is as empty as their promises.

It was under the NDP where their incompetence and mismanagement led to unprecedented cuts to the Conservation Officer Service. Under their guidance, we saw a 40 per cent reduction in conservation officers—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nesbitt:—and 13 district offices were permanently closed.

Madam Speaker, the NDP's lack of foresight won't hold us back. We'll set things right.

Drug Overdose Deaths Release of 2020 Data

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): While the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) tries to hide the number of overdose deaths, Sunshine House is shining a light into how severe the addictions—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith:—crisis really is here in Manitoba.

Sunshine House runs a mobile overdose prevention site, which provides supervised consumption services, education resources, harm reduction supplies, naloxone training and more.

They've shared data that shows very high demand for life-saving services, yet the Province is still refusing to share overdose data for 2020.

Will the Premier do the right thing: release the data today for 2020 on overdose deaths here in Manitoba?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I'd like to offer condolences to families who have lost loved ones to overdose.

Every death is a tragedy, and we continue to work with community partners to offer supports and resources for these individuals and their families. And earlier on today, we reached out—we were wanting to make sure that the preliminary numbers were posted on the website, and if the member opposite goes and takes a look, I believe they are there.

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

Safe Consumption Site Request for Facility

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, 4,500 people visited Sunshine House mobile prevention site between November and February, including 885 people using drugs.

The mobile site provides hundreds of Manitobans with services that help prevent overdoses. It's clear that there's high demand for these services and that this PC government is failing to address the addiction crisis here in Manitoba.

Will the Premier do the right thing: Will they support a safe consumption site and save lives here in Manitoba?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Our government believes in a continuum of care.

We believe in building capacities for individuals who are in pursuit of recovery to go and access services that they can. We have introduced six RAAM clinics to communities; we have naloxone kits that have been distributed over 200 places and safe needle supplies for individuals who are using.

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

Mrs. Smith: Hundreds of people have lost their lives in the last couple of years. These numbers that come—that they've released, I haven't had a chance to see

them yet, but I'm sure they're higher than 'laster,' which probably goes into the thousands.

More needs to be done in this province, because—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith:—this government is failing to address the addiction crisis here in Manitoba. These are families; these are people losing their lives. Sunshine House has, you know, put out data that shows that there's a great need for these services.

* (14:30)

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) do the right thing today: open a safe consumption site and help save Manitoban lives?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I'd also like to let the member opposite know that this morning there was a great announcement out in Portage la Prairie. We were announcing funding for seven beds and up to 300 treatment spaces for individuals who are accessing services in the addictions field.

We also sponsored money for individual—10 community service providers to up—them, and we put out an expression of interest for individuals who are looking to provide services for the remainder of the 1,000 treatment spaces so that individuals are able to access the services they need.

Northern Manitoba Highways Infrastructure Spending

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): No trust, Madam Speaker. Manitobans know all too well they cannot rely or trust on this PC government, let alone trust them to do what they promised.

Every PC MLA has said they wouldn't cut infrastructure investments in our province, but they continually underspend their budgets each and every year, including a \$50-million cut last year—\$50-million cut, Madam Speaker. They're even planning to underspend again this year.

Why, after seven years of broken promises, should the people of Manitoba trust this government to invest in infrastructure when they have failed to do it every single year?

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Well, the member from Keewatinook should be actually talking to the member from Concordia when he was in government with the NDP government—the dark days of the NDP,

Madam Speaker. They underspent by \$1 billion in the last eight years.

Eight—\$1 billion would put about five interchanges on the Perimeter Highway, Madam Speaker. Instead, they put traffic lights, making it unsafe for the Perimeter Highway.

We can—we're investing into our highways, Madam Speaker. We're going to be spending \$4.2 billion in the next five years.

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

Mr. Bushie: Again, no trust in this government.

Northern Manitobans know that this PC government ignores their needs. They know that when they drive Highway No. 6 from Thompson to Winnipeg, that their lives are at risk due to 'underspending' on maintenance, snow clearing and a failure to invest in much-needed safety upgrades.

Once again, northern Manitoba is forgotten in this PC government's budget.

How can this government expect the people of northern Manitoba to trust them when they consistently, day in and day out, forget about Manitoba's northern highways?

Mr. Pivniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, the member keeps on putting false information on the record.

In the five-year plan that we have—in the five-year budget, Madam Speaker, we're going to be spending over \$100 million on Highway 6, fixing it up, adding shoulders, adding passing lanes.

We're going to be investing in the North, Madam Speaker. There's going to be a lot more announcements in the North coming up in this next few months, so stay tuned.

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

Mr. Bushie: Another five-year broken promise that Manitobans are getting from this PC government.

There's only one way to ensure that our northern highways get the much-needed investments that they need, and that's by electing an NDP government that consistently, day in and day out, speaks up for northern Manitoban.

Their pre-election budget is nothing but a campaign document, and their highways announcement

yesterday is just not believable. The proof is in their failure and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie: —inaction, including the cuts in northern highways maintenance, with half—yes, half, Madam Speaker—the positions kept vacant.

Will this PC minister do the right thing and reverse their cuts in the highways in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, I know when it comes to the maintenance of our highways up to the—Highway 6 in northern Manitoba, we are recruiting employees all the time.

We actually brought out 40 retired members—our employees that came from retirement and—to make sure that we—they're on standby pay and they're actually looking after our highways in the North, Madam Speaker. And we'll continue recruiting up in the North.

The challenge is, every other province with human resource issues that they have—having challenges in the North. Because we're doing such a good job up there, including our mining industry, Madam Speaker—that's where all the jobs are going to, is going to the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —mining industry.

So, we have competition on our highways, Madam Speaker, but we'll continue working on our highways and investing in our highways, and we'll get the job done.

School Divisions Funding Concerns

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): School divisions across Manitoba are facing deficits and layoffs. The minister boasts that funding is going up by 6.1 per cent this year, but inflation last year was 7.9 per cent.

And compare that to federal transfers to Manitoba, which are up by over \$1 billion just this year—a 16.8 per cent increase, and sixth—2016, total federal transfers have doubled from \$3.6 billion to \$7.2 billion—an increase of 103 per cent—but it's not making it to the children in the classroom.

Hanover School Division is facing \$2.7 million in cuts. Louis Riel School Division needs \$2 million from their savings. There are cuts and deficits in Garden Valley, in the Interlake, and Seven Oaks increase doesn't even cover their increased enrolment.

If the minister is telling the truth, why are so many school divisions facing years of deficits and layoffs?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It gives me great pleasure to be able to stand up and put some facts on the record.

Madam Speaker, educators and friends all across this great province of mine continue to reach out and ask me questions. Why the member from Transcona and why the member from St. Boniface continues to mislead Manitobans, when there has been a \$100-million increase to the K-to-12 system—a 6.1 per cent increase.

Louis Riel School Division alone, this year alone, is hiring adding 46 full-time teachers, 65 EAs, six clinicians, five support staff and 12 bus routes for the upcoming school year. That's more, not less, Madam Speaker.

I wish the—*[interjection]*—thank you. I wish the member from St. Boniface would get it straight.

Madam Speaker: Just a caution to the member for St. Boniface, may wish to choose his words more carefully; asking is the minister telling the truth is actually going down a slippery slope. So I do encourage the member to be careful with the language that he's using.

Some Honourable Members: Apologize.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order.

If I wanted him to apologize, I would have said so. I would have asked that.

So I would ask everybody, please—need a little bit of order in here.

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

Children with Disabilities Remote Learning Program

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, my office has received a number of complaints from concerned parents and grandparents about this government's decision to cancel remote learning.

Many are individuals whose children have special needs and remote learning for a public school is a much better option for them than homeschooling. That includes immune-compromised students. The

school has 194 students, which means enrolment is higher there than 50 schools in Winnipeg, and there's a wait-list in an extremely successful after-school program where 30 students across the province do extra learning.

Why was this successful program for children with disabilities cancelled when it's clear there is a demand for it?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba remote learning centre was put into place with supports for students of immunocompromised situations within their own lives definitely over the COVID pandemic. For the upcoming fall of 2023, school divisions are going to resume that leadership on those—for those students that are going to be requiring those supports.

The supports—the resources are still there, Madam Speaker. We're working hard with our education partners to make sure those services for those students are still there.

It's unfortunate that it sounds like the member from St. Boniface wants to close down schools, Madam Speaker. I wish he'd stand up today and say that and put that on the record.

Seven Oaks School Division Funding Supports for Children with Learning Disabilities

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The Seven Oaks School Division spends less per student than the provincial average, yet their graduation rates are higher than the provincial average.

They should be an example of what a school board should do, and yet this government is underfunding them, forcing them to raise taxes or find other means to give a proper education for kids.

I'm also concerned about children with learning disabilities, who can do well if diagnosed early and helped, but if not identified early in support, often have life-long struggles.

I ask the minister, why is funding for Seven Oaks School Division less than needed, and why is the minister not focusing on ensuring no child with a learning disability falls through gaps in diagnosis and support, as is happening now?

* (14:40)

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I would expect a question like this coming from the NDP, for actually not

caring for those individuals that we, on this side of the House, want to make sure that there is funding for.

I'm going to correct the record on a few topics that the member brings up.

So, first of all, Madam Speaker, the Seven Oaks School Division is receiving a 3.8 per cent increase this year alone, which is a—\$3.3 million. He can check the budget recordings. The superintendent, Mr. Brian O'Leary, who I know the NDP are very familiar with, has confirmed the fact that it is a \$3.3-million increase.

Madam Speaker, under this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), we have increased funding to students with special needs by \$17 million, on top of school division operating grants.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Winnipeg 2025 Grey Cup Bid Government Announcement

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Our government has helped place a bid for the 2025 Grey Cup to be hosted in Winnipeg. We understand that such opportunities bring communities together and are a great economic boost for local businesses and our province as a whole.

Can the three-time Grey Cup silver medalist Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage please outline the status of this bid?

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Thank you to my colleague and former friend, the member for Swan River, for the question pointing out my three silver medals.

Madam Speaker, I know first-hand that Winnipeg has the best fans in the CFL and I am so proud that Manitoba—that our Manitoba government supported the Winnipeg Football Club's winning bid to host the 2025 Grey Cup.

Madam Speaker, it's a no-brainer for the Blue Bombers to host the 2025 Grey Cup. We all know that the week leading up to the game is filled with exciting events, bringing fans, friends, family and tourists from all over the world and Canada right here to Winnipeg.

This will be a time for Winnipeg and Manitoba to shine for the entire world to see, and it's going to be a time for the Grey Cup to come home, where it belongs.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Due to the extended applause and other activities that have been happening in the House today, I'm

going to add an extra minute and a half to the clock for oral questions.

Foot-Care Services in Thompson Request to Restore Services

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): For years, the people of Thompson and surrounding communities have been without foot-care services due to this government's cuts. There's no lack of demand for this service. Over 2,400 people have signed a petition demanding this service be restored.

Foot-care services are important preventative form of health care that keep people out of hospital and reduce surgeries and life-altering amputations.

Will this government reverse their cuts and restore foot-care services for Thompson?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I was pleased last week to meet with the Thompson seniors' association here in my office at the Legislature and I was pleased to be able to share with them that medically indicated foot care is, in fact, a service like other wound care, and with a clinical assessment, is a service delivery organization service that is provided through either home care or primary care, Madam Speaker.

Medically required foot care is available in Thompson.

Mr. Redhead: I was happy to set up that meeting with the Thompson seniors and the minister.

And the minister did indicate that wound care service is available. This is not what the seniors are asking for. And the people of Thompson were asking for the services that had been cut by this government: preventative health care, preventative foot-care services for Thompson.

The seniors left that meeting disappointed, not having come—a commitment from this government to restore that service.

Will they reverse their cuts and restore that service today?

Ms. Gordon: I was so pleased to hear directly from individuals who attended that meeting of their particular needs, Madam Speaker.

And, again, I'm a minister that sits around the table of solutions and that's the table we sat at with the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care (Mr. Johnston), who also indicated that, within the seniors strategy, we are looking at many different services that will help seniors,

not just here in Winnipeg, but in the North, like Thompson and surrounding areas.

So I say to those individuals, our government is here for them and will continue to meet their needs.

Madam Speaker: I do have a question, because the clock hasn't changed and we did add a minute and a half. *[interjection]* Okay. Apparently, I will be told when the time is up.

So, the honourable member for Thompson, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Redhead: We still haven't gotten a commitment from this government to restore preventative foot-care services for Thompson.

As we know, Winnipeg has 14 foot-care clinics and the North has zero. We're not asking for additional services that Winnipeg doesn't have, we're asking for the same.

Will the minister restore this service for Thompson?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I wish to acknowledge the member and the meeting that we had with residents of Thompson. I found it very productive and informative.

I can indicate to the member that this is an issue that we have heard throughout our seniors consultations in the North, and I can indicate to the member, as our seniors strategy proceeds, it's a living document, and I have taken the concerns that were raised to heart.

And I can indicate to the member that I'll be further deliberating over the issue that he brings forward.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Petitions?

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, I just wasn't sure if this was going to come up in question period. I just want to—and it didn't—so I want to take a moment to acknowledge our colleague from Dauphin who announced today he's not going to

run in the next election. So I just wanted to acknowledge that.

And maybe we'll see you at a Dauphin Kings game in the future, eh.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I had the opportunity to talk to the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) earlier today, and I just wanted to say thank you so much for his service to the constituents of the great people of Dauphin and just wish him all the very best in his future endeavours.

Madam Speaker: The—I would just indicate that that was a good point, but it was not a point of order.

PETITIONS

Community Living disABILITY Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Currently, adults with specific or non-specific disabilities, or a combination of disabilities, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory or language processing disorders and/or non-verbal learning disabilities, will be denied access to services under the Province of Manitoba's community living and disability services if their IQ is above 80.

People with these or other borderline cognitive functioning issues also have extremely low adaptive skills and are not able to live independently without supports.

* (14:50)

Recently, it has become widely recognized that access to CLDS should not be based solely—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —on IQ, which is only a measure of a person's ability to answer questions verbally or in writing in relation to mathematics, science or material which is read.

Very often, persons with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities have specific needs related to their executive function for support when they are adults or are transitioning to adulthood, which is not necessarily connected to their IQ.

Executive function is the learned ability to do the normal activities of life, including being organized, being able to plan and to carry out plans and adapt to changing conditions.

Those who have major defects in executive function have a learning disability requiring assistance under CLDS to be able to make a contribution to society and to be self-sustaining.

Provision of CLDS services to individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of these disabilities or executive function disability, would free them from being dependent on Employment and Income Assistance and have the potential to make an important change in the person's life.

Newfoundland and Labrador have now recognized that access to services should be based on the nature of the disability and the person's needs, rather than on IQ.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to change the requirements for accessing community living and disability services so that these requirements are based on the needs of individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities, including executive function or a combination of disabilities, rather than solely on the basis of their IQ.

Signed by T. Lewadoy *[phonetic]*, A. Chiponski, Julianna Strelnikow and many, many others.

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

Any further petitions? If not, orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please resume the debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Where was I? Oh, that's right. Nobody trusts this Stefanson government, Madam Speaker, and that's absolutely clear.

You know, I had an opportunity—I was mentioned in my remarks yesterday that we're out speaking to folks in the community and we were talking to

people on the doorstep yesterday. And people—somebody brought up a good point to me.

They said, you know, in the 2019 election, leading up to the 2019 election, we, of course, as the opposition, had fought tooth and nail to get the Concordia ER—to save the Concordia ER. And, of course, we forced the government—first they said, no, total closure, we're closing down the hospital, no one's allowed in, it's going to be no public access, it'll be an internal access only, no access for the public; and we fought against that.

And then, of course, they said, well, maybe we'll make it a clinic, maybe we'll make it like a walk-in clinic—you know, despite the fact there's two walk-in clinics right there at the Concordia site. And we said, no, that's not good enough. We fought, we fought and finally we got them to say urgent care so that we had some 24-7 access to health care in our community again.

And this person was reminding me that they went into—this was, of course, just on the eve of the election, and they said, trust us. They said, we—you know, we know you don't like the change, we know you're worried about how this is going to play out, but don't worry, just trust us. This is going to be the best thing ever for our health-care system. We're going to close down these ERs, we're going to close down these urgent-care centres, we're going to limit services across the board, but don't worry, just trust us. It's just going to take some time and all this will work out.

Well, you know, I—as I said, I mean, the people of Manitoba are smart, but I think they're also pragmatic, so they gave this government that chance. They said, fine, we'll give you an opportunity to prove yourself and let's see what happens when we make these catastrophic changes across the health-care system of reorganization.

Well, Madam Speaker, here we are. We're living it now. We're living it. And we were living it before the pandemic, before members opposite say, well, no, no, it's—things have changed. No, no, wait times were going up, they were going through the roof. People were backed up at the emergency room at St. Boniface. People were in the hallways already at Health Sciences Centre. The Grace health-care workers were already telling us what a mess the Grace Hospital was in 2019, before the pandemic. And, yes, the pandemic has only highlighted how these changes have decimated our health-care system.

So when they go to the people of Manitoba now and they say, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, don't worry, now things'll be different, just trust us, Manitobans have no reason to trust them at all because they've shown their true colours. They've shown that all they can do is cut, all they can do is force people into the hallways to force our emergency rooms to have the longest wait times ever.

We hear about stories about 20 hours, about days of people waiting in hallways. It's sickening, Madam Speaker, and I believe that all of us as legislators have a duty to protect health care, and the PCs are simply not doing that. So they haven't earned another chance.

Now, I could go on. I was going to spend some time talking about the good people in the Hanover School Division, you know, another thing that I learned on the doorstep. I knocked—I talked to somebody yesterday, and they said, did you hear 27 people fired in the Hanover School Division?

I mean, we're hearing about cuts in all different school divisions, but when the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen) own school division is coming out and saying, we're desperate here, we're desperate because the cuts that you've wrought upon school divisions over now seven years are coming to a head, and we've already done more with less year over year over year. We've already packed our classrooms. We've already cut programming, and now we are at the end, and we have to make these difficult decisions that no teacher would ever do. No parent would ever advocate for bigger classrooms, less one-on-one time for their children. But this government says, too bad, that's where the position you're at.

So I was going to spend some time on that, but I know I'm short on time. Others in my caucus want to put some on the record, and so I'm happy to give them that time.

But I did want to simply just touch on community safety and public safety for a moment. You know, it is—we're in a really bad spot here in the city. I think I don't need to tell members who represent constituencies in this city. I don't have to tell them this; their constituents are telling them every single day. You know, whether it's seniors who are worried about going out for a walk in the evening in the community, whether it's, you know, young families whose kids are out, you know, hopefully enjoying the spring weather very soon and playing outside or at the community rinks in the evenings, whether it's people who want to go downtown for a Moose game or a Jets game, if they're lucky enough to do that, you know, wanting to

feel safe, and I think the bottom line for most people, Madam Speaker, is that when they drive through, not just downtown Winnipeg; we're talking about communities throughout this city and suburbs and in my community, and they see somebody who's set up a tent on the side of the—of a busy road or in a park or in a small wooded area, they feel ashamed.

The people of Manitoba feel ashamed. And they feel that this government's actions reflect on us a province, and that's not right. That's not right, because those people know that if given the chance they would help those people. They would make sure that people have housing, make sure people have addictions treatment, make sure people have a safe place to go when they're at their most desperate times. Manitobans would gladly say we should increase the minimum wage to make sure everyone can get ahead, have some controls on rent in this province so that people don't get rent evicted from their homes. You know, people understand that we need to help those who are most vulnerable in our society.

But this government is so off base and so off in their own world that they've let it get to this point over seven years of indifference, of callousness and of austerity that I think it fills people in this province with a sense of shame.

We don't need to feel that way, Madam Speaker. We don't need to feel that way. We can build a province that we're proud of. And it starts with helping those people who are the most marginalized. It starts with helping those people who have the least. And I truly believe that any kind of community safety that we want to build starts by helping those people first. And that's something that we're going to talk a lot about going into the election campaign.

* (15:00)

This government: well, you know, they're stuck in—well, some previous century, maybe. They think Manitobans, you know, they want, you know, lock them up, throw away the key; they want to be—look like they're tough on crime.

Of course, over seven years of cuts to municipalities that have cut police forces, you know? I mean, this is their legacy. This is their legacy: cut programs to—for rehabilitation in our prisons, let people come out on the street with no skills, no supports. And then where do they end up? Well, back in the system because of the cuts of this government.

So, you know, they think that Manitobans—well, now we're going to say, you know, we're the gun-slingers. We're going to come in and we're going to clean up this town. Well, Madam Speaker, nobody buys it. Nobody buys it.

And more importantly, when you actually talk to people on the doorstep—again, I invite all the members opposite to maybe start doing that again. I know it's kind of scary going out there, and you know you're going to get lambasted by your constituents, you're going to get told some pretty harsh truths. I mean, the—we—this is just the electoral cycle; they get it. They know where they're at.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

But I encourage them to do that, because Manitobans are ready to have an adult conversation about this, a more nuanced conversation, a more complex conversation, but they get it. And they don't want to feel the shame. They don't want to feel the shame for the people who we've left behind. They want something better.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that on this side of the House, that is exactly what we are working towards. The members of this NDP team are united in coming together to build a better Manitoba.

We are excited. I would say we're champing at the bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for an election, because we want to go to the people of Manitoba and we want to listen to them. We want to work with them and show them a better way. And show them that we have a vision that we can build this province by helping others, that we can make things more affordable, we can protect health care as a fundamental right and a fundamental tenet of who we are as Canadians. We can build our education system.

And ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I guess give people a little bit of hope and give them a government that they can trust again. Because Manitobans have lost all confidence in this Stefanson government.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): It gives me great pleasure to put some words on the record about this historic budget.

One of the areas that I am very, very pleased to highlight during my few moments that I have to speak is the investments that we're making in disability services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government believes that people with intellectual disabilities have the right to live full lives in their community. And that is why we've made historic investments: \$104 million in new funding for the Community Living disABILITY Services and Children's disABILITY Services, for a total commitment in this year's budget of \$640 million annually toward services for the disability community.

Our government is committed to ensuring that adults with an intellectual disability and children with disabilities and their families receive quality services in community, and the staff who support them receive compensation for their work.

Last year, our government announced \$28 million in new funding to strengthen the disability services for children with disabilities and adults with an intellectual disability. These services included—or, this included investments of over \$10 million in additional wage funding as a first step to help stabilize the front-line workforce.

Very disappointed to update the House that the NDP—or, the NDP opposition at that time voted against these supports for people with disabilities. Now, this year they have an opportunity to set it—set the record straight and do the right thing by voting in favour of the \$104-million increase in disability services; \$79.7 million, of course, will be used to increase the baseline funded hourly wage rate from \$15 an hour to \$19 for the direct-service workers who provide residential, day and respite services to Community Living disABILITY Services participants and their families, to ensure that safe, reliable services continue to be provided.

An additional \$2 million will support families of children who are eligible for Children's disABILITY Services by also increasing the baseline funded hour for the—for respite. These investments will ensure that families are supported through self-managed respite services and are able to competitively recruit and retain respite and employment-support providers. In addition to the wage funding, an additional \$21.4 million will be used to expand the capacity of Community Living disABILITY Services for new entrants into the program.

I also want to highlight the \$8.1 million in new funds for the Manitoba supports for persons with disabilities program, which is that new income assistance program for persons with severe and prolonged disabilities that is separate and distinct from Employment and Income Assistance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to highlight that Budget 2023 is investing more than \$50 million in a comprehensive homelessness strategy. This is the first of its kind in the province's history. There has never been a comprehensive homelessness strategy, and this will increase funding for overnight shelters, transitional housing and rent subsidies. We are going to create 700 net new units of affordable and social housing. We are also going to be moving to 24-7 shelter space for many of our shelters in the province of Manitoba, because we know that people need to come in from the cold or come in from the extreme heat and also receive services that are pertinent during the day so that they can access better services.

And I really look forward to the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), who's chirping from the loge, who I am certain will be supporting these investments in a homelessness strategy, because we know that everybody in Manitoba deserves a place to call home.

Our government is also preventing more money in the family violence shelter program. We have invested, last year—in last year's budget, \$5.1 million into the Family Violence Prevention Program by modernizing the funding that all of our family violence shelters receive. This has—that investment, unfortunately, the NDP voted against. This year, we are implementing a second phase of that modernization, which will put another \$1.6 million right on the front lines of domestic violence. The workers that work in this sector, they are angels on earth, and I certainly hope that the NDP will show their appreciation for these angels on earth and vote in favour of those new investments for those combatting gender-based violence.

We are also putting \$2 million in nine women's resource centres, \$890,000 in residential second-stage programming agencies, and \$439,000 for nine specialized programs, and we've committed funding for a program led by Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata to engage men and boys and we are working towards combatting sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. These are all items in the budget that I know have much support from community, and I certainly hope that it will receive much support in—from all members of this House.

Because ultimately, since our government took office seven years ago, we have made 100 per cent increase in investments in women's programming through the Status of Women Secretariat. That is historic investments into women—into improving the lives of women and reducing gender-based violence across the province.

I certainly hope members opposite will support this great budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): It's always a pleasure to stand here and provide a few words to be on record as the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak.

During the past couple weeks here, you know, it's been quite challenging to be told by members opposite that we don't—that we do not understand or, you know, with the health concerns issues that are going on in northern Manitoba. We were also told that we don't understand what issues that we're actually living with. And so I found that quite offensive, because a lot of what the members talk about does not portray what we live in northern Manitoba.

For example, you know, hearing the Health Minister say, you know, everything's okay, investments, investments. But for who? You know, there's no investments for my family when we live in The Pas, Manitoba. And twice I've been medevac'd myself just to receive medical services. And probably I can count up to six times now when I was going through—when my two teenagers were having to be medevac'd out here for self harm, right.

So, there's a pattern here. We're always jumping on planes or jumping in our cars or jumping on buses in order to travel six hours or even to Brandon to access health-care services, and that's a reality that we all live with.

* (15:10)

And so, it's quite frustrating when I hear members across say everything is fine. No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not everything is fine. I wouldn't wish upon any of our members opposite to get sick or in a car accident, you know, or in a major—even just to reserve—receive cancer or dialysis.

We have people from OCN who live at the—on River Avenue, there's a medical assistance—I mean, a building there. And we have people that are living there for months because there's no dialysis, you know, in The Pas, northern Manitoba, so they have to leave their family, their home, the stress of asking family members to check up on their house to make sure it's okay.

And also, too, for family members that are left behind is—it also could be quite lonely when you have to be separated in order to get dialysis or physiotherapy from being a type 2 diabetic.

So, I agree with the member for Thompson (Mr. Redhead) in regards to, you know, him getting very, very passionate about why is there no foot-care clinic in Thompson when, you know, you could read, you know, health stats that a lot of our diabetics are Indigenous people and northern Manitoba has a high percentage of Indigenous population, right?

So why can't our health-care services be representative of who we're serving in northern Manitoba? For example, we're diabetics, including myself, right? So, we have to leave our communities in order to see an eye doctor here to prevent from going blind. And if I didn't catch what was—I knew what was an issue what—going with one eye, I could have been like several people who are my age who are completely blind, right?

They live in The Pas or they live farther up north. They may be intimidated or just can't afford or just cannot get the treatment here in Winnipeg. You know, so, what—just sitting in the waiting room and just wishing that we had these services, including my own eye doctor in The Pas wanted—wished, too, that we had these services. Perhaps our eye-care health will improve.

The reason why I keep on bringing this up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I'm 47 and I have people that I grew up with in Opaskwayak Cree Nation and they're blind. And their physical being is being deteriorated and I just find that, you know, with preventative programs—they need to be there, but at the same time, those services should be in northern Manitoba.

I don't know how many times that I know of people who have driven the six hours here in order to have, like, maybe 10 minutes of a doctor's time. And so, imagine the gas, the hotel, maybe getting a sitter for the kids or bringing the kids and missing school and all that. I'm very aware of the challenges and—that we have to face in order to come to one medical appointment.

So, I keep on bringing this up because it's just frustrating watching my people in northern Manitoba—especially in my own community, just deteriorating, you know, especially with diabetes. And the amount of people who are being—whose lower limbs have been amputated. Again, people my age with one leg.

And I keep on telling and sharing with this House that Opaskwayak Cree Nation has the highest rate for amputations. It's not something that I want to be proud of, but that's something that should be alerted and this House should be informed.

So, what does that say? That's a northern community in northern Manitoba with the highest rate of amputations versus a community here who are all surrounded by health-care services. So, this is why I keep on getting frustrated and why my constituents keep on asking me, why don't we have these services here? Why do I have to spend money and travel? If I can't make it or if I'm broke, then I'm going to have to miss this medical appointment.

And guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're just going to get more sicker and sicker and sicker. Okay? And with that, the Northern Patient Transportation Program was an absolute joke. I don't think that's been touched since the early '90s, and we should really consider that, because like I said, a lot of our people do not make it to their medical appointments here in Winnipeg because of no money. Right?

It just seems like that's a barrier that, as a Canadian, we shouldn't have to face here in Canada. We should all have access to first-class health care. And in regards to health capital, it was very disappointing in 2016 when these folks took over, The Pas clinic: gone. They were ready to put the shovels in the ground and build this building, which would've housed specialists, right? Maybe we could have had that eye doctor to come up to help treat many of our folks who cannot make it to Winnipeg in order to keep their eyesight. Okay?

Also, too, I want to put on record: The Health Sciences ER, you know, again, it was discouraging hearing members opposite, you know, act like everything was fine, when—that evening when that man who had passed away in the ER, I was there with my daughter in regards to her infected leg, and we were there for a long time. And I can't forget the amount of moaning and groaning from patients, elderly people, young people, just wanting to see a doctor. And it was just heartbreaking that I had to leave my daughter there because no family members are allowed to wait in the ER waiting room.

So patients are there literally alone—alone, waiting. And you can't join your family member until you're actually in a bed or a room. So that was quite frustrating, when I had to leave my 19-year-old daughter. She's independent as heck, but I still wanted to be there with her.

So when we got home after we finally got to a room so her leg could be infected—again, diabetes runs in my family and I was quite concerned about that. And it was very upsetting when we got home and—learning that that same room that we were in, somebody had died in. And I felt so bad for the family; I

felt so bad for the nurses, like, we were there that evening.

A nurse started getting very short with my daughter and I. And I quickly, very respectfully, corrected that behaviour and said let's start this all over again. Communication, right? So you can tense—you can sense the tension in that room in regards to trying your best to provide health-care services as a front-line worker when there's like nobody around. That was very, very concerning to have seen that.

So in regards to this budget, again, there's no commitment to provide psychiatric assessments for children, to take care of their mental health in northern Manitoba. Once again—once again we have to leave our community just to get those services—Winnipeg, Brandon. And that's not fair. All our children should have the same, same chances as the children who go to school here in Winnipeg and surrounding communities. That's just frustrating when our kids, including mine, do not have what the kids have here. It's unacceptable. And all I want is our kids to have the same chances.

Now, I just want to close by—early this morning I went to the University of Manitoba, where I graduated in 2003, and I haven't been there in probably about 15 years, so when I stepped on campus all these memories came flooding in. You know, good times, and remembering my friends who I still are—I'm—still am friends with today. We're professionals now, hey, but you should've seen us back in U of M; it was pretty fun. I hung out with the fun crowd.

So, I went there to talk about Indigenous representation in politics, and it was quite—you know, the questions were quite—they were—it was great discussion within the classroom there at U of M.

And, again, I was there as a student. I was in my early 20s. I rarely said peep, you know. I was shy, shy, shy. So, I never even—I never ever thought that I'd be in front of a lecture theatre, talking about Indigenous people in politics.

* (15:20)

And what the point was, is that I'm very thankful to be on this side of the House, because me being an Indigenous woman and—wow—going through—wow—you know, all the—you know, when all this data, you know, the highest to, you know, to CFS, you know, mental health, suicide, the law; it just seems like my whole being and my community, my family, all this is not new to us.

So, by us, by me being here as an Indigenous woman, talking to the folks, member opposite, who may or may not know what barriers that I've had to—as several of us here—had to go through, it's very important that we do have Indigenous representation, so that why—that way, we can inform and tell the members opposite as to why we particularly want these services for our people.

Because being an Indigenous woman, like I said, you know, I'm used to being let down in those certain areas there. But me, here, as a representative, we can change that.

So, I really enjoyed the class that I was in at U of M, talking about Indigenous representation and how it's truly needed, especially within this Chamber. And, like I said with Manitoba—I'm from northern Manitoba, the largest percentage of Indigenous population—I was elected because I absolute represent where I come from and it's an absolute honour. I still have to pinch myself when I walk up the stairs and realize that I am here and something that I will not take for granted.

Ekosi.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): This is a great opportunity to put a few words on the record here when it comes to our Budget 2023. And this is a historical budget when it comes to all areas of—all the departments, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And one thing I have to say is that, you know, one thing that we really did focus on in the last number of years since the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) became Premier, was that we're looking at economic development. And that is how we grow this economy, we grow the revenues because of the economy growing; we create jobs, and right now we have—right now in Manitoba, we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have opportunity now to really focus on bringing more investment into this province.

And we're doing everything possible to make sure that we're here; we're open for business, and we want to attract that investment capital into this province. It's so important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to investing in this province, and we want to show that we're setting policy so that we're competitive.

One thing I really liked about the budget the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen) had put out there was that I live right by the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. And the thing was, that was one of the reasons why I ran as an MLA, was because what was

happening in Saskatchewan during the dark days of the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There was—they were actually sending information over to our side of the province, on our side of the border, showing that—the disadvantages of living in Manitoba versus all the advantages of living in Saskatchewan; the competition, the competitive rate that they have.

And one of the things that we've—since we formed government, we want to make sure that we are competitive with our Prairie provinces. They became have-provinces because they have actually attracted a lot of investments. Look at Saskatchewan with their natural resources. We had the same opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to invest in our northern parts of Manitoba, especially when it comes to natural resources.

And, of course, in southern Manitoba, we have agriculture and, of course, we have processing centres that we've actually—that, just in that one quarter section of land just west of Portage la Prairie, with Roquette and Simplot—Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was \$1.4 billion of outside investment that came to Manitoba. Many jobs for the Portage area, and that's what we could be doing in every corner of this province.

And this budget really wants us to make sure that when it comes to Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, being the minister, we are investing in every corner of this province because we believe that every opportunity for every community can grow, based on giving them the opportunities and working together with small communities around Manitoba, and in the northern communities with our First Nation communities, we have the opportunity to really put Manitoba onto a have province.

And the opportunity that we're working right now with Indigenous communities up north there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the opportunities that is a corridor that we can actually be looking at in northern Manitoba, where connecting Saskatchewan and Alberta would be a great opportunity to get more investments and making sure that we are the gateway when it comes to northern Manitoba.

We have our energy in Manitoba Hydro, which we could be selling to Saskatchewan and Alberta in the future, going strictly to their industry that they have in northern Saskatchewan and northern Alberta.

And this is why our roads, the infrastructure, we're spending \$4.2 billion on infrastructure throughout the whole province, and this is a great opportunity right now to put \$2.6 billion just in our highways,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the NDP days, you know, they didn't—they underspent by \$1 billion in the last eight years, and that billion dollars could've put about six interchanges around the Perimeter Highway.

We could've actually had a freeway almost by now, but they chose not to. They put traffic lights on. They underspent. The only time they actually spent their budget was the year before an election in 2015.

They put, like, that's—I remember my colleague here from Midland used to always say, raid, raid and parade. And, basically, that's what they did. They raided the infrastructure budget year after year, and then when it came to before the election, they painted the highways with black pavement, and that's all it was, was black paint, almost, because in years later, all that stuff started crumbling.

What we're doing with infrastructure, we're actually going to rebuild the roads right to the base, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow RTAC highways to trade and commerce grid, to make sure that we can transport our goods and services from every community which has agriculture or industry, and making sure that our highways can take the load and making sure that there's no rate restrictions and holding back when it comes to industries such—like the oil industry in my southwest corner of my province—or, my constituency.

And we are going to make sure that we listen to Manitobans. In this budget, we listened to Manitobans and now we are putting more money into health care. We're putting more money into education because we know the training that we need to make sure that when—our growing economy, we need the right employees when it comes to the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we will, on this side of the House, make sure that we invest both in—when it comes to health care, when it comes to education and training, when it comes to highways and roads, we are going to be investing in this province, and this budget really sets it out straight that we are actually here to make sure that the province grows and becomes, one day, a opportunity for newcomers that are coming to this country just like my grandparents.

All my grandparents came to this country back in the turn of the century, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the thing is they had opportunities here. And I want to make sure that our next generations—future generations—have that opportunity, and they don't move to other provinces like when the NDP were in power at

that time, is that the brain drain, back in the day, they basically all went to Alberta and BC and Saskatchewan. We want to make sure we retain our youth and making sure that we do provide jobs—good jobs—for our youth and opportunities.

And I'm—probably now will give the opportunity for some other person to put a few other words on our record here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): Let's be clear: this is a pre-election budget, and Manitobans don't trust this Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) PC government. They all remember the seven years of cuts under Brian Pallister that have continued under this Premier.

Now, all of a sudden, during an election year, the PCs want Manitobans to forget all about their cuts to health care, education, social supports. We already know this PC Health Minister runs away from media and won't answer legitimate concerns from Manitobans.

* (15:30)

And now, this Premier and Finance Minister want to run away from their legacy of their predecessor. But the problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that they have been here the entire time, and implementing Brian Pallister's cuts to health care and education.

Our caucus and our party will share our fully 'co-sted' campaign platform closer to the election. But today is about the PC's budget and their lack of real plan to fix health care.

Manitobans can be assured that the Manitoba NDP will have more to say on helping their families and the pressures of inflation and ways to provide more immediate relief to reduce monthly bills and make life more affordable.

And Manitobans won't be fooled or bought in this election. You can't trust this PC government. They've underspent their health care budgets in the past by tens of millions of dollars. The government underspent by tens of millions on seniors care and mental health. This Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) health budget doesn't keep up with inflation. Funding for home care, long-term care, community care is below inflation, and that's wrong.

That's less for seniors, less for families and agencies like Women's Health Clinic. That doesn't make up for the Pallister cuts.

Health capital. One of the very first moves was to kill hundreds of millions of necessary investments in

our hospitals, health centres, community clinics. And now they're asking Manitobans to trust them to get the job done? I don't think so.

Judge them by their own commitments, budgets for health-care infrastructure. Hospitals and health-care facilities have been underspent by a combined \$816 million since 2016. That's \$816 million less than what they have pledged.

And then, when it comes to rural and northern health care, the PCs have ignored rural and northern health care for years and cut programs. I was just speaking today during question period about the cuts they have made to preventative foot care, and there's no commitment by anyone on that side to restore that program.

And here in Winnipeg, they have 14 of these preventative foot-care centres. We're just asking for that for the North. I mean, the program was in place for the better part of two decades—fully funded and operational—but under this government, they've amputated that program, for a lack of a better word.

So, no one believes them anymore. Earlier this week, we heard from a man from Dauphin, Chris Dunn, who is at risk of going blind because of this government's failed commitments to bringing needed eye-care service to folks with diabetes.

These services—these are services this Premier announced, and her health-care minister failed to deliver. They run health care—they've ran health care into the ground, forcing emergency rooms to close in Eriksdale and other facilities; a new closure is coming for Cranberry, apparently. And after six years of the PC government rural residential—residents still fear for their ER's future, including Thompson.

Right now, the diagnostics situation in Thompson is at risk of failing. We've went from 14 full-time allied-health union members in the diagnostics centre to three. From 14 to three. They've cut programs in the diagnostics program in Thompson.

And what that does is it risks closing down the hospital. If two of those employees aren't able to make it to work, whether they be sick or can't find child care, that hospital could cease to function because you can't administer certain drugs, you can't get lab results done.

It's—we're on a very thin—we're on very thin ice up in Thompson, and we're ready to go through it at any time. We've seen, throughout the North now, since the

lab cuts in Thompson, people in surrounding communities have had to send their lab work down to Winnipeg, which takes forever because of the backlog in diagnostic services across the province, and that's just wrong.

Just last year, the PCs were still forcing cuts on hospitals even during a pandemic. Prairie health region, \$2.8-million cut for vacancy management. The northern, two—northern health care, \$2.3-million downgrade standards of care in PCH and elimination of subsidies for parents who have to travel within the region for care. You know, and that speaks volumes, especially to the Northern Patient Transportation Program, which hasn't seen investments, you know, since this government took office.

And I get calls from my constituents saying, look, we're not able to make it down—we're not able to make the 760-some-odd-kilometre trip down south to seek health care because we can't afford the stay. The Northern Patient Transportation Program offers about \$300 in total for a trip to Winnipeg, when we know that the—that doesn't even cover gas, let alone meals, let alone hotel stays, let alone parking at our hospitals, right? And so we need that program revamped so we're able to take care of people in the North.

This budget doesn't even focus on the North; it doesn't look north. It's only focused within Winnipeg. And we know that's wrong. That's wrong.

I dare one of the members opposite to go seek health care in Thompson. Let's see if they're able to get the services that are provided down here. I'll bet you can't.

So, you know, Southern Health region, \$2.2 million in efficiency cuts; Interlake, \$516,000 for streamlining and efficiency cuts. What else we got here.

We know this government is running with scissors in our health-care system, just cutting, cutting, cutting everywhere they can to save their bottom line.

And when it comes to child care and education, you know, multiple years of operating grant freezes at child-care centres; a cut in real dollars. A severe shortage of qualified daycare staff has caused long time—long wait times for families to access spots for their kids, and I faced that myself.

When I was working in the health-care system, I had two little ones who weren't of school age in Thompson. Was I able to get them child care? No. The wait-list was for years. You had to sign up years in advance. And so, what ended up happening was my

partner at the time had to quit her job in order to take care of the two little ones, which, you know, strained us financially, because there was only a—one income.

So it's things like that—these real, tangible investments that need to happen that aren't happening in this budget.

By the government's own admission, not all child-care fees will be \$10 or lower, depending on the type of care. And school-age fees for in-service days and holidays will remain the same with no change. So that \$10-a-day daycare announcement is complete—it's not a hundred per cent true.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this mean-spirited PC government is making life more expensive for students. They've already—they've seen tuition increases in universities go up by 25 per cent, and now their budget will see their fees only increase again by another 2.75 per cent. That's wrong. As we know, students are barely making it by as it is. We need to make access to education more affordable, life more affordable for students so that they're able later on to contribute to the Manitoba economy and hopefully in our health-care system. That's what we want.

So, you know, in closing, I will say that this budget does nothing for the North, in particular for health-care infrastructure. It doesn't do nothing for our northern constituents, northern Manitobans. We are left out of this budget and that's wrong.

So, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (15:40)

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to rise today and put a few words on the record with respect to Budget 2023, Historic Help for Manitobans.

First, I'd like to thank my constituents: the people of Seine River. Thank you for placing your trust in me these last seven years to be your voice in this Legislature. It has been a privilege and an honour to represent you and take actions on the matters that—on the issues that matter most to you.

It's also a privilege and an honour to be appointed Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness, and I want to thank our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) for the opportunity to serve all Manitobans in this role. This department works with some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society, and I thank all the officials in our department for their work.

I am proud to serve in a government that takes challenges in addictions and mental health seriously. In the last five years, our government has opened six RAAM clinics across the province. That's six more than members opposite ever got around to opening. This is just the beginning. Budget 2023, Historic Help for Manitobans, provides good news for mental health and community wellness.

Overall, our department will see an 8.9 per cent increase in funding this fiscal year. That is historic support to this critical sector for so many Manitobans struggling with mental health and addictions challenges. This historic increase includes up to \$17.3 million to fund year 2 of our five-year road map for mental health and community wellness in the province. We will continue to work diligently to build capacity and dedicate more resources to mental health than ever before.

In addition, Budget 2023 takes action on our 2022 Throne Speech commitment to add and support up to 1,000 treatment spaces for addictions across the province. This budget provides up to \$9.4 million to support this initiative. Recovery saves lives, and I am pleased to see this investment in our recovery-oriented system of care. And I look forward to members opposite and their support of this crucial investment to ensure more Manitobans have access to the recovery supports that they need.

In addition to adding more spaces, our government recognizes the excellent, life-saving work that many community service delivery organizations do already to support those in pursuit of recovery. Budget 2023 provides 16 community organizations providing addiction treatment services receive—to receive an increase in funding to align with standardized rates. This is good news for all Manitobans.

And to these community organizations I say: thank you. Thank you for the work you do; it is not easy, but it is essential to so many who are in pursuit of recovery. For what you do, thank you.

Overall, oh—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

An Honourable Member: Keep going, keep going.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Okay. Overall—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: —Budget 2023 provides historic relief for Manitobans by changing the basic personal amount for—from under \$11,000 to \$15,000. The result in 47,400 Manitobans being removed from the tax rolls;

47,400 Manitobans no longer paying tax, thanks to this budget. It's incredible.

This means family in Seine River will have more money to spend; more money that they have worked hard for will be able to stay with them. This measure alone will save the average two-income family \$1,000 this year compared to 2022. That's in addition to the relief already provided with the carbon tax relief fund, and the affordability payments and the education property tax rebate.

On the topic of education property tax, I am so pleased to see our government increase the rebate to 50 per cent this year, returning on average \$774 to homeowners. We are the last province to fund education with this antiquated system, and I am proud our government is moving to modernize education funding in Manitoba.

Seine River is a very diverse constituency. We have farmers, we have homeowners, we have business owners; and this is great news for all of them. Overall, this government's measures are putting an astounding \$1.8 billion back into the pockets of Manitobans right when they need it most, equating to over \$5,500 for each family. This is record relief for Manitobans, and I am pleased to support it in this budget.

While this historic relief for Manitobans is crucial—or, critical, sorry—it is also important to invest in the challenges that our province faces. I've spoken about the great investments we are making in Mental Health and Community Wellness, but Budget 2023 also makes record investments in health, education, safety and social services.

As part of my department, the minister—or, sorry, as part of my colleague, the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Cullen) annual prebudget announcement, we committed to providing \$3.6 million to the 'downtime' community safety partnership, an innovative organization working in our downtown. This organization is having great success connecting those experiencing addiction, mental health challenges and homelessness to provincial programs and supports, and providing 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week eyes and ears on the ground.

This is supported by two further investments which are both critical to creating safer streets in our communities: \$51 million for our two-year violent crime 'strategy' and 51 for our comprehensive homelessness strategy. We know that safety is top of mind for all Manitobans and we are taking action so that all Manitobans, regardless of where they live, feel safe.

We also know that Manitobans deserve better care closer to home. We know that our health-care system needs healing and Budget 2023 delivers on that commitment, as well. This budget invests a historic \$7.9 billion in health care this year. To be clear, that is \$668 million more than last year, a 9.2 per cent increase.

Just to summarize some of the initiatives, here are few that are under way and supported by Budget 2023: \$200 million in human health resource action plan; \$1.2-billion multi-year capital commitment, including new hospitals in Portage and Neepawa. I'm so proud to speak in favour of this budget.

We have heard loud and clear from Manitobans on what their concerns are. We have taken action, providing historic investments in health, education, social services, public safety and, more importantly, historic relief to help them make ends meet.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any more speakers?

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): It's my pleasure to speak here on behalf of my constituents of Notre Dame.

I know we come here to the Legislature to do a lot of things. We come here to bring up issues that are important to us in our critic portfolios. We come here to do things to hold the party line. But the main focus of why each and every one of us are here is because we're here to represent our constituents.

So, that's my first and foremost concern are the people of Notre Dame and what they've been telling me at the doorstep, and the things that I see every single day because I actually live just a stone's throw away from Notre Dame Avenue, myself.

My family and I moved there from Sage Creek in May or June of 2020. We had to renovate a bit, so we had to stay at my parents' house first for a little while because of the extent of the renovations to this new place that my family and I got. But it is—been really worth it to move so close to everybody that I'm representing and it's really an honour to be there and to be here in the Legislature representing them.

So, one of the things that was left out of the budget speech that is very, very important to the constituents of Notre Dame is any kind of plan of action to address lead contamination in soil.

Every single year, I stand here debating the budget and I bring this very same topic up because there

hasn't been much traction on this, despite the fact that there have been already two executive summaries and reports based on the Intrinsic company that has done some work on this situation—on this very important issue. And this company has outlined several important recommendations that the government has yet to enact.

So, again, I'd like to bring up the fact that in the last report—and the City of Winnipeg did a little bit of work on this, as well. It was found that the area on Logan Avenue, on the Weston community centre—Weston Memorial Community Centre on Logan Avenue, parts of the field there around the hockey rink have had to be closed due to lead contamination in soil.

So, again, you know, this is an area that is very well used by many folks in my constituency. I, myself, when my family first moved to Canada, we lived very, very close to this community centre and my cousins and I used to play at that same—very same field. So, this is—and playing soccer, just running around. So, to know that these are areas where children play and we're still not dealing with lead contamination—I am now almost 45 years old, and we're still trying to deal with lead contamination in soil on the same very field.

* (15:50)

So, we have this recommendation from the Intrinsic reports saying that there needs to be seasonal landscaping done on these types of areas, that there needs to be more testing in these types of areas and that there needs to be an aggressive public awareness campaign on lead contamination in soil, because people are still playing, people are still gardening. They're still doing these types of things, because, you know, lead contamination is not something that you can see, hear or feel. It's largely invisible, but it's still there.

So, these are tangible recommendations that the government's own reports have outlined and have yet to be implemented.

So, again, nothing in our budget for the residents of Notre Dame and other parts of Daniel McIntyre and other parts of St. Johns and Point Douglas that this is directly impacting. And we're hoping that, in the future, the government will tackle these issues for the constituents.

Recently, I guess it was late fall, I was pleased to be part of some founding meetings of a very new residents' association in the constituency of Notre Dame. It's called the Weston-Brooklands residents' association.

They meet—we meet regularly at the Salvation Army church in the Weston area.

There is a new president there; her name is Maria Fernandes. This is a very committed group of Weston and Brooklands residents who are, you know, concerned about the rising incidents of public safety that we're seeing and we want to be able to respond in a way that improves safety for everybody in the community. Right? Even the most vulnerable or the marginalized. We're seeing a lot of increase in homeless encampments in the area, and we're really hoping that there will be some housing-first solutions for our fellow Manitobans who are experiencing homelessness.

And part of what the residents' association is trying to do is to raise awareness about lead contamination, for one, and also the decommissioned railroad tracks that criss-cross throughout parts of the Weston-Brooklands area. There is a very, very successful project that we would love to be able to emulate that the folks in the northeast part of the city have been able to do with their decommissioned railroad tracks. They were able to have federal, provincial and municipal dollars go into removing those decommissioned railroad tracks and then creating pathways that were also landscaped so that people would be able to bike and walk and just have, like, more recreational opportunities.

We happen to live close to the Garbage Hill, and—I think it's called Weston Park, but everybody calls it Garbage Hill—and those decommissioned railroad tracks actually would be leading in that direction. And wouldn't it be great if we actually had some pathways similar to what they have in northeast part of Winnipeg to show for our Weston-Brooklands area as well. Have those pathways—have those beautiful landscaped pathways, places for kids to bike—learn how to bike, learn how to skateboard, and then lead to the park, have more walking opportunities for people and just in general beautifying the space.

This is what residents are really clamouring for, is to try to make our neighbourhoods and communities more beautiful and more liveable. Having those active transportation pathways. And this is something that is one of the goals of the new residents' association, the Weston-Brooklands residents' association, and I'm hoping that this government will be receptive to these plans for the constituents of Notre Dame.

Another thing that we've been working on as part of multiple residents' associations across the constituency is trying to get together to deal with things that we have

identified together as quite problematic for our community. We've formed the Notre Dame Powerline. The phone number there is 204-588-7111. And we're asking folks to please report certain things like when you see a whole lot of garbage, lot of garbage mounds. We're seeing garbage that is not normal.

Like, this is not, oh, you know, the City has forgotten to pick up garbage this week or something like that. This is stuff that we've been seeing ever since the pandemic; whole lots—vacant lots full of garbage, taller than I am. There's been some, like, informal trading going on between people, sometimes with stolen goods, leading to the amount of garbage. There's also been illegal dumping by—I'm not sure which type of residents, leading to that much vacant lot garbage.

And then there's also the issue of homelessness and folks that are hoarding, because that is one of the things that happens sometimes; one of the symptoms that you have when you are on meth is that you have a hoarding tendency. And so we are seeing mounds and mounds of garbage like this. We are getting calls on our Notre Dame Powerline to try to deal with this garbage.

When you see that much garbage, it is really unsightly. It's really unsanitary. There's human feces, animal feces, mattresses. After the snow melts, everything's wet, and whole back lanes are full and cars can't get passed through, and it takes the City of Winnipeg up to 10 days sometimes to remove these mounds of garbage, in part due to all the budget freezes due to this provincial government.

So, what we're seeing is when you have this amount of disorder, it makes you feel as a resident that your place doesn't count. And it actually—there's actually studies that show that your environment and, you know, stuff like the lack of green space or unkempt yards and things like that, they certainly do contribute to crime and actual violence. So if we could just try to keep our spaces clean.

But this has been proven to be a more difficult situation to deal with than I originally anticipated. When we make the phone call to 311, to the City of Winnipeg, it takes up to 10 days to get this done, right, due to their—City's budget cuts to 311 and everything else.

And, in fact, when I did speak to the City councillors about this, to the mayor, Scott Gillingham, about this and even to the chair of the Waste and Water Department, Councillor Brian Mayes—I've even spoken

to Greg MacPherson, who's a public servant with the City that specializes in public safety and wellness and community wellness.

And it is an intractable problem, because it's not just about waste and water, that department. It also has to do with multiple departments, like with the RTB. Like, if—in case the garbage is being left at a—at near—a nearby residence, then who's responsible to pay for that garbage to get to the dump?

But our residents and volunteers at the Notre Dame Powerline are actually willing to pick this up just to get rid of all this garbage. We're hoping and calling on other levels of government, including the Province, because it is not only the City's issue. A lot of this garbage has to do with the lack of housing for folks, and so the City has a role to play—I mean, the Province has a role to play in dealing with this garbage.

You know, recently, when we were getting so many calls from the Notre Dame Powerline about a building on Sargent. We were getting so many calls regarding this, because there'd been so much garbage outside of it, it's—even if you do once every two days garbage pickup from the City, it still wouldn't be enough. It just still wouldn't be enough. It's almost necessary on a regular basis.

So the surrounding residents are asking about this. And, secondly, this property on Sargent has so much—*[interjection]*—you want me to stop? Okay.

* (16:00)

And with those comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll cede the floor to my other colleagues.

Thank you.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to stand up in the House this afternoon and put on the official record what is, hopefully, my last budget debate in respect of the PC government and all of their austerity and all of their cuts and all of their bad decisions and all of their callousness and uncaring towards Manitoba. Hopefully, this is our last time that folks on this side of the House have to get up and talk about the bad, bad, horrible job that each and every one of those members is doing on behalf of Manitobans.

Before I get into what is a hot mess of a budget, I do want to acknowledge my colleagues on this side of the House. As I have said many times, and I will take this opportunity, since it is my last opportunity to talk about their budget, I want to take an opportunity to

just talk about the good work that the folks on this side of the House are doing.

I have the great honour and privilege to work with some of the most capable, caring, intelligent, competent, generous, compassionate, respectful, humble individuals in Manitoba that work day in and day out to ensure that Manitobans have a province that we can be proud of. And I know that, for the last many years, certainly for myself since 2016 and then for many of our colleagues since 2019, a good portion of our responsibilities as MLAs is talking to Manitobans and trying to offer advocacy and some type of support and in respect of all of the bad decisions that the PC government has made.

We spent a lot of time talking to Manitobans on the phone, emails, meetings, outreach, community organizations, and no matter where we go across this beautiful province of ours, Manitobans are telling us how sick and tired they are of members opposite. They are sick and tired of members opposite, and they understand, as we do on this side of the House, that their time is up.

Time's up for members opposite, and we are looking forward to the next provincial election where we can vote in a government that truly cares about Manitobans and truly will put forward what's in the best interest of all Manitobans, not just the very rich, not their very best friends, or other best friends who sit in—languish in jail right now, but all Manitobans, Deputy Speaker.

And so I want to say miigwech to each and every one of my colleagues for the work that they do. I want to acknowledge each and every one of my colleagues and the work that they do. It's important work, as I said many times; it's sacred work, and each and every one of our NDP caucus has leaned into the leadership. They have stepped up, not only during the pandemic, but each and every day since they've been elected. And I, for one, am very proud to sit on this side of the House and work with these individuals.

I want to put on the record for Manitobans, and—you know, let me just say this: Manitobans see this budget for what it's worth. They remember, in 2016 and 2017, all the way up to 2022, the cuts, the austerity that Brian Pallister brought in that was supported by all of his ministers, including failed Finance ministers, failed Health ministers. They're not going to be fooled by this budget.

And I know that the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and every one of the members, they've got their talking

points that this is the most generous budget—in the history of humanity. The members opposite are trying to fool Manitobans as if this is some type of progressive budget. It's not. Manitobans won't be fooled by this last-ditch effort by members opposite to try and buy the votes of Manitobans.

As I said, Manitobans are sick and tired of members opposite, and so I want it on the record because I think members opposite have forgotten some of their health-care cuts that they've done since 2016.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

In 2016-17, they cut \$78 million from their health-care infrastructure budget. In 2017 and 2018, \$197 million was cut. In 2018-2019, \$199 million was cut. In 2019-2020, \$74 million was cut, and in the midst of a global pandemic, when we were all grappling with a global pandemic and the ramifications that it had on every single level of our society. Each and every one of those members agreed to cut \$106 million from the budget. Then in 2021-22, they cut \$162 million. That's a total, Madam Speaker, of \$816 million that was cut from Manitoba health care.

And the members opposite wonder why health care is in an absolute mess. It's because they took money that the health care infrastructure needed—desperately need—and they cut it year after year after year after year, even in a global pandemic.

And who has suffered for that? Manitobans have suffered because of that. Manitobans have died under these members' watch. They have died; they've died alone; they've died—they're still waiting for care that they're entitled to, and yet members opposite can now try to bamboozle Manitobans in trying to say that they're spending the most that they've ever spent in the history of Manitoba.

That's just pure nonsense. They're actually—if it were true, and again, nobody trusts members opposite—but if it were true, they're simply making up for the cuts that they've done in the last seven years. And we will never recoup from that under their watch because, at the end of the day, members opposite just care about money. They care about doing things on the cheap. The less amount of money that they can spend for our infrastructure, even if Manitobans suffer, they don't care. They simply do not care.

And some good, really good examples of that, Madam Speaker—and we've brought it up in the House many, many times, but I think it's worth mentioning again—that members opposite, since they came into power in 2016, all agreed with and supported an attack

on women's health. It was a co-ordinated and methodical attack on women's health.

* (16:10)

We know that their former minister—Finance minister, Cameron Friesen, didn't support, you know, access to abortion, or Mifegymiso. We know that he fought it on every single level; we know that. We know that they were fine when they cut lactation consultants for new mothers and Manitobans who needed help with breastfeeding their newborns. We know that they cut the Mature Women's Centre.

And, again, I had the opportunity to tour the women's health—mature women's health centre, and—in its dying days when these members opposite decided to dismantle it. And I will always remember speaking with one of the nurses, who was actually one of the nurses that—the only nurse in Manitoba that was specialized and trained to do that type of health-care work—and I remember her crying. And I'm feeling so helpless to be able to help her, and I said, I'm sorry; I'm sorry that we have a government, a PC government, that doesn't care about women's health and actually thinks that women's health is what we should be cutting. I'm sorry. That's their legacy.

Again, their legacy, Madam Speaker—and if you can believe this—we can believe this on this side because we've seen how callous they are—but these are the same individuals, the same government that cut the levels for the Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit and the Healthy Baby milk program.

I mean, for all the talk from folks opposite and those members over there, including ministers who go to anti-choice rallies about, like, protecting lives and pro-life this and the sacredness and blah, blah, blah, all of that.

Meanwhile, here they are, they're talking out of both sides of their mouth because these folks here, these ministers, these MLAs cut. They cut dollars to help women and Manitobans who are pregnant, who maybe need an—a little bit of extra support with nutrition; they cut those dollars.

And then, they—you know, as soon as these babies are born, these new Manitobans, they think, oh, you know what, I'm already going to get at you and I'm going to cut a milk—the milk program. Like, who cuts prenatal benefits and who cuts milk programs? Folks opposite.

And they are—they should be so, so proud of that, that that's their legacy. Most of them—I would suggest

maybe two thirds of them—are going to be gone in a couple of months, and when Manitobans look back on their legacy as MLAs, what will they see? They'll see individuals who cut from prenatal care and cut milk from brand-new newborns. Ridiculous.

We know that members opposite—and I think it's important to point this out yet again. Since 2017, I have introduced the abortion buffer protest—the Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act—I think it's about six times now.

And every single time, members opposite have voted against it. They voted against Manitobans being able to access health care without being harassed, intimidated or bullied by anti-choice Manitobans.

And they've all stood there—in fact, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) stood up in this House and voted against protecting Manitobans accessing all kinds of reproductive health care.

I only have a couple of minutes left, but I want to mention the cuts that members opposite have celebrated and agreed to in respect of the North. There are women in the North that can't even have babies in their home community and have to be sent to Winnipeg; away from their community, away from their family, away from their supports.

There is no greater illustration of a government that does not care for women and gender-diverse folks in this province than this government when you have a series of attacks on women's health care. And we're talking millions of dollars that were cut from women's health care.

As I said earlier, hopefully this is going to be my last opportunity to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Fontaine: They agree with me. They agree with me that this should be the last time that we ever talk about their PC budget. They agree. They were just clapping for it.

I think everybody in the Chamber knows that they—it is a disaster on that side, Manitobans aren't going to fall for it and we are looking very, very forward to the next election.

Miigwech.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I'm honoured to rise in the House to speak to our 2023 budget, Historic Help for Manitobans.

I want to start off by thanking the Finance Minister and the entire team at Manitoba Finance. I know that, certainly, during the minister's 19 years in public life, he has fought tirelessly for his constituents in Spruce Woods and the citizens of our entire province, and we thank him for his service and for the budget that he introduced.

Madam Speaker, I also want to thank the thousands of people who participated in prebudget consultations to ensure that this budget accurately reflects the priorities of all Manitobans. Over the last year, I have been to every corner of this great province of ours, listening to Manitobans. I have heard from families, I have heard from seniors about the cost shock that they experience every time they go to the grocery store and to the gas station.

Due to inflation, Madam Speaker, and the Liberal-NDP carbon tax, too many Manitobans are struggling in our province to make ends meet. And they want to know that the health care, education and other social services they rely on will be there for not just their children, but also there for their grandchildren. Manitobans need, want and deserve our help during these very difficult and challenging times. Through tax relief and investments, we are providing historic help to Manitobans in this budget.

I have also heard, Madam Speaker, from business leaders who see the strength of our economic recovery. Manitoba is open for business like never before. Manitoba is open for business with significant new investments in job creation across multiple sectors of our economy.

Madam Speaker, our economic resurgence is fueling unprecedented revenue growth of \$2.1 billion this year. Budget 2023 invests every cent of that—of those new revenues in the priorities of Manitobans. It invests to help Manitobans make ends meet. It invests to make our streets safer. It invests to heal our health-care system and to strengthen our communities and create opportunities for all Manitobans.

The members opposite, Madam Speaker, have been putting false information on the record for the last week and beyond, so now is the time for us to correct that record. The only cuts our government has ever implemented are the tax cuts that provide relief for Manitoba families.

Madam Speaker, by voting against this budget, the NDP are finally telling Manitobans what their plan is for the future of our great province. The NDP's plan is to raise your taxes and make life less affordable for

Manitobans. They will raise taxes on your home, they will raise taxes on your income and they will raise taxes on the goods and services that Manitobans rely on each and every day.

Madam Speaker, don't be fooled by the NDP. We remember all too well when they promised not to raise taxes. They went door-to-door across this great province of ours. They knocked on those doors. They spoke to Manitobans and what did they promise them? They promised them that they wouldn't raise the PST, that they wouldn't raise the taxes. And what did they do? The first opportunity that they had, they raised those taxes on Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans can't trust the NDP. They did that last time they were in government under Greg Selinger, and they will do it again under this Leader of the Opposition.

* (16:20)

Madam Speaker, our Progressive Conservative team are the only ones who can stop that from happening. I'm here to tell Manitobans today that we will stop NDP tax hikes in the next election and we will continue to offer historic relief to Manitobans, because that's what they need, they want and they deserve.

Madam Speaker, this budget implements the largest tax reductions in our history and includes historic investments that will bring total tax and affordability measures to more than \$1.8 billion for Manitobans, providing tax relief through increasing the basic personal amount, saving the average family a thousand dollars this year alone and taking more than 47,000 low-income Manitobans off the tax roll.

Madam Speaker, we will increase income tax bracket thresholds, saving Manitobans hundreds of dollars more on their taxes next year. Our government will stop NDP tax hikes and implement the largest tax relief in the history of Manitoba.

When it comes to safer streets, Madam Speaker, Budget 2023 includes an historic investment of more than \$100 million to address the challenges of violent crime and homelessness across Manitoba. We are investing in Manitoba's violent crime strategy. We are investing in Manitoba's homelessness strategy. We are investing in Downtown Community Safety Partnership. We are investing in Bear Clan Patrol, and we continue to make those investments in Manitoba.

We will invest in new treatment spaces, Madam Speaker, for Manitobans who are in need of addictions treatment services across Manitoba, as well as child

and youth mental health services to improve access and reduce wait times.

Madam Speaker, what will the NDP do? They will defund the police and support the revolving door in our criminal justice system.

Our government will take a very different approach to that, Madam Speaker. On this side of the House, we are funding the police, we are cracking down on violent criminals and we are investing to address the root causes of crime in our communities.

Madam Speaker, the members opposite don't have a plan to make our streets safer. We do and we are getting the job done in this budget.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to healing our health-care system, our government is responding to the largest investments in the history of health care in the province of Manitoba. Budget 2023—and this is the facts. I know members opposite don't like facts, but these are the facts—Budget 2023 includes an historic investment of almost \$8 billion in the health-care system, providing an increase of \$668 million to our health-care system.

Madam Speaker, we are investing in the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force. We continue to make significant investments in health human resource action plan. This includes efforts to recruit, to retain and to train doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals from around the world right here to Manitoba. We will invest in a health infrastructure plan, including major renovations to hospitals right across this great province of ours.

This budget will also provide support to advance initiatives under the seniors strategy. And I want to thank the Minister of Seniors for all the work that he does, including, Madam Speaker, but not limited to—because it goes way beyond just this—but very important what we heard from Manitoba seniors, that they wanted us to invest in a hearing-aid program for them, and we are getting the job done.

So, Madam Speaker, the members opposite can continue to put all the false information on the record that they want, but Manitobans know the truth. Manitobans know that we are healing our health-care system for generations to come.

Madam Speaker, families rely on affordable and quality services close to home. Budget 2023 includes an historic investment of \$217 million in total municipal operating funding; that's an increase of \$47 million

a year, the largest in more than a decade. To improve education, we are investing \$1.7 billion in K-to-12 public schools, \$100 million more than last year, a 6.1 per cent increase; and \$76 million to implement \$10-a-day child care, three years ahead of schedule.

Madam Speaker, we're investing \$81 million to community living and children disability service agencies for a funded average wage of \$19 per hour, bringing the total budget to disability services to an historic \$640 million this year.

Madam Speaker, \$8.7 million to support recycling, composting and waste-diversion initiatives; \$50 million for the arts, culture and sport and community fund, an area that was neglected by the NDP for more than a decade. Our government is investing in the services that Manitobans rely on, now and well into the future.

Madam Speaker, the opportunities are endless that lie ahead for Manitobans. Manitoba has experienced an unprecedented economic recovery. Budget 2023 makes an historic investment in infrastructure and other initiatives that will transform Manitoba into a global trade and transportation corridor. Key industries such as manufacturing and agriculture showed record growth. Our government is making major strides with historic investments in our economy.

We have made it our mission to turn Manitoba into a global mining destination, advancing economic reconciliation with Indigenous communities and strengthening the northern economy. Madam Speaker, the NDP just want to keep the resources in the ground, costing thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in investment. The NDP would cripple our economy with higher taxes and low growth. Our government is investing to make Manitoba into the economic engine of western Canada.

Madam Speaker, once again I want to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), his entire team, on this budget. I also want to thank all of my colleagues, some of whom have chosen to take a step—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —back from public life, and the many candidates who are—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —stepping forward to help renew our party.

This year's budget comes just months before a provincial election. Madam Speaker, in that election Manitobans will have to choose between a party that will raise taxes on your home, your income and the goods you buy every day, and our team, that will put over \$5,000 back in the pockets of Manitobans.

They will have to choose between a party that wants to keep our natural resources in the ground and our government that is getting our resources out of the ground and out to market like never before, providing significant economic opportunities for northern Manitobans. Madam Speaker, Manitobans will have to choose between a party that would defund the police—

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker: Order.

The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 35(7), I am interrupting the proceedings to put the questions necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and all amendments to that motion.

Therefore, the question before the House is the proposed subamendment of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont).

Do the members wish to have the subamendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I declare the subamendment defeated.

The question now before the House is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Do the members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a yes.

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

therefore regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) breaking Manitobans' trust for seven years through supporting Brian Pallister and making deep cuts to health care, including closing emergency rooms, cutting cancer care and firing nurses, cutting education, including teachers and EAs, supporting and seconding bill 64 and ignoring local community voices, raising the cost of living by raising rent and hydro bills by hundreds of dollars at the Cabinet table, sending money to billionaires, as well as failing Manitobans in many other ways, while failing to be responsible and failing to balance the budget, despite record revenue increases, increased federal transfers and funds from Manitoba Hydro, failing to properly address health care and also reverse cuts to roads and highways in rural and northern Manitoba, and failing to apologize for years of underspending and annual cuts, including failing to address homelessness in local communities.

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

The question before the House is the amendment on the budget.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Khan, Klein, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Mickelfield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 21, Nays 33.

Madam Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

* (16:40)

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

Division

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

Yeas

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Khan, Klein, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Mickelfield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Nays

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

Clerk: Yeas 33, Nays 21.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly passed.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, can you canvass the House to see if it's the will of members to call it 5 p.m.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

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