

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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

Wednesday, November 23, 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, Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**An Honourable Member:** Matter of privilege.

### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a matter of privilege.

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I rise on a matter of privilege. I have taken the time to review the relevant evidence and consult the authorities. This is the earliest opportunity to raise.

It is a fundamental privilege of every member in this House that they be able to perform their duties without interference. Every authority of this House is clear on the question. Assaulting, threatening or obstructing a member from doing their duties is a violation of privilege.

During yesterday's Tuesday, November 22nd, 2020, question period at approximately 2:40, the MLA for

Midland struck my chair with force to try and stop me from speaking in this Chamber. This was wrong. This assault by the member from Midland has shaken my—me to my core and made me question my safety in this Chamber, particularly as an Indigenous woman, as an—and as an Indigenous woman constantly at risk for violence, not only here but now—or, not only outside, but now in here.

I should be feel—I should feel safe here in my place of employment like every other member in this Chamber. Yesterday proved I'm not. The MLA for Midland may not like what I have to say, but the people of Manitoba sent me here, and I have every right to say what I need to say without being hit while I sit in my chair.

That's wrong. We don't hit people in their chairs when people are sitting in them and try to change the opinion of the person while sitting there, or stop them from speaking their mind. As an educator, as a parent, I know we teach our children to keep our hands to ourselves. As a woman, and as an Indigenous woman more particularly, I expected this never to happen in this Chamber. And I expect it to never, ever happen again to anyone else.

I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that this House—*[interjection]*—oh, Union Station. Sorry.

I move, seconded by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), that this House compel the MLA for Midland to apologize for his actions, refer this matter to a committee of this House to examine whether any further sanctions are necessary for the MLA for Midland, and to examine the question of how to ensure no MLA engages in any physical acts of aggression or any other act which prevents MLAs from performing their duties.

Miigwech.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by honourable members are limited to strictly relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity, and whether a prima facie case has been established.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I sincerely apologize if I caused any harm or grief to the member that—in this issues that's raised. My sincere apologies.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity to view the tape today of the issue that was raised by the member, the matter of privilege. I'm satisfied, and I know you might take that opportunity as well, that whatever was done was simply to try to gather the attention of the member. I would describe it as a tap on the chair.

The members opposite can view the tape themselves, as I did, and make their own determination. But I would conclude by saying, and I say this in a very heartfelt way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've known the member for Midland for a very long time, and served with him. I know his character; I know his heart; and I know his intentions. He's an honourable individual. And when he says that he was not intending to cause any harm or any concern to the member, I support and I understand and I believe him one hundred per cent.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers?

Matter of privilege is a serious concern. I will be taking this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

\* (13:40)

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 208—The Protecting Youth in Sports Act

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** I move, seconded by member for St. James (Mr. Sala), that Bill 208, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Moses:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, every child should feel safe on their own sports team. This bill would create a policy to protect children and youth in sports from abuse or harassment by creating guidelines for coaches, sports organizations, schools and parents.

Manitoba families have been calling for action from this government to keep kids safe in sports. So far they have missed the mark.

This bill will help to give families the peace of mind they deserve when their child joins a sports team.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

#### Bill 209—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary)

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Redhead), that Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for St. James, seconded by the honourable member for Thompson, that Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary), be now read a first time.

**Mr. Sala:** I rise today to introduce Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary).

Manitobans over generations have invested in Manitoba Hydro. It's our most important Crown corporation, but it is under threat. The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) of our province stood alongside her predecessor, Brian Pallister, while he broke up and sold off pieces of Manitoba Hydro. We believe that's wrong and that all Manitobans deserve a say before any part of Hydro is privatized.

This bill would require a referendum before any part of our Crown corporation is privatized, because all Manitobans should have a say before this Crown is broken up and sold off.

I look forward to debating this bill in the House as soon as possible, and I look forward to the support of all members for this bill.

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

Committee reports?

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to table the Communities Economic Development Fund quarterly financial statement as of September 30th, 2022.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** And I would advise the House that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with the rules.

Would the honourable minister please proceed with the statement.

### Manitoba Hydro's Finances

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, today our government is advancing an initiative aimed at further stabilizing Manitoba Hydro's finances.

The November 15th Speech from the Throne stated that our government will financially stabilize Hydro and that additional announcements will be made to ensure Hydro continues to be affordable for Manitoba taxpayers.

Manitoba Hydro currently has a debt-equity ratio of 87-13, which is very high compared to other hydro-electric public utilities in Canada. Financing costs, including interest payments and the fee, currently exceed \$1 billion. In addition, interest rates are on the rise. Today, the rate on the 30-year Manitoba bond is over 4 per cent versus just 3 per cent in January.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has been working hard to repair the shameful record and actions of the NDP over their 17 years in government. Manitoba Hydro is arguably one of the worst examples of NDP mismanagement, and their decision making resulted in higher rates for ratepayers and record debt for Manitoba Hydro.

We know the former NDP government tripled Manitoba Hydro's debt. We know that they raised hydro rates significantly more than under our government: 11 increases over the span of their 12 years in office, some years, hydro rates as high as 5 per cent.

Manitobans know that Hydro would not be in its current financial situation was it not for the NDP mismanagement of Keeyask and Bipole III projects, which saw cost overruns in excess of \$4 billion, while bypassing the very regulatory oversight processes designed to protect ratepayers and hiding escalating project costs in a diminishing business case.

Members opposite rely on fear mongering to hide their record, but Manitobans will not be fooled. They know that this debt has been saddled on the backs of Manitobans. They know this debt equates to \$16,000 per household in Manitoba.

In Moody's 2022 credit opinion for Manitoba, it noted that Manitoba Hydro's debt remained the largest contingent liability for the province and a credit rating downgrade risk. The Public Utilities Board opined that most payments from Hydro to Manitoba are driven by debt—the fee and the capital tax, which combine for about \$350 million—and not financial performance. The economic review of Bipole III and Keeyask also noted similar concerns identified by the PUB during the Needs For and Alternatives To Review.

Now is the time to act for a number of reasons, including rising interest rates, and the high level of debt carried by Hydro.

The opposition party says the answer is to freeze electricity rates at zero per cent, and ignore the ballooning debt carried by Manitoba Hydro. Not only is this irresponsible, but it would likely to have—it would be likely to have serious impacts on our credit rating. The NDP is not disclosing the serious risk of rate shocks and higher borrowing costs in an area of—era of already high interest rates and the impact of the costs on ratepayers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need only look to the east coast, where Nova Scotia, a bill introduced by the government to significantly limit rate increases to 1.8 per cent for three years—not the zero per cent proposed by the opposition—has led to a credit rating downgrade on Nova Scotia Power two days ago. Their bond status is now non-investment grade, which is credit-rating speak for junk bond status. Our government will not be taking the NDP junk bond status approach.

S & P Global Ratings view the enactment of the government—of the Nova Scotia government's bill as political interference, because it undermines the regulatory construct, materially weakens the regulatory jurisdiction's predictability and increases the uncertainty for its utility and stakeholders.

The Manitoba government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is therefore taking a much more prudent approach that will result in a very positive outcome for Manitoba Hydro, but more importantly, for Manitoba Hydro ratepayers.

As Manitoba Hydro indicated in its November the 15th rate application with the PUB, reaching bill 36 debt-equity targets will be challenging within the 3.5 per cent requested for 2023 and 2024. Following increases of 2.9 per cent in 2021 and 3.6 per cent interim rate approved by the PUB in 2022, the record

high inflation that households and businesses are experiencing today, we believe that working with the government's assistance, Manitoba Hydro can do better for Manitobans.

Hydro payments to Manitoba are higher than other public utilities to their provincial governments. Hydro pays over 16 per cent of its revenue in transfers to Manitobans, including the rental, the fee, capital tax and the payroll tax. Only Hydro-Québec pays more money to the provincial government, primarily because, with a lower debt-equity ratio of 70-30, it is solvent enough to also pay a dividend.

In this regard, I want to confirm today that our government has approved the following changes to better support Manitoba Hydro and better support Manitoba Hydro ratepayers:

Under The Water Power Act and accompanying water power regulation, Manitoba Hydro currently pays rent for the use of water. We have approved an amendment to reduce the water power rental rate by 50 per cent. Once signed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council, the order-in-council and regulation will be posted on the government's website under proactive disclosure.

\* (13:50)

A debt guarantee fee paid annually for the Province's guarantee of Manitoba Hydro's gross outstanding debt balances at the previous fiscal year-end is currently calculated based on the rate of 1 per cent or 100 basis points. Manitoba is reducing the rate of the fee from 100 basis points to 50 per cent—50 basis points, a 50 per cent reduction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the savings from these reductions will be applied annually to Manitoba Hydro's debt. For 2022-2023, these savings are estimated at nearly \$190 million. As part of this initiative, the government will require that Manitoba *[phonetic]* Hydro annually confirm the projected amount of the savings through the budget Estimates review process and report the actual savings realized in Manitoba Hydro's annual report as a payment against debt.

It is anticipated that applying these savings to debt will save Manitoba Hydro and ratepayers \$4 billion in accumulated debt over the next 20 years. Ultimately, the impact on rates will be determined through general rate application hearings and the Public Utilities Board.

As this initiative represents a material impact on Manitoba Hydro's 2022-2023 and future financial forecasts, we expect that it would warrant amendments to be made to the November 15th general rate application currently filed with the Public Utilities Board.

I would now like to offer just a little context on the previous administration's actions to impose higher rental rates and fees on Hydro.

Originally, when Manitoba began to borrow on behalf of Hydro in 1962, that fee was 12.5 basis points. It was raised by the previous government to 65 basis points in 2000, to 70 basis points in 2001, 95 basis points in 2002 and 100 basis points in 2007. Where other provinces assess fees ranging from 25 to 65 basis points, Manitoba was clearly out of line with other provinces; but no longer.

The water rental rate paid by Hydro was in place since 2002, when the previous government increased it from \$9.90 per horsepower year output to \$20.32, immediately doubling the rental paid to Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, Manitoba Hydro is important for Manitoba. Manitoba Hydro is one of our most important assets in shaping our province's economic future, and our government will continue to work with Manitoba Hydro in leading, in providing clean hydroelectric power for Manitobans and their businesses and offering among the lowest rates in the country for years to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our plan has always been clear that our plan is to stabilize Manitoba Hydro and protect the low-rate advantage enjoyed by Manitoba ratepayers. In particular, our government will continue to work to secure Manitoba Hydro's financial stability for the benefit of all Manitobans.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We have seated in the public gallery from River East Collegiate 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Dennis—*[interjection]* Okay. Okay. I'm told we will finish the ministerial statements and then acknowledge said students.

So please, the honourable member for St. James.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Nothing that the minister just shared will help to make Manitoba Hydro more affordable for Manitobans. On that side of the House, they introduced legislation to raise hydro rates. On this side of the House, we're working to freeze hydro rates for Manitobans, to keep rates affordable.

The PC government has been—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sala:** –interfering with Manitoba Hydro since they took office in 2016. Over and over again, they proposed big hikes in hydro rates. When they couldn't get their way, they increased rates at the—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sala:** –Cabinet table for the first time in modern Manitoban history. And they did this right before the holidays.

Last year they again proposed increased rates by Cabinet decree. Fortunately for Manitobans, we were able to help stop that bill from passing. But then they decided to completely change up the rules with bill 36, and now in just a few short years the—this government will be able to increase hydro rates by 5 per cent per year at the Cabinet table.

Their justification for these rate hikes isn't based in reality because, contrary to what they—this government wants us to believe, Manitoba Hydro is an important asset that is paying dividends. The PC government has tried hard to cover up Manitoba Hydro's finances. They hid the fact that they'd signed export contracts worth \$5 billion. Hydro profits this year are projected to be over \$500 million.

But the PCs don't want this message to get out. They want hydro rates to go up to make the corporation and its subsidiaries more lucrative for private sale. They're denying the facts to justify rate hikes and selling off—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sala:** –pieces of a Crown corporation. And that is wrong—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sala:** –Mr. Deputy Speaker. The cost for Manitobans are real. Because of PC government interference, Manitobans are paying hundreds more for hydro, with rate increases of over 30 per cent six—since 2016. [*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sala:** Manitobans deserve affordable hydro rates from a government that is honest and transparent about the state of Crown corporations and doesn't try to meddle in the independent rate-setting process. That's what they deserve, but that's not what they're getting from this PC government.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Does the member have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Lamont:** I think if we want to understand why Manitoba Hydro's problem is so bad, it's that Hydro has been good for the party in power. Whatever is bad for Hydro has been good for the party in power for about 20 years.

The bigger the cost overruns and the deeper Hydro's debt, the more government takes out of Hydro. And if this sounds like a terrible idea, it's absolutely right. [*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** And now the government apparently wants credit for reducing the amount that they're—for stealing from Hydro only half as much as they have been for the last 20 years.

The Manitoba—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** –government charges Manitoba Hydro water rentals, which is a pure rake-off, a debt-guarantee fee, which has been 1 per cent of Hydro's debt—even though the province guarantees the debt anyway—and a capital tax on Hydro's dams, and is set—has set up a truly terrible dynamic under governments in power, whether they've been NDP or PC. Because if a dam that's built is under-budget, Hydro pays less in capital taxes. If it pays down its debt, the province gets a smaller debt fee.

For 20 years, the PCs and NDP alike have been using Manitoba Hydro as an off-book way of hiding public debt, and Manitoba Hydro has been subsidizing the government, not the way—other way around. But, of course, if Hydro can't pay its 20-plus billion dollars in debt, all Manitobans are going to be on the hook.

Again, Hydro could have had lower rates and workers wouldn't be facing cuts, and the PCs would have no excuse to privatize anything if they'd actually followed the PUB's recommendation in 2018 to stop charging water rentals then to pay back the fact that they were politically ordered to build the Bipole III line.

Both the PCs and the NDP have relentlessly interfered with Hydro; they've both ignored the PUB. The Brad Ball [*phonetic*] report was inadequate, because it made recommendations that run completely against good governance to say that Hydro should be run like a government department, and not as an independent board-run monopoly, subject to the PUB.

It's an absolute—that was one of the worst things about Brad Wall's report, is when he said that Hydro needed to be run like a government department. Nothing could be further from the truth.

He also said that Manitoba should focus on low-cost power for Manitobans. Only on its core. Not on exporting power.

And why is this former Saskatchewan premier who demanded that Manitoba's equalization payments be cut because of Hydro, was hardly an impartial judge about what we should do with it. He also seemed—it's also, I have to question Mr. Wall's judgment, just simply since then, one of his clients was the convoy that laid siege to this building as well as the nation's capital. So we have to wonder whether he—what kind of perspective he has on politics and on policy.

Hydro could be profitable, investing in paying down debt all the same time, and it hasn't, because for 20 years NDP peep—NDP and PC policies have been taking about \$425 million every year, and that has been adding to debt.

\* (14:00)

When this government talks about the \$10 billion in debt that was added, they ignore that 40 per cent of that—\$4 billion since 2009, between 2009 and 2020—was taken out by the government.

Hydro's books over six years, from 2009 to 2015, the NDP took \$1.9 billion out of Hydro. But in just four years, from 2016 to 2020, the PCs took \$1.8 billion, and they've taken more since then.

So the fact is, the PCs have put a—have taken a lot more and added a lot more to the debt of Hydro from taking it out than even the NDP did. And it wasn't on projects, it was because the NDP and the PCs couldn't keep their hands out of Hydro's till, and they still can't. This decision today, this policy today, doesn't take the government's hands out of Hydro's till.

Now, at committee on bill 36, presenter after presenter said the same thing: instead of undermining the PUB, which this government is, and politicians engaging in price fixing, which this government is—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** —we need to follow the direction of the PUB in 2018 and stop taking that money out.

This government had no trouble finding \$900 million to borrow to pay to people outside of the province,

but they can't find funds in order to pay to put money—to help Hydro stabilize and recover. There is no justification—no justification—for a water rental or a debt fee at all.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay. Now I'd like to recognize we have seated in the public gallery, from River East Collegiate, 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Dennis Dekleva. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Rossmere.

We welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Falcons Football Club's Atom 7s Team

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I rise in the House today to congratulate the Falcons Football Club's Atom 7s team.

The Falcons are part of the Manitoba Minor Football Association. They play out of their clubhouse in Windsor Park.

This year, the team won every single game they played—a perfect season. They capped things off by winning their championship game on October 30th against the St. James Rods.

Parents and fans huddled together on a cold and windy October afternoon. I joined many proud parents as well as president, Sheldon Kobewka, and VP of operations, Jeff Wilson, to watch the championship match.

Everyone was so impressed with the team's accomplishments throughout the season, and the championship game was no exception.

The Falcons played near-flawless football as they dominated all three phases of the game. The offence was efficient and high scoring. The defence forced turnovers. Special teams gave the Falcons great field position all game.

I have no doubt that there are some future professional football players in their ranks.

The Falcons Atom team also know the meaning of sportsmanship. They were humble in victory and showed appreciation for each other and their opponents. It's one thing to win; it's another thing to win graciously.

I want to thank all the coaches who volunteered their time and did such a good job teaching these



athletes the game of football while also instilling lessons they will cherish forever.

I also want to thank the parents and guardians of the players, as they dedicated countless hours getting ready, driving to games and practices and providing support in the sun, rain or snow.

The season is now over, but the memories and friendships between these players will last a lifetime. I look forward to returning to IG Field next year to watch them defend their title.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm providing a list of names of the players, coaches and staff of the Falcons team to be included in Hansard, and I ask all the members in the Chamber today to join me in congratulating the Falcons football team on their championship.

*Falcons Football Club: Will Henry, Ainsley McPhail, Mike Ross, Will Sheils, Ken Stoesz, coaches; Breanna Usick, trainer; Jack Boblinski, Elijah Boluarte, Emerson Buchanan, Bamba Gadj, Niko Greaves, Junior Heinamaki, Ever Lennon, Logan Locke, Bradley Moreau, Elijah Okunnu, Malin Ross, Cruz Sheils-Bertone, Ryder Sinclair, Anthony Stoesz, Ben Willems, players.*

#### **Kildonan-East Reivers Football Champions**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to rise today to recognize and offer a well-deserved congratulations to the 2022 Winnipeg High School Football League Division 3 champions: the Kildonan-East Reivers, who join us in the gallery here today.

The Reivers motto is Respect All, Fear None, and it's reflected in the positive attitude and hard work that the student athletes embody both on and off the field.

After taking a step back in 2020 and 2021 to rebuild both a solid foundation and a positive culture within the program, the Reivers returned to the league this year in perfect form with a record of 10 wins and zero losses in their 15th season in the WHSFL.

The outstanding commitment of the athletes to stay humble as they worked hard and continued to learn was demonstrated in each and every game, which led them to their first divisional title in the history of the school's program.

This victory represents the culmination of 17 years of dedication and determination by countless students, coaches and staff, led by coach Jason Hawkins; also known as Coach Hawk. Coach Hawk, along with Lawrence Sangster, started the team in

2006, and over the years has produced a long list of amazing athletes, scholars and citizens.

The commitment of all team members and their coaches once again shows that football is a positive development tool for youth. It teaches teamwork, the importance of community and perseverance. The team's hard work shows through not only in their record, but through the impact they have in their wider community.

Today, I wish to recognize the students, athletes and young leaders on this team as well as the coaches, staff and parents who came together to make this victory possible. I ask that the names of the 2022 Kildonan-East Reivers be included in the Hansard and I ask that all members join me in congratulating the team on their incredible season. Go Reivers.

*Kildonan-East Reivers: Austin Alexander, David Amaliri, Dayson Anderson-McLean, Jesse Andrews, Aiden Armitage, Colm Balez, Olamide Balogun, Jordan Balsdon, Gavin Buckmaster, Charles Clarke, Lucas Cochrane, Tyson Egan, Daniel Epp, Ronin Evans, Hayden Fortier, Owynn Fraser, Josh Gill, Joshua Gudmundson, Parker Hill, Kyle Hines, Jayden Horvath, Riley Howard, Guilherme Janson Marinho, Bryan Lindsay, Yohannes Melaku, Jacob Millar, Logan Normand, Nathi Ollolo, Nicolas Omeniuk, Ruben Ortiz, Damisi Oshinowo, Sawyer Pacheco, Lyndin Paulic-Melville, Matthew Pike, Jaime Reoyo Coca, Jordan Ross, Aiden Simard, Mathew Skelding, Darius Totin, Jordan Treller, Cody Vanderveer, Ayden Walby, Declyn Walby, Cayden Walsworth, Jordan Warwick, Toby Zimmermann.*

*Gloria Harris, Liam McLauchlan, Jerry Shewchuk, Barry Sworyk.*

#### **Isabel O'Brien and Chloe Crockford**

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I'm pleased to rise today to highlight the accomplishments of two remarkably engaged high school students from Collège Jeanne Sauvé in my constituency of Riel—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** —named Isabel O'Brien and Chloe Crockford.

These two young ladies reached out to me earlier this year and advocated for menstrual products to be made available at no cost in all school washrooms. The students present—presented information about period poverty, and passionately articulated that it wasn't right that some girls across the province miss

school because of a lack of products during menstruation. They ended their letter with a call to action and asked me to do something about it. I was pleased to read their letters and appreciated their willingness to exercise their democratic right and get involved in issues they are passionate about.

After hearing from Chloe and Isabel, and as their MLA, we took action. In September of this year, the Manitoba government reached an agreement with Shoppers Drug Mart to provide free menstrual products to schools and other agencies to improve accessibility and reduce period poverty. Through this agreement all schools, domestic violence shelters, resource centres and second stage and specialized programs receive menstrual products to administer to those in need.

Following our announcement to end period poverty at Collège Jeanne Sauvé, both students, Chloe and Isabel, spoke to media. They said it best when they stated that menstrual products are a right, not a privilege, and should be safe and affordable for everyone.

Thanks to their advocacy, here in Manitoba we're progressing towards ending the destigmatization of menstruation and ensuring that no girl will ever have to miss school again because of period poverty. I commend these two individuals for taking action and getting involved in issues that inspire them. They are living proof that one voice matters and that one individual can make a difference in the lives of many.

I am honoured to represent them and today in the gallery is Isabel O'Brien and her father, Dan O'Brien. I ask all my colleagues to help me congratulate them for their achievements in helping end period poverty in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

\* (14:10)

### Health-Care System

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** There's a simple lesson every school kid knows: you break it, you should fix it. But, unfortunately, for Manitobans, with the PCs, if they break it, they try to sell it off.

We all know that the PCs broke our health-care system. They closed emergency rooms, they fired nurses, they cut hospital beds. But the PCs never met a problem that they couldn't try to privatize. Physiotherapy, privatize it. Air ambulance services, privatize it. Diagnostics, privatize it. COVID testing, privatize

it. Contact tracing, privatize it. Mental health supports, privatize it. Home care, privatize it. Nursing workforce—you guessed it—privatize it.

Brian Pallister and the Stefanson government broke our health-care system, and now they want to convince you that the only option left is private health care.

But Manitobans aren't buying it. Here's a quote from Dasha in Winnipeg, quote: My friends and family agree the PCs are deliberately failing public health care to clear the road for privatization. End quote.

Now, why would the PCs do this? Well, it's the same reason they give big cheques to billionaires. This is a government not for the average Manitoban but for the wealthy few.

Cornie from Winkler puts it like this, quote: I've spent a lifetime paying taxes to build affordable health care. Now these Conservatives want to give what we have already paid so they can benefit their billionaire buddies. End quote.

Let's be clear: American health care is not the solution.

A Manitoba NDP government would invest in public health care so your family has quality care when you need it. We won't make you pay for it. And even though—[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —even though it will take years to fix the damage—[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —that the PCs caused to our health-care system, the Manitoba NDP will fix public health care in Manitoba because it's a universal, Canadian value.

### Provincial Road 227 Upgrades

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I stand before you today to speak about a significant investment which is integral to Manitoba's economic prosperity.

Our government has committed to almost \$70 million for long-term upgrades to Provincial Road 227, which will benefit all Manitobans. Continued population and economic growth along PR 227 and regional economic activity has led to a significant increase in traffic volume. This investment will support pavement upgrades and three bridge projects for this east-west corridor and to ensure safety for everyone travelling this route.

These multi-year projects are expected to be completed with the next five years so the entire route has a paved surface. As part of our government's trade, commerce grid initiatives, these upgrades will make and enhance New West Partnership as it strengthens our economy.

The expanded grids of highways that accommodate heavy commercial loading will attract new industrial activity, reduce transportation costs and optimize supply chain efficiency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this investment is about safety, growing our economy. The municipalities and local residents set out on a mission to collect support in this initiative throughout this project.

I would like to thank everyone involved and all public support for this vital provincial highway network. What a tremendous investment in our province.

Mission accomplished, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Allied Health Professionals Collective Bargaining Contract

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Just like Brian Pallister, this Premier is failing allied health-care workers.

You can't run a health-care system without paramedics or lab techs or X-ray techs, and yet allied health-care professionals have been ignored by this government and haven't even been included in any of the flurry of pre-election announcement that this government is desperately making. In fact, they've been without a contract for some five years, and it's all because the Premier doesn't care about the people who work on the front lines of our health-care system.

Why is the Premier disrespecting allied health-care professionals?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Deputy Speaker, I want to thank all health-care workers in the province of Manitoba—indeed, around the world—for the incredible work they've been doing, particularly under these very difficult times in the last few years.

I also want to thank the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) for the work that she's doing in outreach into the front-line health-care workers right across this province of ours.

We are listening to Manitobans. We're listening to those on the front line to develop policies to help

them be able to do their jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's what the Minister of Health is doing.

While Leader of the Opposition wants to continue to put his ideology against health care in the province of Manitoba, we will always put patient care first.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a follow-up.

**Mr. Kinew:** Just like Brian Pallister, the Premier continues to ignore the health-care professionals on the front lines of our health-care system.

Paramedics across rural and northern Manitoba are working more and more overtime, and these folks are still without a contract after five years. They've been forgotten by this PC government.

Folks across rural Manitoba who are waiting longer and longer to get an ambulance are seeing the direct result of this policy of cuts from this provincial government.

Now, we know that EMS stations are being set to close by this PC Cabinet. Workers are being forced to work longer and longer for worse wages. And paramedics can't even work their full scope of practice in many parts of the province, like the Interlake. These folks have been demanding help for years, even as our situation in health care continues to deteriorate under this Premier.

Why is this Premier ignoring paramedics and allied health-care professionals in Manitoba?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the litany of false accusations again—once again from the Leader of the Opposition—he continues to put false information on the record within this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we are investing more than \$1 billion more in our public health-care system in the province of Manitoba, more than the NDP ever did when they were in power. We will continue to make those investments on behalf of Manitobans.

I will just note for the Leader of the Opposition, once again, 12,000 procedures that took place in private clinics across this province in the last eight or nine months alone this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those would have been denied by the Leader of the Opposition because they continue to want to put the ideology ahead of patient care.

We won't take that approach. We will always put patient care first.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** The ideology of privatization being spear-headed by this Premier and her PC Cabinet is what is impacting these health-care professionals.

When the paramedics go without a deal for five years and are prevented from practising at their full scope of practice, it drives them out of the profession. And then this government brings in private providers for stretcher service in the Interlake.

What's the result? You cannot get an ambulance when you need it in far too many communities across Manitoba.

What is the result? Patients are waiting longer and longer when they call for emergency assistant.

And what is the result? Those valuable paramedics are speaking with their feet and are leaving the profession. They're leaving the province. The decisions made by this PC Cabinet are having real-world results.

Why does the Premier continue to ignore allied health-care professionals like X-ray techs, lab techs and paramedics?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is just plain wrong.

As I said to the answer to his first question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) is out doing her work, reaching out to those that work in our front lines, including paramedics and other allied health-care professionals in the province of Manitoba. We will continue to do that.

We are listening to Manitobans right across this province of ours, and I can tell you, what they're saying is that they want to have health care here in Manitoba—closer to home. And I will say to the members opposite that if they continue to take an ideological approach like they are suggesting, those individuals will not be able to get that service here in Manitoba.

I can say to you, right now, by contracting out those services, more than 12,000 individuals got the services that they needed closer to home, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and more than 13,000 are about to get their procedures.

The question is, to the Leader of the Opposition: Will he deny them those procedures? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

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

### **Staffing at Grandview District Hospital Facility Closure Concerns**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** You know, it's really something to hear all the Premier's alternative facts day after day in question period.

Let's see if she denies this fact: December 1st is next Thursday—check?

\* (14:20)

Okay, that's the day that Grandview will not have enough nurses to keep their hospital open. That is a fact.

This is incredibly concerning to families in the Parkland. It means people will have to travel further to access essential medical care. It means there's an increased chance of compromised health care for residents, both of Grandview and surrounding communities.

We need to hear from the Premier what the plan is to keep Grandview's hospital open past December 1st.

Will she share those plans today?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** I just want to thank all of the health-care professionals working in the Parkland region for the incredible work that they do to provide surgical and diagnostic procedures for Manitobans within that region.

Of course, we know that Manitobans don't want to go back to those dark days of the previous NDP government, where they shut down almost 20 hospitals across rural Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can tell you that we will continue to work with our regions to ensure that they get the health care they need closer to home. That's exactly what we're doing.

We'll continue to work with them to ensure that they get those procedures.

**Mr. Kinew:** We need to hear a clear commitment from the Premier to keep the Grandview hospital open past December 1st and, unfortunately, we just didn't hear it there.

And, in fact, in the Premier's answer, you see a symptom of what is going on. There is a dwindling number of health-care workers in the Parkland region to care for residents in communities like Grandview. In fact, community residents are sounding the alarm now, because after December 1st there will no longer

be enough nurses to staff the hospital in their community. This is a facility that seniors rely on, young families rely on, people who experience emergencies rely on.

What can the Premier do today in terms of direct and concrete action to assure the people of Grandview their hospital will stay open past December 1st?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite will know that there is a human resource challenge within our health-care system. And it's nothing that is unique to Manitoba; in fact, it's right across the country.

We're working very closely and diligently with other provinces to ensure that we look at this as a—you know, all together so that we're not poaching from each other across the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's why we're calling on the federal government to provide more monies in the way of the Canada Health Transfer to ensure that we can attract those individuals to our country.

And I'll remind the member opposite, we are taking action: 400 more nursing seats, 2,000 more health-care professional seats as well, with a two hundred—unprecedented, \$200-million investment in those areas.

We are taking action, unlike members opposite.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Manitoba's health-care staffing crisis is worse than other provinces, and it's because of this PC government.

The situation in Grandview illustrates the reason why. Grandview does not have enough nurses or health-care professionals to keep their hospital open past December 1st.

The reason is, there has been an exodus of staff ever since this government announced that they slated the Grandview EMS for closure and then began making noises about potentially closing the emergency department. It turns out that health-care staff don't want to work in a community where it looks like the PCs are going to be closing health-care facilities.

This is a—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —rational response to years of PC cuts to health care. It began when the Premier was Health minister, and it continues to this day.

What specific, tangible, concrete steps can the Premier commit to today to keep Grandview's hospital open past December 1st?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Once again, the Leader of the Opposition will know that there are human resource challenges within the health-care system after a worldwide pandemic that we've recently faced, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that that's exactly why.

He asked what actions we're taking; I'll tell him: \$200 million invested in 2,000 more health-care workers in the province of Manitoba; 400 more nursing seats in the province of Manitoba. These are the actions we're taking after an unprecedented, worldwide pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When the Leader of the Opposition, the NDP were in power, they shut down more than—or, almost 20 rural hospitals. And that wasn't after a worldwide pandemic.

We are taking action, we are getting results and we are ensuring that we get the patient care for patients when they need it.

#### **Volume of Patients at Children's Hospital Request for Plan to Address System Capacity**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Deputy Speaker, Brian Pallister cut health care. He was enabled by every single member opposite. Hundreds of nurses left the profession, and health care has not been the same in our province.

At Children's Hospital, the situation has been very concerning. The minister suspended transfers from Nunavut and northern Ontario for many weeks. Children's Hospital is facing an unprecedented demand.

What is the minister's plan to safely treat young patients here in Manitoba?

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

I was pleased to hear that Dr. Roussin and Dr. Doyle from Shared Health, they held a town hall discussion yesterday evening with questions posed from parents. And over 15,000 people phoned in to listen, and it was also livestreamed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Shared Health has closely been monitoring the number of patients coming to the Children's Hospital. They will continue to make the best clinical and medical decisions for their patients.

I also want to remind the member opposite that decisions are being made by health system leadership; they're not being made here in the Manitoba Legislature.

**MLA Asagwara:** Deputy Speaker, last year this government said it had capacity for adults right up until the very moment they did not, ultimately flying 57 very sick ICU patients to other jurisdictions. Manitobans were kept in the dark.

The minister needs to provide a clear message about what she's being told about the situation at Children's Hospital and what is being done to safely treat young patients.

What is their plan to deal with the situation at Children's Hospital?

**Ms. Gordon:** Well, our plan is to continue to rely on the advice of public health experts, not members opposite, as well as the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Roussin.

And I want to remind parents and all individuals in Manitoba to get their bivalent vaccine and flu shots. It's extremely important, and I understand that Dr. Doyle and Dr. Roussin reiterated that during the call and with the parents who posed questions.

Because we are at the peak flu season and respiratory virus season, remember to follow the fundamentals: if you're ill, stay home, wash your hands, distance yourself, but look after your families and individuals who may be around you.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Deputy Speaker, young patients are waiting much longer for medevac to bring them to the hospital. Children's is overwhelmed with sick kids presenting with COVID, RSV and other illnesses. We're hearing from many worried families about what this means for their kids should they become sick and need access to the hospital.

A clear message from this minister and this government is needed. Families are asking for this.

What is the minister's plan to address the demand at Children's Hospital—an immediate plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that these families are asking for?

**Ms. Gordon:** Perhaps the member opposite missed the session that was held with Dr. Roussin and Dr. Doyle where they laid out the plan, where they're

encouraged parents and families to get their flu vaccine, to get their COVID vaccine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was our government that lowered the age for pharmacists to provide COVID vaccinations, flu vaccinations, so that it could be available in our local communities. I encourage parents and families to access pharmacies and their pediatricians and health professionals to get vaccinated.

Again, practise the fundamentals: if you're sick, stay home, wash your hands and—

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

\* (14:30)

### **Review of Provincial Parks in Manitoba Timeline for Release of Report**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** The PCs are not being transparent with Manitobans about their plan for Manitoba parks.

For six months, the PCs have been sitting on a review of our parks. They've already sent millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to a Texas company who provides passes for Manitobans to visit our own parks. Manitobans are worried that the review will lay the groundwork for even further privatization.

Will the minister do the right thing and finally release the parks report today?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks):** Again, our parks, as Manitobans know, were completely neglected under the 17 years of NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All the NDP did during their time in government was cut, cut, cut—in 2012, in 2013—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wharton:** —in 2014, 2015 and even in the last dying days of their government in 2016.

**Ms. Naylor:** The minister certainly has a lot to say, but without releasing the parks report—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** —that he's been sitting on for six months, we don't actually know if there's any truth or accuracy to it.

Because just like Brian Pallister, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the PC caucus are continuing their privatization plan for Manitoba parks. Manitobans don't want the PCs to sell off any more of our parks.

The minister must be transparent and share the parks report today with Manitobans: Will he do so?

**Mr. Wharton:** I know the member is probably really searching for questions, but I know the member has been told many times and the members opposite know that our parks are simply not for sale, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that.

And we know we're making continued—  
[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wharton:**—advancements, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They want to shout—[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wharton:**—want to shout me down, Mr. Deputy Speaker; that's fine, go ahead.

Member from St. Johns wants the floor—  
[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wharton:**—she can have the floor shortly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary—[interjection]  
Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** I understand the minister's tired of hearing this question. I'm certainly tired of asking it week after week but never getting an adequate response.  
[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** Manitobans don't believe the PCs—what they say, that they're not going to sell off parks—because they've already started their privatization agenda.

Manitobans deserve a response. The PCs must be transparent with Manitobans. The minister's had his park review in his hands for six months. Clearly, he's hiding the review.

He must do the right thing and release it: Will he do so today?

**Mr. Wharton:** You know, it's funny. I really like a question on transparency from the members opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here's some transparency: I was so happy to announce that our government was successfully tendered a new reservation system, and we are processing a final agreement with that supplier.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for years, Manitobans waited on the phone line—on the phone line—because they couldn't get Internet service under the former government.

In April this year, Manitobans will go online, they'll book their yurt, they'll book their provincial park space in—better than they've ever done in the 17 years under the NDP.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay, just—if we can just pause the clocks for just a quick second, here.

I'm informed that in the gallery we have mayor and council from Swan River, reeve from Swan Valley—and the reeve from Swan Valley West in the constituency of the member from Swan River.

We certainly welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature today.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Let's resume the clocks.

### Post-Secondary Education Funding and Tuition Costs

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Post-secondary institutions and students don't feel supported by this PC government.

Rather than partnering with institutions to help provide affordable and accessible education, good-quality education to students right here in Manitoba, the PC governments have actively worked against them.

They cut funding to post-secondary institutions by 18 per cent, forcing institutions to raise tuition to students and increasing fees. These cuts have hurt quality and accessibility of post-secondary institutions.

Will the minister simply do the right thing: Will he commit to stop cutting funding to post-secondary institutions?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said before, as outlined by Stats Canada, Canadian undergraduate students pay on average around \$5,000 here, which is one of the lowest in western Canada and way below the Canadian average of \$6,000.

The provincial contribution to the post-secondary institutions' revenue in Manitoba is around 39.2 per cent, way above the national average of 32.6 per cent.

**Mr. Moses:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the minister reads a boilerplate response, Manitoban students are actually suffering because of the cuts—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Moses:** —being made to post-secondary institutions. They cut funding by 18 per cent to universities and institutions in Manitoba. As a result, students are paying a whopping 25 per cent more than they did when this government took office.

It's had a clear impact. The quality and the affordability of institutions has been hurt because of this government's decisions.

Will the minister do the right thing, will he do it today and commit to stop cutting funding from institutions in Manitoba?

**Mr. Reyes:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, our government is committed to making life more affordable for students, and that is why we are investing over \$1 billion in post-secondary institutions while keeping tuition one of the lowest in Canada.

We are investing more in Manitoba's public post-secondary institutions' funding to ensure students have access to affordable, high-quality education while strengthening oversight of the post-secondary institutions to make sure our students get world-class post-secondary education right here in Manitoba.

Again, I don't know what the member has against affordability for students.

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

**Mr. Moses:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is that institutions and students are tired of having to call on this government to do the right thing. The affordability and quality of education has suffered, thanks to the decisions of this government.

Of—the funding cut of 18 per cent has had a real impact on institutions; as a result, tuition has gone up for students by 25 per cent. They want PCs to end their cuts. They want to have adequate funding to post-secondary institutions.

It's a simple question for the minister to answer now: Will he commit to stop—to stopping the cuts to post-secondary institutions right here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Reyes:** Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government continues to invest a record \$1 billion in post-secondary institutions, and average tuition in

Manitoba is around \$5,000, with the provincial contribution of 39.2 per cent to PSI revenue.

If we compare our numbers with British Columbia, the NDP government of BC contributes 32.4 per cent to post-secondary institutions' revenue; 6.6 per cent less than Manitoba, while the average tuition is almost 20 per cent higher in BC as compared to Manitoba—NDP BC.

Our government is committed to investing more in post-secondary while keeping tuition one of the lowest in Canada.

### **Economic Review of Bipole III and Keeyask Request to Table Progress Report**

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** I've asked the minister many times now about the Wall report recommendations that his government ordered Manitoba Hydro to follow—recommendations that called for privatization and breaking up of Hydro.

The minister promised to update Manitobans on the progress of these recommendations by releasing a report, yet he still has not delivered. The minister should be transparent with Manitobans and provide a report to this House before the end of this week.

\* (14:40)

Will he commit to doing so today?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** The member for St. James continues to lose on this issue, but if the pecking order of question period is any indication, he's also losing the battle in his own caucus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been clear. The commitment was to provide that response to the expert report on bipole and Keeyask—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —while the House was still in session this fall. And, as I see it, the House is still in session this fall, and so we're on time to bring back the review.

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

The honourable member for St. James, on a follow-up.

**Mr. Sala:** The Brad Wall report recommendations called for privatization and breaking up of Manitoba Hydro. These recommendations will lead to further rate hikes.



The PCs ordered Manitoba Hydro to implement all 51 of these recommendations, and that's why it's so important that the minister update this House on the progress of implementing these recommendations. The minister promised Manitobans he'd deliver a report on this progress this fall, yet he hasn't followed through—another broken commitment from the PCs.

Will the minister do the right thing and commit to providing Manitobans with the report by the end of this week?

**Mr. Friesen:** The PUB and the expert report on bipole and Keeyask both identified the challenge around the amount of revenue owed by Hydro to government, so I thank that member for a question on our government's historic action today to actually allow Hydro to retain 50 per cent more of the debt guarantee fee and the water rental rates which will help to stabilize the rates for Manitobans and stabilize Hydro in time.

This is exactly the action that we said we would accomplish. This is exactly the action that NDP is moving further and further away from with their atrocious approach of going zero, zero, zero and zero, and then hiding a 15 per cent increase in year 5.

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

**Mr. Sala:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, to no one's surprise, the PCs seem intent on breaking yet another promise.

They told Manitobans they would table a report on the implementation of the terrible Wall report recommendations this fall, but we've yet to see anything, and neither have Manitobans.

We know every Manitoban deserves to see the PCs' agenda for privatization and rate hikes.

Will the minister stop breaking his promises and table the report today?

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the facts are thusly.

That member has dug a hole for himself and he simply continues to dig it deeper. He spent weeks and months telling Manitobans that our plan would deliver these maximum 5 per cent rates. He knows it to be untrue. He brought a plan that he says will be zero per cent for ratepayers going forward in perpetuity, but we know that the consequence of that reckless action would be a 15, 20 per cent rate shock to Manitobans in year 5.

Will that member quit digging, grab a ladder instead of a shovel and try to resuscitate his failing narrative on NDP approaches to Hydro?

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Just quickly before recognizing the next member, if we can pause the clocks, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today—I hope that I say these names correctly: Gur Reet Pal Singh Brar, Ramandeep Kaur Brar, Sukhan Singh Brar, Ruhani Kaur Brar, who are members of—the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

We welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature. Welcome here.

### Capacity at Neonatal and Pediatric ICUs Request for Public Health Measures

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** A week after the Throne Speech declared the PC pandemic mission accomplished again, we are in a full-blown health-care crisis again.

The neonatal intensive-care unit is at capacity. The pediatric intensive-care unit is also at capacity. And I received a note from a nurse at—from HSC who said, HSC is so full right now due to respiratory, it's beyond unsafe. We are sending people home prematurely because there's no beds. We were short five nurses and ran out of people to mandate.

All we are asking for is basic public health measures to keep people out of hospital, like free masks, and to bring in new sick leave and business supports so people can weather this wave of infectious disease.

Will the PCs step up, or are we still all on our own?

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

I also want to remind him that it was our government that allowed Manitoba pharmacists to be able to vaccinate all children ages five and up. We lowered the age, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that they could vaccinate for seasonal flu vaccine, as well as for COVID, and it will directly help to keep them away from the hospital and keep them active in school and with their friends and their family.

And we've also invested \$3.6 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to expand eligibility for the high-dose flu vaccine this fall, the first time in this province's history individuals 65 and over can now—

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

The honourable member for St. Boniface on a follow-up.

### **Emergency Paid Sick Leave Request for Program**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are infectious airborne diseases, and the Health Minister never mentioned masks.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has said it's up to Manitobans to manage and decide their own risk. How can they do that when the government buries COVID information on its website? When people can't even afford groceries, how are we expecting them to pay for proper masks?

Nurses and doctors and health-care aides and everyone else can't work remotely, because if they don't show up for work, someone get—someone dies. And people can't work, either, because—if they're sick, or their kids are.

This government had no trouble finding \$900 million to cut cheques to property owners but not a dime for paid sick leave.

Will the PCs bring in emergency paid sick leave so Manitobans don't have to face the choice between 'groing' broke or infecting others?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Our government will continue to rely on the advice of public health experts as well as our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Roussin.

And I just want to remind Manitobans—parents as well—to get their bivalent vaccine. I was pleased to have my flu shot several, several weeks ago in the Southdale constituency. And at that time, I posted that information and encouraged parents, encouraged individuals to get their flu shot.

We are at the peak of respiratory virus season, and so I remind everyone again to practise the fundamentals. Stay at home if you're sick, wash your hands—

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

### **Manitoba's Tree Canopy Climate Change Mitigation**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, trees store large amounts of carbon, a key to saving the planet from the ravages of climate change.

In Costa Rica, a country-wide effort since 1996—including payments for environmental services—has produced a dramatic increase in trees and in their

forested area. In contrast, to date, the Manitoba government hasn't provided a shred of evidence that their actions have produced any net gain in trees or forested areas in southern Manitoba.

Is this why the government failed to mention trees at all in their Throne Speech? Does the government not see trees as important? Or does the government not have any data—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —and thus doesn't know if anything they're doing is making any difference at all?

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

**Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development):** I want to thank the member from River Heights for the question on trees.

Trees are a very important resource to Manitoba. Our forestry sector is a strong economic driver here in Manitoba, very important for our—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** —First Nations.

We're also looking at the rejuvenation of our forests. We're part—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** —of a 2-million-trees process here in Manitoba; we're planting trees throughout the province. I encourage the member to come out next summer and help plant some trees.

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

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

### **Association of Manitoba Municipalities Convention Update**

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye):** As of this afternoon, the AMM's annual fall convention has drawn to a close.

\* (14:50)

For the benefit of the House and the members opposite, would the Minister for Municipal Relations please provide an update on how the AMM convention went? [*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations):** I was a little concerned that, today, that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) would have run out of questions already this week. So I'm really

pleased that my colleague gives me a few minutes to speak about AMM.

And—*[interjection]* Well, it could take longer, and it was great to have Swan River and Swan Valley West councils here today. We had great time when—there with them this week.

But what the member opposite doesn't know is what was presented to the ministers yesterday from the AMM executive and their delegates was the successes in '21-22. And there are 13 very significant funding successes that they presented to us.

What did they tell us about those 13 successes?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order—government and opposition.

### **Labour Disputes in Canada Use of Notwithstanding Clause**

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** We all know that there are lines that should never be crossed, but Conservatives in this country seem to be willing to break any rule.

Doug Ford passed legislation taking away workers' constitutional rights. Every member of this House should be appalled. We should speak as one voice saying that this is wrong.

Will this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) or anyone on that side stand with workers and speak out against the use of the notwithstanding clause, and will they do so now?

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** Well, I'm very pleased to work with employers in Manitoba as they negotiate with your unions. That is the role that they take, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We've had—seen some very great successes in Manitoba that those employers have struck deals with the unions that—of the staff that they employ. I'm pleased to see that those processes continue.

We see those negotiations under way, and apparently the member across doesn't like collective bargaining, but it's been working to great success here in Manitoba.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a follow-up.

**MLA Lindsey:** This House should speak unanimously against the actions of Doug Ford and his

Conservative government. Ontario have repealed the legislation, but Conservatives made it clear that no right is safe.

This minister should speak against it, and he should, right now, promise before this House that they will never invoke the with—notwithstanding clause to take away workers' rights.

Will he do so now?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, perhaps the member opposite is a little confused, because I am the Minister for Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services for Manitoba. Those are the areas that we deal in; not in Ontario, not in Saskatchewan, where he licenses his vehicle. Those are things that are up to him, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, we deal with the employers and the unions in Manitoba, the negotiations—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Helwer:**—continue. They are ongoing. We've had very good success with those negotiations.

The collective bargaining is well under way in Manitoba, and it's a very healthy environment right now. There's lots of good consideration between the employers and the unions here, and we see that ongoing in—

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

The honourable member for Flin Flon—*[interjection]*—on a—*[interjection]* Order.

**MLA Lindsey:** While this minister dances all around—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Lindsey:**—and refuses to answer the question—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. *[interjection]* I'm—order.

I'm standing, all members need to not be standing, thank you. I'm calling the government benches. Please, tone it down.

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

**MLA Lindsey:** The Ford government waived protections under their provincial human rights code, protected rights waived away whenever it suited a Conservative government. All governments should stand united against this practice.

So, will this so-called Minister of Labour stand against the use of the notwithstanding clause? Will he stand against the use of waiving away workers' constitutionally protected rights, and will he do that right now, or will he just continue to ignore the question that's asked?

Let's hear what he has to say.

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, the condescension in the member's voice is quite something, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, I'm very honoured to have been appointed the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services under this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), the first female premier leading Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We are making a difference, even if the members opposite can't.

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

Petitions?

Seeing no petitions, orders of the day.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Could you please call for resumption of debate on the Throne Speech.

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

#### THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** So we will now continue debate on the motion of the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), and amendments thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Vital, who has seven minutes remaining.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** I'm pleased to again have the opportunity to rise on Throne Speech and conclude some of my remarks, as I was saying that there's, you know, a lot that this Throne Speech missed out on and clearly did not reflect the true sentiment and feelings of what Manitobans are looking for, provided no vision in terms of how we're going to tackle so many challenges that we currently face.

What I would like to speak about right now is how this government, through its words—or lack of words—

in the Throne Speech put attention to the concerns that students have shared over the course of many years about what they've been seeing from this PC government.

Those concerns are—include but are not limited to the fast rise of tuition, the fact that it is far more expensive now than it was in 2016 to afford to go to college or university—up to 25 per cent more expensive since this government took office.

Another includes the fact that tuition—that funding has been cut by 18 per cent—can you believe that, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that since 2016 'til today, funding at post-secondary institutions has been cut by 18 per cent? They've had real consequential impacts, real impacts.

And these impacts don't just spill out to the institutions and make it harder for them to recruit, which it does. It doesn't just make life for students more challenging by affecting the quality of education, which it does. It doesn't just make it—puts more pressure on institutions to raise tuition, which it does. It doesn't just put pressure on international students, whose tuition is sometimes three or four times more expensive than domestic students, which it does.

But it also impacts our economy right here in Manitoba, because as we don't educate the next generation of labour workers in our province, we're doing harm to businesses who want to employ skilled workers in Manitoba. And so when businesses, when enterprises, when entrepreneurs come to the Minister of Economic Development and say, I'm looking for really good, skilled workers to work in Manitoba, what is the minister going to say to them, why we don't have any?

\* (15:00)

Is he going to explain how he was—his cuts forced students to make difficult choices and maybe delay or slow down or not go to university or college in Manitoba, and that's why we have a lack of well-educated, well-skilled, well-trained employees ready to come and enter and energize our economic system.

Is that why? Is that what he, the Minister of Economic Development, will tell enterprises and businesses and private sector institutions, partners in Manitoba? Well, I hope so, because that's the truth. Because that's what's happening right now. That's what we're seeing.

That doesn't even account for one of the biggest concerns I've heard from students, and that's the fact

that international students don't have provincial health care. Can you believe that? We invite international students to come here so that they can be a part of Manitoba, be a part of our education system and our part of our economy.

And how do we treat them when we—here? Well, I'd like to think that we would treat them as Canadians and as Manitobans. But sadly, this government obviously doesn't see them as full-fledged Manitobans because they don't even grant them Manitoba health care. They don't give them Manitoba health-care coverage. They don't.

*Mr. Brad Michaleski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

They force them to get private insurance. Again, another area where this government has chosen to privatize our health-care system. They force them to take private health-care insurance and, as a result, that—they—we pay, Manitoba international students pay the highest amount for health care in the country—over \$1,000 a year for health-care coverage.

The—and mind you, that health-care coverage is not the same as what a domestic student can get. It doesn't match life for life with the provincial health-care plan. As a result, service providers don't actually provide services off the—right off the bat. They're very skeptical as—when they show them their provincial health—their private health-care coverage, they say, well, really? Can I take this? Can I accept it? It's not a Manitoba Health card, so can I accept it?

And what happens is many international students know that and they're reluctant to go even seek care in the first place. And they get more disastrous health-care results.

So, can you imagine during a pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're here in the middle of a pandemic, where people are getting sick. We need to provide people with health-care supports. And what does this government do? They continue to refuse to allow international students to get coverage on the provincial health-care plan, forcing them to, you know, not seek care when they need it, get sicker, face worse outcomes; all the while paying for these services out of pocket and hope they get reimbursed. It's a hope.

And we know that there has been disastrous impacts where students have fallen through the cracks and faced bills of tens, of hundreds of thousands of dollars. And that's not the Manitoba I would want to welcome an international student to. That's not the

type of place that I would say, you know, I'm welcoming you here with open arms.

And as a result, we're seeing Manitobans—people leave Manitoba with the largest net out-migration in this country's modern history. Over 10,000 people came to Manitoba and said, no; life is too difficult because of this PC government.

And they left; they left and went out of province. They went to other provinces after being here in Manitoba in droves because of some of the worst decisions by any provincial government in the country—this PC government.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks today by saying unequivocally that we do not support this government's Throne Speech. There's so many callous areas where it doesn't reflect the true vision, the true want, the true needs of Manitobans.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we wholeheartedly say that this province can do better, it should do better and with a future NDP government, it will do better.

**Mrs. Cathy Cox (Kildonan-River East):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's always an honour to rise in this House as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the hard-working people of Kildonan-River East.

And it really is the people that make the difference. It's a statement that perfectly reflects the families of Kildonan-River East. My dad instilled in me to always stand up for what I believe in, and his comment has guided me during the—my entire time as an elected official.

Over the past two years, we've all experienced immense challenges. We've had to sacrifice visits with our families and friends, delay our travel plans—*[interjection]*

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Order.

Just want to let everybody know in the House, if you can, keep the level of conversation down. There's quite a bit going on in a number of different camps in the room, so if you could, so we can hear the member.

So, we'll go back to the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Cox) has the floor.

**Mrs. Cox:** Over the past two years, we've all experienced immense challenges. We've had to sacrifice visits with family and friends, delay our travel plans and say goodbye, unfortunately, to those who succumbed to the pandemic. But despite these challenges, we have emerged even more united as a community.

And when I reflect on the war that continues to rage in Ukraine, the homeland of my ancestors, community is what first comes to mind. I have seen remarkable acts of kindness and generosity from within my community: churches, families, children and businesses all stepping up to make a difference for those forced to flee their war-ravaged homes. This is community, Mr. Deputy Speaker; this is Kildonan-River East.

I am personally grateful to the families of Kildonan-River East for their unwavering support. They are my motivation, and I promise to do my very best each and every day to represent them, whether in this Chamber or on the streets of our community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so profoundly grateful and proud as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Kildonan-River East to represent such a vibrant and diverse community. Earning the respect and support of my community is a privilege I never take for granted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Kildonan-River East has an abundance of notable restaurants, shopping and even two—yes, two—spectacular 18-hole golf courses within its boundaries.

There's much to explore and a multitude of activities for constituents of all ages to enjoy regardless of the season. And I'd like to take a moment to share and, yes, brag, about a few of those attributes that make Kildonan-River East the very best place to call home.

Bunn's Creek, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a notably— is notably one of the most beautiful green spaces within our city. It hosts picnic and barbecue areas, children's playgrounds and a magnificent canopied walking trail that gently weaves its way along the Bunn's Creek to the historic Red River. The trail is a favourite frequented by families, seniors and avid photographers hoping to capture that perfect shot of the multitude of wildlife that reside within the park. During my many walks of the trail, I've observed the snowy and horned owls, coyotes and foxes, to name just a few.

And the Northeast Pioneers Greenway is one of the neighbourhood's most popular active transportation corridors. Regardless of the season, the trail is a year-round space for families, teens and seniors to walk, run or bike or just get out and enjoy the day. I personally clocked thousands of kilometres walking that trail and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can attest that the

member from Springfield-Ritchot is also a frequent trail user.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, snuggled along the banks of the mighty Red River is Kildonan Tennis Club. Established in 1937, the club was originally known as Kildonan Canoe Club and it included docks along the riverbank. The courts are popular with players of all ages, and the club also hosts a fantastic clubhouse with views of the Red River that will leave you breathless.

I'm immensely proud to represent the historic and treasured Kildonan Park. Established in 1909, Kildonan Park is a destination must for visitors of all ages. This premier park features a duck pond, amazing walking trails that wind gently along the historic Red, amazing—the famous Hansel and Gretel Witch's Hut, an Olympic-sized outdoor pool, picnic shelters and barbecue pits. It's also home to Canada's longest running outdoor theatre, Rainbow Stage.

And we're not done yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Kildonan-River East is also home to Winnipeg's oldest municipal golf course. It was just last year that Kildonan River—Kildonan golf course celebrated its 100th anniversary. And nestled along the banks of the historic Red River, its fairways challenge players at all levels.

And further to the north is another river trail located in McBeth Park that is perhaps one of Winnipeg's best kept secrets. Snuggled in Rivergrove along the winding Red River, this trail is home to some of the largest cottonwood trees in all of Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm always in awe as I walk this riparian forest and encourage all members of this Chamber to take a walk along these towering cottonwoods, and it's an experience you'll never, ever forget.

\* (15:10)

And finally, and last but not least, is Shooters golf course, where golfers can choose from a game of mini golf to a round of 18-hole executive golf play on any of their fairways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has made record investments in our communities; 2022 was a banner year for Kildonan-River East, with our community receiving over \$279,000 in Building Sustainable Communities grants. I was proud to advocate for these important community projects, and I am pleased to share with the members just a few of the successful recipients: Red River Community Centre, \$14,392; the Movement Centre of Manitoba, \$18,275; Peace

Lutheran Church, \$46,688; St. Nicholas Tavelich Roman Catholic church, \$75,000; North Kildonan community church, \$2,790; and North Kildonan United Church, \$29,097; and the Snow Raiders Snowmobile Club, \$75,000; and our beautiful Kildonan Tennis Club, over \$18,000.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Green Team grants for Kildonan-River East totalled over \$75,000 in 2022. I'll quickly list a few of those recipients that include Kildonan Presbyterian Church, Razorback BLAST, St. Anne Ukrainian Catholic Church, Historic Kildonan Church and Cemetery, Sugar-n-Spice Kiddie Haven and Waterways reception.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to recognize our government's efforts to support those suffering with mental health challenges. Our government's commitment to establish a separate, standalone department referred to as the Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness, together with the addition of 1,000 addiction treatment spaces and more support for suicide prevention will set the direction for mental health, wellness and addictions treatment well into the future.

Mental health does not discriminate. It affects families from all walks of life. I know because, as I've shared previously in this Chamber, I lost my brother, Gregory Sawula, to suicide just days before Christmas on December 23rd many years ago. I will never forget receiving that call from my dad. It rocked our world. Our lives and our families were changed forever.

And while Christmas is a joyous and festive time for most families, we must be cognizant that it is also a time of darkness and despair for others. For years, I hid my brother's passing, not even sharing with our own sons for fear that they would consider suicide as an option. Now I share this story so others know they are not alone in their battle against mental illness.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we look forward to the Christmas season, I ask my colleagues to be kind and remember those coloured lights do not shine brightly for everyone. Reach out and lend a hand to those in need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government inherited a huge mess and we recognize there is much to do to clean up that mess. The Speech from the Throne lays the foundation to improve life for all Manitobans. Our government is committed to making our community safer, helping families make ends meet, reducing the surgical and diagnostic backlogs and protecting our parks and building strong communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is investing in families. We're investing in our elderly. We're investing in our children and those individuals needing a hand up. Our priority is improving the lives of all Manitobans.

And as I conclude, I'd like to, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank my family for their unwavering support over the past six years. I love them all and thank them for their patience, understanding and compassion.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** I welcome the opportunity to be able to put some words on the record in response to the government's Throne Speech.

I've had a number of days now to reflect on the Throne Speech. I did have an immediate reaction that I put on social media in regards to the very concerning themes that were in the Throne Speech, specifically around this government's clear agenda to further privatize health care, their decision to criminalize vulnerable people who are struggling in our communities.

But I do feel grateful that I've had a few days since then to really reflect on the Throne Speech, to read it a few times and to determine what I think is really important to share, in terms of my response.

I want to thank my colleagues on this side of the House, my NDP colleagues, for their remarks, the folks who have already put words on the record. Now, every time I listen to a colleague's response to the Throne Speech, I'm reminded as to why I decided to run as an NDP MLA. My colleagues are folks who genuinely care for their communities, who put people first and who recognize the significance of being able to be in this place as an MLA and the responsibility that we hold.

First, I'd like to thank the constituents of Union Station. I've been an MLA since 2019 and it has been an absolute honour and privilege to represent every single person who resides in our community.

I absolutely love the constituency of Union Station. I have been connected to this community in some way, shape or form for almost my entire life, and I shamelessly brag that Union Station is the best constituency in the province, hands down. We have art galleries—we have, you know, the biggest art galleries—the WAG; we've got small, almost independently run art galleries. We've got the best restaurants, as far as I'm concerned, in the province. We've got an

incredibly diverse and dynamic community that cares for one another, that is creative.

We've got so much in our condensed community boundaries that really allow me and support me every day in being able to wake up excited to be their representative.

And one of the things that I'm most grateful for is the fact that people trust me as their representative, to bring their concerns to me and to our office and to our NDP team. I hear not only from Union Station constituents and residents, but I hear from folks all across the province, who understand that if they bring their concerns to our team, we're going to listen to them, we're going to believe them and we're going to advocate on their behalf and help them however we have the capacity to do so.

And so, I stand up today in this House in response to the Throne Speech as someone who takes my role as the MLA for Union Station very seriously, as someone who takes their role as the critic for Health and Seniors and Long-Term Care very seriously and as someone who recognizes that this government, since 2016, has been very intentional about their decision making. And as a direct result of that, we are all now seeing the damage that they have caused and how that harms Manitoba families.

I'm going to start by talking about health care. You know, privatization has been the agenda for this Conservative government, first under Brian Pallister, supported by every single member of his PC caucus. And then, you know, that agenda carried on by the more recent Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and she has made explicitly clear in the Throne Speech that they fully intend to privatize as much health care in Manitoba as possible.

And it's interesting because the Premier makes a point of saying that it's an ideological approach on this side of the House that would not see privatization happen, that she claims it's helping Manitobans.

And yet, the Premier thinks Manitobans have such short a memory that they wouldn't be able to put together that the Premier, when she was former minister of other portfolios, certainly the former minister of Health and now Premier of the province, she has been a part of a government that has systematically dismantled some of the most important aspects of our health-care system.

This—we're talking about a government that has callously, without regard for impact, mistreated and disrespected health-care workers from day one. This

is a government that cut physiotherapy, outpatient physiotherapy and occupational therapy from our hospitals.

\* (15:20)

This is a government that fired nurses, that sent nurses into tunnels under the hospital at HSC to look for positions and compete against one another after finding out their positions were altogether deleted.

This is a government that has literally made decisions that's resulted in people—as a part of a backlog, on waiting lists for health care. And people have died waiting for health care in Manitoba.

And then for the Premier to claim that, somehow, further privatizing health care is to the benefit of Manitobans in a time where we have a health-care human-resource crisis, in a time where we have people who have died waiting for essential procedures and tests, in a time where the folks that she wants to parade out as shining examples of why privatization works—those very same people have been waiting years for care as a direct result of her terrible decision making—it is embarrassing, quite frankly, that the Premier, Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) and other members—all members of the PC caucus, actually—think that Manitobans have forgotten the decisions that they've made that have resulted in us getting to this point.

It is nonsensical, quite frankly, to me, that the Premier actually believes people would prefer to get surgeries in another country versus getting them in a timely manner right here at home. It's insulting, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, is what it is.

And, you know, Manitobans deserve to get the health care they need in a timely manner, in their own communities, without needing a passport, without having to pay money out of pocket for travel fees, for food, for their loved ones to take time off of work to be there with them, if that's even possible, when they go to another country for private care because this government has undermined our public health care so much that it doesn't have the capacity to provide that care here at home.

It is a 'fundal'—fundamental value that we have a strong public health-care system. It is a value that all of us recognize as a Canadian value. It is a value that all of us recognize as important. The vast majority of Manitobans will always need to access public health care, even those who this government sends away to other countries to get the care that they cannot receive in Manitoba as a direct result of this government's



cuts. Those folks will also need to access the public health-care system.

So, it is disingenuous when the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) celebrates cutting health care so much that she tries to convince Manitobans that privatization is the answer, when it's not. It is disingenuous when she makes comments like, we're going to get 2,000 more health-care workers into our health-care system, while also privatizing health care, when we don't have enough folks in the health-care system as it is. Where does she think those folks who she wants to work in the private sector are going to come from?

The Premier's agenda, that was Brian Pallister's agenda that she now carries and—the flag for is the wrong approach. It is hurting Manitobans. It will hurt Manitobans down the road. It is against our fundamental values in terms of how we see health care, and Manitobans know that it's wrong. They don't want it.

I also want to speak to the addictions crisis, the overdose crisis that we have in Manitoba. And I want to talk about something that was in the Throne Speech. And I recognize that, you know, members in this Chamber on the opposite side of the House aren't listening to what I'm saying, and so I want to be clear that my remarks are to Manitobans. I am speaking directly to Union Station constituents; I'm speaking directly to Manitobans.

I have no hope whatsoever that this government is suddenly now going to start listening to voices of reason. I have no hope that this government cares about a single thing I have to say, so I am speaking directly to Manitobans.

In the Throne Speech, where this Premier and her entire caucus think it's appropriate to say, and I quote, that their 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. End quote.

That statement is so incredibly offensive and hurtful, and every single Manitoban who is struggling with addictions, who is unsheltered, every single Manitoban who would have heard that statement needs to know that that statement is wrong.

You are not deserving of being criminalized, of being penalized, of being surveilled, of being policed and hyper-policed. Your struggles and experiences are not automatically equated with policing and crime. That is a false and harmful narrative from this

Conservative government that has nothing to do with you. They should be ashamed of themselves for including that in their Throne Speech, for speaking that into this House, for sharing that message with Manitobans.

Every single person in our province who is struggling with addictions, who is unsheltered, who has heard the harmful words this government has said; you are deserving of love and compassion, and care and health care and services; you are deserving of a government that sees you as a whole person and treats you as such.

And you can trust, even as the minister for mental health wellness heckles me right now and tells me—tells you, because I'm speaking to you—that the only thing you deserve is a government that believes strictly only in the narrative of recovery, dismissing all other aspects of health care, that you deserve to live a full life and to save your life. Do not listen to people like the Minister of Mental Health, who would try to shame you for what your experiences are, who would try to shame you for what your family is going through.

If you are in a place right now where what you need is food and shelter and compassion, and someone to listen to the trauma that you've experienced in your life and to offer you care in the form of health care; whatever stage you are at, you are deserving of that care, you are deserving of that service. There is no place for judgment or shame whatsoever in any leader in this place, in our province.

That is my message for Manitobans who have been hurt and harmed by this government's statements.

I want for folks to know that, when the Minister for Mental Health heckles me and makes these comments, or the minister—or sorry, the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), I believe it is, makes comments like, if you believe in the harm-reduction approach of supervised consumption sites, you're on the wrong side of the issue. I want those folks to know this: the people who are on the wrong side of the issue are the people who know that last year, 407 Manitobans died of overdoses, and yet they choose to not take the action that 80 front-line organizations who are actually saving lives are asking them to take. Those people are on the wrong side of the issue.

The people who are on the wrong side of the issue are the people who would do nothing, who would actually cut the budget around community health, public health, while we see the highest rates of

congenital syphilis across the country here in Manitoba, an entirely preventable disease here in Manitoba.

The people who are on the wrong side of the issue are the people who are taking a callous and dehumanizing approach to the hundreds and thousands of families that are struggling with very real issues today.

You are not on the wrong side of the issue; this government is on the wrong side of the issue. And on this side of the House, we stand with you and we will continue to stand with you, on the right side, to make sure that lives are saved, to make sure that families have the care that they deserve and to make sure that we destigmatize this aspect of health care.

Even as members laugh in the PC caucus as I'm making my remarks, my priority, along with my colleagues', is Manitobans. Our priority are your health outcomes. Our priority is that of your families' outcomes. And you can lean on that. You can guarantee—you can trust that.

The last thing I want to talk about is community safety. This is an area that I know is on the minds of many people. And again, we see an approach from this government that is so tired, that is disproven and is punitive. And I've used this word before, I'm going to use it again—that is harmful.

\* (15:30)

This government's approach to all of the sudden say enough is enough, which, quite frankly, doesn't even make any sense, given they've been in government since 2016. So, what they're saying is enough is enough of their own terrible decision making. Enough is enough in terms of the ways they've cut services which help people. Enough is enough that they've taken money directly out of neighbourhoods and communities that need it, that use those funds, like Neighbourhoods Alive!, to keep their kids safe and healthy and families engaged, and put it in wealthy communities.

This government is actually saying enough is enough in terms of their own bad decision making, and then they go on to make even worse decisions when it comes to community safety.

Our approach on this side of the House is to listen to communities, is to support communities who know how to keep themselves safe; support organizations that put people first and have care at the centre of what they do; to take a prevention approach; to not be reactive after being a government since 2016 that has

deliberately cut the services and attacked the root that communities need to be strong in order to thrive.

We will support front-line organizations. We will invest in prevention. We will address housing. We will treat people struggling with addictions and problematic substance use as whole people deserving of dignity, respect and care.

We will support and bolster public health care as a fundamental value to make sure that, no matter how much money you do or don't have in your bank account, you will have access to good quality public health care in Manitoba.

We will make sure that we take an equitable approach to decision making. We will actually talk about the importance of being anti-racist, because that matters and that makes a difference. Those are words this government can't even utter.

On this side of the House, we recognize that Manitoba is a diverse and dynamic and beautiful province with people who have a vision for what this province can and should be. People are excited about the opportunities in our province if it's led by a government that actually compassionately cares about its citizens and residents, and they know the NDP is the party, is the caucus that can deliver that leadership and will deliver that leadership.

Manitobans are tired of this tired government. They are fed up with a government that cares only about themselves, cares only about profit, cares only about the opportunity of the day to try and clean up yet another mess they've made or maybe put a little bit of dirt in a very deep hole they've dug for our province.

And, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I am excited. I am excited when I walk around the streets of my constituency of Union Station. I am excited when I call up Manitobans who have reached out to our office because they can't get a hold of their PC MLAs and they want to talk about what Manitoba is going to be in the very near future. They're excited to talk about what it will look like to have a government that genuinely invests in the ways in which make sure that Manitoba families have the best chance at great outcomes. I am excited for that.

And Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I want to remind Manitobans that the callous and tired approach that this government took with the Throne Speech, the ways in which they made the decision like they've done many times before to dehumanize people in our communities who are struggling, people who have

trauma, people who are deserving of our support; I want to reassure folks that we will continue to fight day in and day out to ensure that that mentality is not the mentality that leads us moving forward.

And sooner than later, collectively, we're all going to have the opportunity to remove this harmful government, to boot them out of office and to make sure that this side of the House is working on behalf of Manitobans for the brighter and better future we know our province deserves.

Thank you, Acting Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** It's an honour to represent the people of Burrows in this wonderful Chamber, and it's an honour to rise in this Chamber and debate the Throne Speech from this government.

I don't know if it's sixth or seventh Throne Speech by this government since 2016, but I pretty much believe that this is the last Throne Speech from this government.

There is no hope for Manitobans in this document. And many Manitobans who have listened to what's offered in this Throne Speech think that this document looks like a party document, because this document clearly reflects the ideological approach of this government.

This document indicates—I would say clearly indicates—that this government is determined to privatize our public health-care system to the maximum possible, because this document clearly says the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) clearly indicates that they believe in privatization of health services in Manitoba.

And if we see their track record since 2016, they have cut health care to the bone. It's their planned strategy to break the system through cuts—staffing cuts, funding cuts, infrastructure cuts; and then break the system and then start talking about privatization of health-care system—not just the health-care system, but many other departments as well.

So, when the Premier says that they're going to privatize the health-care system, the first question comes to the mind is that, where would the health professionals come from? Obviously, those working in the public system right now should go to the private health-care system that this government is trying to build. That would mean that the current public health-care system would get worse and worse as we go.

And this government would continue their agenda for corporate welfare. We know that this government

has privatized Lifeflight. This government has privatized physiotherapy services in the past.

We know that we are short on nurses. We know that we are short on support staff. We are short on doctors in the health-care system in Manitoba. And we all know that there is mandatory overtime for the nurses. They work 16 hours a day. That shouldn't be happening here. And when the government says that they are recruiting more nurses, we need to remind them that we still have 2,400 vacancies—nurse vacancies in the health care in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about surgical backlog, we know that there are hundreds of thousands of patients waiting in pain. And what this government's approach is: to send them not just out of Manitoba for treatment, but down south of the border. And those procedures are going to cost Manitobans way more than the situation where we would have a public health-care system that takes care of those patients in pain.

\* (15:40)

This government, during COVID times, they shifted patients out of Manitoba from ICUs to other places in the country, and we had—have bad news of losing Manitobans in that process.

When we talk about health care for international students, many times I got a chance to join those students here. When we talk about international students, first I should mention that those are the people who bring millions and millions of dollars to our economy. And this government is refusing to provide them health care, which is their basic right.

Internationally educated nurses, they are struggling to settle in Manitoba because of the procedures and policies of this government, which are too much time-consuming. Internationally educated doctors, they have the qualifications, they have the experience, but there's no system that welcomes them and that encourages them, or that provides an opportunity to utilize their skills, their experience, their education to serve Manitobans.

And when this government says that this is the budget assigned for health care, they just say it; they never spend it. They always underspend in health care. Since I got into this office, I have heard this government cutting our health-care system, cutting Concordia ER, cutting Seven Oaks ER and Concordia and Seven Oaks CancerCare.

And, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, I want to share this: that Manitoba has lowest number of family physicians per capita in Canada. And Manitoba has third lowest number of specialists per capita in Canada. Forty-three per cent of the physicians are planning on retiring, reducing their hours or leaving our province.

In 2021-2022, PCs spent more than \$40 million on private agency nurses. And Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, this number in 2017-18 was just \$14 million. As I already said, PCs' plan is to cut, to break the system and then privatize it.

When we talk about mental health, this government is failing to help those who need help. This government fails to listen our team, to establish safe injection sites in Manitoba. I don't know what their plan is. They are not investing on housing, they are not investing in education, they are not investing in harm reduction. And this government knows that there were 407 people lost to overdose last year—407 people. Just think about those families who lost their loved ones to overdose.

What this government is doing to address the situation in Manitoba? Nothing. Property crime, theft is the result of addictions crisis. And this government refuses to address addictions crisis. They are not timely reporting on overdoses as needed.

When we talk about community safety, they have cut so many projects that we used to have in Manitoba. When I talk to my constituents, they complain about the crimes in the neighbourhood. They don't feel safe under the leadership of this government. The PCs tried to change their leader, and they did, but unfortunately, leadership did not change. It's the exact same as it used to be under Brian Pallister.

Housing: this government failed to address the housing crisis in Manitoba. They have no plan to address homelessness. In twenty—since 2016 and '21, the PCs sold 1,700 social housing units and no new units built. There is a long wait-list for social housing. In February 2022, the number was 5,904. In this situation, what this government is doing, they're increasing tax on renters, and they are cutting the tax credit for renters by 25 per cent.

And, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, I would like to share that in 2019-20, 100 per cent of the above-guideline rent-increase requests were approved under this government. The NDP has a plan, and we have shared that plan to address the housing crisis in Manitoba.

When we talk about education—K-to-12 education—we all know that this government failed on all fronts. People are worried about their kids. People are worried about class sizes. People are worried about cutting positions in various school divisions in Manitoba. Seven Oaks had to cut positions. Brandon School Division had to cut positions. But this government is doing nothing to address this.

Bill 64: all Manitobans know that this government brought forward that bill that intended to eliminate all the school divisions. But what happened? They repealed it. What was the point spending millions on a document, spending time of this Chamber, of the researchers, of the elected representatives, spending those resources and then, to address their own goals, to follow their own ideology, they simply backed up. They repealed.

So that tells us that this government has no plan. They are worried about keeping themselves fed, keeping themselves in office rather than serving Manitobans.

If bill 64 was a great plan, why didn't they go forward with it? If it was done with proper consultation with Manitobans, why there were hundreds of people who wanted to speak against that bill at committee stage? That clearly tells that these PC members sitting opposite to us, they are not actually representing Manitobans. They are just running their own agenda to keep themselves in the job.

Post-secondary education: a lot has been said in this Chamber. They cut funding to the universities. They interfered with the wages. Under this government, none of the researchers, professors, faculty members—none of them are happy. Tuition has gone up. Only the people who have deeper pockets can afford to send their kids to the universities. That's unfortunate.

\* (15:50)

Health and education: these are the basic things that should be in approach, that should be affordable for every single family in Manitoba, but that's not the situation.

Immigration and out-immigration: people are leaving our province. Why? Because they're not getting good governance here. Why would 10,000 people leave Manitoba last year? There has to be reasons. And we know what the reasons are. People are debating this Throne Speech, and people are sharing what the reasons are.

Skilled workers overseas—under MPNP program, they're waiting forever and they're waiting to hear from this government and they're waiting to make decisions on their life, on their kids, on their families because of lack of support. And because of the process being so slow, they're stuck in their application process.

About agriculture: Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, you know that the area you represent—how many people in that area are upset with the PC government about their decisions regarding Crown lands. I get a chance to talk to them on a regular basis. They are frustrated. They feel deceived, betrayed by this government because this government did not disclose their decision to revise the lease regulations 'til after the results of the provincial election in 2019.

That's not transparent. That's not honest. And now, again—like bill 64—they're changing their decisions.

Recently, they have started saying that we would reduce the rent for Crown lands in 2023, 2025. Why? Because they think that saying this would bring them back into office. Manitobans are listening. Manitobans understand that this is not true; this is not honest.

So they speak good about their policies, they announce the things that they think people would like and people would fall in their trap again and they would be in the office again after the next election, but that's not going to happen.

I got a chance to talk to a few producers who contacted Ag Minister regarding the unseeded acres due to moisture recently. There is more than 800,000 acres in Manitoba that couldn't be seeded because of moisture and 165,000 acres or more in just Interlake. And these people, they're asking for land recovery payments. The Ag Minister listened to them, but did not take any action to support these hard-working producers who feed us three times a day. That's unfortunate.

And representatives of this government failed to show up during drought, failed to show up during moisture and they failed to show up when our farmers were dealing with grasshopper and insect and disease infestations in Manitoba.

Regarding Agriculture office closures: people are upset about those offices being no more available for them to go, sit together with an expert, discuss their issues and find solutions. That is called agriculture extension, and this government is cutting the Agriculture Department to the extent that people have no

options, no option to go to a nearby Ag office and find the information they need.

I do not see any hope in this document. There is a lot that needs to be done for Manitobans.

PCs have done a lot of damage to our province. That's what they could do and—

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

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to put some comments on the record in respect to the Throne Speech.

This will be, for me, probably the 12th throne speech. I can't remember, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, if I've spoken on every one. I know there's always a clamour to get to that place, to be able to speak to the Throne Speech. And sometimes, as a minister, you're actually in meetings and can't make it to the House. And, you know, we always thank the whip, and those who serve us in these places, to be able to pivot and to help out and, indeed, all our colleagues who do that. But it's always a pleasure to stand in this place.

I remember receiving some advice from a colleague, who said: Never give away the opportunity to just actually speak from the heart during a speech from the throne, to talk about the people and give thanks where it's due. And I want to give thanks to a few groups, including my wife Shelley and my family, who, back when my children were much younger, in 2011, allowed their dad and, you know, a husband to undertake to do this crazy work that we do. And it's definitely been a bumpy road, but it's been a rewarding experience.

I was a former educator. I left that work. I worked for the federal government for a while in a political capacity and then made my way to this role. And it was a good experience. The highs have been high, the lows have been low, but we do what we do in service of the Province and the good people of Manitoba, and in—representing our constituents. It's honourable work to do and it is an honour to be able to have the opportunity.

I want to thank my CA, Tara Braun, whose been with me now for a number of years, who holds down the constituency office and is the face of that office in the Morden and Winkler community, who fields the phone calls. And I would say to all of our constituency assistants, what they faced during COVID-19—I often thought about the impacts and what I took home at the end of the day but I think we maybe, from time to

time, fail to understand how heavy that burden was that was borne by those who answered the phone and took those calls and those concerns from people on both sides, and on every side of the issues. It wasn't easy work and we noted and we could sometimes see the heaviness of the burden they were carrying.

I thank my SA, Connor Verry; my EA, Mikael Vander Kooy; my press secretary, Eric Bench; my staff in my front office; the department under the leadership of Deputy Minister Richard Groen, with whom I get to work every single day. It's an interesting thing to work at that level with a very competent and talented department.

Also, myself, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, now in—with responsibility for Manitoba Hydro, it's also a different thing to be a minister with a responsibility for a Crown corporation and to understand and to endeavour to respect and to work at that appropriate governance. What is the minister's responsibility? What is the board chair's responsibility? What is the CEO's and executive management team's responsibility? What is the board's responsibility? What's the deputy minister's responsibility? And that's excellent work to be involved in.

I want to give a shout out to the class of 2011: the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Smook), the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson)—West (Mr. Helwer) and myself. Those five—we were elected in 2011. And it's kind of a special group within a group. You always have that kind of special connection with that group with whom you crossed that line, because you have that shared experience; you came across at that same time.

So, it's been a pleasure getting to know these individuals and their constituencies. We've had a lot of moments together, lot of stress, a lot of highs, a lot of lows, but what a great group of people. And, indeed, my whole team—such a fine group of people—men and women with whom I have the opportunity to serve under the leadership of the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson).

I wanted to indicate—sometimes the best successes you have in this place are the successes close to home. We often like to say that some of the best moments are actually just doing casework and meeting with constituents. That, of course, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker—as you know because I've been to your constituency office—that got tougher to do during

the global pandemic, but it's been nice to see constituents finding their way physically into our offices again. It's good.

I had another experience just weeks ago where I thought I had someone who was quite hostile to me asking for a meeting. And I didn't think it would go well. And I got some advice, you know: just meet. Just meet. Just get together. And I got the nicest note the next day.

\* (16:00)

I don't know; you know, I listened to him, I think he listened to me. Didn't think we had any breakthroughs on fundamental issues; there's been a lot of division in my constituency, as you know, during the global pandemic. But the next day, I got this note. It was just a simple note that said, thank you, you listened to me, I see a different side of the story now, I apologize for some of the comments I made to you.

And you know what? I think it's always just a lesson to us as members of this Assembly: most times, people just want to be heard.

I once had some good advice from a gentleman who was the special assistant for a former MP. And he had said to me, be very careful not to over-promise to your constituents because, remember, when they come to an MLA, they will often have been around the block already. If it's a health-care issue, they've talked to their doctor, they've talked to the hospital, they've talked to the department, they've talked to the regional health authority. They said, be very careful not to promise what you can't do.

It's an amazing feeling when you can go to bat for a constituent and actually resolve an issue for them. But sometimes, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, you know, things just don't get resolved and there is—you know, there is that difficulty of having to report back to a constituent on their issue of finance, on their issue of social services or eligibility for a program or on a health-care issue, you couldn't help.

But isn't it amazing how many times you hear back from people: well, thank you for listening and thank you for helping me. And sometimes help comes later and we're able to circle back and say, I saw an announcement or I saw that there's a new service, and someone contacted our office and could we help them now? And that is a part of the work that we do and often the most rewarding part of that work as well.

I won't say much this afternoon; I mean, a lot of people have spoken. I wanted to say I was proud to hear

the Throne Speech and to hear the investments that our government is making—the lives of Manitobans.

We know that right now, with six interest-rate hikes in the course of just over three quarters of a year, we know that Manitobans are dealing with affordability issues like they haven't before in the last 20 or 30 years.

We know that in Manitoba, according to new results that came out just last week, that the consumer price index is showing a year-over-year change in Manitoba that is higher than the national average and one of the highest increases we've seen October to October in 30 years.

And that means that families and households are focused on that. Their dollar is not going as far. It costs more to fill up a tank of gas. It costs more to get the groceries. It costs more to put their children in violin or hockey or dance or any extracurricular activity. It costs more to travel to their work and to commute. All of those things impacting them.

And of course, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it costs more if you have a line of credit or a mortgage and—that is a variable rate or when your mortgage becomes due. And I just read an article yesterday in *The Globe and Mail* saying that many Canadians are living with hesitation knowing that that date is coming on which they will have to rebroker the conditions on which they are paying their mortgage or their car or their truck payment. And those costs come with huge impacts.

I had a banker friend tell me just days ago that he saw one mortgage renewed in the city of Winkler—and, of course, I wouldn't know any names, but he said it just—without any names attached to it—said a family with less than \$100,000 of income with one income earner—and we know the taxation implications of that—where the mortgage was going to go up by \$250 a month. We know that is significant and we know that that's Winkler. And, you know, in Winkler we would say, probably the cost of living would be a little less than a big city like Brandon or Winnipeg, but that is an extraordinary change in a family's finances.

And then you hear the NDP say that the middle class shouldn't be eligible for affordability relief. I noted with interest that when you look at our affordability package and compare it to those other jurisdictions, that you see other jurisdictions actually identify the challenges also experienced in the middle class. Where the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) would try to say that, well, you know, a nurse who—in

a home that is a partner of a paramedic, that represents an ultra-wealth Manitoba household.

Well, only according to the NDP. We know that Manitoba families are hurting, and that's why we brought affordability relief.

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Now, don't get us wrong, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. As you know, we created a cap and said yes, no, ultra-high wealth earners should not be eligible for this payment. But we were proud to bring an education property tax rebate historically, a 37.5 per cent for both households, residential homes and also for farm families, bringing historic relief. That relief is on its way to 50 per cent—in respect of the education property tax next year.

But to be clear, and we have—you know, of course the Minister for Education always wants this reinforced, this is being done while we're making record investments in education. Not done on the backs of education; it's done through general revenues.

But that's not all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for—I just noticed you've taken the Chair now. But that's not all. In the fall, of course, we announced an \$87-million affordability package to families with children under 18: \$250 for the first child and \$200 for every child thereafter. But also to seniors on modest income—declaring less than \$40,000 in income, they're eligible for a one-time payment of \$300.

But the Minister for Families would want you to know as well, that we've historically adjusted that—what's called that basic needs amount in that EIA calculation. The NDP talk a good game on that, but they never raised that payment. They had 17 years to raise that payment and never did it.

Now, Mr. Acting Deputy—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also, of course, had a special program built in to help food banks apply for additional funding that they might need to respond to need. At the same time, of course, we've raised the minimum wage, and just yesterday we had another historic debate on a bill designed to get those changes into effect.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there's much more to say, I would want to say. We'll continue to respond to Manitobans. Clearly, bill 36 we're proud to have passed, but the Throne Speech signalled that there was more to do on Hydro and Hydro stability and keeping rates low.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker—let me say, it is always our responsibility and our right in this place to

disagree. The opposition has a role, the government has a role. But I've been dismayed to see the deliberate attempts to mislead Manitobans month after month after month.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Just a caution, it's been deemed in the past to be unparliamentary to use language of deliberately misleading. So, just a caution about that particular phraseology.

**Mr. Friesen:** Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member for St. James (Mr. Sala) knows what the facts are, he presents them differently.

He has said for months and months and months that the fundamental issue is PUB independence. He said our bill threatened it. And then two weeks ago, the NDP went out in the hall and brought the most awful, half-baked, walked-it-back-one-time-then-walked-it-forward attempt to mislead Manitobans with a zero, zero, zero and zero increase for Hydro over four years, which amounts to a fundamental interference with the activity of the Public Utilities Board. It is unprecedented.

But more than that, what they didn't do is reveal to Manitobans that the implication of four zeros machined by the NDP in their caucus room at the caucus table directly means the implication is a double-digit rate shock for Manitobans in the year following and the years after.

Manitobans can—will not be fooled. They understand that the NDP tripled the debt of Hydro. They understand that we're in a hydro-borrowing environment. Manitobans understand they can't build a house and then phone the bank and tell them that they're not planning on making any principal or amortization payments for four years. If you could find a bank that would accept those terms, there would be one thing you could know for certain: that in year 5, there would be a hangover of a payment due, the likes of which you could not even imagine. And who would be able to pay that in year 5?

The NDP is hiding what their plan really is from Manitobans, because in the interest of political expediency and self-serving, they will simply do anything to get elected. But Manitobans know that their record on Hydro is a disastrous one.

And that is why today, we were proud to be able to update Manitobans and indicate that fees that the NDP hiked for Manitoba Hydro in respect of a debt-service fee, and in respect of a water power rental rate, we are turning back, allowing Hydro to keep more of its own revenue.

What is the implication of that? It means that the Manitoba Hydro board will now have to figure out whether this material change to Hydro means they should be returning to the PUB to adjust and amend their rate application that they brought one week ago. What's the implication of that? Lower rates, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

\* (16:10)

We believe that this significant action of government today will have the effect of seeing lower rates for Manitobans. Where we are honestly grappling with the fundamental issues of Manitoba Hydro and will continue to do so for the benefit of ratepayers, they'll continue to mislead Manitobans.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, very proud to see the investments in health care in this budget—400 new nursing seats. Some of those nursing seats are coming to my own city of Morden in a space that is actually, incidentally, near my constituency office, and we are so delighted to see the hammers swinging and the drywall sheets going up. And I can't wait to see the new—I guess you'd call them the cohort of nurse trainees that are coming to that location.

We recently had a speech in the Legislature, I think by the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Smook), who was saying he had just visited the site. And I thought to myself, he went and stole the content of my next private member's statement. I was delighted to hear the member for La Vérendrye speak about what he saw, and we are so excited to see those nurse training seats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that the subscription is full for that first intake and, like the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Smook) shared, those are local individuals who would not—or, may not seek that training in Winnipeg when gas is at a—one-sixty-two a litre, or one-sixty-eight. But they're doing it in their communities. They are bettering themselves, getting a designation, taking training near and close to home. We are so excited. I think we'll stop by the first day and bring them a whole bunch of doughnuts—probably from Valley Bakery, which has, like, amazing doughnuts. But they might be also from one of the other coffee shops because I have to be careful what I say about my favouritism of doughnuts.

So, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, also coming—I wanted the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) to know that my wife, Shelley, drove by Boundary Trails Health Centre today, and she took a photo. And I couldn't figure out what the photo was. It was a crane.



It was one of those fences and it was the work beginning to push back the dirt to be able to start the minimum \$67-million project to build one of our planned P-C-S-P, the provincial services—the clinical and preventative services plan—what we call our cornerstone projects, to drive better delivery of health care in rural Manitoba.

The community is delighted. I can update the House and indicate that the communities of Morden, Winkler, Stanley, Rhineland, Altona, have already been fundraising, and I believe they have an aggressive target to be able to raise 15 per cent of the total project cost. They could not have been more delighted to have that minister and the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) be able to be present for that sod-turning ceremony.

We know we're making good investments in health care, including bringing 2,000 more nurses into the profession, training through 400 new seats each and every year. There's much, much, more I could say about our government's progress. We're making progress on the deficit. We are making progress in investing, in families, in mental health and addictions. On mental health and addictions, we were so excited to see in the Throne Speech this announcement of a thousand new treatment spaces.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know you understand addictions treatment works. Addiction treatments work. I would challenge any member of the opposition to stand up and acknowledge what evidence and science and all the KPIs from these agencies who deliver this therapy know to be true, and that is that addictions therapy works. It helps to get people their lives back. We have lived experience in my extended family, and I can tell you from that experience addictions therapy works.

The first time, not always. People with addictions struggle. Our government is there making a historic investment to be able to meet them where they are, get them to wholeness, to wellness, to get their lives back, to get their families back, to get back on track. That is not judgment. That is compassion.

Mr. Deputy—and they guffaw at that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's something. It really shows you where they're at. I asked them if any of them would have the courage to say that addictions treatment works. And what I hear from the other side is a scoff. I think it tells you a lot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll wrap up soon. I just want to say this: it's been the honour of my career for these

12 years in the Legislature to represent Morden-Winkler. These have not been easy years for my constituency. I have not known at all times what to do to be able to navigate, to hear all sides, to be able to be listening. Our duty as MLAs is not to agree with everyone who comes through our door, but to show respect and hear them.

Two years ago, when I was the Health minister, I took challenges for that, but I did respond and I'll continue to respond. It's my delight to represent that constituency.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I'm pleased to be able to have the privilege to stand in this House and respond to the PC's horrible Throne Speech.

But let me begin by this, Deputy Speaker, and—I know that several MLAs on both sides of the House have started their Throne Speech debate by acknowledging the good constituents of their particular representative constituencies, and I want to do the same. I want to acknowledge the phenomenal, generous, connected, compassionate, hard-working, dedicated constituents of St. Johns.

And I know the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) 'previously' said that they have the best constituency. And I'm sure that it doesn't matter what side of the House we sit on, each of us would argue that our constituency is the best. But St. Johns really is the best constituency, and I'm so honoured and blessed to be able to represent them and so privileged and humbled that, you know, that I've been elected a second time in a row to represent them in this Chamber.

And as I've said many, many times before, we are some of—among the most privileged individuals to sit in this Chamber. And I mean that in the sense that, you know, less than 900 people in the history of this Legislature have ever sat in this Chamber to be able to represent the good folks of Manitoba. And so I recognize that each and every day.

And even more so, there is, you know, out of that less than 900 Manitobans who have sat in this Chamber, only 61 have been women. And so, even more so, Deputy Speaker, to know that just by virtue of being elected, we are breaking down barriers.

And, you know, we saw today something that occurred at the beginning of our day, and I just want to reflect on that just a little bit in the sense that, you know, it's important for members of this Legislature, when there are acts of disrespect and acts of violence,

to stand up to ensure that this Legislature is safe and equitable for everybody that comes in this Chamber.

And I would submit, as well, how much, even moreso, for Indigenous—an Indigenous woman who sits in this Chamber, as we know there is an ongoing genocide of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited across our country.

And so, it is important that when there are those moments that are not good moments, that are questionable moments, that are harmful moments, that people on both sides stand up in this Chamber and say that that's unacceptable, and that we don't offer excuses—that we don't offer excuses for any man in this Chamber to touch the seat of any woman in this Chamber.

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

The member's referenced something which is under advisement, and it cannot be referenced. So, I just ask that we steer clear of that, please.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Thank you for that, Deputy Speaker.

And so, I do want to just take a moment to, again, thank the good people of St. Johns.

Recently—maybe a couple of days ago—there was an article in the Free Press—or in CBC, I can't remember, Deputy Speaker—but it was talking about small businesses in Manitoba. And in particular, they highlighted Modern Coffee and Pollock's Hardware, which are in St. Johns. And the article was about how much small businesses are struggling. You know, they were—they struggled during the pandemic, as we know. And things haven't gone back to normal, if there is a way that we can best describe that.

\* (16:20)

But I do want to acknowledge all of those small businesses. Not only, like, Modern Coffee and Pollock's and other small businesses in St. Johns, but certainly all small businesses across Manitoba, who—again, to no fault of their own—are still struggling in the midst of, you know, the consequences of this pandemic that we've all been through in the last two and a half years.

And I know that I have spoken about Modern Coffee and Pollock's Hardware many times in this Chamber, but I do just want to say to each of them what a vital component each of you are to St. Johns and what a role you play in bringing community together. And, particularly, I want to say to, you know, Allison, who I absolutely adore and love, that

she's doing good work and that all of us in St. Johns are so proud of her for continuing on and trying to make the best of what is not a very good situation right now. So, I lift up and honour Allison.

And then, certainly, everybody that's at Pollock's and everybody that's on the board, that, you know, for many years, find themselves kind of going through these ebb and flows of struggle, and yet they still continue and they still have that dedication and that passion for what they offer St. Johns. And so, I lift up each and every one of you as well.

Deputy Speaker, in St. Johns, I have some phenomenal folks who are on the front lines of animal welfare. As everybody knows, you know, I've been a long-time animal rights and animal welfare activist, and we have some pretty phenomenal individuals in St. Johns. And I just want to take a couple of moments to acknowledge them as well.

There's Russ and Maureen, who I absolutely love. And, you know—here's the thing, Deputy Speaker, is that, you know, when you become an MLA and you kind of, you know, your first weeks sitting in this Chamber, and you're kind of trying to get yourself oriented in what this job really entails, one of the things that I never could foresee is actually becoming family and loving constituents as your own family. And I'm so blessed for that. There are so many phenomenal St. Johns constituents that I really, truly consider family.

And, as I said, Russ and Maureen are two of those individuals. They go into First Nations communities, particularly during winter months, and they will bring doghouses that they raise money for, that they put together. They'll—they come with straw. They come with a whole truck of food. I've gone to Roseau River First Nation with them, and they know everybody. Every First Nation community that they go to, they know everybody. They go in there in a humble way, in a respectful way, in a good way, in a loving way and they offer—they pick up the slack of governments. And I mean that both federally and provincially, because there is such a gap in respect of animal welfare.

And I know that—I would imagine that most people in this Chamber know that, in Manitoba, we have such a unique situation, that we have such high levels of an overpopulation of dogs in northern and rural communities. And one of the reasons for that is because we don't—First Nations communities or rural communities don't have access to veterinarian services.

And so, often you'll hear people that will kind of, you know, talk disparagingly about First Nations communities and overpopulation of dogs, but it's no fault to their own. There's no veterinarian services. And people like Russ and Maureen and Katie Powell and Jasmine and all of these folks that—this network across Manitoba do such phenomenal work on trying to pick up the slack for both the federal government and the provincial government in order to ensure that communities are safe and that animals are taken care of.

And, you know, I've—like I said, Russ and Maureen are some of my—among my favourite folks that I'm blessed to call family, and I was able to nominate them for our Queen jubilee award, so I'm really excited for Monday to be able to give out these awards.

I want to talk about Angie Houston, another St. Johns constituent, who, again, I consider family, and I think I've spoken about her maybe once or twice in the Chamber. But she just celebrated, I think it's like 45 or 46 years of voluntary—volunteering for the Winnipeg School Division. And she's a foster mom and she's just a phenomenal human being.

I want to acknowledge Tracy Ball. Tracy Ball is a pillar of the St. Johns community—an absolute pillar of the community—and she's the executive director for the Sinclair community—Sinclair Park Community Centre, which used to be in St. Johns and now is in Burrows, I believe. And so, but she is a phenomenal human being that is involved in all kinds of community work.

And those are just some of the examples of the community connection and collective that we have in St. Johns. And you know, I just want to say it again: I'm so blessed and honoured to represent them, but also to call them family.

I want to just talk about a couple of things. In—first off, I want to acknowledge my colleagues. I want to acknowledge my 'collees' in this Throne Speech, which, you know, is going to be the last Throne Speech of this particular session. And I want to highlight for Manitobans the incredible work that our colleagues, every single one of our colleagues, has been doing for the last many years, but certainly during the pandemic.

As I've said many times in this House, you know, the test of real leadership is in times of crisis, in times of despair. That's when you see the true test of a person's character. Do they lean into that crisis?

Do they step up in that crisis? Do they give their 1,000 per cent in that crisis? Or do they find themselves trying to, you know, hide from the public; do they find themselves actually causing more harm in the midst of a crisis?

And I would suggest to the House, and I would suggest to those Manitobans that are watching this, that our NDP team stepped up. They leaned in to this global pandemic and the crisis and the consequences that it created for Manitobans everywhere; obviously, those that are on the front lines, but Manitoba families, Manitoba educators, Manitoba students, they—I am so proud to work with this NDP caucus.

And I believe that the public has seen this cohort—this new crop of NDP MLAs—they've seen how hard they worked and that the things that we put on the record—when we say that we care about Manitobans, we mean that we care about Manitobans.

When we say that we are committed to health care, we mean that we're committed to health care. When we say that we stand with educators and all of the ups and downs that they've had to go through, including still today, we mean that we stand with educators. We stand with workers. Again, these last couple of years, workers have gone through ebbs and flows and all kinds of things unimaginable, and we stand with those workers.

You know, a couple of years ago, before the pandemic, there was this amazing movement that was starting among youth here in Manitoba about the environment. And I remember there were many of us that participated in that walk of students calling for politicians' commitment; what's your commitment to the environment, right? And we stand with those youth.

We stand with Manitobans, and we mean it. It's one thing to stand up in this House or outside this House and make all kinds of announcements and because, you know, folks know that they're in trouble in latest polls that come out. But there's one thing to show up day in and day out and put the needs of Manitobans first and to understand what a sacred responsibility we have as MLAs to fight for Manitobans. And I'm proud to say that our caucus shows up day in and day out.

And, you know, our caucus has been—has told Manitobans that it's going to take us a while to get out of the mess that the PCs have created. And you know, I think that Manitobans understand; they see that and they appreciate that it's going to take us a while to fix

the mess that the PCs have created, including in the health-care system.

So, I want to thank each and every one of my colleagues. It's an honour to work with them, and I lift them up for all of the work that they've done, you know, not only since they've been elected, but certainly stepping up in these last couple of years. That is a true testament of people's character.

\* (16:30)

I don't have a lot of time left. I just want to say this: there's been a lot of discussion and a lot of back-and-forth about supervised consumption sites, and the fact that the PCs are, you know, taking this different approach here. And the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) stood up just before myself and he said that, you know, addiction treatments work.

Obviously. Like, I don't know if the minister thinks he's sharing something new that none of us know; like, oh my God, you mean treatments actually work? We know that. We agree with that. Hence why, since 2016, we've been trying to push this government to commit to more treatment beds, to meet Manitobans where they're at when they need it and to have those resources.

But they haven't. And now we have, you know, the Minister of Finance saying, like, trying to infer we don't believe in treatments. That's ridiculous, and I want Manitobans to know—and I'm sure I don't even need to tell Manitobans that; they would know that that's ridiculous.

But here's the thing about supervised consumption sites. And why I bring that up is because in the PC's Throne Speech, essentially what they did was, and I will read it into the public record—it's already been obviously read into the House, but: Our government will continue to tackle the underlying issues of homelessness, addictions, mental health, by providing increased supports to front-line law enforcement officers through technology, specialized training, increased police presence and support for more officers.

And so we, on this side of the House, take great exception to that. Tying criminality to homelessness and addictions is beyond grotesque and is beyond a failed approach. You would think that we were back in the early 1900s, when you had people, like, putting things on your head and trying to test your criminality and how big your head was. Like, mumbo-jumbo stuff that's coming out from members opposite, you know.

And I know that lots of members opposite are anti-choice, or in their words, pro-life. Again, anti-choice. And so, I find it really particularly egregious when members opposite don't want to consider what has been proven to save lives, which are supervised safe consumption sites. It's about saving lives. They're so fixated on thinking that we're giving free drugs to everybody, like, hey everybody, come and do some drugs here; we want you guys to do drugs.

That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about saving lives. The bottom line is Manitoba has an addictions crisis. We have an overdose crisis. And what supervised safe consumption sites are doing, it's saving lives, Deputy Speaker.

And so, again, I find it particularly ironic that members opposite are, like, anti-choice, pro-life, but I guess it's only when it infringes or when it's about controlling women's bodies. I think that's when they're pro-life. Not when it's, like, folks that they don't agree with, that they look down on for doing—for having an addiction.

So, I want to put it on the record. I'm sure that Manitobans know. Manitobans are not going to fall for this false narrative that both the Minister for Mental Health and certainly the Minister for Finance are putting on the record, that we don't agree with treatment; we have this ideological approach on addictions.

Yes, like, we care about saving lives. We care about saving Manitoba lives. That's what it comes down to. And we understand that that requires a myriad of different approaches and a comprehensive infrastructure to be able to do that, and part of that infrastructure is a supervised safe consumption site.

And so, it's pretty simple, Deputy Speaker. And I—you know, I would hope that, you know, from now until the next election—either it's going to be in October of 2023 or the members opposite are going to call an early election—I hope between now and the next election that the members opposite get on the right side of history, make the right decision, get cracking and open up a supervised safe consumption site, and actually live up to their pro-life narrative and not only when it's about controlling women and gender-diverse folks' bodies.

Miigwech, Deputy Speaker.

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** I want to begin my Throne Speech response by talking about lead contamination in soil and how that really affects

many communities in Winnipeg, especially my Notre Dame constituency.

So, recently, we received results from the Province about soil lead sampling in lots of different parks and lots of different school fields. And this was done by the Province and I'm very grateful for this action thus far. And from, you know, that soil sampling we saw that there are two that require active remediation right now: one in St. Boniface, in Mission Gardens park; and one in Weston community, in an outdoor hockey rink close to the Weston centre memorial community centre.

And, you know, it was in the news yesterday that the City is looking for money to do this that—so that we can properly have safe places for these children to play. Like, for me, this should have been like a done deal already. That these spaces for our children—that there should be resources in place so that we're not having to wait for a budget approval, because there should be money allotted for these safe spaces for our children to play.

Some other spots that were identified in the Notre Dame constituency and outside of our constituency that's very close include the Home Street playground, the Jacob Penner Park, Lipton Park, the Maryland Tot Lot and the Sherburn Tot Lot. Just the names of these small little parks alone should be enough for us to know that this is very, very important, that we should prioritize our provincial resources in this way to make sure that these are safe spaces for our children to play.

And there are many other children's playgrounds that have been identified in this recent soil lead sampling that the Province undertook, many spots and playgrounds in St. Boniface and Point Douglas, and in St. Johns and in Union Station.

And, you know, it's not fear mongering to say that there could be a lot more that we haven't been able to identify through this testing, because in my long conversations with soil scientists at the University of Manitoba, they explained to me that, while you can set up some soil sampling in one spot, just even five metres away there could be a completely different outcome from that soil sample, from that soil sample just five metres away or so.

So it just goes to show that there needs to be a lot more work and attention done on this issue for these neighbourhoods.

You know, to kind of deal with this, we've tried to set up community meetings. We have, you know, tried to spread the word as best as we could in our

constituency. We've had petitions that we've signed to discuss this issue so that we could continually raise it. And I thank my colleague for Flin Flon, who just raised the petition just yesterday so that we can keep having this in our public discourse, keep raising this, because it's so important.

But more work remains to be done. We're looking for the provincial government—and this wasn't mentioned at all in the Throne Speech—we're looking for the provincial government to put a comprehensive plan in place to deal with lead in soil, specifically for public health to be able to conduct a broad advertising campaign to educate residents in these affected neighbourhoods.

And we we know where these neighbourhoods are to reduce the risk of lead exposure. But instead, this hasn't been happening, even though we've been asking for this for at least two to three years now.

\* (16:40)

And when I go door-to-door, I still see my constituents continuing to garden and work in the soil and children continue to play in the dirt, and these families don't know the associated risks with this. You know, a lot of our constituents are dealing with poverty and day-to-day concerns and, you know, lead contamination is, you know, something you can't see or hear or—so it's not, like, high on the radar for lots of folks, but the danger is still there.

Our communities are beseeching this provincial government to take action to reduce people's exposure to lead in Winnipeg and to implement recommendations proposed by the provincial government's review, including the creation of an action plan for the western—Weston neighbourhood and developing a lead awareness communications and outreach program, and requisitioning a more in-depth study and creating a tracking program for those tested for blood lead levels so that medical professionals can follow up with them.

Our communities are not backing down on this. Recently, I joined an advisory committee made up of environmentalists and lawyers that are—and community activists that are trying to change the laws federally, provincially and also on a municipal level to try to deal with this; and it's called the Healthy Environment, Healthy Neighbourhood Advisory Committee, and it's specifically on lead contamination in soil.

And also, we have a brand new Weston Brooklands residents association that is in the midst of forming. December 7th at 6:30 p.m. at the Salvation Army

church on Roy street is actually going to be our first major meeting, where we're going to be trying to get new board members for this. And this Weston Brooklands residents association, one of their main goals is to deal with this lead contamination issue and, you know, to try to address it properly.

We know that, in addition to the parks and any kind of green spaces, Weston has a lot of railway tracks. And a lot of these are actually decommissioned railway tracks. And there's a lot of opportunity there for lead contamination as well, and none of that is being tested. And none of that—those railway corridors are being addressed, like, in terms of landscaping properly, making sure that the ground and the dust and the soil can stay moist with mulch or with grass cover.

And this is something that is really, really one of the things that the Weston—the new Weston Brooklands residents association is wanting to see a lot of federal, provincial and municipal co-operation on, so that we could perhaps get rid of these decommissioned tracks and replace them with paths and natural pathways that can then be landscaped properly to reduce the effects of lead contamination in soil.

And it just so happens that it's a nice pathway that we can probably have and that will go towards Garbage Hill, and then that'll be a nice walk or bike ride for my constituents to be able to have. So, that's something that I'll be working towards, especially with the newly formed Weston Brooklands residents association.

Something that's really come up a lot in Notre Dame is community safety. I noticed that around late—sorry, early spring, we were seeing so much garbage, we were seeing garbage like I'd never really seen before, in different open spaces.

We normally have community cleanups; we try to get, you know, residents out, and so many different non-profit organizations help organize these community cleanups. The garbage was so bad that—the amount of garbage and the type of garbage—that we were looking at how we could even rent one of those, like, little Caterpillars—I'm not sure what they're called—because it wasn't fair for people to have to touch that with their bare hands. And it would—definitely not going to be able to deal with it with just those picker-upper things that we normally do for our community cleanups.

And a lot of that was due to the different homeless encampments, and so you're really seeing that our homeless—our folks experiencing homelessness, it's

really reaching new heights that I've never seen in my lifetime in this constituency of Notre Dame. And that's really sad. And it was really—you know, I think that, you know, a lot of it had to do with the pandemic, but also because of all the different underfunding that's been happening, especially in the area of housing. And so many people are being affected by this, most of all those folks that are experiencing homelessness.

So, I live very close to Notre Dame Avenue. My family and I moved to our house in—I think it was May, 2020—about five months or so after—I guess seven months or so after getting elected. And it's a stone's throw away, my house, from homeless encampments that have sprung up, you know, over this past winter. And you know—so I get to experience first-hand what it's like to live very close to a homeless encampment.

At night we have people, usually women, going through our yard, going through our locked car, trying to look for anything that they could use to survive, and so we're seeing a lot of increased property crime in the constituency of Notre Dame. I know for our house, it's almost on a—at least three or four times a week that this is happening, people trying to get into the garage or into our yard. And it is a feeling of—you don't feel safe when this happens.

And you know, as bad as that feeling is for me and my family, imagine being these women who have nowhere to live, and so they're trying their best to live in a homeless encampment, you know, just yards away from where other people, you know, get to eat and sleep and do everything, you know, in their regular houses.

More really needs to be done, so we started—we know that this government, especially with their Throne Speech, there wasn't a word about housing. There was money that was announced for shelters and that's great. I am part of the Salvation Army advisory board, so I know exactly that that money that went to shelters is very, very well needed. It meant that we weren't going to actually close our family shelter program, which was days away from getting closed. It meant that that money that the Province gave us for the shelters meant that we could probably pay our staff closer to a living wage now.

But we know that this isn't a long-term solution, and the Throne Speech really didn't have anything to address housing.

I spoke to Greg MacPherson. He used to run, for a long time, the West Broadway—what's it called—

*[interjection]* neighbourhood association, and now he works for the City of Winnipeg doing research to address community wellness, community safety, homelessness. And you know, one of the things that Greg is advocating for is to really deal with rooming houses because we have lost so much rooming house stock in this province.

And, you know, when you think about rooming houses, that doesn't sound like such a great place to live, but there are some rooming houses, according to Greg, that were run extremely well and that rooming houses provide truly affordable housing options for some people.

And right now, we're talking about thousands of rooming house units that are just gone now. And this could be a real solution that the Province can take a look at to help alleviate some of the stress. Not—they don't all have to be new builds, but let's just start somewhere, right. Of course, we need new builds, but this rooming house idea from Greg and others like him, you know, shows that with just a little bit of attention and effort we can put a dent into our—into the situation that folks experiencing homelessness are facing.

And then there's, like, reverberations to that afterwards, right, because then the communities around also feel a little bit safer, too, because people aren't, you know, scrounging to survive. They have a place to call home, even if it's just a rooming house.

And there's certain things that the Province can do, for example, providing certain kinds of incentives for landlords. So, if you're a landlord and you've got this rooming house and your furnace breaks, there should be some kind of support for these landlords to be able to avail of that so that, you know, the houses can still be maintained properly and people can continue to live in them.

\* (16:50)

And we certainly have a lot of older stock in real estate here in Winnipeg that could go towards this, so I would really love to see our Families department, our housing department, to be looking into this as an option.

So one of the things that we did to try to address the crazy amounts of garbage, the—you know, the property crime that we were seeing that were stemming from our homeless encampments, from a lot of the drugs that we were seeing in the community, is that we started up the Notre Dame Powerline. And we modelled this after the North Point Douglas Powerline

with a community activist like Sel Burrows giving us a lot of information and help with that.

And because of that, we've been able to partner with the City of Winnipeg bylaw enforcement director to take a look at problem properties. A problem property is, you know, typically being run by a slum landlord; the property is, you know, in completely derelict type of condition; there is usually drug-dealing activity happening there and loads of garbage.

So, it's just like a triple whammy, and it's reverberating out to the rest of the neighbourhood, you know, because of different kinds of property crime and other types of crime happening there, whether it's child sexual exploitation happening in some of these problem properties and other, you know, terrible things. And I've been working with a staff sergeant, Todd Martens, who is a community support unit officer that's assigned to Notre Dame.

So there is a place, definitely, for increased funding for policing, especially for community support units like Staff Sergeant Todd Martens, and I really appreciate the work that he does and the work that those officers do to try to help keep our community safe, the kind of preventive policing that they do when they try to focus on these types of properties and the kind of criminal activity that's happening there. This is really important.

But for the government to just say, okay, here's some money for some shelters and here's some money for some technology for video capability monitoring, and some—a little bit more money for policing; that is not going to help us solve what we're seeing in our communities. And if you just ask anybody, they would know what we need to do.

There was a street census, a Winnipeg street census that happened just a couple weeks ago—I think it was just the week of the Throne Speech—where community groups went out and spoke to 1,200 folks experiencing homelessness—the true figure is somewhere close to 4,000—and spoke to them about, you know, why is it that you're experiencing homelessness? Can you tell us a little bit about your life that led you here? And the answers had to do with poverty and mental health and addictions issues.

But the Throne Speech was so light on dealing with those real concerns. And, you know, I understand that political parties have to play to their base and have to do that. But, you know, the rest of Manitobans don't appreciate that. They actually want to see real solutions.

And homeless—to deal with homelessness, folks experiencing homelessness, we really need to deal with the poverty levels that we're experiencing here. We really need to deal with housing, and more investments in mental health and addictions. So, that is something that maybe wasn't so popular, going door-to-door before; maybe it was a law-and-order response that most of my constituents were looking for before, to deal with it.

But something changed. Something changed, and I think it was probably around the time of Kamloops when, you know, we discovered all the bodies of residential school children, and it was something that, you know, elders and family members had been telling for a long time. But now, you know, as Canadians, we were faced with irrefutable proof about this. And I noticed that it was after that that we started seeing constituents, you know, maybe trying to take a little bit more time to process what it is that might be happening to other folks that are experiencing homelessness and things like that.

And at the door now, even if we say, you know, you can't arrest everybody and they're going to be out in a few hours, in a few days, in a few weeks, in—even in a few years, depending on how serious the crime committed was, but that's still not going to solve their problems.

And so, people really care about this and they're looking for more than just some kind of knee-jerk thing for people trying to play to their base. It's not not enough.

And, you know, with the NDP and academics and non-profit groups, they're all advocating for a housing-first approach. You don't want to call it Houston, that's fine. It's a housing-first approach and it's the only thing that's ever worked—

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

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** Thank you to my colleagues. Pleased to rise today to speak to the Throne Speech. A very good Throne Speech, as I'm sure we all know. And I'm thrilled to see the leadership of our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) in this Throne Speech and the work that's been done from caucus and Cabinet to bring it to fruition. Lots of good things to work on there.

We have been through some very trying times, as we all know. We're still working through the impact of that in the economy, seeing disruptions here and

there and in some unexpected places, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think that's why it's important that one of the focuses of the throne 'shpeech' was helping families make ends meet and working for—through an affordability plan for Manitobans that need some help in this time of 'unprecedented'—dented upsets and changes that we have been going through.

And we do know that some people need some extra help, and that is some of the things we have been doing with a variety of plans out there. And not the least of which has been the minimum wage increases that we've been going through. We know that it's a very small percentage of workers in Manitoba, much far below the rest of Canada, that are paid minimum wage. But increasing the minimum wage does have a big impact on both workers and employers.

So we know that business owners have been challenged over the last several years on how to pivot their businesses to make sure that they can still employ people, that—make sure the businesses are still active, having problems with supply issues, with all kinds of challenges to those businesses, and not the least of which is paying their employees and ensuring that they're employed and finding those employees here as they strive to expand and pay their staff. The staff of a business or a small business is the most valuable part of the business, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we know from listening to the members opposite, who delayed this bill to the detriment of the Vital Statistics bill, that it's not going to committee at this time, which was apparently an important piece of legislation. I think it's important and they seem to believe it is, as well, but again, they've delayed that once for Manitobans for whatever reason.

But while speaking—they were speaking to the minimum wage changes, it was obvious how much hatred there is on the NDP benches for business, how much they hate business. That was clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is what Manitobans know; that the NDP hate business, they hate everything business stands for, they can't stand them, all they can do is tax them. And that's what the NDP are very good at. We know that.

That not only in previous elections have they increased the PST, but they lied about it, said they wouldn't do it and they even looked further to see if they could increase it another percentage point, lying to Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that election. That was a horrible thing to see and a horrible thing to watch.



Manitobans remember that. They remember the words that you put on the record about business, about how much you hate them and about how much you would tax them—

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

I'm obliged to just—I'm obliged to caution the member, language around lying is unparliamentary or, at very best, right on the edge.

The time being 5 p.m., this House—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services (Mr. Helwer) will have 16 minutes.

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

Have a good evening, everybody.



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