

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
ALTomARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, 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	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>	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 17, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline 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.

Welcome, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Official Time Amendment Act

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Johnson), that Bill 2, The Official Time Amendment Act, now be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Clarke: This bill will amend The Official Time Act to allow Manitoba to consider adopting permanent daylight saving time. Currently, under The Official Time Act, daylight saving time in Manitoba begins the second Sunday in March and ends the first Sunday in November.

This bill will pave the way for Manitoba to observe daylight saving time year-round, if the United States enacts similar legislation and Manitobans indicate a preference for a year-round observance of daylight saving time.

The proposed amendments are intended to be proactive steps to 'entable'—enable Manitoba to seamlessly maintain a consistent time zone approach. This approach would ease business relations, trade and the transportations of goods and travel. Public and targeted stakeholder engagement on the proposed shift to end year-round observance of daylight saving time will begin early in 2023. All Manitobans will be encouraged to participate.

I am pleased to present this bill in the House for its consideration.

Thank you.

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

Bill 3—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act (Name Registration)

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, that Bill 3, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, name 'regisnation'—registration, be now read a first time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the honourable Minister for Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, that Bill 3, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act (Name Registration), be now read a first time.

Mr. Helwer: This bill provides for additional characters and single name options to be used on foundational identity documents, when in accordance with cultural practice.

Manitoba has worked for many months to expand the characters accepted by both The Vital Statistics Act and the vital events registry to ensure traditional Indigenous names can be accommodated more readily.

We both know the care with which parents select the names of newborns. Names are deeply personal

and reflect our culture and our ancestry. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission documented how administrators of residential schools renamed students at the time of enrolment. The commission called upon governments to enable survivors to reclaim their birth names.

In order to begin implementing Call to Action No. 17, waiving of these for survivors, we needed to first to update our legislation and registry system to expand the accepted characters. We worked with other provincial partners and federal government to smooth the path.

The amendments before us today bring Manitoba into alignment with other jurisdictions such as Ontario and Alberta. These amendments create the foundation upon we can build and implement Call to Action No. 17.

I am grateful for the hard work of my department to prepare these amendments and set the stage for greater cultural sensitivity with respect to name recognition.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to table, pursuant to The Statutes and Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered under that act, after the last regulation tabled in this House and more than 14 days before the commencement of the session.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Ministerial statements—and the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26, subsection (2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with the statement.

Municipal Government Awareness Week

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations): I am honoured to rise before the House today to recognize November 21st to 25th as municipal government awareness week.

This is the second year in a row that our government has celebrated municipal government awareness week, and there is a good reason why it is fast becoming an annual tradition.

Municipal governments play a crucial role in our province. As the level of government with the closest and most direct impact on the people who live in their communities, municipal governments make important decisions for all Manitobans, regardless of ability, identity or background, on issues related to local services, programs, facilities and infrastructure.

* (13:40)

Municipal governments provide essential services such as waste management, road maintenance, fire and police services, land-use planning, building inspections and emergency management. The provision of these services ensures the safe and efficient functioning of communities and it provides the opportunity for communities to flourish economically, socially and culturally.

I would also like to acknowledge the good work of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities for their unwavering support and advocacy on behalf of Manitoba municipalities.

Advocating for the unique needs and interests of Manitoba bilingual communities, I would also like to take a moment to recognize the hard work of the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities advocating for the unique needs and interests of Manitobans.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities' annual fall convention, taking place this year between November 21st and 23rd, is a chance for municipal elected officials and administrators to come together to share ideas, to learn, to grow and to build capacity to better serve their citizens. We strongly support these efforts, and we wish the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and all of the convention attendees, a rewarding and successful convention.

This proclamation all come—also comes with an opportune moment as Manitobans recently elected the current slate of local representatives during the municipal elections that took place on October 26th.

I'd like to wish all the new and returning mayors, councillors and reeves grace and wisdom as they fulfill their duties, a duty entrusted to them through the traditions of our representative democracy, to earnestly and effectively represent the best interests of their constituents as they work to build strong, safe, accountable and healthy communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask all colleagues to join me in celebrating Manitoba municipal awareness week.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Today, I'm happy to recognize the contributions of our municipal governments for municipal governance awareness week.

Municipal governments are essential for the overall functioning of many of the services Manitobans rely on, whether it's waste collection, libraries, emergency response services, drinking water, active transportation, road maintenance and so much more. Municipal governments work tirelessly every day to make important decisions that directly affect the day-to-day lives of local citizens in their municipalities.

Municipal governments are often first to identify the priorities of local citizens and bring forward initiatives that resolve those issues in our communities. As elected representatives at the provincial level, we know a strong partnership with municipal governments is absolutely key to ensuring we build a better Manitoba for everyone.

As we celebrate the immense contribution of our province's municipal leaders, I also want to recognize the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, which represents Manitoba's incorporated municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg.

This association, funded solely by its members and collaborative business arm, represents the voice for municipalities. It provides support and advocacy on behalf of Manitoba municipalities and helps ensure strong partnerships across the provincial and federal levels of government.

Unfortunately, it's clear that the PC government has not worked towards a strong partnership with Manitoba's municipalities. Funding for municipalities has remained frozen for seven straight budgets, which has put immense pressures on municipalities. The PCs also scrapped the 50/50 funding agreement for transit, which left municipalities such as Winnipeg without millions in support. Bill 37 stripped local decision making from local governments and weakened local democracy.

We urge the PCs to reverse their regressive approach and work in true partnership with Manitoba's municipal governments.

In closing, I'd like to once again thank Manitoba's municipal governments for the work that they do, that has often—that often goes unnoticed. No doubt, municipal governance and leadership deserves to be recognized and celebrated.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I seek leave to speak to the ministerial statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Lamont: It's a pleasure to speak on municipal government awareness week.

Municipal governments face a unique challenge. They have expensive problems and they often lack the financial levers to deal with them effectively. And it has to be said that one of the greatest cultural divides in the world—not just Manitoba or Canada, but in the world—is the division between urban and rural or city and country.

Part of it is that we actually have to have different solutions for each. People have jokingly referred to what happens in larger cities as sewer socialism. Someone I mentioned this to preferred public-library socialism.

But when you live in a city, when the moment you wake up, you turn on your light to electricity from publicly owned Hydro. You brush your teeth with water from the public water supply, which goes to a public water treatment plant. You walk on public sidewalks and drive or take bus—public bus over public roads. Walking to the local public school, college or university, and you'll take an ambulance to public health care, and if there's an emergency you'll get paramedics, fire and police—all public.

When we invest in these and make these policies correctly, it means you can have a safer, cleaner and more prosperous community. They're investments, they are not costs, and we can—because we can accomplish much more together as we pool our funds to cover everyone, than we can separately or as individuals.

By contrast, in rural areas, water may come from a well and go to a septic tank. You may have a gravel road, and a hospital or a school may be a ways away. There may be no 911. Firefighters may be volunteer. And if a family is in crisis, it may be easier to address their issues. A small community can come together and offer support. When they're a larger city, you have to have programs to ensure that people who are vulnerable are cared for.

The municipal event—investments we make in public services increase everyone's prosperity. While we strive to ensure that all Manitobans 'benefit' from and have access to investments, we have to 'reconcile' the same

policies that work in the cities of 800,000-plus will not work in a city of 800, and vice versa.

So when Conservative politicians defund and freeze municipal funding, education, health, police, social and community services—as this government has spent years doing—individuals and the private sector can't pick up the slack. Instead you get system breakdowns, as we're seeing right now.

We are committed to policies that work to—supporting municipalities, especially the City of Winnipeg and the Association of Bilingual Municipalities of Manitoba, to ensure that they all have funding to—they need to invest for all our benefit.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before proceeding to private members' statements, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today from Mosakahiken Cree Nation: Chief Vincent Bercier, and his traditional name is also Red Feather; Councillor Sandra Lambert; Councillor Flora McNabb; Allard Nasikapow; Councillor Rueben Grey; Councillor Alfred Tobacco; Councillor Joey Martin; Angela Leask-Campbell and Floyd North, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development (Mr. Nesbitt).

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

We also have seated in the public gallery from Calvin Christian collegiate 27 grade 11 students under the direction of Brittany Zoilkoski—I hope I said that right. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare).

We welcome you here to the Manitoba Legislature as well.

I know we have one other group, but I didn't get a page with specifics, but I know we spoke earlier, so welcome here to you guys also. In fact—and anybody else who hasn't been welcomed, you're welcome as well. So it was—few up here as well, so welcome here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lundar Trap Club

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize a non-profit sport club in the Interlake-Gimli Constituency, and they join us here today.

The Lundar Trap Club is an organization dedicated to allowing enjoyment and competition in the sport of trapshooting.

They have a junior shotgun program every spring for youth aged 12 to 18. The goal for the junior program is to keep the sport alive and to teach youth gun safety, respect a firearm and to appreciate the privilege of being able to participate in the sport.

The Manitoba Junior Shotgun Association held their provincials at the Winnipeg Trap and Skeet Club in July. Lundar had three youth participants who each took the provincial championship in their age categories. Logan Halldorson-Bruce, Zachary Halldorson, Matty Law are—who are here with us today.

This year, the club hosted its annual goose shoot for its 46th year and the winning team brought in a total of 198.94 pounds. A fundraiser dinner was enjoyed with an additional fundraising of \$1,000 for the Children's Hospital.

* (13:50)

The Lundar Trap Club, with their many volunteers, are dedicating to enriching the lives of youth. This is but one of the reasons I believe the Interlake is a fantastic place to call home and raise your family. There are dozens of supportive role models for children in all of their interests.

Seated in the gallery along with Logan, Zachary and Matty are Jeff Halldorson, Valerie Bruce, Lundar's reeve Virgil Johnson—Coldwell, I guess I should say, Reeve Virgil Johnson, Catherine Johnson as well as Patty and Allen Johnson, all of whom are exceptional role models for youth in the Interlake.

Please join me in recognizing the Lundar Trap Club and our outstanding marksmen.

Simon Monteith

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Today I am honoured to recognize the truly admirable and scientific mind of a young educator. Simon Monteith, also known as Simon the Scientist, is a Cree youth originally from Opaskwayak Cree Nation currently living in Winnipeg and attending Lakewood School. At only 10 years old, he has spent almost three years making inspiring educational videos from his kitchen in Winnipeg.

Early into the pandemic, Simon and the world's best production assistant, his mother Jacqueline Monteith, began creating videos to explain scientific concepts for young viewers. Beginning with concepts

such as the coronavirus, he has steadily progressed throughout many other advanced topics and concepts.

Simon aims to take the videos—helpful and accessible for all, by building concepts from the ground up with the help of his mother. He has been hosting an online series of live sessions to keep kids entertained and informed on scientific concepts during the pandemic.

In order to make his videos accessible, there is also simultaneous American Sign Language interpretation throughout every video on his YouTube channel. He even dedicated a video to covering assistant—assistive technology, all inspired by the needs of his sister Ella.

Simon has—Simon was the recipient of the MPower award and Rick Hansen Difference Maker of the Year Award in 2021, and in June, Simon finished as a semi-finalist in the annual Canada-wide Powwow Pitch competition.

Simon continues to grow his YouTube channel, Simon the Scientist, but needs some help to make it grow even more. He is currently working with Frontier School Division to bring monthly STEM activities to Indigenous communities.

The passion that Simon has for sharing his knowledge and his early start surely have set him on a path for scientific success in his future, and we should all celebrate his accomplishments and encourage his continued adventure in educating.

Joining us today is Simon the Scientist himself, Simon Monteith, along with his mother Jacqueline Monteith, his sister Ella Monteith-Lathlin, Lisa Monteith, Jaylene Irwin, Thelma Nice, Sheri Wasilewski, Lisa White, Isabella Franzin and William Franzin.

Please join me in thanking Simon for reminding us the pursuit of education is for more than just ourselves, but also for the betterment of others. We look forward to seeing your next videos.

Ekosi.

Dr. Elizabeth Grant

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Last week, November 8th, to be exact, a Steinway & Sons model B semi-concert grand piano was given the name Liz. This may seem a little odd, but there's a story here.

This piano, donated in collaboration with Brandon University and the Grant family, was dedicated to the lasting legacy that Dr. Elizabeth Grant has created within the Brandon school of music—Brandon University School of Music.

If you talk about choir music in Brandon or Westman, Dr. Grant's name always comes up. Someone will speak about the wonderful experience they had with one of her choirs, about her passion, about how much they learned without realizing they were learning.

In 1981, Dr. Grant founded the Brandon Conservatory Chorale as a project for her master's in music education. Under Dr. Grant's leadership as conductor, the chorale grew to well over 100 singers. She has received many awards, but the best award is the impact she has had on students, teachers and performers throughout Manitoba.

She's been a musical adjudicator from Vancouver to Halifax, and is a popular clinician at local, provincial and national events. Dr. Grant has also led many successful groups to international events and competitions.

Dr. Grant traveled to the Steinway & Sons factory in New York with her family, and personally chose the handcrafted piano now known affectionately as Liz. She chose the piano that she felt had the best personality to accompany a choir. The piano is expected to provide exceptional service for students and musicians at the Brandon University School of Music for more than a century.

This amazing donation was made in possible by the immense generosity of Dr. Grant's family, and the 88 sponsors of the piano keys. These key donors have funded an endowment to provide proper care of this instrument to ensure Dr. Grant's legacy and music is heard for generations.

I can't think of a better way to celebrate the impact that Liz has had on our community and on Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro Rates

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba Hydro belongs to Manitobans.

But whether it's setting electricity rates behind—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —closed doors or selling off pieces of the Crown without telling the public, the PC government

has a pattern of interference when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: Over the last several years, the PC government has repeatedly proposed big rate hikes. It's important that this government is held to account so that Manitoba citizens and businesses aren't being overcharged for utilities.

This pattern of interference has been going on since the PCs took office in 2016. They increased hydro rates at the Cabinet table for the first time in modern Manitoban history in 2020. They did so through use of an omnibus bill, sneaking a rate hike in right before the holidays, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This interference would be bad enough, but then this year, the PC government—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —changed the rules with bill 36, allowing hydro rates to be set at the Cabinet table on a go-forward basis.

The PC's repeated interference with Manitoba Hydro has made life more expensive for Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —at a time when the cost of living is already unsustainably high.

The Manitoba NDP believes in making life more affordable for Manitobans by keeping utility rates affordable. Manitoba Hydro recently projected net income this year of \$559 million. Inflation is running at over 8 per cent. Increasing hydro rates just doesn't make sense at this time.

That's why we've proposed a rate on hydro—a freeze on hydro rates for Manitobans. It's time for government to do the same. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Tyndall Park Constituency Staff

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm very happy to rise this afternoon and introduce and pay tribute to my constituency team, who have joined us up in the gallery.

I would like to begin by introducing Tito Robert, who I have known my entire life. He has been with our office since 2016 and works every morning to ensure our office is up and running, and that it is a

comfortable and oftentimes a very fun atmosphere for our staff and all constituents who utilize it.

Now Carl has also been with the office since 2016, and is like a younger brother to me. Carl does a bit of everything, from events to McDonald's to case work, and is my go-to person when I need an answers from the various departments. I really value his education, drive and shared thoughts on philosophy as he continues to teach me about reasoning in politics.

Thirdly, Prabjot has been with the office since 2019, and she's so patient with my all of my often very forgetfulness that comes with scheduling. Every Saturday, Prab joins me at McDonald's, where she helps with casework, advertisements and claims. She works two jobs, knows how to rock a nice vehicle, teaches me lots about local businesses and has become a very good friend to me.

* (14:00)

Lastly, I'd like to introduce our newest addition, Rheanne, who joined our office this past May. Rheanne radiates kindness and I only wish that she would work in our office more. She's going to be a teacher and I know will be a phenomenal asset to our education system because of her compassion, curiosity and her incredible attention to detail.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Jack Canfield says: Make a conscious effort to surround yourself with positive, nourishing and uplifting people. I find such comfort knowing that we have this in our office.

Thank you, Tito Robert, Carl, Prab and Rheanne for your passion, motivation and dedication towards our community. I know that I am incredibly biased, but I think that we have the best team.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care System Privatization of Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just like Brian Pallister, the Premier is trying to push through more cuts and more privatization of health care.

It used to be the case in Manitoba that if you had a hip or a knee surgery, you could get physiotherapy free of charge. But not after the PCs took office. Now, Manitobans have to pay for this formerly public health-care service to the tune of hundreds of dollars.

That's what privatization in health care looks like under the PC government. And, by the way, Mr. Pallister and this former Health minister, they fired many of the health-care workers who provided this physio.

So, can the Premier tell this House: In her pursuit of private health care, does she think that privatizing physio, charging Manitobans more money and firing those health-care workers was a good idea?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I know what we have been doing on this side of the House is listening to Manitobans, taking action and getting things done on behalf of Manitobans.

We do know that the Leader of the Opposition and all members opposite take an ideological approach when it comes to the delivery of health-care services in our province. We know that provinces right across this country have been able to increase the capacity of surgical and diagnostic procedures within those provinces.

In Manitoba, that was curtailed as a result of the ideology of the NDP government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We don't want to go back to those dark days of the previous NDP government.

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

Mr. Kinew: The dark days when Manitobans used to be able to get physiotherapy for free? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Absolutely. Every single time we—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —will stand up for public health care—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —for the people of Manitoba.

We know that this government also—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —saw fit to privatize nursing in Manitoba: every year, tens of millions of dollars more sent to private nursing companies. Since they took office, there are 400 fewer nurses working at the bedside in Manitoba.

And, by the way—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —on top of that, there are more than 2,000 nursing jobs sitting empty right now at this moment as we are gathered here. They want more money for private companies and we see less people working at the bedside.

Does the Premier agree that privatizing nursing and pushing more nurses into the private sector was a mistake?

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell the Leader of the Opposition what was a mistake is that the NDP government at the time put ideology over patient care.

And I can tell you, we will never take that approach. We will always stand for patients in the province of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Kinew: Just like Brian Pallister, this Premier is pushing more cuts and more private health care.

Let's talk about the patients who needed Lifeflight Air Ambulance during the third wave of the pandemic. Manitoba was the first jurisdiction that saw our health-care system collapse. That happened under this Premier's watch, when she was the Health minister. We know that this government privatized Lifeflight Air Ambulance.

What was the result during the third wave? Well, we saw that patients were being transported aboard flights that didn't have the proper equipment and by staff that didn't have the proper training to care for people that sick.

Does the Premier now recognize that privatizing Lifeflight Air Ambulance was wrong?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite are more concerned about their own ideology and will put that ahead of patient care in the province of Manitoba. We will not take that approach.

In fact, in the last two years, 12,000 Manitobans have received successful surgeries in private providers in Manitoba, and 4,500 of those in the last six months alone. Those are 12,000 Manitobans who received the surgeries that they needed, took them out of the pain that they were sitting in.

And I can tell you, what would members opposite do? They would have denied every one of those 12,000 Manitobans the surgical procedures that they needed and they wanted and they deserved, Mr. Deputy

Speaker. I can tell you, we will stand for patients and we will put them first every single day in this province.

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

Safe Consumption Site Government Position

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): If a smoker gets lung cancer, should they be provided with a nurse to deliver cancer therapy to them? Yes.

If an unvaccinated person gets COVID and ends up in an ICU, should they have a nurse there to provide them with critical care? Yes.

If a person living with addictions overdoses, should we provide them with a nurse to administer naloxone? Most Manitobans would say, yes—except for the Premier. She says, no. That is what she does when she denies health care in the form of a supervised consumption site.

Why does Manitoba's—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—Premier refuse to provide this form—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—of health care, this form of life-saving intervention that could be delivered at a supervised consumption site?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only person that would be denying Manitobans the access to the health-care services that they need is the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite, who would—who'd take an ideological approach when it comes to the delivery of health-care services.

I just mentioned 12,000 Manitobans; 12,000 Manitobans that were waiting, who had been left in pain waiting for their surgical procedures because they take an ideological approach when it comes to this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will put patients first every day in this province.

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

Mr. Kinew: Ideology is when you try to fear monger about health-care facilities.

Supervised consumption sites—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—are health-care facilities. Supervised consumption sites are health-care facilities. Supervised consumption sites are health-care facilities.

They employ nurses, paramedics and other health-care professionals who can deliver life-saving medical interventions. By the way, they can also refer people to primary care, to foot care and also to treatment and recovery services.

Everyone knows that we have to stop treating the addictions issue as a justice problem and to start treating it for what it is: a health care problem—everyone that is, except for the Premier.

Everyone knows that a supervised consumption site is a health-care facility: Why is Manitoba's Premier denying Manitobans access to this health-care service?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming from the captain of fear mongering in this Chamber, I will say to the Leader of the Opposition that, in the Throne Speech, we announced and committed 1,000 new treatment spaces for Manitobans who are trying to get off of their addictions.

* (14:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue to take that recovery approach. That is an approach that has a scientific evidence to ensure that we reduce the deaths associated with those who are suffering from addictions problems. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: We will continue to take that scientific—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson:—approach. We will continue to help those recover from addictions problems in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Kinew: You have to keep people alive long enough so that they can get to treatment, and a supervised consumption site is one way to help—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—doing that. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kinew: The Premier is fear mongering. That's—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —why we all know that she made something up last week.

She talked about California supervised consumption sites—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and she said, and I quote, the unintended consequences of what happened in California, that's exactly what happened, and they've been doing this for decades. End quote. That's simply untrue.

The only reason the Premier would make that up is because she's trying to scare Manitobans about what these things are when, in fact, what they are, are health-care facilities: nurses, paramedics working to help people living with addictions and giving them the opportunity to stay alive long enough so that they can seek treatment in the future.

Again, the addictions issue needs to be—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only person that is fear 'margering' in this Chamber so far today is the Leader of the Opposition.

And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we will continue to take an evidence-based approach, one that is a recovery-focused approach, one that has scientific evidence of saving lives for those who are suffering from addictions in Manitoba. We will continue to take that scientific, evidence-based approach.

We will not put ideology over patient care in the province, like the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite. We believe Manitobans deserve to get the health care they need when they need it, and we will ensure that they get that.

Patient Transfers to Children's Hospital Decision to Cancel Out-of-Province Patients

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Deputy Speaker, Children's Hospital has long treated critically ill children flown in from Nunavut and northwestern Ontario.

It's reported that, starting in August, that policy changed, barring transfers from Nunavut to Winnipeg, where they're usually treated. Doctors were forced to scramble to find space for children dealing with serious respiratory infections.

I ask the minister: Who within the health system made that decision?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): In addition to the 12,554 Manitobans who received surgery and care here in this province, an additional 13,886 cases will be completed by the end of March of next year.

That's a total of 26,440 Manitobans receiving care here in the province that would be denied by members opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station, on a supplementary.

MLA Asagwara: Deputy Speaker, it's particularly disappointing when the minister avoids answering a question about sick kids.

The chief critical-care provider at Ottawa's pediatric hospital, Sonny Dhanani, reports that physician leaders at Winnipeg's children ICU were facing, and I quote, a lot of moral distress, end quote, at the prospect of turning children away.

It was reported that transfers to other jurisdictions can face long delays due to transport guidelines and lack of available flight staff. Those long delays for children facing very serious respiratory illnesses happened this summer.

I ask the minister again: Who made the decision to close access to Children's Hospital to Nunavut and northwestern Ontario, and when did the minister become aware—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Gordon: Members opposite continue to put false information on the record and to rely on fake news and their narrative of fear mongering, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but members on this side of the House are focused on ensuring Manitobans receive the care that they need right here in this province.

That is our focus, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is why we made the announcement of \$200 million and to add two hundred—2,000 additional health professionals to the system so that we can provide care to children, to youth and to all Manitobans right here in the province.

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

MLA Asagwara: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm asking the minister about sick kids from Nunavut and northwestern Ontario who couldn't get care here in Winnipeg.

So, let's be clear: last year, this government said that it had the capacity for adult patients right up until the moment they didn't; ultimately, flying 57 very sick ICU patients to other jurisdictions. Manitobans were kept in the dark at that time. The minister needs to be clear and provide a message to Manitobans about what she's being told about the situation at our Children's Hospital.

In August, Manitoba's pediatric hospital closed its doors to patients from Nunavut and northwestern Ontario.

Why did the minister make the decision to stop accepting critically ill children?

Ms. Gordon: Well, the members opposite can continue to fear monger and continue with their narrative of fake news. We will continue to help Manitobans. We will continue to strengthen the public health system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that children's hospitals are located in provinces all across this country. Perhaps the member for Union Station is referring to another children's hospital, but at the Children's Hospital here in Manitoba, the service is available.

But again, as I said before, it's just more fake news from members opposite.

Manitoba Hydro Rates Request to Repeal Bill 36

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, just weeks after being passed, bill 36 is costing Manitobans more money.

Just yesterday, Manitoba Hydro said that they will have to raise rates on Manitobans more and more because of the targets that the Tories are forcing on them. That means 5 per cent rate hikes a year. And the only reason rates are going up that much is because of bill 36.

Bill 36 is costing Manitobans more: Will the minister repeal it today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been a sad journey for this member for St. James on this issue. He has meandered. He has stalled. He has stumbled. He has turned down dead-end streets. But now, he seems like he is stuck in a traffic circle in his lane of misinformation and distortion.

So, while that member tries to put his turn signal on and get back on track, let's help him out.

Manitobans will not be fooled by their narrative. They know that the NDP produced \$24 billion of debt at Hydro. Manitobans know that that matters. And Manitobans know that, when it comes to the NDP party, they have absolutely no solutions at Manitoba Hydro.

We will continue to keep rates low for all Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, on a follow-up.

Mr. Sala: What Manitobans know is that this government legislated a huge hydro rate increase on them, and on this side of the House we stand for rate freezes in Manitoba. We—increasing costs, affordability on this side of the House.

Manitobans are already seeing the effects of bill 36, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The bill is forcing Hydro to raise rates on Manitobans. That's what Hydro said only yesterday. And it's all because the PCs interfered and forced Hydro to agree to the PC plans. This means that Manitobans will have to pay even more on their hydro bills only because of PC interference.

Will the minister stop forcing Hydro to raise rates and repeal bill 36?

Mr. Friesen: And round and round he goes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that member talks about interference. For months, he insisted that the most important principle was the independent process managed by the PUB. Who said that? The member for St. James. And then he stood up last week and said, actually, I had my fingers crossed, our plan in the NDP is to interfere with the PUB and go zero, zero, zero, zero, but not tell Manitobans that that math means double-digit increases in year 5.

* (14:20)

We won't be fooled. Manitobans won't be fooled. We're standing on the side of low rates while they continue to mislead Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Sala: Just want to thank the minister for giving us two terms: year 5. Thank you very much for your confidence.

Bill 36 means higher bills for Manitobans, according to Manitoba Hydro. Those are the facts.

PC interference in Hydro is costing Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: That's all—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —we've learned from bill 36. And bill 36 guarantees further rate hikes of 5 per cent—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —a year. Despite the minister's claims, it's clear that bill 36 will cost Manitobans more.

Will he admit that bill 36 is costing Manitobans more and repeal the bill today?

Mr. Friesen: Reality check for the member for St. James: Manitoba Hydro has some of the lowest rates in all of North America. Under our government's plan, Manitobans will continue to play some of the lowest rates in North America.

But yesterday's Hydro press release read as a direct indictment of the NDP fake plan. It said that regular, modest increases are necessary to keep the lights on, to move to electrification of vehicles, to do planned maintenance, to meet their labour obligations.

Let's understand: even though the NDP can't do math, Manitobans can. And they know that the result of four zeroes in a row is a fifth year with a double-digit rate shock hike to Manitobans.

Won't they just admit that they're really promising Manitobans 20 per cent increases in year 5?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The—*[interjection]*—order.

The honourable member for Notre Dame.

Home Care, Seniors Advocate and PCH Beds Government Priority in Throne Speech

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech was a disappointment for seniors' health care. There's no commitment to additional PCH beds and no mention of home care.

Manitoba has lost personal-care-home beds since this government came to office, and home-care workers in Winnipeg have told me that this government's cuts are making it impossible for them to do their jobs.

Why was there no commitment to more personal-care-home beds and home care in this year's Throne Speech?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I need to correct the member. The Throne Speech indicated significant investment in the health-care system, which obviously includes seniors.

In regards to personal-care homes, there was an indication within the Throne Speech that we are going to be fulfilling the challenge of long-term care, and that's one of the things that the seniors strategy is going to address. And that's what the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) initiated our particular ministry to do, and we will be doing that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a follow-up question.

MLA Marcelino: Mr. Deputy Speaker, no additional PCH beds were mentioned, no mention of home care. And that's why Manitoba needs a seniors advocate to hold this government to account.

But, again, this year's Throne Speech makes no commitment to accountability and no commitment to a seniors advocate; this, despite the call from many concerned about seniors in our province.

Why did the Throne Speech not include a commitment to a seniors advocate?

Mr. Johnston: Appreciate the question from my friend because it gives me an opportunity to indicate the significant investment that was designated to the Ministry of Seniors and Long-Term Care.

When this ministry was initiated, we had a budget of \$54 million, \$54 million going towards the support of seniors, which I will be advocating on—or have been advocating on. But the NDP voted against that investment. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. *[interjection]* Order. *[interjection]* Order.

MLA Marcelino: Mr. Deputy Speaker, no commitment to a seniors advocate, no commitment to increasing the number of available PCH beds and no mention of home care.

Workers in home care are really feeling the impact of this government's cuts. New tools to track their time has reduced their time with clients by as much as 50 per cent. They were looking for this to change, but this Throne Speech was just more of the same.

Why wasn't home care a priority in this year's Throne Speech?

Mr. Johnston: I can assure the member that home care is a priority for this government and that, therefore, the senior strategy is being developed to be able to address that, as well as other initiatives that are going to fulfill the needs of seniors in the province of Manitoba.

Post-Secondary Education Funding Concerns

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): The Throne Speech offered no commitment to increasing funding for Manitoba's post-secondary institutions. Instead, the government said it'll take a look and see at the issues with funding.

Well, here's the issue with funding: The PC government has cut funding by 18 per cent since they took office.

Now, while they now appear to be walking back their plans for a performance base for funding, they still aren't adequately funding post-secondaries, they're still not making tuition affordable and still not making education affordable.

So, will the minister reverse course, listen to students, listen to institutions and increase funding today?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Post-secondary education is a critical component ensuring that we have skilled and talented individuals who can help restart our economy as we move forward through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our government will continue to invest over \$1 billion every year in post-secondary education. This year's funding announcement includes a \$12-million boost in ongoing grant funding to support the nursing seating expansion initiative.

I don't know where the member's been. We've made some really good announcements and we're moving forward with post-secondary education here in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Moses: There's no need for the PC government to be taking a look at funding. I'll tell you the issue: It's the fact that this government, since they've taken office, have cut post-secondary institution funding by 18 per cent.

Students and institutions will tell the government that their cuts have had real impact on their education and especially on students' wallets.

Will the minister do the right thing and adequately fund Manitoba's post-secondary institutions, and will he do so today?

Mr. Reyes: Our Speech from the Throne delivers on our government's commitment to making life more affordable and communities more stronger and competitive. That is why we are investing more than \$1 billion in post-secondary education, more than \$217 million in student loans, grants and bursaries and more than \$44.7 million to graduate an additional 400 nursing students.

We have been taking bold action and listening to Manitobans, something the NDP did not do in their 17 years of government.

Mr. Moses: The fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, cuts to post-secondary institutions hurt Manitoba students and they hurt the quality of their education. And at the same time, they also hurt our economy and our competitiveness.

Rather than continuing with their post-secondary funding cuts, the PC government should commit to adequately funding post-secondary institutions and making education more affordable and more accessible for all Manitobans.

Will the minister take that course of action instead of his reckless path, and will he do so today?

Mr. Reyes: As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, our government has a strong vision of delivering world-class education while making life more affordable for all students.

The NDP had no plan. They took an ideological approach to post-secondary education, making our institutions less competitive and while taxing our students to the max. The NDP's plan is higher and higher taxes and forcing our students to move out of Manitoba.

* (14:30)

We, on this side of the House, want our students to study and stay in Manitoba, and we'll continue working with our post-secondary stakeholders for a better and brighter future for our students right here in Manitoba.

We are on the side of affordability. Why can't the member be? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

**Homelessness, Addiction and Mental Illness
Throne Speech Measures to Combat Crime**

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I was appalled when I read in the Throne Speech that it linked—directly links mental health and violent crime.

I quote: Our government will continue to tackle the underlying issues of homelessness, addictions and mental health by providing increased supports for front-line law enforcement officers through technology, specialized training, increased police presence and support for more officers. These measures will help provide the tools and staffing necessary to deal with those who've resisted help, preyed on others and chosen a life outside the law.

It is not a crime to be homeless, have an addiction or a mental illness. These folks don't belong in remand or a jail cell, they need shelter, treatment and therapy, which they can't get because this government has abandoned them on the street.

We'd like to know exactly who wrote and who signed off on this shameful policy that will do nothing to combat violent crime?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, I would hope that the member opposite would take another look at the announcements that the government has made, take another look at the Throne Speech, which committed to 1,000 spaces to help those who are dealing with addictions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Take a look at the commitments that this government, this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and this minister have made to the homelessness strategy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that there is shelter for those who need shelter. There are initiatives that have been rolled out before the Throne Speech; there are initiatives within the Throne Speech. And I can assure the member there'll be even more initiatives that come forward.

And I'm sure that when the opportunity comes, he'll vote against all of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a follow-up.

**Peter Nygård Assault Allegations
Inquiry into Filing Charges in Manitoba**

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): The thing is, there are organized criminal gangs in this town who are responsible for violent crimes. They run drugs, they buy and sell women and girls and they're accused

of violent crimes, including sexual assault, threats and intimidation.

But this government is ignoring the elephant in the room, because Peter Nygård is currently accused of all of that. He's got a class-action lawsuit against him in New York alleging decades of shocking crimes, including in Manitoba: sexual assault, human trafficking, bribery, threats and intimidation. He targeted minor women, including Indigenous women, and he silenced journalists with threats of criminal libel and employees and survivors with non-disclosure agreements.

He's facing charges in Toronto, Montreal, New York, but not in Manitoba. If this government were really interested in finding out what's gone wrong with justice and crime in Manitoba, they'd call an inquiry into Peter Nygård.

Why won't they?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Member opposite has gone down this path before.

Of course, everybody in this House is appalled by any allegations against children, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the member opposite has often come to this House and directed—wanted the government to direct prosecution. This is not China. This is not North Korea.

If he's actually looking for—now, I know that his leader in Ottawa said that he appreciates the government of China and how they operate their government; we are not going to direct prosecutions against politicians. We're not going to direct prosecutions against individuals politically. That is done by the Crown who has a Crown standard by which they charge, and it's done independently.

If he wants to live in a country where politicians charge individuals, there's many countries—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

**Youth Justice Committees
Request to Re-establish**

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): In the Throne Speech, the government made reference to needing more police in Manitoba over and over again, and it's concerning that their only solution to tackling homelessness, addictions and mental health is to increase supports specifically for police.

There is strong evidence that alternatives, like restoration and remediation, provide better opportunity for people to heal. An example of this could be youth justice committees. In the past, they were a great resource for young people. But the previous NDP government cut them.

Would this Conservative government consider re-opening youth justice committees?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Community justice support remains, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I would say this when it comes to law enforcement. The federal Liberal government brought in legislation in 2019 called bill 75, which essentially makes it impossible to deny bail to violent offenders.

As a result, there are more violent offenders with outstanding warrants than there's ever been—three times as many in Manitoba. Now, we need the federal government to actually take action on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we're not content and our Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) not content to do nothing while we wait the federal government to do something.

So, we will have a high-risk integrated warrant unit that will go after those who have a warrant, who are high risk to reoffend, who are violent. We know who they are. We know where—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Immigrant Women Experiencing Trauma Purchase of Facility for Newcomers

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Manitoba is known as a welcoming place and provides newcomers with the supports they need to transition.

Can the Minister of Families explain what's being done to support newcomer women who have experienced trauma and violence?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'd like to thank my colleague for that excellent question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 18 years ago a remarkable woman named Sister Lesley Sacouman had envisioned a place, a refuge for women who were fleeing violence and persecution in other countries around the world, and she created the Holy Names House of Peace, which is just down here on Edmonton Street.

And for 18 years, she's run this place very successfully. And this year, they wanted to move forward and ensure the sustainability of the Holy Names House of Peace by purchasing the building in which they were renting.

Our government was really proud to announce \$500,000 towards the purchase of that building in the Beyond Bricks capital campaign for the Holy Names House of Peace, so that this house will remain forevermore a place of refuge and a port—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Northern Highway and Road Maintenance Department Vacancy Rate Concerns

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This government has allowed highway maintenance vacancies in the northern region in particular to grow to dangerous levels. Since 2017, the rate of vacancies in the North has grown by 17 per cent, now sitting at a whopping 47 per cent vacancies. This means that nearly one out of every two positions is sitting empty.

Lack of maintenance, like snowplowing, has dangerous effects on people's lives because they do have to drive on those roads.

Can the minister explain why he has allowed highway maintenance vacancy rates to grow to such dangerous levels?

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that in our department, the biggest priority is making sure that we actually have safety on our highways. And we are recruiting up north making sure that we have recruitment—making sure that our highways are cleared when it comes to snowfall.

Since last year, we're going to—preparing for the worst but hoping for the best, and we're going to make sure that our—we actually hired 40 new—retired staff members to come back to help with plowing our snow-clearing opportunities.

And so this is what we're doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're doing recruitment too, and I'll talk more about that.

MLA Lindsey: Hoping for the best clearly isn't going to be good enough. Clearly, it isn't good enough today. The roads aren't being properly—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: –cleaned and maintained, and when you're sitting at nearly 50 per cent vacancy 'ren,' bringing back—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: –some retired workers isn't going to be a long-term solution.

Has the minister done anything to ensure the long-term viability of the maintenance positions in the North? Has he got a plan to hire people that are going to be there long term?

Can the minister answer that?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to say to the member from Flin Flon, he wanted to keep the minerals in the ground like his leader.

Meanwhile, the exploration that's happening in the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a challenge for our department when it comes to good jobs up there. They're actually hiring for the mining industry. So, the thing is, our recruitment is also—I met with many First Nations communities, and one thing I've said to every chief, that we're actually hiring.

We have—see the opportunity with our First Nations communities up there, opportunities for careers in government, and we are going to make sure—*[interjection]*

* (14:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: –that we recruit them. And it's this big opportunity that we have with our First Nation community, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

MLA Lindsey: I'm not sure which question the minister was answering, clearly wasn't the one that was asked. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: What we need to know is why 64 positions in the northern region have been cut. They're gone. And now the minister can't even fulfill the obligation to fill those positions that are left. These vacancies are impacting safety.

The minister knew people were going to retire, and yet he did nothing. Now he hires them back, knowing full well they're going to retire again.

What's he doing to fill those positions on a permanent, long-term solution?

Mr. Piwniuk: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, we are recruiting big time up in the North when it comes to our department.

We are investing \$1.5 billion for road safety when it comes to reconstruction, especially up in the North. Highway 6 is going to be—we're going to be investing \$51 million on Highway 6. Highway 39, we're investing another \$20 million.

So I know—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know what the member wants, but we're doing the good job up there and we're going to continue it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Seeing none—I'm sorry, I did not see.

PETITIONS

Learning Disability Supports

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Individuals with neurodiversity and learning disabilities frequently have long wait times to get support and often fall through the gaps in current provincial supports.

When a child with a learning disorder turns 18 years old, there's little in the way of helpful services except through the Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba, which, sadly, has been undersupported and underfunded, both by the present and previous governments.

Individuals with learning disabilities can have a high IQ and have great potential succeed—to succeed in work and life if they receive timely help to fully address and overcome their learning disability.

However, if their needs are not met, some with learning disabilities are frustrated with delays in being diagnosed and being placed in an education system which does not appropriately accommodate them. These difficulties often result in individuals dropping out of school, experiencing a life of inconsistent employment, juvenile delinquency, crime, and likely will require additional health care costs that could have been avoided.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to provide online resources for children and adults with learning disabilities and IQs above 75, including:

Online videos featuring individuals with learning disabilities explaining their situation in a strength-based way to help create awareness.

(b) A centralized listing of all resources for those with learning disabilities, including relevant support systems for families, schools, educational and employment institutions; and

(c) A free online webinar series and resources to enable individuals with learning disabilities to access government services.

To urge the provincial government to provide additional resources to ensure that the present two-year wait-time list for assessments for learning disabilities is reduced to less than one month.

To urge the provincial government to partner with organizations to provide supports for individual and/or group supports for those with learning disabilities who are transitioning to adulthood.

To urge the provincial government to improve funding for Community Living disABILITY Services and other organizations which could provide supports for those with learning disabilities in order to reduce wait times.

To urge the provincial government to recognize that individuals with learning disabilities with a normal or high IQ have great potential for working provided they have adequate supports, and to set up initiatives to help these individuals get and keep jobs.

To urge the provincial government to mandate that all teachers must take courses on learning disabilities during their post-secondary education to better understand and educate in order to end the discrimination they often experience in the classroom.

Signed by Temple Duncan, Salem Roby, Mars Livingston and many other Manitobans.

Hearing Aids

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

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

(3) Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms and call 911, et cetera.

(4) A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an update consensus—updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

(5) Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia and Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

(6) Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

(7) The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an 'otolaryngologist' or audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health on a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent

of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

(9) Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

(10) The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive listening devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

(11) Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

(12) New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

(13) Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health.

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental and social health and well-being.

* (14:50)

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you for your patience.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Deputy Speaker, on House business—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

Seeing none, orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

House Business

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On House business.

Ms. Fontaine: Pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Its Private Health-Care Agenda and Invest in Manitoba's Public Health-Care System.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the official—the honourable official government—or opposition House leader, that pursuant to rule 34(8), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Union Station. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Its Private Health-Care Agenda and Invest in Manitoba's Public Health-Care System.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

THRONE SPEECH (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that we will resume debate on Throne Speech.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition?
[interjection]

I'm told that I'm required to specify that we are debating the proposed motion of the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I appreciate that kind introduction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly am honoured to rise in this esteemed Chamber once again to speak to the government's Throne Speech. Before I do, I want to talk a bit about the MLAs who moved and seconded the reply in address to the Throne.

A motion was moved by the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) and the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), and, of course, you know, the government puts up who they think are their up-and-comers to speak first and second, and so this represents what the PCs see as their future.

So with the member for Borderland, I've had a chance to hear him speak a couple of times in reply to the throne, and I've noticed that every time he gets up he talks about the communities that are part of Borderlands, and he often talks about, you know, the folks in these communities and pays tribute to them in some kind of way.

So I've noticed that he's never mentioned the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation as part of his constituency. And even though you look at the map of Borderlands—it's right there in the middle, maybe even shaded it in red so that it catches the eye on the Elections Manitoba map—the member has never seen fit to acknowledge that.

And then you've got the member for Fort Whyte, who we read in the paper today not only received half a million dollars from the provincial government, but he also received half a million dollars from Tina Jones, which, if you're keeping track at home, means he received at least \$1 million towards his various business ventures, and yet still has not been able to make a go of it.

And so, we read in the paper today that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —his defense is that he's not good at making money.

But I don't think—I think very soon in court, he's going to find that not being good at making money is not a defense when somebody is suing you.

So, I'll leave that with the member for Fort Whyte to consider, while I'll consider the much more interesting question of who is Tina Jones working with that she would launch a lawsuit against a sitting member of the PC party. Very interesting internal political question for the Progressive Conservatives to consider, because certainly, folks don't launch lawsuits against sitting MLAs without thinking through the various ramifications—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and impacts and media that may arrive from such a story. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: So, on to—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

If there's a legitimate conversation to be had on any matter being discussed as part of Throne Speech debate, let's have that conversation at the appropriate time, not across the House while a member is speaking.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew). *[interjection]*

Order.

Mr. Kinew: So, on to the terrible, very long, very boring, tedious Throne Speech that this government brought forward, which I will also compare and contrast, is very different from the short, boring and tedious speeches given by the members for Borderland and for Fort Whyte.

Really, when we see the government in the last year of their second term bringing forward a Throne Speech address that has nothing new in it, that is really a cause for concern for Manitobans who are looking for reasons to be optimistic and are looking for things to be hopeful about.

But it is very much in keeping with the approach of the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) because, of course, her approach is just like Brian Pallister. And so, just like Brian Pallister, we see the same focus on private health care and on making health-care cuts, and we see nothing new on the question of affordability, on the cost of living, which is certainly one of the top priorities for people right across this great province.

And even when it comes to the topic of crime and safety in the community, you know, the PC party has been having their political staff go out there and spin and saying that there's this big pivot happening and they're going to focus on crime. But we look at the Throne Speech and there's nothing new. There's nothing new.

Again, they're talking about programs that were cut under the Premier back when she was the minister of Justice. And when you go past that, there's really nothing in the Throne Speech document that is a novel program to meet the challenges that communities are facing these days.

Of course, we've brought forward many of them. Just the other day, we were highlighting the important

work that groups like SABE Peace Walkers do to provide safe walks to seniors in our communities.

We've outlined some of the steps that we want to take to end chronic homelessness in Winnipeg, which would not only deliver dignity to folks who are currently living without permanent shelter in our province, but I think would help all of us feel like our province is doing better.

And I don't think it's escaped anyone's notice that, over the time that the PCs have been in office, that the amount of tent villages and the amount of people living in bus shelters has increased. And we see that, of course, many of the social issues we see in our province have gotten worse for the time that the PCs have been in office.

And, really, it's not surprising. When you cut education, that has an impact. When you cut education funding at the provincial level and school divisions don't have the necessary services to provide in the classroom, they're forced to make difficult decisions. And what we've seen across the province, both in the city of Winnipeg and across rural Manitoba and other cities like Dauphin, Thompson, Brandon, et cetera, is that quite often, educational assistant positions have been cut.

And when you have a child with additional needs who's not getting the support in the classroom, that is going to have real-world impacts, not just on their experience at school, but also potentially on the trajectory of their lives.

And so, we believe in a Manitoba where we invest in children, where we support those exceptional kids who sometimes have exceptional needs by providing more educational assistants, and that we follow this current COVID generation, if you will, those whose learning careers have been impacted by the pandemic, right through the K-to-12 system on to post-secondary and provide them with the supports that they need to succeed. And the reason why we say this is, of course, because that the best economic plan is an education plan.

* (15:00)

And we're talking about health care. We know that moving to more private health care is the wrong approach. Every time that the PCs have pursued this, it has had a negative impact on the people of Manitoba. When they cut outpatient physiotherapy services and made it a private for-profit health-care service in Manitoba, that had an impact on seniors. It had an impact on our health-care system because now

the risk of re-injury was increased and thereby increased the number of folks who needed to get additional surgeries in the future. But that also had a big impact on those folks' quality of life, when they had to pay out-of-pocket or to rely on private insurance to be able to receive the health-care services they need.

We also know that when the government privatized government air services, among the major impacts that that had is that it resulted in the privatization of Lifeflight Air Ambulance and we saw many cases over the past few years in which patient transportation was negatively impacted. Of course, we saw patients who were travelling as part as a Northern Patient Transportation Program, whose care was impacted.

We saw issues with Lifeflight Air Ambulance begin to emerge even prior to the pandemic, but most acutely during the third wave of COVID-19 in May of 2021, we did see issues emerge with the reliance on private air carriers. And, of course, Lifeflight Air Ambulance, when it was a public system being run by expert doctors, anaesthesiologists and those with an expertise in providing care in intensive care units and similar settings, it was an excellent service. And yet, this government chose to starve it and then to cut it and then to privatize it.

And so these are just a few of the examples, along with the ever-increasing amount of nurses who are being forced out of the public system by the decisions made by this government and who are winding up working for private agency nurses, the cost of which is now in the tens of millions of dollars per year.

So when this government and when this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) goes out into a scrum and says that they want to increase and they want to invite more private for-profit companies to come in and operate in our health-care system, we have serious concerns. And, of course, when we talk about the issue of surgeries, we know that there is a finite number of surgeons in Manitoba and a finite number of nurses in Manitoba.

And so, if you introduce more private for-profit companies, they are going to pull those surgeons and nurses out of the public system, and that is going to weaken those centres where we currently offer surgeries in a public setting, like at the Concordia Hospital, like at the Misericordia hospital. And you could go right down through the list. I know that folks in Swan River are very concerned right now with folks that need eye surgery in their community.

And so these things are having real-world impacts. And for us, we know that this is a false choice. The PCs caused the chaos in our health-care system. They've continued to make bad decisions along the way, which has only served to worsen the staffing crisis in the health-care system. And now, coincidentally, they want to champion private for-profit health care as the only potential solution. It's a false choice.

You could have used the same resources and invested them in the public settings to accelerate the amount of surgeries and to expand the amount of care that is delivered to the people of Manitoba.

And I will say it does stand out quite a bit that this government refuses to tell Manitobans just how much each of the surgeries being conducted in America right now is—are costing the people of Manitoba. Surely, the government knows. By this time, they will have signed off on multiple disbursements of payment to these American health-care companies, and so they will know both an aggregate and also at a specific level just how much these surgeries are costing.

And so, why is it that they don't want to reveal this to the people of Manitoba? Is it because these surgeries are costing twice as much, perhaps three times as much, four times as much as here in Manitoba? And so that's certainly a cause for concern because, again, the question remains: Why are we sending money to America and have we explored every option around expanding that investment in public care here in Manitoba?

If the surgery in the States costs three times as much, I wonder, what could you do in the public setting here in Manitoba with three times the investment per surgery case invested in our operating rooms, invested in surgeons who live here in Manitoba and in nurses who pay here—or, who live here in Manitoba, pay taxes here in Manitoba and work in our operating rooms and recovery rooms.

These are the questions that the PC team does not want to engage with. Instead, they want to shout about ideology and fear mongering when they, in fact, are the ones who are engaged in ideological decisions to starve the public system and to try to propose privatization as the only path forward, when that is a completely false choice.

Now, we know, of course, that they are fear mongering excessively when it comes to the topic of

a supervised consumption site. You had the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) just making stuff up about supervised consumption sites in California. You read the comments; they're clearly designed to try and scare Manitobans away from these sorts of health-care facilities, but let's just cut through the false information that was being shared.

Supervised consumption site is a place where somebody could receive health care from a nurse or a paramedic or another health-care professional. This might be a life-saving intervention, such as providing somebody who's overdosing with naloxone. This might be another form of medical care, such as a referral to a physician or a nurse practitioner. This might be a referral to foot care. It could even be, of course, a referral to a treatment centre or to a recovery program.

And so, again, this is one tool, among others, which should be used here in Manitoba. And the evidence is clear. The experts are all aligned in their agreement that this should be part of the approach, and yet the government denies it, purely for ideological reasons.

And again, not only do they deny an evidence-based approach to responding to the addictions crisis based on an ideological decision that they've made; they then try to engage in a public relations campaign of fear mongering to cloud the issue and to try to distort the situation in a way that, I'll tell you, is inappropriate during an addictions crisis here in Manitoba.

So these are just some of the issues that we take with the current government's approach.

And, certainly, when you have Manitobans living through a cost-of-living crisis all year long—this summer, dealing with such high gas prices; this fall, now looking at a head of lettuce in the store that costs seven bucks, right? Again, this is a major, major issue for families out there from all walks of life. Yes, low-income people are being hit hard. But middle-income people are being hit hard as well. In fact, middle-income folks spend a proportionally large share of their incomes on energy costs relative to other folks across Canada.

And what is this government's response? Well, it's to increase Manitoba Hydro rates yet again. And it's to do nothing as the price of gas continues to increase. And then they come back with a Throne Speech which merely recycles previous announcements and things that they've pushed out by way of press release.

You know, if you're driving to Costco in the snow right now, for all the pomp and circumstance of this Throne Speech, what actually was delivered there that's going to help you when you get to the store?

And if you're the average parent out there who's driving to hockey practice or to the dance program and then to school, and you're worried about the fact that it seems like your kid's been sick for two months straight, and then you go to the store and there's no Children's Tylenol on the shelf, what, in this Throne Speech, is there to help you?

And, specifically, when we see Children's Hospital admitting nearly record numbers of patients through the emergency room day after day, what specific steps are being taken to alleviate that impact on our health-care system?

So these are open questions that we know should be answered by having a government that would say, you know what, a government can't do everything, but here are some concrete, specific steps that we can do to take some of the pressure off in the form of energy costs and grocery costs that your family is dealing with.

And, again, we know that it's going to take years to fix the damage that the PCs cost to our health-care system, but here are some targeted, concrete steps that we can take to expand primary-care options to families and to the people of Manitoba.

And so that's why my colleagues from St. James and Union Station and I were very happy to join with other Manitobans and nurse practitioners to put forward one specific, concrete proposal that would actually help that family out there who's worried about their kid being sick at a time of shortages in Children's Tylenol and really, really increased levels of busyness at the Children's Hospital.

* (15:10)

And the answer was simple: it was to make sure that the ACCESS primary-care centre is open before school and after school and late into the evening, which are, of course, those times when parents need them and when families have the ability to access them.

And I want to just point out that, again, it was crucial, in my estimation, that we included nurse practitioners in this announcement, because nurse practitioners can deliver many of the services that a physician can. They can act in a similar way to what a family doctor can in many situations—not all, of course, but in many situations.

And of course, again, you know that there is a serious flaw with this government's approach to health care, because when they brought out the Peachey report in the early part of their first mandate, nurse practitioners featured largely in the announcement there. And supposedly, we were going to add hundreds of nurse practitioners here in Manitoba.

But I would ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to reflect on when is the last time you've heard this government talk about a nurse practitioner? Six years, perhaps? Right? And so it shows you that the entire cuts and reorganization and closure plan that they pursued was never about health care, was never about the patient. It was always about the money.

And to see them in the last year of the second term in office to now just say the quiet part out loud and say that they want to privatize health care, again, doesn't surprise me. It certainly offends me as a Canadian, as somebody who grew up knowing that universal, publicly accessible health care is a fundamental Canadian value and, of course, causes my colleagues and I to recommit to fighting for public health care in Manitoba and to seeing through the project of defeating the Progressive Conservatives in the next general election.

So I have an amendment that I would like to propose to this Throne Speech reply. And I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

THAT the motion be amended by adding at the end the following words:

But this House regrets that the provincial government has:

- (a) demonstrated to Manitobans that the Premier is continuing former premier Brian Pallister's agenda of health-care cuts and privatization while giving cheques to billionaires; and
- (b) refused to reverse its cuts to public health care and is instead pushing through further privatization of Manitoba's public health-care system, bringing the province closer to a costlier and inequitable American-style two-tier health-care system; and
- (c) failed to address the current health-care crisis in Manitoba that is putting intense strain on front-line health-care workers and patients waiting in pain in emergency rooms, especially in pediatric facilities such as the Health Sciences Centre Children's Hospital; and

- (d) continued to cut northern health care and mental health services in the North; and
- (e) failed to fill widespread staff vacancies in home care so that seniors and vulnerable Manitobans have access to quality and timely care; and
- (f) refused to call an independent public inquiry into Manitoba's pandemic response to learn from its mistakes and bring forward changes to improve the lives of Manitoba families and strengthen the health-care system; and
- (g) continued to cut and underfund K-to-12 education in Manitoba while class sizes keep on increasing, while offering no real plans to support adult education; and
- (h) refused to address the addictions crisis by failing to provide investments into harm-reduction initiatives including safe consumption sites; and
- (i) continued to make misleading statements on safe consumption sites by citing non-existent safe consumption sites in California; and
- (j) refused to address the housing crisis by failing to build affordable social and supportive housing; and
- (k) failed to act to improve access to mental health services across the province, particularly for youth and children and those living in remote and rural areas, as well as supports for children in Child and Family Services care; and
- (l) failed to take actions to address the epidemic of missing and murdered women, girls and two-spirited people and failed to offer any concrete supports to help prevent domestic violence and to help those fleeing domestic violence; and
- (m) failed to outline how the provincial government will reduce the number of children in Child and Family Services care and support those who have left the system; and
- (n) continued to make life more expensive for average Manitobans by raising taxes on renters, cutting services, hiking hydro rates, attacking workers and increasing the price of essentials at the grocery store while offering no supports for producers; and
- (o) refused to support workers while freezing their wages and 'undermining' workers—sorry, I'll correct that—undermining workers in the public service by leaving positions vacant in important sectors such as highway safety and health care; and
- (p) continued to attack collective bargaining in the province while failing to bring in paid sick days or health and safety supports for working Manitobans to keep them safe and healthy at work; and
- (q) refused to take concrete initiatives to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples of Manitoba yet again by failing to complete legally required duties or make progress to repair the damage caused by former premier Pallister's hurtful comments; and
- (r) refused to increase funding for municipalities like Brandon, Dauphin, Selkirk, Gimli, Thompson and Flin Flon, leaving their budgets frozen for the seventh straight year; and
- (s) failed to take meaningful action to combat climate change, while pushing ahead with a plan to privatize provincial parks; and
- (t) failed to mention the fact the Province has failed to even start the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin Channels project while under-spending by millions of dollars in infrastructure projects such as highway maintenance and repair, and failing to staff road clearing services adequately especially in northern Manitoba; and
- (u) continued its attack on post-secondary students and institutions by forging ahead with the plan to cut funding for universities and colleges while increasing tuition and failing to support English language services for newcomers and refugees; and
- (v) failed to offer any vision for supporting the people of northern Manitoba as the provincial government continues—point of order—[interjection] No? Yes? You're not going to find that out of order? Okay—failed to offer any vision for supporting the people of northern Manitoba as the provincial government continues to cut essential business supports for the people of the North; and

- (w) offered no supports for producers suffering from high input costs and other challenges during this cost-of-living crisis; and
- (x) failed to support francophone services in Manitoba; and
- (y) failed to support an expansion of broadband services in rural and northern Manitoba; and
- (z) failed to mention how the provincial government will work towards creating an equitable Manitoba for everyone, particularly people of colour, women, Indigenous peoples and members of equity seeking groups; and
- (aa) failed to fill vacancies in important positions in the Justice Department such as Crown attorneys in locations across the province; and
- (bb) failed to implement a comprehensive plan to support people with disabilities during this cost-of-living crisis.

As a consequence of these and many other failings, the provincial government has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Motion is in order.

It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

THAT the motion be amended by adding at the end—of—the following words:

But this House regrets that the provincial government has—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense? Dispensed.

For the record, I wish to note one grammatical change, in section (v) for victor, should read: "continues to cut", not "continues cut".

The amendment is in order. The floor is open for debate on the amendment.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): It is a pleasure and an honour of mine to rise today and to put some words on the record about our government's Throne Speech, and to point out that this is my seventh Throne Speech that I have had the honour of providing comment on and being a part of.

And I just want to start off by thanking my constituents for giving me this great honour of representing them in this House each and every day and for being their representative since 2006. It really has been an honour of a lifetime and a real duty to serve this wonderful community of Riel.

* (15:20)

It is also—I'm very pleased to be able to stand and put a few facts on the record, particularly following many of the false assertions that were recently put on the record by the Leader of the Official Opposition. Particularly, I find it particularly offensive when he talks about our record on child welfare. And I would just like to point out that when his government had formed office in 1999, there were only 5,200 children in care, and when his government left office in 2016, there were over 11,000 children in care. They nearly doubled the number of children in care.

And I point that out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the legacy of those—that impact is significant, and the legacy is resonating in our community today. And we are really needing to work hard in terms of providing supports for families to stay together, as well as supports to those who have exited the child-welfare system, and who are met without any connection to their communities, met without any connection to their families.

Mr. Brad Michaleski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

That broken circle needs to be repaired. And that is something that was evident in this year's Throne Speech, in regards to our commitment to enhancing many of those initiatives, really threading that safety net, so that we can build a better society for all those, particularly those most vulnerable.

I want to just revert back to my constituency for a quick moment and thank one particular bright star in the constituency of Riel, whose name is Chloe Crockford. Now, Chloe is a student in Collège Jeanne-Sauvé, and she took a strong advocacy position on menstrual products in schools, and she believed that all students in Manitoba should have access to menstrual products while they were in school.

And, of course, we know that many students were previously missing school because they had their period and didn't have products to go to school. And Ms. Crockford and her classmates wrote to me and shared their concern. And I point that out that that was real democracy in action. That was student advocacy, using their voice.

They wrote to me. I met with these students—many of the students from Collège Jeanne-Sauvé, and took it back and worked on a memorandum of understanding with, of course, Shoppers Drug Mart, and in collaboration with my co-chair on the Poverty Reduction Committee, the Minister of Education, and we worked towards an agreement. And we're very, very proud that in—earlier this fall, in September, we announced at Collège Jeanne-Sauvé that we are now providing free menstrual products to all students in the province of Manitoba. And we are also moving forward with providing free menstrual products to all of our shelters and our women's resource centres.

And, of course, one of the reasons why we wanted to expand the products into the women's resource centres is we know sometimes that there are girls who are not going to school, that are currently truant from school, and our hope is that if they need to get product, and they might go into a women's resource centre, they will not only receive the product that they need, they may also be able to be connected with some of the supports that they really depend upon. And a lot of that initiative is thanks to a remarkable young woman who was not afraid to use her voice and to advocate for something that she believed in, and then, of course, working through the appropriate channels.

Also in my constituency of Riel, earlier this fall, our government hosted a very remarkable—a very important initiative, and that was the \$87-million affordability announcement that our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) made, of course, with all of caucus, in the heart of Riel at a community centre in my constituency.

And this affordability package, not only did it put money in the pockets of parents who were working towards providing their kids' back-to-school lists and, of course, dealing with the rising cost of groceries, which, of course, we know is 11 per cent increase on—inflationary increase on food and the rising costs. We wanted to provide parents with some contributions in that regard.

We also provided low-income seniors with \$300 per senior so that they could be having some relief when they are going to the gas pump. Whether they're paying, you know, Justin Trudeau's carbon tax that we know that the NDP, of course, support, or they're paying for rising inflation, we wanted to provide them with an additional benefit.

And then something that hadn't been done in several years was we wanted to adjust the general assistance category for EIA clients who do not have dependent children.

So, of course, these clients are ones that would not have received any additional money through any of these programs that are specific for parents, and we wanted to ensure that they were not left out in the cold. And so a \$50 increase to their monthly budget was just the first measure that we did in the fall.

The second measure, which I'll talk about a little bit more in greater detail, was when we expanded some program benefits and gave more in our general assistance for our EIA Rent Assist program so that they would have between a \$35 increase and a \$70 increase, depending on the size of their family, in their monthly rental benefit in addition to the \$50 that we'd provided in October.

And this was really important. These rates had not been increased since—for the last 20 years. In fact, the entire time that the NDP were in office, they looked at the rates only once, and they gave a very minimal increase to those rents—or to that general assistance category only once in their time in office. Our government has worked on increasing the Rent Assist. In fact, we've quadrupled the Rent Assist budget since we formed office because we do believe that all Manitobans deserve a safe and affordable place to call home. We've also now increased the EIA benefit.

Another thing that we've done is that we've created a special disability income-support program. This is a program for people with severe and prolonged disabilities and people who have impediments to entry into the labour force, who have a shorter term disability. We've created a special income-support program and very pleased that that program is going to be ramping up starting January 1st with additional benefits for people who have disabilities and who are on the disability income-support program.

Our government also knows that there are many challenges for people who are precariously housed or unsheltered. That is why our government has introduced many measures like the Rent Assist that I was—had mentioned earlier, but also making strong investments, ensuring that that safety net is strong. And we provided an increase of \$9 million just a few weeks ago to many of the shelters who ensure that people have a safe and warm place to get in from the cold during this winter seasons. We've provided this long-term sustainable funding in their agreement so that they can plan their budgets accordingly and that they can ensure that they continue to care for those in need.

We also launched a Food Security Fund for the first time ever. This fund has never done before in the province of Manitoba. And this Food Security Fund

was available to everybody who offers food services. Whether it was through a soup kitchen or a food bank, we opened up an intake for them to apply because we knew that their dollars were not going as far as they once were.

And this was really brought to our attention, and I really want to highlight the Bear Clan who at the start of COVID had created an impromptu food service. They weren't previously in the food space, but they started to provide food to people in a low-barrier way.

And this program grew to the point where they were feeding 700 individuals a day, and they were doing that, thanks to a grant provided to them by the federal government that all of a sudden just quit at the end of the summer. And so the Bear Clan had come to our government and said, we don't know what to do; the federal government is not funding this program anymore, and we now have 700 people that are not receiving their—won't be receiving food, that will go hungry. Will you help us out?

And I just really want to thank my colleagues in government for allowing me to respond to this request that came in from community, and not only did we say that, yes, we wanted to help the Bear Clan to continue the operations at their food bank, we wanted to open that up because we knew other organizations were struggling. And so we launched that Food Security Fund.

* (15:30)

I also want to just mention a few other initiatives. The other day, I had the great pleasure of spending some time with two remarkable women, Diane Redsky and Melissa Stone, at the grand opening—or, the ribbon cutting of the Astum Api Niikinaahk program, which is a 22-unit housing project in downtown Winnipeg, that, of course, is being made available in—by funds from our government as well as from the federal government. But our government is very pleased to be giving \$2.58 million towards this village in downtown Winnipeg.

And tenanting is expected to begin immediately, and that is real—you know, it's housing in action. We are getting people into housing, as well as providing them with those mental health wraparound supports.

We know that, oftentimes just giving someone the keys to a new place, while it may be a good step, it's not the only step, and we need to ensure that there are supports for those individuals in regards to ensuring that they maintain housing and that they can continue on in their journey towards independence.

And so really I want to take a moment to just congratulate Diane Redsky and Melissa Stone and everybody involved in this remarkable village, and really want to welcome home those 22 individuals who will be soon getting keys to their new place.

So, with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm just really, again, once again, honoured to rise and to provide some comments in my capacity as the MLA for Riel and as the Minister of Families.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Manitobans understand that we are one community, and that we care about one another and we want to see our neighbours living healthy and stable lives.

Manitobans know that some of their neighbours are struggling right now, that they may have mental health issues, they may be struggling with addictions or they may be struggling with the stressful effects of poverty.

And Manitobans understand that if somebody is drug sick, they're not going to be making rational choices. If somebody is in the throngs of a mental health crisis, they'll have—struggle to make the right choices at the right times. And, under the stress of poverty, many of those who are feeling its effects may be reactive and do things out of desperation and the need to survive.

Manitobans understand that for our province to be healthy and our community to be healthy, we have to support everyone. We have to support those that are in the thralls of addiction; we have to support those that are struggling with mental health issues, and we have to support those living in poverty. And until we do, we won't be a healthy community.

Manitoba NDP believes that every single Manitoban is—has worth, has dignity and needs to be respected and seen by this government. And we believe you cannot leave anybody behind. And until we do that, we won't come together as a community.

Now we've—the Throne Speech spoke a lot about community safety. I've had a front-row seat to that as a criminal lawyer for the past 22 years. And, unlike this government, I actually spend a lot of time with people who are involved in the criminal justice system. I absolutely spend a lot of time with people with mental health issues, with addictions, who are suffering the negative effects of poverty.

And, unlike this government, who—their world is very small, and they don't see these Manitobans; they

don't know these Manitobans and they don't want to know them. And we're seeing, at this time, that they're demonizing Manitobans. They are trying to divide Manitoba into somehow the good Manitobans and the bad Manitobans.

And, after six years in government, they are surprised to discover that there is crime in Manitoba. They are surprised to discover that there is a homelessness crisis in Manitoba. And they are surprised to discover that there is an addictions crisis in Manitoba.

So, they tell us enough is enough. Where were they six years ago? Why is this only a priority now? Well, we know the answer to that: it's politics, it's an election.

Their newfound interest in community safety is cynical, disingenuous and certainly not sincere. And it's about ginning up fear of one Manitoban over another for purposes of politicking. To win a few extra votes in a few ridings, this government wants to turn Manitoban against Manitoban. It's absolutely shameful.

So, this government doesn't have any lawyers in it and our Justice Minister has no experience with the justice system, and his pronouncements routinely display that ignorance. And it's very crass politics because they talk about the victims of crime without understanding actually who in Manitoba commits crime. And one of the biggest fallacies of this government is that they don't understand that the people that often commit crimes are often the same people who are victims of crime. We are talking often of the same people.

I will recall, just one week in my practice, where I had a client of mine who was walking home late at night and she had been sexually assaulted. And she was so fearful after that that she armed herself with a knife. She was so traumatized by what had happened to her that she began to drink heavily that week and ended up in party houses where you could drink for days non-stop with—as much as you want. And during one of those parties where she was trying to block out the trauma, she got so angry and hostile at being abused that, for unexplainable reasons, she pulled out a knife and stabbed one of the people at the party.

This all happened within three days of each other, where she was both victim and victimizer. But that kind of nuance is lost on this government. They want to punish that woman without understanding her, without understanding how she got there and without actually doing the work to prevent that situation from ever happening again. They want to sacrifice those

Manitobans so they can win a handful of votes in suburban Winnipeg.

Everybody sees this. One of the most conservative columnists in the Free Press has called this government out for this ridiculous, 1990s strategy on crime. I mean, this is the last refuge of scoundrels.

Now—and let's look at how we got here after six years and this government magically discovering that, oh, there might be some issues about community safety. Well, if we actually want to talk about the root causes of crime in Manitoba, the main root cause of crime in Manitoba is the failed policies of this PC government.

Let's talk about it. They made a mess of health care. They made a mess of our education system. They've allowed our roads and bridges to crumble. They turned one of the fastest growing economies in Canada to now one of the slowest and sluggish. We are one of only three provinces that has lost GDP in the last three years.

They've hollowed out our public service. You can't even get a birth certificate under six months. You can't get a work permit without waiting four months. And that's all new. Prior to 2016, you could get a work permit in a month. You could get your birth certificate in two weeks. This government has lost 18 per cent of our civil service. They can't even hire back people now because it's such a gong show that they don't want to stay, so they can't retain anybody new. And we've stopped being able to serve people. We've stopped being able to give them basic public services.

* (15:40)

So, Manitobans see this. It's obvious to everyone except this government. This government has their head in the sand and hugs themselves at night with gaslighting and alternative facts or whatever they do to help them sleep. But the reality is, is that these problems aren't going away, and building up this straw man of an unsafe Manitoba—the one that they were administering for the last six years—is not going to get Manitobans to forget how absolutely mean-spirited and incompetent this government is.

So, the reality is, if crime has gotten worse in Manitoba, it's gotten worse because of this government, because of their failed policies. So, when this government took office in 2016, nobody was living in a bus shelter. There wasn't a runaway addictions crisis in Manitoba. We didn't have a significant homeless crisis in 2016. You know, accessing mental health

wasn't perfect or great in Manitoba in 2016; now it feels impossible.

Child poverty was on the decline when this government took office. It is back on the rise. There are cases of trench foot being found in downtown Winnipeg; that's something from 100 years ago. That's a direct result of the cuts to the social policies of this government and their fallout effects.

This government has cut social housing. They've sold off social housing stock. They've let others deteriorate to the point where they can't ethically rent them out. They have agreed to 100 per cent-above-'guiderine' rent increases, some people getting rent increases of 30 per cent in a year. And we wonder why people are homeless.

They've cut social services and income supports. They've kept Manitoba's minimum wage artificially low—the second lowest in Canada. And even when they're shamed into raising it up, it's still the second lowest in Canada. They brought in wage-freeze laws so that people with unionized jobs would also see their income cut every year by inflation.

The cost of housing has skyrocketed to the point—and we need to talk about this more in Manitoba—a smaller percentage of Manitobans own a home now than before 2016. Less Manitobans can afford to live in a house that they own in Manitoba because of this government. And considering home ownership is the No. 1 way that middle class people build wealth, this government has made Manitobans poorer.

Nothing announced in the three—in the Throne Speech is going to have an impact on crime. And it's just more of the same; it's gaslighting. How is this government going to be tough on crime when they are going to war, yet again, with front-line criminal justice workers?

And I'm talking about Crown attorneys. So, this government says, yes, we're tough on crime. But you know what? The people that actually have to administer the justice system, they've been without a contract since March. This government will not negotiate in good faith with them, will not give them a reasonable settlement.

And what we're seeing at the Crown attorneys' office is that they have 17 vacant positions. And just like nurses, they're burning out. The workload is intense.

When you have that many vacancies, the pile of files on your desk gets higher and higher, and things

get missed, mistakes get made and the people that are supposed to be administering the justice system can't do their jobs properly and they're burning out and getting stressed out.

And they're getting jobs in Calgary and Edmonton and getting \$80,000 bump up in pay to do it. And we can't keep people in the North; we can't keep people in the Winnipeg office.

So, if this government was really serious about crime, they would respect the front-line workers. But, of course, they're not. And it's empty and it's hollow, and we see that with this fight that they're now picking with Crown attorneys.

How on earth is this government tough on crime when they can't even keep courtrooms open? We heard recently that Shamattawa was shut down because there was not a proper facility in that community to actually hold court. They are now going to force the residents—some of the poorest in Manitoba—to take a \$1,000 flight to Thompson to appear in court.

This government has no solutions. They've allowed it to get this way and it's just going to compound it. Many people will get warrants because they can't actually afford to get themselves to Thompson from an isolated fly-in community in order to get themselves to court. This government has no answer to that. But, of course, they're tough on crime, and they're going to punish those people for the circumstances they created, for the problems they created, for the barriers they created.

You know, this government talked a lot in the Throne Speech about the intensive bail supervision program, like that was going to solve everything. This is a band-aid solution, but there's a couple points that need to be made here.

They thought so little of this program that—our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was Justice minister at the time in 2017. She cut it. This government made a big deal about the integrated gang unit. Again, they thought so little about it in 2017, this Premier—then the Justice minister—cut it.

So, five years later, when they magically discover community safety before an election, they are basically reversing their cut. And they're trying to convince Manitobans that they're serious about community safety.

They have no credibility—and it should be pointed out that these programs were started under an NDP government. So, obviously, in 2017 they didn't think

much of it, and they're now discovering the wisdom of a government that they criticize and reinstituting their policies.

But that's it. These are band-aid solutions. They won't actually make people safer and, obviously, they thought that in 2017 when they cut them.

But this government doesn't stop there. It started to pick a fight with our courts and with our judges. And I was sitting in this Chamber, alarmed at some of the comments of our Justice Minister and some of the inferences that he was trying to allege in relation to our judges and our courts.

Now, he's not a lawyer, and that's very clear when he stands up and talks to this House. He really has no basis to understand. He's never conducted a bail hearing. I've conducted hundreds, if not a thousand. He's never spent a day in a courtroom. I've spent tens of thousands of hours in a courtroom.

Yet this minister, a few weeks ago, stood in this House and was alleging that our courts were not doing their job, that our judges were not doing our—their job, that they were letting out violent criminals and that only this minister could solve it by his sideshow of creating a—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —reverse bail provision that the federal government had to impose.

If he was a lawyer, he would be disbarred for making comments like that. That is so disrespectful. It undermines the administration of justice.

Does our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) do something about that? Does our Premier defend the integrity of our justice system, our judges and our courts and say, wait a minute, maybe our Justice Minister shouldn't be undermining our justice system? Maybe our Justice Minister shouldn't be going around to Manitobans and tell them, be afraid of the courts, be so very afraid because they're not doing their job and they're letting violent criminals out on a daily basis.

That's shocking the man still has a job. But we know that the only qualification to be a minister in this government is mediocrity. And that's troubling, because the minister has brought no facts to this debate because he has none. The courts are doing their job. They are not releasing violent criminals. They have enough tools in the bail system already to keep people who are violent in custody.

* (15:50)

And I can tell you, 22 years as a criminal lawyer, they don't allow violent people to roam our streets. That is patently ridiculous. This minister owes the judges and the justice system an apology, and if he refuses to give an apology, well, then I think it speaks volumes about how unserious—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Order.

I just want to remind everybody in the House, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) has the floor.

Mr. Wasyliw: At least somebody around here likes the rule of law.

So, he needs—this Justice Minister needs to make it clear to Manitoba: Are the courts and judges doing their job? Are they keeping Manitobans safe? And if he can't say that, he needs to resign.

So with that, thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Assistant Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and respond to the Throne Speech.

And just before diving into the response to the Throne Speech, I do want to take a couple of minutes just to begin by thanking the constituents of Tyndall Park for the honour to have the opportunity to continue serving them inside of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I first got elected back in 2016, and I can tell you, the years have just—they have flown by. And, quite frankly, I think that's because I enjoy what I do quite a bit. And I continue to learn every single day, whether it's here in these Chambers, more about the province of Manitoba and our economy or about the way politicians work.

But I also continue to learn in the community and that's, quite frankly, where I would rather be is in the constituency of Tyndall Park. And I'm glad there's just a couple more weeks of session and everyone will have the opportunity to return to their communities.

I also want to thank my constituency staff. And it was really a fun opportunity this afternoon, because I had my constituency staff all come down to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and I was able to introduce them all by name.

I started with my Tito Robert, and I shared with the House as—how he's actually been with the office since when I first got elected. He was actually one of my campaign managers back in 2016. And I've known him my entire life and he actually—he teaches me how to dance and teaches my dad how to dance, too,

Mr. Deputy Speaker. And as you know, Lamoureuxes, we do not have a whole lot of—don't have moves in dancing, so it's very generous of him to spend his time teaching us how to.

And I made reference to my assistant, Carl—his real name is Carlyle, and he loves philosophy. He is going to be a student for life, I just know it. And he often reinforces and reminds me of the importance of politics. And it is a true honour to be a politician and having that opportunity, and Carl is very, very good at reminding me of that importance and bringing people back down to the level of understanding and calmness oftentimes when this House can be quite a—rowdy and a little disappointing at times, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I remember back when I was in high school—so, over 15 years ago—I am getting older, Mr. Deputy Speaker—over 15 years ago, back in high school, I used to base my spares around question period, so I could actually watch question period, whether it was from my laptop in the library or I'd go sneak home and watch it.

And I remember being very—I admired politicians. I thought it was so cool that these people knew so much about the province of Manitoba, and they would come in these Chambers and they would advocate and fight for people.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to admit, I'm a little disappointed since becoming an MLA. It is disappointing to see that that's not always the case; that there is a lot of misinformation put on the record, there is a lot of: they said this, they said this, they did this, oh, they should have done this. Meanwhile, if we actually used our time and our resources and focused on bettering Manitoba rather than bashing one another, I think about how much further along we could be.

I also want to thank our caucus staff. We've got a wonderful team here at the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and, you know, for a party of even just three members, we're pretty high maintenance sometimes. We need help. We are often running around the House, often filling in for one another. During Estimates, there's three committees going on at all times, and we're having to jump back and forth, just making sure that there is that Liberal Party presence known, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there's no way we could be doing this without our staff.

So, I want to reflect on Shandi; I want to reflect on Colin; I want to reflect on Justin, our newest addition; and I want to reflect on Colleen as well. We

were so, so fortunate as a caucus to have such a wonderful team around us.

And I want to thank my colleagues. I'll start with the members for River Heights and St. Boniface, as they are part of my caucus, and I feel so lucky to be part of a team where I get to stand up and speak in this House about issues that are truly important to Tyndall Park, issues that are truly important to me as a woman in politics, and it is so nice to have that honest, genuine support that allows me to do that.

I've never once, in my party, felt I couldn't come forward on an issue, I couldn't speak openly and transparency. And I do believe that is rare. I don't think that happens in all parties throughout Canada as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so, I'm very grateful for that.

And to the rest of my colleagues, most of them—as they know, I get along with a lot of you quite well, and I do think that makes a big, big difference. When you have to go into work every day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you should be friends with people you work with.

If you want to get work done, you need to be able to work with members in the House, and I think that is really important. It's a piece of advice I got, actually, on April 19th, the first day that I got elected into these Chambers. And it was actually my father who gave me the advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but he said, be friends with your colleagues. If you want to get work done, if you want to enjoy your place of work, be friends with them.

And I do take that very, very seriously, and I appreciate all the friendships that I have had the honour of carrying on a relationship with in these Chambers.

Now, I want to get to the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the first topic that I would like to touch on is seniors. Now, the Throne Speech—only mention of seniors in the Throne Speech is a \$300 annual cheque, and, frankly, like, this is nothing; this is peanuts. Seniors have so, so many issues here in the province of Manitoba, and I'm going to get into them, but a \$300—I'm going to call it a measly cheque—that doesn't do much. What about hearing aids? What about dental work? And, again, I'm going to get into a huge issue—or, a huge list here, but that doesn't even make a dent into it.

So, it's very disappointing with the high need for changes that need to be made here in Manitoba for the benefit of seniors, this government should be doing a whole lot more.

Now, in 2016, I first started advocating for something called a seniors advocate, an independent office that would represent seniors throughout the province and work with whoever is in government by providing some advice and some insight.

And it would also—the seniors office would also work with individuals on a personal base by—case-by-case outcome.

So, if someone needed help with something specifically—perhaps transportation, for example—this individual could go to the office of the seniors advocate and have advocacy on their behalf.

And, you know, it would work the same way as a children's advocate would, and we have that here in Manitoba. And other provinces and territories now, here in Canada, have an office for a seniors advocate. So, I do think it's a matter of time before it happens, but it's disappointing that we started talking about it in 2016 and it still hasn't happened. And the seniors advocate, they'd be able to do a lot for our province.

One of the big, big issues that seniors are facing in Manitoba—and I would say, on average, once or twice a week I receive an email on this—are home repairs. Seniors want to be able to remain in their communities; most of them, at least, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, oftentimes, it's the smallest home repair or smallest change that would actually enable them to do so.

But—and, again, I'm speaking for the constituents of Tyndall Park. I don't know how it is in other constituencies, but in Tyndall Park, there are occasions where seniors cannot afford items such as a rail going up into their house or perhaps a ramp or a shower stool, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And our Province has a responsibility in taking care of all Manitobans, and if our Province would help with these little necessities, oftentimes that would enable seniors to remain in their homes, maybe even for decades longer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather than having to find different long-term-care facilities that are often not exactly what they need or want and usually makes them end up leaving the community in which they want to stay in.

* (16:00)

So, a seniors advocate, they could advocate for home care, transportation, day programs. And, I should say, on the home-care issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I asked about this yesterday inside of the House, too, during question period, and the Minister for Seniors said that there's going to be a strategy

coming out. And I'd like to know when the strategy is coming out and—

An Honourable Member: Very soon.

Ms. Lamoureux: He shouts across the way, very soon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but, like, give me something a little more tangible than that.

I'm optimistic. I feel we're giving this government a lot of leeway here. But give us some dates. When is the seniors strategy going to be coming out, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

And, you know, since fighting for this in 2016, I am actually really, really happy that the NDP—they've gotten on board, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They've decided to support the call for an independent seniors advocate, which I think is great. So, now we've got the Manitoba Liberal Party, we've got the Manitoba NDP, both saying yes, the province needs an independent office for a seniors advocate. All we need now is the government to support it as well. Two out of three—that's not too bad.

You know, some concerns that came from seniors in my constituency—and these are over—just over the last two weeks; I've actually copied and pasted them here. There is a unit at 30A Tyndall Ave., and the front entrance isn't closing properly. There are units where washing machines are broken. There are concerns that sidewalks in the community are not being shovelled and maintained during the winter. There is a big and ongoing concern with safe access to the mailboxes, which I've spoken about quite a bit in these Chambers. And there's a lack of fire alarm testing and maintenance in the building.

These concerns specifically came from five seniors who live in Tyndall Park, within the last two weeks. There are—and, it's just a sample, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are so many that we really do need to start addressing. And these are small asks. I—there's nothing preventing our Province from stepping in and helping, except the government chooses not to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to switch over to justice here. I know time is going very quickly and there's so many topics here that we need to address, but mostly because they weren't addressed in the Throne Speech.

One of them is this topic of police. The term police must have been used, what, 10, 15 times during the Throne Speech. And don't get me wrong, I think that it is important that we do what we need to do. However, I don't think more police—or, investments

only in police, rather, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is necessarily the way to go about it.

I think the topics of restoration and mediation, which weren't even mentioned in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are incredibly important. We need to be talking about ways in which people can heal; ways in which we, as a society, can help one another out. We need to be more of a village. We need to be kind and compassionate and share resources with one another.

You know, I often—and even today in question period, I talked about youth justice committees. Youth justice committees were an opportunity for youth. When they made a poor decision or they fell into a crowd perhaps they shouldn't have, whatever got them there in the first place, a youth justice committee was an opportunity for youth to sit down with people in their community where they are residing and talk about ways of restoration. This often led to community service work. This often led to even just writing papers of why they are remorseful.

Rather than having young people go into the Winnipeg Remand Centre, rather than having young people have to pay severe consequences because of an indiscretion or they had fallen into the wrong crowd—again, whatever it may be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but—these justice committees that were actually running quite successfully here in Manitoba, they were all cut under the NDP. They took them all away. They took away the opportunity for youth to be able to have healing in their lives, for them to be able to give back to the community, have a second chance.

And they enforced more toughness on crime. And I don't think being tough on crime is necessarily the answer. I think we got to be smarter on crime.

And I think, with 57 MLAs, we should be able to bring forward productive ideas, not just the back and forth: well you did this, you did this. Here's a youth justice committee idea; let's debate that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many things. We—I appreciated the minister for—is it Sport, Culture and Heritage? She spoke about Bear Clan. I know there's Bear Clan northwest within the constituency of Tyndall Park and I have the opportunity to go out with them every few months. And the incredible work they do—and neighbourhood watch 204, that's another one that often comes into Tyndall Park.

They take hours out of their weeks and they patrol the areas. They bring food to people who need food.

They pick up items on the ground that are not safe to be on the ground, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the work and the effort that they put into the community, what has this government invested in them? What if they created more supports and more opportunities for our local, grassroots people and individuals who are trying to combat dangerous situations here in Manitoba? Mr. Deputy Speaker, these groups have taught me so much. Whenever I go out with them, they teach me about food insecurity and unemployment and substance use.

And I actually had a constituent email me last week, and they shared a link with me, and I'm actually tabling the link because I want to encourage my colleagues to take a peek at it. It's a 25-minute-long clip and it's called The Pour, based off—it's a TV show, Fifth Estate, called The Pour, and it's based off an idea, a way in which our province could at least attempt to deal with a lot of the alcoholism that is happening.

It's a new approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in the clip it talks about how people can go down to this centre and they monitor the amount of alcohol that a person is taking in. Because if a person is an alcoholic, you can't just stop them from drinking; that's not how it works. The human body needs to detox, and this—in this case—and it's actually in Ottawa, so it's here in Canada—it's a place where people can go and detox safely while still having the alcohol that they need as they proceed out of that.

And that's why—it's just an idea, but it's a conversation that we should be having, rather than giving more money to police to deal with alcoholism. That's what it said in the Throne Speech, and I don't think that that is the answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Can also talk about investing in public transit more, especially for the sake of safety. I know, just over the last few weeks, there were two stabbings in Tyndall Park at the same bus stop, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this is avoidable. And if we did more, if we invested more—and not just money, but resources as well, and education and awareness—if we contributed more as a province, there would be less dangerous activity happening, less people getting hurt here in the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's still a lot I want to talk about with education, with continuing on with truth and reconciliation, with child care, health care and businesses in Tyndall Park. And I'll speak briefly to a couple more.

With education, we can talk about primary schools and just how there is such a shortage right now in teachers in primary schools, as well as resources, where teachers are actually having to pay for school supplies out of their own pockets. And that's not right, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Here we are, as MLAs, and we have the opportunity—many who go and get their clothes dry cleaned, and they can claim that. Meanwhile, a teacher has to go to Staples and pay for notebooks and pens out of their own pocket for students. Something has to be revisited here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also talk about needing more teachers in our school system, and maybe it's revisiting, for example—this idea was put on my radar by one of the groups, actually, that came and met with our caucus. We need to revisit how teachers who have immigrated to Canada are actually being accredited and recognized for their past experience here in the House—or, here in Manitoba.

We can talk about post-secondary students. I know—there's no post-secondary facilities in Tyndall Park, but I know there are a lot of students. And this government took away the tuition rebate. They have implemented—now you have to pay if you want health-care coverage if you're an international student.

They really haven't made it easy, and they haven't—they have it so tuition can actually continue to rise over the years. There's no safeguard for it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A student could start school tomorrow and six months from now, their tuition could double. There's no way to prepare for that. I don't know what the government expects students to actually do in this situation.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know—I want to share a quick story about a school that I visited, Meadows West School. It's in Tyndall Park and I had the opportunity to visit them on Orange Shirt Day. And I really, really—it was one of the coolest things I've never experienced as an MLA because I went in and it was an assembly entirely put on by the students.

And they went around in a circle and they talked about their own personal commitments and things that they could do as students—and we're talking about grade 2s and 3s here—things that they could do as students to commit to making our province a safer and better place, and what they could do to further Truth and Reconciliation. I think it is very clear one thing that we could be doing right now here in this House is passing Call No. 80.

* (16:10)

You know, on August 12th, 2021, I wrote a letter to a couple of the ministers here. And in the letter, I talk about how I think that this government of Manitoba should, in fact, have September 30th as a stat day, the way the federal government had done so. And a couple of months later I got a response, and they really didn't address the concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So then on—I have the dates here—on October 7th, 2021, I had the honour of introducing bill 204, the recognition of national day for truth and reconciliation act. And again, I just shared how the federal government had already declared this be a federal stat day and I believe that the Province has a responsibility in doing the same. And this government has yet to take this into account. And I do—again, I think it is a matter of time and this government should be doing it yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are so many issues that were not even mentioned in the Throne Speech. Again, I didn't get to child care, health care or businesses.

We also should be talking about the war on Ukraine, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): The honourable member's time is up.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): It's an honour to rise in the Chamber today to put a few words on the record with regard to the Throne Speech and to highlight some of the excellent work our government has put forward.

It is no surprise, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that the most important part of Manitoba's health-care system are the individuals who work within it. That is why our government worked closely with health-care staff, leaders, unions and post-secondary institutions to create a comprehensive health human resource action plan that is designed to support our front lines when and where they need it most.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was proud to see that the Throne Speech signalled to Manitobans that this plan will move towards ending mandated overtime by adding 2,000 health-care professionals with a—the largest single investment in the Province's history of \$200 million to retain, train and recruit health-care staff.

This means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, more doctors, more nurses, more paramedics and allied health professionals. It also means supports to those already working in the system who've made incredible sacrifices over the last few years and we are taking action here in Manitoba to strengthen our public health system.

And last week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with my colleagues from the other provinces and territories who are health ministers. And they all reinforced that no matter where you go in Canada, all provinces are experiencing the need to retain, train and recruit health human resources and that every province and territory has its own unique needs and challenges.

Partnerships and collaboration is quintessential to the success of the plan our government has put forward and ongoing efforts to help address health human resource capacity in Manitoba. That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the last few months, I've been meeting with front-line health-care staff and visiting urban and rural facilities across our province, listening to their experiences, stories and their innovative and constructive ideas on how to best support the health system, how to best support those working within it.

Directly from these conversations came the commitment to work towards ending mandated overtime hours that nurses are required to work. The Throne Speech laid out the three pillars the plan is built on: retain, train and recruit. And we will continue to move forward with that plan.

I want to take a moment to thank the First Minister and Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) of our province for placing her trust in me with the re-appointment to the Ministry of Health in January of 2022. I also want to thank all of my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus for their support of me, both personally and professionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we move forward in the days and months to come.

We know that there will be challenging times for Manitobans but we're a strong government, we're a united team and we are visionaries that want to tackle the issues of—that flow across the entire province.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I also, before I close, want to thank each and every individual in the Southdale constituency for initially putting their trust and confidence in me to be their member of the Legislative Assembly when I was elected in

September of 2019. I know that I have 56 individuals in this Chamber who will disagree with me, but I stand by this: that I serve the best constituency in the province of Manitoba in the Southdale constituency.

So, I thank all of those individuals, all of the community centres, all the sports teams, all the church officials and stakeholders in that area for their support of me as their MLA.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): You know, most fairy tales have a happy ending. This fairy tale Throne Speech that's been introduced, the only hope Manitobans will have for a happy ending is when the election comes and the PCs get vanquished to the annals of history.

What we've seen presented here is a lot of talk, a lot of things that have no meat on the bone, that there's—they're going to consult, they're going to plan to have a plan. Well, we've seen this so many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Their Look North plan was a plan to have a plan for, I don't know, the first five years of their term in government.

I think it's telling when the Health Department, the Health system in Manitoba, is in complete disarray; it's a disaster in Winnipeg; it's a bigger disaster in northern Manitoba. And yet the Health Minister couldn't spend enough time to talk about health issues and what this government's plan is, that really isn't fleshed out in this Throne Speech.

So, I want to talk a little bit about things in northern Manitoba, and I understand that the Tories don't have a real good grasp on life in northern Manitoba because they haven't really represented anybody in the North, for the most part, for many years.

The hospital in Lynn Lake—I guess I should say the former hospital—the inpatient services have been shut down because this government, this minister, this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) engineered a staff shortage and then said, oh, we don't have enough staff, we got to shut it down.

I've talked to some of the agencies who said they had enough people to staff things, but because of interference and bungling by how things now get managed, instead being managed at the local level, they're managed out of Thompson. So the local part of that has disappeared.

Let's talk about Leaf Rapids. They don't have an ER anymore. Now, I know some hospitals down south

don't have an ER, but the closest one is probably an hour away. The closer ER for folks in Leaf Rapids to go to is a three-hour drive on a good day. And I don't know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether you've heard me talk about snowplowing operations in the North. Pretty much all winter, there are no good days because the roads aren't properly maintained.

We talk about things like Lifeflight being privatized. People trying to get from northern Manitoba by Lifeflight wait and wait and wait; sometimes they go on commercial air, even though they need to be transported by an air ambulance.

* (16:20)

I've heard the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) talk a lot about how the surgery backlog is getting reduced, and yet I have a constituent from Lac Brochet, broke his ankle 10 days ago and is still waiting for emergency surgery. The last I heard it's now planned to be tomorrow, but it's been cancelled every day this week.

Now, I've gone as far as going to the minister's office to try and talk to her, to see if something can be done. I talked to her assistant. I didn't really have a strong sense that they took this seriously and that things would be addressed. And that's just one case, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's how this government treats people in the North, which is shameful at best.

So we know that once upon a time, Snow Lake had an active hospital. Now, Snow Lake is not a dying town. Snow Lake is actually a growing town. With no thanks from this government, the mine at Snow Lake is growing. The number of people hoping to live in Snow Lake will, at some point, grow as the infrastructure grows, but this government has taken it upon themselves to freeze municipal budgets for so many years that those communities are having a hard time growing their infrastructure.

So we have an active mine. Mining is a dangerous business. Hospital shut down in Snow Lake. Closest hospital now is some two and a half hours away on a good day. Again, on a good day, which there's not many of those in the winter, the way the roads are maintained.

Imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to go back to leaf—or, Lynn Lake, for a minute. Imagine your spouse—you're 80-some years old. You've made a trip out of town to see your daughter. Before you even get home, you find out that, well, your wife isn't in long-term care in Lynn Lake anymore; she's been shipped to Flin Flon some eight hours away—on a good day.

Imagine that a government, a health region, a department didn't have the common decency to tell families that their loved ones were getting shipped from their home community to somewhere else. And imagine the mayor of Lynn Lake at the time took it upon himself to tell some of his community members what was going on. The Northern Health Region was mad at him for letting the cat out of the bag. How shameful is that? But that's this government and their mentality for people in the North.

I follow along on several online groups that talk specifically about highway travel on roads like No. 6, 60, No. 10, 391. And we constantly see what, apparently, the minister doesn't see, is that the roads are not being cleaned in a timely fashion, they're not being maintained properly. One lane traffic for two-lane highways that, particularly in the winter, have that much more heavy traffic on them because that's when the winter roads are open to the northern communities. Traffic—trucks must run to service those communities over roads that aren't maintained.

I just heard from a fellow at Leaf Rapids about how his car is damaged now trying to drive over Highway 391. Did we see any mention in this Throne Speech about how they're going to properly maintain roads in the North?

Many times in the past, I've stood up and talked about—I believe the highway number is 395—that runs from the Snow Lake road into Lalor mine. I'm sure the minister probably isn't aware of this, the number of accidents that have happened on that road in the last month, because that road was never designed for the amount of traffic that it's got on it now.

It is a government road. It is controlled by the government. It needs to be maintained by the government. They're failing yet again.

I listened earlier today to the Minister of Seniors try and answer questions about home care. And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, home care in the North is yet again another disaster created by this government. People that have been assessed and determined that they need somewhere in the neighbourhood of 40 hours a week of home care because severe disabilities are lucky if they get eight hours a week. Some people don't get any.

Imagine your mother, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sitting at home, waiting for someone to come and give her a bath, but there's nobody coming.

I've heard stories about even down south here, now, where they've changed the way they calculate

home-care workers' travel time and work time; that where they used to have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 45 minutes—which wasn't enough to get to a client, perform whatever duties it was they were supposed to perform and then get on to the next client—the number now is down to, like, 30 minutes or something.

And I could be wrong on the specific numbers, but imagine that home-care worker having to race now from one client to the next to try and perform some kind of care. Creates an unsafe condition for the client who needs care. Creates an unsafe condition for the worker trying to do their best to do a good job.

We know that this government talks a lot about the challenge that seniors have put up with, that have been forced to put up with—throughout not just the pandemic, because this disaster started happening long before that. The amount of care that seniors get in care homes is substandard. The amount of workers that work there are not enough to meet the minimum requirements that they are supposed to have in place.

This government's ideology—and they're the ones that keep saying, well, it's ideological. It is their ideological desire to turn health care into a private enterprise so that those private enterprises can make money. They pay agency nurses millions of dollars over and above what ones in the employment of the government get paid.

They froze government workers' wages for many years. They actively discouraged people from wanting to work in that government system, specifically so their ideological drive to privatize things like health care can progress. And they'll say, well, it's not our fault the public system isn't working anymore. It's not working specifically because this government starves it for the resources.

And I heard the minister or the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)—one of them—talk about the recent meetings that have taken place with the federal government and the federal government didn't want to increase the funding.

Let's back up a little bit and keep in mind that it was a federal PC government under Stephen Harper that reduced those health transfer payments to the lowest level ever. Along comes the Liberals. They increased it somewhat. Now they've suggested to the provinces that if you want an increase in that health transfer, you need to spend it on health care.

* (16:30)

Which this government doesn't want to do. They want to make sure they can give tax cuts to their billionaire buddies while taking government money from the federal government, putting it in general revenue and trying to cover the shortfall that now will show up from the tax cuts that will make rich people richer and not help poor people one little bit.

Want to talk a little bit about this government's obsession with police, with policing their way out of the drug and mental health crisis. It's not an issue that you can police your way out of. You need to address the root causes: poverty, homelessness, unemployment, lack of education. All those things are exacerbated in the North.

We talk about education. Imagine, during the pandemic your kids in the south, they had access to the Internet; they could keep up. People in so many of those northern communities don't have that same access. They don't have even dial-up Internet, never mind high speed. They don't have cellphones.

And what'd this government do? They contracted out to a private outfit, with big fanfare about how the North is going to get high-speed Internet. What they failed to say, again, in one of their big announcements was that it wasn't going to happen anytime soon. *[interjection]* I hear the minister beaking off about 75,000 done. Not in the North.

I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —this bunch likes to congratulate themselves—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —for ignoring northern Manitoba. Northern Manitobans are fed up with being ignored. They're fed up with somebody like this minister taking credit for something that hasn't happened.

There are so many communities in northern Manitoba that do not have Internet access. Imagine, I've heard the ministers here say they've got to address cellphone coverage in some areas down south because it's spotty; you got to go to the top of the hill to get cellphone access.

You can go to top of whatever hill you want; north of Thompson, you're not getting cellphone coverage because there isn't any. You can drive down No. 6 Highway, and there's vast stretches of it that don't have cellphone coverage. You can come across No. 60 Highway; there's no cellphone coverage.

So, while this minister takes credit for doing something, people in the North know that that credit is not deserved because he has not, and this government has not, addressed the problem of communication coverage in northern Manitoba. It's just one more failing on the part of this government to address anything in the North in a substantial, meaningful way.

So, we need to move on. I could talk a lot about what this government's focus on policing is going to be. And I represent a lot of communities in the North that they now have fly-in, fly-out policing, that they don't have permanent police of any kind there anymore, that two RCMP officers are expected to cover two separate communities. That doesn't work very well.

But, again, adding more police to those communities is still not going to solve the problem. It's not going to solve the problem of homelessness. People in Black Sturgeon, for example, they have clean drinking water—one of the reserves in northern Manitoba that actually does. But they don't have enough houses. So those people are forced to go and live in Lynn Lake that has empty houses but doesn't have clean drinking water. What a sad commentary on this government.

We've talked about Manitoba Housing any number of times, and certainly, I didn't really see anything in here, in this fairy-tale Throne Speech, that was going to address the issue of the shortage of Manitoba Housing units in northern Manitoba. This government actively sells off housing units. In the town of Leaf Rapids, they just bulldozed another 25 houses rather than maintaining them and allowing people who need homes to live in them.

They made big announcements about a new seniors home in Flin Flon. They were going to provide some private entity to build this seniors home. Well, it's now been quite a few years and still no seniors home.

Everything that this government talks about in this Throne Speech—I shouldn't say everything. Most things they talk about in this Throne Speech are plans to have a plan. They announce big numbers, but the reality is that's not what happens and certainly not what happens in northern Manitoba.

We don't see them building hospitals; we see them shutting down hospitals. We don't see them addressing high-speed Internet; we see them abandoning the North completely.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): What a pleasure it is to speak to the Throne Speech on this Thursday afternoon. It's probably the 21st, 22nd time I've had an opportunity to speak to a Throne Speech, and it's exciting every time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to begin, as I usually do, by thanking my family for the support that they provide to me in elected life. All members know—because it's not a political issue—that families and other support systems are critical when it comes to serving in political life.

At all times, and maybe especially in the last few years as we've seen things change and become more difficult for all occupations, I think in life, but certainly it's true for elected life as well, our family support has become more critical. So very, very thankful for my wife, Kim, and my son, Malachi, my mom, my mother-in-law, my sister, my niece and nephews and, really, the whole extended family for the great support that they've provided to me.

It's a family dynamic, really, when it comes to politics, in many ways, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we serve better when we have that support at home. And I've been very, very lucky for the last 19 years to have that support at home, and so I want to begin with that.

Now, it's always exciting to speak about a Throne Speech, because it really talks about the priorities of a government and those priorities reflect the priorities of Manitobans, and that's true in this speech, as well.

And I've heard from some of my friends across the way who have said some derogatory things about the Throne Speech, and I understand that's the role of the opposition. I wasn't sitting here with any great expectation that they would stand up and be supportive of the Throne Speech.

But they also, I think, have to be careful in terms of the words that they put on the record. I don't mean be careful in a parliamentary sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that's your purview to ensure that we're all following the rules and the decorum of the House. But I mean careful in terms of not being so obtuse or out of tune with Manitobans.

Because you come into this House and you come into this Assembly, and you sometimes think, well, this is a partisan House, I'm going to act in a partisan way. And you start to say things that, you know, your constituents, if they heard you say it, would kind of look at you a little bit funny, a little bit strange.

And I've heard members opposite in this House responding to this Throne Speech talking about crime and saying, well, crime really isn't—it really isn't that big of a deal, it really isn't that bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, we heard the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) not long ago say it's really not that bad, you know, what's going on in the criminal justice system and that judges, you know—there's really nobody who's getting released who is a violent criminal.

And I would suggest to him—and I know he only does this job part-time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So he's only a part-time MLA and then he practises the other time, and he defends, you know—he specializes in a certain kind of defence of individuals. And that's fine. That's certainly part of the justice system.

But maybe because he's a part-time MLA and he's not doing this the way most of us do it, as full-time MLAs—and I would say, you know, I have friends on the other side, the New Democratic friends, who I know take the job seriously and who really put their full effort into this, because we're paid as full-time legislators and we should act as full-time legislators.

The member for Fort Garry, of course, has taken a different path and has decided to do this as a half-time job. He'll have to explain that to his constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (16:40)

But let's look a little bit beyond that, because some of the things he and other members of the NDP have been saying that this really isn't a serious issue, crime; I think if you would actually, in the half-time that he serves as an MLA, go and speak to his constituents and ask them—the good people of Fort Garry or beyond that in Winnipeg—and ask them if they really think that crime is a serious issue, I believe they would say yes, because they would recognize that something has changed in the last couple of years.

There's no question that a violent crime has increased in the last couple years. We don't have to talk about headlines or anecdotal sort of things; we can look at data. And it's not a Manitoba dynamic, it's a Canada-wide dynamic; it's a North American dynamic. In every province and virtually every state in North America, we've seen crime—particularly, violent crime—increase over the last couple of years.

Lots of analysis about why that could be. We could talk about the pandemic; we could talk about certain things that people weren't able to participate in the last couple years. I'm sure that there will be many

studies about those effects and what the effects, you know, were on the other side of the pandemic.

It's difficult to disassociate, though, the increased violent crime and property crime as well, and we hear that a lot in rural Manitoba, from, you know, the last two years. And yet, the member for Fort Garry and other members of the NDP say, it's not an issue; it's not a problem. In fact, I can't even remember the last time in this House any of the members of the NDP raised a question specifically about violent crime in this Assembly. Mr. Deputy Speaker, not a single question.

And you wonder why—you wonder why it is that they don't want to speak about it. Now, it might be that the member for Fort Garry is correct, and they don't actually think it's an issue. That actually might be the answer. Sometimes the simplest explanation is what appears to be the simplest explanation. And the simple explanation might be that the NDP don't believe that crime really is an issue, as it was stated by the member for Fort Garry.

He said on the record, in this House, that there are not violent criminals who are being released. And yet, we know statistically that that's not true. When we look and we—the reason why the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and our department has created this integrated, you know, violent crime warrant suppression unit, which is different than what existed before. I mean, member opposite talked about the NDP. That was a unit that wasn't focused specifically on high-risk offenders. They were going after a lot of, some would call it, lower hanging fruit. This is about going after violent offenders.

But we've seen that those violent offenders and the warrants that are outstanding for them have grown. They've tripled in the last three years. And part of that is because there were changes to the federal legislation that changed how bail is provided or how it can be argued against.

Now, the member opposite might say, well, I don't agree. I don't agree with myself. He can call me names; he can do all sorts of things, and that's okay because I can accept those sort of things. It doesn't really bother me and, frankly, I'm busy being a full-time MLA while he doesn't take the job seriously enough to put full-time work into it.

But I would say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker: if you would talk to the NDP Attorney General or minister of Public Safety in British Columbia—the NDP Attorney General and Public Safety minister, they

would say, very concerned about violent crime. And supporting the provisions we brought forward when we were meeting with ministers of Justice in Nova Scotia about three weeks ago, they were the strongest—the strongest proponents in supporting the proposals that we brought forward that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) spoke against and said they're not actually worthy.

That was true for Saskatchewan and Alberta as well. Of course, members might say, well, those are Conservative governments, in Ontario and the Maritimes, and some of those represented by Liberal administrations.

So NDP, Liberal and Conservative governments across this country supported Manitoba's changes to their Criminal Code, or proposals to changes to the Criminal Code. They supported what we said, that we said violent crime is increasing. In fact, they demanded that the federal government meet again to specifically make changes to the Criminal Code.

And yet here, in this Assembly, the NDP on the other side don't ask questions about crime, don't talk about violent crime. Every once in a while when they take the seatbelt off the member for Fort Garry and he stands up—if he's actually working as an MLA that day—he stands up and says, it's not an issue. Manitobans don't believe that it's an issue. It's not a problem.

Now, we can debate, I think, as reasonable people and as reasonable legislators, the solution to a problem. And the NDP might have different ideas of a solution, the Liberals might have different ideas of a solution. They can have those differences of what the solution might be.

But what worries me is they don't even believe it's a problem. And how disconnected do you have to be from your constituents to believe that crime in Manitoba isn't a problem? Don't ask the question about it, want to say that it's really not an issue and, instead, hurl insults across the floor.

And now, can you imagine if they were in government? And I know some of them over there are already measuring the drapes and all that kind of stuff, and they're getting ready and they're picking out their cars and that sort of thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I would say to Manitobans, and this is how I would speak to Manitobans when I have the opportunity: Can you imagine an NDP government who, for whatever reason, doesn't believe crime is an issue, doesn't believe it's something they want to talk about, would

rather be a half-time MLA—maybe they'll have—I don't know, if they were to win government, maybe they'd be half-time ministers and that kind of thing. I'm not sure how they would expect to do that. Maybe the member for Fort Garry will continue to just be a half-time politician.

But if they actually got elected into government and didn't believe that crime was an issue, as they've stated here, what would the repercussions of that be? What would the repercussions of that be if they said, we are just going to ignore it.

So, a throne speech is about priorities of a government, but more than that, it's about priorities of Manitobans. And Manitobans, as one of their priorities, have said clearly to us, we're worried about the increased violent crime rate; we're worried about the increase of property crime; we're concerned that there aren't enough RCMP officers; we're concerned that we're not seeing police in the presence that we want.

Now, I've heard from the Justice critic before say, we think that police have enough resources. They don't think that they need any more resources. We think that there are areas that are over-policed. I've heard, now, from the member for Fort Garry who has said that he doesn't believe that violent crime is actually an issue. How disconnected are those members from Manitobans?

Now, I understand why the MLA for Fort Garry's disconnected because he's only doing this as a part-time job. He sort of sees this as something that he just does once in a while. It's like picking up a job at Pizza Hut or something, he just—he does it for extra cash, I guess. And that's fine. He can do that if that's what his view is of what being an MLA or being an elected—I personally think that the good people of Fort Garry deserve better than that, but ultimately, if they want a part-time MLA, that's fine.

But to be disconnected from the views of those constituents, to believe that violent crime and crime in general isn't an issue is something I truly struggle with. But we will take, though, that message to Manitobans. We will let Manitobans know, because they need to think about it.

What does voting NDP actually mean? It means voting for members who are not working full-time, but beyond that, don't actually think that that crime that you're worried about is an issue; that when your home was broken into, they don't believe, according to the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), that

that's a problem. They don't believe that those issues are serious.

I hear the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) and others, you know, they're trying to—try to make comments. I suppose they don't believe this is an issue. Maybe they don't feel there's crime in St. James. Maybe they feel none of that is an issue. I would challenge him to take that to their constituents, to knock on the doors and repeat the words of the member for Fort Garry.

And if they don't, they don't have to worry about it because we'll repeat the words for him and for you, and we'll let your constituents know that you don't think it's an issue, that you don't think it's a problem, that you aren't worried about it, that you don't support going after the highest risk criminals who are—who have proven, through a broken warrant, to be dangerous. You don't support that.

You think that the police have enough resources. We heard that from the Justice critic: they don't need any more resources. We'll let them know that that is what the NDP think and then their constituents can make their own decision about that.

We'll let them know that they weren't as concerned about things like the Integrated Child Exploitation Unit, which we'll talk about further; not really an issue, apparently, according to the NDP. Why are we worried about it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is why a throne speech is important, because it lays out priorities. It speaks to priorities, but it exposes something else; it exposes when members opposite get up and speak to those priorities, in a House like this, how disconnected they are from houses that are in Fort Garry. Because this is a political House, but in the houses of Winnipeg, in the houses of rural Manitoba, the houses in Brandon and Steinbach and Winkler; in those houses where Manitobans live, they talk about those priorities.

And one of them is about keeping the lights on.

Can you still hear me? *[interjection]*

* (16:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, please.

We're just figuring out what's happening. *[interjection]*

Order, please. Sometimes this place reminds me of teaching days when something would happen and all the students would get very excited.

So, probably someone flipped a switch in the basement. They're checking on it. The audio works, the video works, so let's continue with the speeches.

The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor and if there's any more updates, I'll be sure to let the House know.

Mr. Goertzen: This reminds of the dark days of the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, at least with the academy, they start playing music when they want you to stop talking or—now they just start bringing down the lights.

But I will conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by reminding members of their own words. They're going to campaign—whether it's in a by-election now or in an election in the future—they're going to campaign on a message to Manitobans in rural Manitoba and in Winnipeg that crime isn't important, that there aren't violent criminals that are being released, that you don't have to worry because there's really nothing to see here and there's nothing happening.

And it's a symptom. It's a symptom of how disconnected the NDP are from what real Manitobans are saying. *[interjection]*

Ah, well, there we go. So, now we have a member of the NDP who are so disconnected from what's happening in Canada—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —to feel that the NDP in British Columbia have caused these issues, to feel that Liberal governments in the Maritimes have caused these issues. Maybe they feel that the NDP coalition in Ottawa have caused these issues.

Clearly, in the last two years, there have been changes and we will respond to that, and we will respond in a way to do our best to keep Manitobans safe. The solution on the other side is to pretend there isn't a problem. From part-time MLAs, from critics who don't want to talk about violent crimes, from leaders of the opposition, for their own reasons, don't want to talk about crime; that is their solution, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I can tell you we will take the message to Manitobans from this House to their house, from this doorstep to their doorstep. It might be dark in here right now, but we'll shine light on this issue of crime that is happening in the province of Manitoba and

remind Manitobans that they don't think it's an issue, that they want to work part-time, that they don't actually believe that it's something that can be solved or even should be solved because nothing's happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We will stand on the side of safety for Manitobans. We'll stand against those who want to cause violent crime, and if the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) and others want to continue in their part-time reality doing their part-time work, they can stay there.

And they'll stay in opposition with that attitude for a long time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So, just to update the House, I'm told they've figured out the problem and the lights should be coming on shortly.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): This Throne Speech was an important opportunity for this government to give Manitobans some hopefulness and, unfortunately, Manitobans did not walk away from that Throne Speech feeling any hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Manitobans are in darkness.

Mr. Sala: Yes, that's right.

Instead, what we heard was a lot of focus on things that, really, Manitobans have already heard before: recycled statements.

And, unfortunately, in the area that I think Manitobans are most concerned about, which is health care at this point in time, they certainly did not get any hope. Instead, what they heard was that this government's solution to our health-care crisis was to privatize more health care in Manitoba.

We've seen them, over the last many years, advance a number of privatization initiatives like outpatient physio—cancelling outpatient physio. Lifelight Air Ambulance, that's another example of this government's focus on privatizing in health care. Their increasing reliance on growth of agency nurses here in Manitoba; again, more examples of them privatizing over the last many years.

But this Throne Speech embrace of private health care is different. It feels different. It now seems that they've determined that, now that they've done sufficient damage to our health-care system and now that things are bad enough, that Manitobans may be willing to accept private solutions out of desperation because the situation is so bad.

And this, folks, this is part of their plan. Manitobans have known this. They knew where this was going, that this government was going to create a crisis and then seek to try to fix it with more privatization.

So, now that the impacts of those cuts have taken hold and now that health-care professionals across the province are leaving the profession in droves, we see nursing vacancy rates—eye-popping nursing rates in our hospitals, especially in the local Grace ER in my end of town, west Winnipeg. Now that people are routinely waiting 10-plus hours for care in emergency rooms, now that tens of thousands of people continue to wait for surgeries and diagnostic procedures, now they've determined that it's the time to strike. It's time to strike.

Why are they doing this? Well, we know, first of all, that this government is very, very ideological. Very ideological. And we saw, of course, that with the former premier, Brian Pallister, and we see it now with our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson).

But we know that privatization within health care will create significant profit-making opportunities for their buddies. And that's likely a very big reason why they're looking to take—sorry, I was going to say take advantage. The right of saying this was to exploit the situation that they've created.

I want to use this opportunity here today to put something on the record, to use this privilege I have to speak in this House to be very clear about this: that further privatization in our health-care system at this point in time would be disastrous, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's reckless, it's irresponsible and, frankly, it is offensive as a Canadian. We must say no to the privatization of health care in Manitoba, and that's especially true with this PC government.

We know, because evidence has showed us very clearly, what private health care does. We know that it makes health care more expensive and it lowers the quality of health care where privatization is used. We know that it deepens inequality and it will create a situation where wealthier people are given opportunities to get access to better care, and that's in the best of times.

And perhaps most importantly—*[interjection]*—and I hope that the member across who's chirping there is going to pay very close attention to this, because this is seriously a major concern—we know that the introduction of private health care right now will further erode our public health-care system.

And I ask the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon): Where would these newly privatized health-care services obtain their employees? Where are these individuals supposed to come from?

We don't even have enough individuals right now to support our public health-care system. Look at the disaster in our ERs. Look at what's happening at the Children's Hospital right now with it being overrun. Where does this government expect that they're going to find health-care professionals to work in the private system?

Well, I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where they're going to come from: they're going to come from our public health-care system.

That is a disastrous plan to further gut our public health-care system after what they've done over the last seven years, after their cuts have decimated our hospitals, have sent nurses running from our health-care facilities. This is absolutely the wrong direction to be going.

So, we need to call this out. We need to say no to the further privatization of health care in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order please.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.—*[interjection]*—right.

When this matter is before the House again, the member shall have 15 minutes remaining.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 17, 2022

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Home Care, Seniors Advocate and PCH Beds	
		Marcelino	41
		Johnston	41
Bill 2—The Official Time Amendment Act		Post-Secondary Education	
Clarke	31	Moses	42
Bill 3—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act		Reyes	42
(Name Registration)		Homelessness, Addiction and Mental Illness	
Helwer	31	Lamont	43
Tabling of Reports		Goertzen	43
Goertzen	32	Peter Nygård Assault Allegations	
Ministerial Statements		Lamont	43
Municipal Government Awareness Week		Goertzen	43
Clarke	32	Youth Justice Committees	
Wiebe	33	Lamoureux	43
Lamont	33	Goertzen	44
Members' Statements		Immigrant Women Experiencing Trauma	
Lundar Trap Club		Morley-Lecomte	44
Johnson	34	Squires	44
Simon Monteith		Northern Highway and Road Maintenance	
Lathlin	34	Lindsey	44
Dr. Elizabeth Grant		Piwniuk	44
Helwer	35	Petitions	
Manitoba Hydro Rates		Learning Disability Supports	
Sala	35	Gerrard	45
Tyndall Park Constituency Staff		Hearing Aids	
Lamoureux	36	Lamoureux	46
Oral Questions			
Health-Care System			
Kinew	36		
Stefanson	37		
Safe Consumption Site			
Kinew	38		
Stefanson	38		
Patient Transfers to Children's Hospital			
Asagwara	39		
Gordon	39		
Manitoba Hydro Rates			
Sala	40		
Friesen	40		

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