

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated, everyone. Good afternoon.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 17—The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), that Bill 17, The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm pleased to introduce this legislation to continue our government's commitment to modernize family law in Manitoba by making it more accessible for Manitoba families, continuing to encourage out-of-court alternatives to resolve family law disputes and harmonize Manitoba law with recent changes to federal legislation.

The bill will repeal The Family Maintenance Act and replace it with two new statutes that are written and organized to make it clearer and easier, for those who need to, to understand them.

The new acts are The Family Law Act, which governs the rights and duties of family members, and The Family Support Enforcement Act, that governs the enforcement of support obligations by the Maintenance Enforcement Program in the Department of Justice.

The bill also amends the inter-jurisdictional support orders amendment act to enhance procedures under that act.

Modernizing and improving the justice system in Manitoba continues to be a top priority of our government.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Taras Shevchenko

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Dobry den. [*Good day.*]

It is my privilege to rise before the House to recognize the accomplishments of Taras Shevchenko, the great 19th century Ukrainian poet and political activist whose birthday falls on March the 9th. As the war continues in Ukraine, it is fitting that we should pause to recognize the many contributions of Taras Shevchenko to art and to human rights.

He was a writer, artist, public and political figure, a folklorist and ethnographer, and a round-a-renowned poet, a painter and illustrator. And the work of Taras Shevchenko is regarded as the foundation of modern Ukrainian literature.

Distressed by the condition of Ukrainian region under the Russian empire, Taras Shevchenko expressed the desire for Ukrainian independence through his poetry, writing, paintings and illustrations.

Madam Speaker, Taras Shevchenko holds a special place in the hearts of our Ukrainian community who call our province home. A large, bronze granite monument of the Ukrainian poet sits on the west grounds of the Manitoba Legislative Building, created by New York sculptor, Andrew Daragan, and assisted by Winnipeg sculptor, Roman Kowal. Two statues of Shevchenko also reside at Assiniboine Park, created by Ukrainian sculptor, Leo Mol.

A Ukrainian community began immigrating to Manitoba in 1891. Since then they have shared their culture, including food, song and dance across much of southern and western Manitoba where the majority of families made their homes. Over the next several decades, Ukrainian community would become some of the greatest contributors to Manitoba's agricultural landscape.

Our vibrant Ukrainian community has made significant contributions that are reflected in the province's faith, economic, social, political and cultural landscape, as well as the important part of Ukrainian Canadians have played in the development of Canada as one of the best countries in the world to live.

The impact of Taras Shevchenko's poetry, paintings and illustrations on Ukraine and its people cannot be understated. His work and accomplishments resonate with those of Ukrainian heritage and all people to this day.

Madam Speaker, I now ask that all members to join me in recognizing Taras Shevchenko for his many artistic achievements, for his contributions and recognition of human rights and for his enduring inspiration for the independence of Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini. *[Glory to Ukraine.]*

Thank you.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): When I am dead, bury me / In my beloved Ukraine, / My tomb upon a grave mound high / Amid the spreading plain.

These are translated lines from Taras Shevchenko's 1845 poem *Zapovit*, a stirring piece that helped found the modern Ukrainian language. These words were inspirational at the time and they are inspirational now, as Ukrainian soldiers and civilians

die every day defending their homeland. We hope that they, too, will rest upon grave mounds high.

Madam Speaker, the Manitoba NDP and I am honoured to help commemorate the birthday of Shevchenko. His influence on Ukrainian language, culture and identity is unparalleled. As a child, I remember being asked to recite his poetry at Ukrainian cultural events.

But Shevchenko's legacy isn't just cultural and linguistic. It's also political. Back in 2014, during the Revolution of Dignity, Shevchenko's work was used by the protesters as a rallying cry. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who became Prime Minister of Ukraine following the revolution, said that this new government is here because 1 million Ukrainians came out to Maidan and did what Shevchenko told us to do: fight for Ukraine.

There's an impressive statue of Shevchenko on the front lawn, but there's more we can do to honour his legacy on these Legislative grounds than just erecting a statue. This government should drastically increase our support to Ukrainians fleeing their country by creating a matching program for up to \$5 million rather than a paltry \$150,000. It should adequately staff the Provincial Nominee Program so that applications get processed in a timely manner and it should waive the \$500 provincial nominee fee today so that Ukrainians don't need to worry about coming up with that money as they flee for their lives.

To the brave Ukrainians fighting against the Russian invaders, the Manitoba NDP offers our full and total solidarity. We echo an encouragement that Shevchenko wrote in 1845: Fight. You will prevail. God is helping you.

* (13:40)

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the ministerial statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: I'm very happy to rise and speak about a great and memorable Ukrainian this afternoon.

Taras Shevchenko was born in 1814 in what is now known as Moryntsi, Ukraine. He was known as a famous Ukrainian poet, writer and artist, and he had a huge impact as a figure in the national revival of Ukraine.

Not only was Shevchenko Ukraine's biggest and greatest poet and talented artist, but he was the champion for national and human rights. Born an agricultural labourer, he fought with his words for human dignity and freedom for all. Shevchenko and his works were so significant during Ukraine's Orange Revolution and subsequently in the Revolution of Dignity in 2014.

Now, Shevchenko is no stranger to Manitoba, Madam Speaker. Starting on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature, this year marks the 61st anniversary of the unveiling of his monument in front of the building.

Winnipeg is also home to the Ukrainian foundation of Taras Shevchenko, which is dedicated to the preservation and development of Ukrainian Canadian cultural heritage.

Furthermore, there are many images of him at the Leo Mol Sculpture Garden at the Assiniboine Park, and there's a statue of him at a park that was erected in 1988, in the North End of Winnipeg, on the corner of McGregor and Burrows.

There's a Shevchenko Dance Ensemble, which was established in 1977 by a group of dedicated parents in Sandy Lake in Westman that draws individuals from communities such as Sandy Lake, Minnedosa, Oakburn, Erickson, Rossburn, Newdale and Elphinstone.

And, Madam Speaker, it is important to share that, in the fall of 1896, Ukraine settlers came to a community that was given the name Shevchenko, and it became the hub of the community known today as Vita.

The Shevchenko post office was built, along with a new Ukrainian Catholic Church. And, in 1906, the first school was built and named after Shevchenko, the community's hero.

Now, Madam Speaker, everyone is aware of the atrocities being committed across independent Ukraine because of Russian dictator, and Manitoba needs to commit to a matching dollar-for-dollar humanitarian aid fund and be prepared to welcome and resettle Ukrainians, and others in Ukraine, here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Altea Active

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I'm very happy and proud of the local private and public investments that are happening in my constituency of Waverley.

Today, I highlight one of the extraordinary examples of local private sector investment. Altea Active is an 80,000-square-foot fitness club located near Bridgwater Centre, offering a plethora of various programs and unique services in their state-of-the-art facility.

After attending the groundbreaking ceremony in 2018, construction was swiftly under way. One year later, I was pleased to be part of the grand opening in November 2019.

From the very beginning, Altea has always had an incredible atmosphere and a positive energy. Creating 200-plus jobs in the local community and 7,000-plus members, this is truly a win-win for economic growth in our city and province, local community here in Waverley, as well as the private sector.

When the pandemic hit two years ago, Altea was instrumental in adapting rapidly changing public health guidelines and prioritizing the safety of their members. As a member of the club, witnessing firsthand the safety protocols and continued enhancements made me truly feel a sense of safety.

Altea used 21 new medical-grade air purification systems that sterilized the indoor air by killing viruses and bacteria with a multi-stage air-purifying technology. They were proactive and took the sanitization steps necessary to enhance the safety of their members and team members. Even with restrictions loosening, Altea still operates with their prevent-and-protect plan.

Altea also kindly allowed my team to distribute KN95 masks to Waverley constituents at their location. I truly thank them for their commitment to the local community.

This \$30-million private sector investment has benefited the community immensely. It has created numerous jobs, offered fitness services to thousands of Manitobans and has truly shaped the local community.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Altea Active, this extraordinary facility in my constituency of Waverley.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Rhonda Head

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): It is my great honour today to recognize the accomplishments of Rhonda Head, a multi-award-winning mezzo-soprano hailing from Opaskwayak Cree Nation. She writes her lyrics in her Indigenous Cree language and composes her melodies inspired by the landscape in her home community of Opaskwayak.

Rhonda's classically trained vocals have received worldwide recognition after she received two bronze medals from the Global Music Awards for her Cree language songs, *Kisahkihitin I Love You*, which was in the contemporary classical category, and *500 Years*, which received honours among protest songs.

In 2019, Rhonda received the Indigenous leadership award from the Women of Inspiration Awards. Over the course of her career, she toured many parts of Canada, the United States and Australia.

Rhonda is a mentor and role model for her next generation of Indigenous artists. Working with the Manitoba Arts Network, she has been organizing the Indigenous emerging artist program. Over 20 Indigenous emerging artists completed their-completed the program and most of them are successful in the music industry today.

When the world was shut down due to the pandemic, Rhonda started an online show called Indigenous Super Stars. She has interviewed over 100 Indigenous guests from all over the world, from musicians to powwow emcees, singers, dancers and fashion designers.

Rhonda also wrote a book called *Mezzo Soprano: Memoirs of a Rez Girl*, which has received numerous five-star reviews. She has had to overcome many challenges to get to where she is today, including surviving two acoustic brain tumours.

Currently, Rhonda is studying broadcast communications at Herzing College, and continues to record music, and is releasing an EP and a few singles this spring.

I cannot wait to see other things that Rhonda will accomplish in her life. Please join me in congratulating this extraordinary woman and artist.

Ekosi.

Town of Neepawa

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations): It gives me great pride to recognize and acknowledge the hard work and efforts that Manitobans have put into their communities during the challenging last two years. Those in leadership roles and businesses in our communities have worked endlessly to support and maintain their city, town, municipality as well as their neighborhoods.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize one of these examples in my constituency and pay tribute to the town of Neepawa.

Since 2016 census, Neepawa has seen a 23.3 increase in population, making it the third largest growth in the province and the 13th fastest growing community in all of Canada. Not only has Neepawa seen an incredible population growth, but, more particular, in this significant economic growth in the last two years, it's clear the COVID pandemic did not slow the progress of this thriving rural community.

With such significant growth, housing becomes the top priority, and Neepawa is certainly working to meet those needs with two new senior complexes built, two family units under construction and several housing developments breaking ground, all of which impact the housing front.

It's exciting to see the population grow in this rural community of Manitoba, and with new growth comes investment and new opportunities. During the last year alone, the town has seen many new businesses and organizations transition as well as expand. The town hopes to add a waterslide to its recreation options and there's a Best Western to its list of hotel accommodations.

A special thank you to Mayor Blake McCutcheon and his council, CAO Colleen Synyshyn [*phonetic*] and economic development officer, Marilyn Crewe, as well as all their staff. This has been an unprecedented time in our history and it has not been easy, but you have all gone above and beyond the call of duty and 'conutinue' to work through the many challenges brought on by COVID. I want to say thank you for their vision, strategic planning and continued commitment to economic 'dolth' and development in rural Manitoba as well as your town.

Thank you for your future developments and wishing you much 'succesh,' town of Neepawa.

Student Unions

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Student unions at our post-secondary institutions are critical to the success and well-being of students across our province.

As the terms for many student union executives are going to come to a close at the end of the semester, their elections are soon to begin, and I want to thank the many student unions and student leaders I've had the privilege to work with over this past year.

I also want to thank the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba and the Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students for their advocacy as well.

These student leaders have done incredible work in such difficult times. Food hamper programs, legal aid, daycare, health and dental insurance, advocacy and more—these are just a few of the ways they have been able to support their fellow students all while maintaining and continuing their own studies at the same time.

* (13:50)

Unfortunately, this PC government has made the lives of students more difficult each and every year. Year-over-year cuts to the operating grants at universities and colleges have left students to pick up the slack. For example, the University of Manitoba students have seen an average tuition increase of almost 18 per cent since 2018-19 academic year.

Now, we all know this government gave themselves even more control over tuition fees through bill 33, and now they want to implement performance-based funding model for universities and colleges. And this will mean a less affordable and less accessible education for students.

And recently, this PC government had problems providing students Student Aid and left students in the lurch and on their own, suffering financially.

It's time for this government to actually listen to students. Reverse these misguided cuts to our advanced education system and start working to make an affordable post-secondary education accessible for all Manitobans.

Thank you.

Dauphin Rail Museum

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): The Dauphin Rail Museum recently commemorated a landmark anniversary: 125 years since the first passenger train arrived in Dauphin on December 15th, 1896.

President of the Dauphin Rail Museum Jason Gilmore co-ordinated a series of celebrations around significant dates in the history of the arrival of rail service to the area.

For a rural community of Dauphin's size at the time, the establishment of rail travel was an important key that contributed to immigration and furthering the settlement of other communities throughout Manitoba and western Canada.

On December 14th, 2021, guests, dignitaries, local historians and board members of the Dauphin Rail Museum gathered to mark this special anniversary at Ochre River's intersection of Mann Street and MacKenzie Avenue, named for the two men who were instrumental in the building of the rail line from Gladstone to Dauphin. In 1896, Mann ran a special train carrying the Lieutenant Governor, government representatives and reporters to showcase the potential of their area. The events of the re-enactment celebrated what must have been a tremendously exciting time full of promise and anticipation for the future of Dauphin and the area.

The group of present-day travelers boarded a train at Ochre River and rode to Dauphin. For some, this was their first train ride ever. The re-enactment also featured members of the Dauphin local Theatre Amisk dressed in period costumes and evoked an excitement of townspeople as they would meet the first train.

Dauphin's working rail station is a provincially designated historic site, a notable landmark and a beautifully restored piece of railway architecture built in 1912.

Congratulations to Jason Gilmore, the Dauphin Rail Museum and all participants in celebrating this important piece of Manitoba and Dauphin history with a memorial event.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Transfer of ICU Patients to Ontario Government Knowledge of Transfer Plans

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier and the PCs continue to mislead Manitobans about ICU patient transfers during the third wave.

The CEO of Shared Health met with Thunder Bay officials to discuss ICU transfers on May 13th. The same day, the Premier was briefed on ICUs. Those

are facts. We've established them in the Chamber. Nobody is challenging those facts.

But now, apparently, the PCs are saying the Premier never asked and was never briefed about the plan to send patients out of province. We need to hear from the Premier today on this important issue.

When, on which day, did the Premier find out about the plan to transfer Manitoba ICU patients to Ontario?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I believe this issue was dealt with yesterday in a statement from Shared Health that clarified that I was not a party to the meetings where those discussions took place.

Madam Speaker, I know that I had extensive meetings when I first came to—into the Health portfolio, to plan ahead for ICU capacity and, certainly, I had sometimes daily meetings on ICU capacity, sometimes a couple of times a week, as we ramped up to ensure that we got more nurses trained for the ICU. That's what was increasing the ICU capacity and we were certainly diligent in moving forward on that.

So we were—we did have those discussions, certainly, on the—increasing the ICU capacity. Madam Speaker, we will continue to have those discussions to ensure that we have better health care for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: The PCs have had days to prepare for this question. I asked it half a dozen times yesterday.

On which day did the Premier—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —find out about the plan to transfer Manitoba's ICU patients to Ontario?

Again, the PC line on this appears to be that the Health minister had extensive meetings, extensive briefings, extensive work around the clock on this issue, and yet in none of those briefings, none of those meetings, did she ask about ICU patients being transferred to Ontario.

We heard the current Health Minister say yesterday that the Premier, the former Health minister, had absolutely no prior knowledge of ICU patients being transferred out of Ontario.

So I ask the Premier today: Is the current Health Minister right? Did the former Health minister not know what was happening in her department under

her watch during the most important part of the pandemic?

Mrs. Stefanson: First of all, the Leader of the Opposition continues to maintain his space in the grassy knoll, but what I will say is—and then they—then he accuses me of not having meetings. Now he's accusing me of having too many meetings, Madam Speaker, and so—he can't have it both ways.

What I will say is what Manitobans want, need and deserve is access to health care. Surgical, diagnostic procedures: that's what we're focused on. That's why we set up the task force, to continue forward to ensure that we're providing those much-needed services for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Let me just clarify: neither my colleagues nor the people of Manitoba nor do I believe anything this government says when it comes to health care, Madam Speaker. We don't believe the lines that they force Shared Health to trot out. We don't believe the excuses armed with the Cabinet ministers yesterday. We don't believe the lines that the Premier is delivering today.

All that I'm pointing out is that those lines make no sense.

What the Premier would have you believe is that she was working around the clock talking to all the people who were arranging for ICU patients to be transferred out of Manitoba, and yet she had no idea that that was going to happen.

So if that's the line that the PCs want to go with, the obvious subsequent question is this: Why didn't the Premier know what was happening in the Department of Health under her watch as Health minister?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the disrespectful comments about—and disparaging comments about Shared Health and those officials at Shared Health is very disturbing.

I will say that those individuals who are in charge there are doing tremendous work, as are all the doctors and nurses and everyone else who is working to get us through this pandemic. And I want to praise them for the incredible work that they have done, because there's difficult decisions that need to be made on a day-by-day basis, Madam Speaker—sometimes an hour-by-hour basis.

Madam Speaker, those decisions are made, and those decisions are made by professionals within the system. They're not made by the Leader of the Opposition. They're not made by government or politicians. They're made by doctors.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, on behalf of doctors across Manitoba, that is deeply offensive.

No doctor made the decision to send ICU patients out of province. That decision was made by the—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—current Premier and the former premier, Brian Pallister. And they made that decision because they were painted—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—into a corner because of the cuts that the current member for Tuxedo and the current member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) made to our health-care system.

* (14:00)

We lost ICU beds because of their cuts—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—and we lost Manitobans because we lost those ICU beds.

So, will the Premier finally answer the question that has been hounding this government for more than a week?

On which day did she learn of the plan to send Manitoba ICU patients to Ontario?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, what is somewhat disturbing about the Leader of the Opposition's question is that he obviously, from his questioning, does not understand how our health-care system works.

Madam Speaker, decisions are made by doctors that—to move people within the system around. Those are clinical decisions that are made by doctors. They are not made by politicians. I shudder to think if he was the premier of this province or the minister of Health in this province. You know what? He wouldn't know how—what to do. That's disturbing to me.

What I will say is that we'll—we will maintain our focus on ensuring that those Manitobans who need their surgical and diagnostic procedures, Madam Speaker, will get those procedures done. That's what our focus is on. We will continue to work with the task force to ensure we move that forward because that's what Manitobans need, want and deserve.

That's our focus. We'll continue along those lines, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, our team doesn't take it for granted that we will have the honour of forming government, but I can tell you that we are working very hard—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—to show the people of Manitoba that we are ready to lead and we are ready to run a health-care system.

And the reason why we are ready to do so is because we listen to the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—health-care experts. And—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—you know what the health-care experts have been telling us all week, Madam Speaker?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order.

I'd ask for everybody's co-operation, please. I am not being—able to hear the question that is being asked of the House.

Mr. Kinew: The reason why we're ready to lead is because we listen to those on the front lines.

And what doctors, nurses and health-care professionals have been saying all week is that they've been yelling at their TVs, shouting at their mobile phones listening to the Premier and the Health Minister trying to blame them for the ICU patient transfers during the third wave.

Let's be clear. Those physicians were put into impossible positions because of the cuts of this government, and still they play the blame game with those front-line health-care heroes. Just stop it.

Tell us: Which day did the Premier find out about the plan to transfer ICU patients to Ontario?

Mrs. Stefanson: It's very disappointing, Madam Speaker, that—the Leader of the Opposition continuing down this line of questioning.

And all Manitobans—indeed, everyone across our country—knows that there's something called COVID—a world-wide pandemic, Madam Speaker. That's what led to the unfortunate decisions, the very difficult decisions that needed to be made—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —by those clinicians, by those doctors, Madam Speaker.

Those were very difficult decisions. And they were made on sometimes an hour-by-hour basis, sometimes a day-by-day basis, Madam Speaker. And we cherish—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —everything that those doctors have done for us, the nurses who—have done for us, Madam Speaker, the difficult decisions that doctors made during that time.

But, Madam Speaker, we are listening to Manitobans, who need, want and deserve surgical and diagnostic procedures sooner rather than later. That's why we set up the task force. That's why our focus will maintain on delivering those services for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: What a week, Madam Speaker. Government and Shared Health comm staff scrambling to spin journalists. You have Cabinet ministers briefed and prepped with talking points. The entire weight of government used to try and explain away the failures of the Premier during our third wave. It's been really something to watch.

And then again, today, to see them come out and blame physicians.

Just imagine if they used all the power that they have for good instead of evil, Madam Speaker.

So, that's why we are asking these questions about accountability.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: It's very simple: On which day—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —did the Premier find out about the plan to transfer ICU patients out of province, and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —is it really her assertion that she did not know what was happening under the Health Department under her watch? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I'm just going to caution members on the language that they choose to use in the House. Some of the rhetoric can be very inflammatory, and I would caution members, when we hear about evil right now, I'm thinking of what Russia's doing in Ukraine. And to throw that word around here, I think, is careless.

So I'm going to ask members to please be cautious—*[interjection]*—please be—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I'm—I would remind members that I'm standing.

I'm just ordering caution on members in the House. We need to be very careful with our language. We don't need to inflame a debate here with using words that may inflame that debate. And I'm just asking for everybody to please be careful and courteous and respectful so that democracy can actually function as it should in this Legislature.

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, it's disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition goes down that path of negativity.

What I will say is that Manitobans want to rise up and be hopeful about the future for Manitoba—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —Madam Speaker. We will ensure as part of that hope that we offer the services that they want, need and deserve—the surgical and diagnostic procedures that they need, want and deserve.

That's why we are emphasizing that and making a priority those things, because they're a priority of Manitobans. We have listened to Manitobans. We've made it a priority, Madam Speaker. We'll continue down those lines to ensure that Manitobans get the

surgical and diagnostic procedures that they need sooner.

Thank you.

Health System Support Workers Collective Bargaining Contract

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, health support staff have worked the front lines throughout this pandemic. They showed up consistently to keep us all safe. When the ones that we love got sick, those health-care workers were right at the bedside.

Sadly, support staff in emergency rooms, long-term care, home-care workers like health-care aides, don't have a contract. They've been without one for five years, and they've been left out of pay top-ups.

Will the minister recognize these staff and give them a contract?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, I'm sure the member opposite recognizes and knows that the government is not the employer in this case. Shared Health is the employer, and I'm told that negotiations are ongoing and doing very well.

And we do respond to and believe in the collective bargaining situation that we're in right now, Madam Speaker, and we'll wait to see what the outcomes of those discussions are.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, health support staff have had their wages frozen for five years. The PC government legislated their wages at zero per cent. Inflation is now running at 5 per cent. Front-line workers have been in a strike position since August and 97 per cent of their members voted in favour of that.

They've worked the front lines throughout this pandemic, but this government has refused to acknowledge or recognize their contributions.

Will the minister give these workers a top-up and make sure they get a fair contract?

Mr. Helwer: Well, obviously, the member opposite may not seem to understand what I said the first time, so we'll try to repeat that, that we are not the employer. Shared Health is the employer, and they are in those negotiations and collective bargaining with those unions.

They did very well, we think, with what they negotiated with the nurses. We were thrilled to see that that agreement came to a close and that we found success there, that Shared Health found the path there.

I expect that collective bargaining will continue, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, hospitals across the province do not have the health-care staffing, health-care aides that they need. This pandemic has made things worse.

* (14:10)

Health support workers' wages have been frozen for five years. It's unconscionable. Four thousand Manitobans have now written the minister with a petition that reads, and I quote: You call them heroes, but they are being treated like zeroes. We're calling on the Manitoba government to immediately prioritize collective bargaining with health-care support workers. End quote.

Will the minister just listen, and will health-support staff get the contract they deserve today?

Mr. Helwer: What I'm hearing from the member opposite is they want the government to intervene, but it—that is not our role, Madam Speaker. This is Shared Health that is negotiating with the unions. They were very successful. We saw a great collective agreement come together with the nurses, and we expect that we'll continue to see bargaining take place.

Sale of Hydro Assets Cost to Ratepayers

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, whenever the PCs interfere with Hydro, we know it costs Manitobans money. They ordered Hydro to give up their assets to Xplornet, and now it's going to cost ratepayers more.

Last October, they first issued a secret directive to Hydro to give use of the assets, quote, at no additional cost to Manitoba Hydro ratepayers. End quote.

But days later, they issued a new directive that said to give access to Hydro's assets and they took out the language about costs.

Why are the PCs ordering Hydro to do something that will cost Manitobans money?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, I'm—I was quite thrilled to announce that we had found that there was a company called Xplornet, Madam Speaker, that was successful in going through our RFP process that was very, 'rery' robust, with lots of competition, that will be able to connect 125,000 Manitoba households in the near future.

And we made sure that Manitoba Hydro was part of those discussions. They have dark fibre that is not being used, and Xplornet and the ISPs will bring that ability for broadband to the province.

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

Mr. Sala: The first directive said Hydro ratepayers shouldn't be on the hook for the PCs plan to privatize Hydro's assets.

They took that out in the second directive, and it's pretty clear what that means: Hydro ratepayers and Manitobans are going to pay more. That's wrong.

Everything's more expensive and the costs of living are going up. And now, we learn PC interference in Hydro means ratepayers will be left with the tab.

Will this government stop interfering in Hydro, and will they stop raising costs on Manitobans?

Mr. Helwer: It is clear, through all of these negotiations, that Manitoba retains ownership of their assets. There is no transfer into—of assets.

But the member likes to go down that rabbit hole, and now he wants to interfere in the Public Utilities Board.

We are going to connect 125,000 Manitobans to the Internet, Madam Speaker, and make sure that they can do—they can interact with others around the world.

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

Mr. Sala: The PCs interfered with Hydro. I'll table the directives they hid from Manitobans. And that means Manitobans are going to pay more due to their interference and privatization efforts. That's wrong, and it shouldn't happen.

The PCs need to stop interfering, and they need to stop hiking the costs of Hydro.

Will the minister listen, and will he stop forcing Hydro to do something that will cost Manitobans money?

Mr. Helwer: Madam Speaker, we were clear in the RFP that this would be an additional service that would be 'availed' to Manitobans through the private sector working with Manitoba Hydro, that they could work with other private ISPs to bring broadband to 125,000 homes in Manitoba.

It's obvious that the member doesn't have any collective memory of what drove up the costs of Hydro. It was the intervention and interference from the NDP that drove the costs of those Hydro dams that Manitobans are now on the hook for, Madam Speaker.

Highway and Road Maintenance Snow Clearance Safety Concerns

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, several times over the last few weeks, dangerous conditions on the Perimeter Highway have been reported as icy surfaces and snow drifts are affecting commuters and trade. Residents and even City councillors have raised concerns, urging more attention to ensure our roadways are clear and that they're sanded in a timely fashion. We as a caucus share those concerns.

Will the minister explain what steps he is taking to ensure that motorways such as the Perimeter Highway get cleared in a timely fashion?

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I just want to thank the member for the question.

And the member has to realize that yesterday's event was not a road condition situation; it was actually a weather condition, and the thing was that there was zero visibility. This is the fifth time this year that we've encountered five consecutive—five times that the Perimeter Highway was closed, and it was because of zero visibility.

And the RCMP will—we actually take the input from the RCMP to close the highways.

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

Mr. Wiebe: In yesterday's incident, over 20 vehicles were involved in a major vehicle—multi-vehicle collision near the Perimeter Highway at McGillivray. Three people were taken to hospital, and media reports were clear that there were huge drifts of snow that were reported at that intersection.

We know we need to do everything we can to protect Manitobans as they use our roadways throughout the province.

What additional steps will the minister be taking to ensure safety on the Perimeter Highway even during high snowfall years?

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I want to say that—I want to thank our hard-working snow-clearing crew that actually go out there, soon as it's safe to go do so.

They're out there within—when it's safe to do so. It can be 2 o'clock in the morning; it could be 2 o'clock in the afternoon. They're out there soon as it's possible to go out there and actually clear the snow, and they'll get the all—clearing done within four hours of a major event. And also, at the same time, they were out on the Perimeter Highway three times yesterday, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, timely snow clearing is an issue that's been raised by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. It's been brought forward by City councillors within the City of Winnipeg—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —who have all criticized this government's lack of action when it comes to cleaning—clearing our highways in a timely manner.

And the pileup that we saw yesterday, Madam Speaker, sent folks to hospital, which caused—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —the Health Sciences Centre to declare a code orange. This is a serious matter; I'll agree with the minister on that. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: But at last check, there were over 387 vacant positions that were admitted by this minister in highways maintenance.

We ask: What additional steps, what more can this minister do to ensure that even in a high snowfall event, like we saw yesterday, that our roads are safe for everyone?

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, our department is continuously looking for—recruiting members—staff to make sure that we have staff on board to make sure our highways are safe.

And the thing was—you know what? The challenge is not just with the Province, when it comes to

our highways. The challenge is also in the City of Winnipeg, with municipalities throughout this province. This is the third worst winter that we actually encountered in this whole province, and the thing is, we haven't seen anything like this since 1923, Madam Speaker.

Northern Manitoba Health Care Nurse Recruitment and Retention

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is continuing Brian Pallister's legacy of leaving our northern health-care system in shambles. Instead of filling the 25 per cent nursing shortage in the North, the government is spending more than double than two years ago on agency nurses.

I'll table the FIPPA documents for the House.

Why does the minister continue to cut health in the North?

Ekosi.

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

* (14:20)

Our government is committed to ensuring the northern and remote communities in our province have the services that they need to be able to serve their residents. That is why we committed \$19.5 million in Budget 2021 to add 259 nurse training seats this year, and then 400 new nursing education seats. We also committed \$4.3 million for 37 additional nurse training seats at the University College of the North. We will continue to support our northern communities.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: Spending on agency nurses has gone from \$5.1 million in 2019 to \$11 million in 2021. That's more than double, Madam Speaker.

This is money that could be hiring—that could be going to hiring nurses that can stay in our communities for the long term. Instead, the PCs are choosing a more expensive way to staff our northern health-care system that results in continuous closures at northern health-care sites.

Why is this minister refusing to recruit and retain nurses in the North?

Ekosi.

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, recruiting nurses and ensuring—staffing positions that are vacant is a priority of this government.

I was pleased to join the faculty of nursing last year to welcome 150 new nurses to our province and to our health-care system. We continue to train nurses through our critical-care nurse training program. We continue to welcome third- and fourth-year nurses to our undergraduate nurse education program.

We recognize that there's a challenge in the North, and that's why I've committed to hosting a northern staffing health-care sustainability meeting this spring with our northern stakeholders, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Lathlin: We need to fix this problem now, not five years from now.

Some northern sites have been totally dependent on agency nurses for their nursing staff, and when they leave, Madam Speaker, sites close unexpectedly and communities can't get the care they need close to home. It's wrong.

Will the minister commit to fixing these nurse vacancies immediately?

Ekosi.

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I commit to hosting the northern health-care sustainability meeting with the stakeholders that have written to me. I commit to working with the northern regional health authority, which is on the ground talking to the stakeholders in the community about how we come together to address the issues that are unique to that part of our province.

Our government is very much 'committed' to ensuring Manitobans across the province receive the care that they need close to home. That is our commitment, and we will continue to work for—work towards that goal.

Thank you.

Southern Health Region Staff Vacancies

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I table a report, acquired through FIPPA, of a list of vacant health-care positions over a year in Southern Health.

As of January 14th, 2022, of 2,448 positions in regular operations, 584—nearly a quarter—were vacant. Altona health care—health centre LTC is

short 30 per cent of its health-care aides. Boyne Lodge in Carman is short 40 per cent. Home-care programs in Carman, Portage, Ste. Anne and Steinbach have vacancies from 23 per cent to 42 per cent. The Portage general hospital has a 45 per cent vacancy for LPNs. Ste. Anne Hospital is short 31 per cent of their RNs.

How can this government justify running an entire health region at 75 per cent staffing levels in a pandemic unless their goal is just saving money instead of lives?

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

It is a priority for our government to address the staffing vacancies throughout the province.

Madam Speaker, this is not unique to Manitoba. Other jurisdictions across the country are facing the same challenges. That is why the federal minister, Minister Duclos—someone he may know—has brought all the health ministers together around the table to talk about a health human resource sustainability plan, because it's not unique to our province, but our government is most definitely committed to addressing this issue.

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

Health-Care System Nursing Shortage

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We're also hearing that nurses who are qualified and registered in Manitoba who want work, can't get it; nurses who've been vaccinating people for months at vaccine centres, working 12 to 14 hour days making sure Manitobans get their shots.

I heard from a nurse that her hours have now been cut to three a week. She's registered, has experience, but when she applied to Shared Health, she heard nothing back. She feels abandoned because she has been.

Now, we know communication between Shared Health and this government is a problem. Can anyone get the message to Shared Health that the nursing shortage is a crisis in this province and that it—they need to immediately start hiring?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, for Shared Health and for our government, the staffing of vacant nursing positions is a priority.

I can't speak to the specific cases that the member is bringing forward, but if he's—if he sends them into my department, we would be happy to take a look at those and to discuss them individually with Shared Health.

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

Students Fleeing Ukraine Studying in Manitoba Continuing Education Accreditation

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Hundreds and thousands of students in Ukraine, both local and international, have had their education completely interrupted as they are forced to settle in other countries all over the world.

As noted in a CBC article, which I table, one particular individual was studying medicine in Ukraine and fled to Manitoba to stay with family. Madam Speaker, we know there are more in this position.

What will this government do to ensure that students wanting to continue their education here in Manitoba will have their previous education from Ukraine be adequately accredited and recognized towards their degrees?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): As I said yesterday, we've heard and seen of the mass exodus of Ukrainian people because of Putin's defiance on democracy.

We also have seen the mass exodus of students from Nigeria, Egypt, India and other nations trying to leave the Ukraine and are—experience—having issues when trying to enter neighbouring countries.

Manitoba will work with the federal government to help immigrate individuals and families, regardless of where they came from, and will welcome them like we know how we can here in friendly Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Art and Culture Sector During Pandemic Government Support Programs

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): The COVID-19 pandemic has posed incredible challenges to all sectors in our province. The arts and culture sector was particularly hard hit.

Can the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage update this House on what supports the Manitoba government have provided to the arts and culture sector during the pandemic?

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I'd like to thank the member for the question. It's a great opportunity to be able to answer my first question as a member of Cabinet in this House here today.

Our government recognizes the importance of the arts and cultural sector. We know that they were very much affected during the COVID-19 pandemic and that's why we stepped up.

How did we do that, Madam Speaker? Through the bridge grants program for the arts and culture recipients—over \$12.4 million; bridge grants program for the sports—over \$9.6 million; Safe at Home—over \$3.8 million; the arts and cultural sustainability fund—\$12 million; le Centre culturel franco-manitobain—\$300,000; and the Manitoba Centennial Centre—\$1 million. That's a total of—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Changes to Crown Lands Program Impact on Young Beef Producers

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): The PC government has made a mess of Crown lands. Matthew Atkinson, chair of Beef Producers' Crown lands committee, says he's a young producer but, I quote, the chances of being able to outbid a more established producer are slim. The benefit for a young producer is certainly not there. End quote.

What does the minister say to Matthew Atkinson and the many young producers who aren't being given a chance?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): I'd like to welcome my critic—or welcome me to his critic role—I guess he's the same, I'm different—but welcome nonetheless.

* (14:30)

I also want to thank the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) for entrusting me in new role, and I want to thank my predecessors, of course—the MLA from Lakeside and the MLA from Midland. I have some large shoes to fill, and we'll make Manitoba Ag proud.

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

Mr. Brar: I also welcome the new Ag Minister.

The PC government says one thing but—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brar: —does another. Carson Callum, general manager of the Beef Producers, says that they have, and I quote, many concerns that a lot of the changes to the Crown lands program did not line up with what we had recommended in our consultation. End quote.

What does the minister say to Carson Callum and the concerns of hundreds of beef producers around this province?

Mr. Johnson: I want to thank the member for the question.

And I want to just take this moment to express our hard work we're doing for the farmers and I want to explain how we've—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: I want to explain how we've extended our ag drought recovery program and we've extended the eligibility from March 15th 'til April 15th, and you can apply for that programming all the way through 'til March 13th.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Burrows, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Brar: One producer, Dale Myhre from Crane River, says their worst fears with Crown lands have come true. He says, and I quote, it has gone the way we expected: a major loss of ranchers and economic hardships. The government said they are bringing in these programs to free up some agricultural land for young producers, but the young people, they have left and this has happened over only three years. End quote.

What does the minister say to Mr. Myhre and hundreds of producers they have left behind?

Thank you.

Mr. Johnson: We've also added, Madam Speaker, extraordinary expenses to the programming. So, this is including—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —expenses that were incurred throughout the summer, and I want to—it includes hauling of water, renting extra pasture and cropland. It's also harvesting extra acres for livestock feed. These are all accommodations that we made for producers.

We've also added extra feed and additives and pre-mixes, including molasses-based products and

vitamins, mineral oils and fats that weren't—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —originally included in the original programming, and I want to thank Agriculture Department and their hard work for moving this forward—and, of course, the previous minister.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Foot-Care Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: (5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot care treatment—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

This petition has been signed by Mervin Tait, Donna Hopkins, Marlene Rudolph and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot

care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns. [*interjection*]

The honourable member for St. Johns.

Abortion Services

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons deserve to be safe and supported when accessing abortion services.

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to detrimental outcomes and consequences for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

(3) The provincial government's reckless health cuts have created inequity within the health-care system whereby access to the abortion pill, Mifegymiso, and surgical abortions are less accessible for northern and rural individuals than individuals in southern Manitoba, as they face travel barriers to access a handful of non-urban health-care professionals who are trained to provide medical abortions.

(4) For over five years, and over the administration of three failed Health ministers, the provincial government operated under the pretense that reproductive health was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Seniors Care and shifted the responsibility to a secretariat with no policy, program or financial authority within the health-care system.

(5) For over four years, the provincial government has refused to support bill 200, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, which will ensure the safety of Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons accessing abortion services, and the staff who provide such services, by establishing buffer zones for anti-choice Manitobans around clinics.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion services for individuals, regardless of where they

reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Provincial Road 224

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road No. 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

(2) The road has been in poor condition for years and has numerous potholes, uneven driving surfaces and extremely narrow shoulders.

(3) Due to recent population growth in the area, there has been increased vehicle and pedestrian use of Provincial Road 224.

* (14:40)

(4) Without repair, Provincial Road 224 will continue to pose a hazard to many Manitobans who use it regularly.

(5) Concerned Manitobans are requesting that Provincial Road 224 be assessed and repaired urgently to improve safety for its users.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to complete an assessment of Provincial Road 224 and implement the appropriate repairs, using public funds, as quickly as possible.

This petition has been signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

Vivian Sand Facility Project— Clean Environment Commission Review

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard:—making it the largest claim ever given to a single company in Manitoba's history. It is larger than the city of Winnipeg, which is 46,410 hectares.

The amount of dry, solid sand mined or produced per year, according to the EAP, is 1.36 million tons, and much of the sand will be used in fracking.

A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, including both carbonate and sandstone aquifers, which covers much of south-eastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and an abundance of wildlife and ecosystems. Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

The sustainable yield of the combined sandstone and carbonate aquifers has still not yet been established by provincial authorities.

The mine could cause leaching of acid and heavy metals and pollute the aquifer, as it will go down 200 feet into the Winnipeg formation of the sandstone aquifer. There is concern that the shale, which separates the carbonate and sandstone aquifers—sand and pyritic oolite itself contains sulphides—will, when exposed to injected air from the CanWhite Sands extraction process, turn to acid.

An additional concern with the proposed mine and plant is the potential to pollute the Brokenhead River and the aquatic food chain leading to Lake Winnipeg.

Residents in the area have also expressed fears of being overexposed to silica dust during production, as there has been a demonstrated lack of safety and environmental procedures by the CanWhite Sands Corporation during the exploratory drilling phase. Signage and fencing has been poor; identifying and required mine claim tags were missing; there were no warnings for silica dust exposure and no coverings to prevent exposure of the silica stockpiles to the elements.

Residents' concerns include the fact that boreholes, which should have been promptly and properly sealed, were left open for a year. The drilling of hundreds of improperly sealed boreholes yearly create significant risks of surface contamination, mixing of aquifer waters and drainage of surface fecal matter into the aquifer.

There is also a risk of subsidence around each borehole as a result of sand extraction.

There are also potential transboundary issues that need to be addressed as the aquifers extend into Minnesota.

This project should not proceed, as no licensing conditions and mitigation measures will alleviate the risk to all Manitobans and the environment since CanWhite Sands Corporation plans to use unprecedented mining techniques with no established safe outcome. The corporation has gone on record indicating that it does not know how to mine for the silica in the water supply and needs to develop a new extraction methodology that's never been done before.

Contamination of the aquifers and the environment is irreversible and there are many surface sources of high purity silica that can be extracted without endangering two essential regional aquifers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to undertake a combined review of the Vivian Sand Facility processing plant and the mining/extraction portion of the operation as a class 3 development with a review by Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to include public hearings and participant funding.

To urge the provincial government to halt all activity at the mine and plant until the Clean Environment Commission's review is completed and the project proposal has been thoroughly evaluated.

Signed by Kathie Boznianin, Rob Fetterly, Charlotte Himey [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

Foot-Care Services

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for simple blood tests or urine sample.

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at

further risk in extreme weather, be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer wait times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they're able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all the phlebotomy blood sample sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Lead in Soils

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as follows:

In December of 2019, the provincial government's commissioned report on lead concentrations in soil in Winnipeg was completed.

(2) The report found that 10 neighbourhoods had concerning levels of lead concentration in their soil, including Centennial, Daniel McIntyre, Glenelmu-Chalmers, north Point Douglas, River Osborne, Sargent Park, St. Boniface, West End, Weston and Wolseley-Minto.

* (14:50)

(3) In particular, the predicted blood lead levels for children in north Point Douglas, Weston and Daniel McIntyre were above the level of concern.

(4) The Weston Elementary School field has been forced to close down many times because of concerns of lead in soil and the provincial government's inaction to improve the situation.

(5) Lead exposure especially affects children aged seven years and under, as their nervous system is still developing.

(6) The effects of lead exposure are irreversible and include impacts on learning, behaviour and intelligence.

(7) For adults, long-term lead exposure can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney problems and reproductive effects.

(8) The provincial government currently has no comprehensive plan in place to deal with lead in soil, nor is there a broad advertising campaign educating residents on how they can reduce their risks of lead exposure.

(9) Instead, people in these areas continue to garden and work in the soil and children continue to play in the dirt, often without any knowledge of the associated risks.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take action to reduce people's exposure to lead in Winnipeg, and to implement the recommendations proposed by the provincial government's independent review, including the creation of an action plan for the Weston neighbourhood, developing a lead awareness communications and outreach program, 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.

This has been signed by Marie Hinegi [*phonetic*], Jaime Vendivil, Julia Lavarias and many other Manitobans.

Foot-Care Services

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

The implications of inadequate or lack of 'podiatric'-podiatric care can lead to amputations.

The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

This has been signed by Jaylene Benson, Shaun Pierone and Allan Benson and many other Manitobans.

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1, 2022.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Road Closures

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Infrastructure has undertaken the closure of all farm-access roads along the North Perimeter Highway, forcing rural residents to drive up to six miles out of their way to leave or return to their property.

The provincial government's own consultations showed that closing the access of some of these roads, including Sturgeon Road, was an emerging concern to residents and business owners, yet the North Perimeter plan does nothing to address this issue.

Residents and business owners were assured that their concerns about access closures, including safety issues cited by engineers, would be taken into account and that access at Sturgeon Road would be maintained. However, weeks later, the median was nonetheless torn up, leaving local residents and businesses scrambling.

Closing all access to the Perimeter puts more people in danger, as it emboldens speeders and forces farmers to take large equipment into heavy traffic, putting road users at risk.

Local traffic, commuter traffic, school buses, emergency vehicles and commercial traffic, including up to 200 gravel trucks per day from the Lilyfield Quarry, will all be expected to merge and travel out of their way in order to cross the Perimeter, causing increased traffic and longer response times to emergencies.

Small businesses located along the Perimeter and Sturgeon Road are expected to lose business, as customers will give up on finding a way into their premises.

Residents, business owners and those who use the roads have been left behind by the provincial government's refusal to listen to their concerns that closures

will only result in worsened safety and major inconveniences for users of the North Perimeter.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to leave residents access to the Perimeter Highway at least every two miles along its length, especially at intersections such as Sturgeon Road, which are vital to local businesses; and

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to listen to the needs and the opinions of the local residents and business owners who took the time to complete the Perimeter safety survey while working with engineers and the technicians to ensure that their concerns are addressed.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Can you please commence the Supplementary Appropriation process.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Supplementary Appropriation this afternoon.

Messages

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I have a message from the Administrator, as well as the Supplementary Appropriation document, which I would like to table.

Madam Speaker: Please stand for the reading of the message.

Please stand for the reading of the message.

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of additional sums required for the services of the Province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day March, 2022, and recommends the Supplementary Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Supplementary Appropriation bill, 2021-2022.

Will the Deputy Speaker please take the Chair.

* (15:00)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Supplementary Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have before us for our consideration four resolutions respecting the Supplementary Appropriation bill.

First resolution, 16.5(a), pertaining to part A of the Supplementary Estimates, reads as follows:

16.5(a): RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$75 million for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Early Learning and Child Care, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

Does the minister have any opening comments? No?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments? No?

The floor is open for questions.

Is the Committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The resolution is accordingly passed.

The second resolution, 21.8, pertaining to part A of the Supplementary Estimates, reads as follows:

21.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$24 million for Health, Medical, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

Does the minister have any opening comments? No?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments? No?

The floor is open for questions.

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution is accordingly passed.

The third resolution, 21.9, pertaining to part A of the Supplementary Estimates, reads as follows:

21.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$26 million for Health, Pharmacare, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

Does the minister have any opening comments?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Floor is open for questions.

Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass?

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The resolution is accordingly passed.

The fourth resolution, 26.2, pertaining to part A of the Supplementary Estimates, reads as follows:

26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$100 million for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

Does the minister have any opening comments?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

The floor is open for questions.

Is the committee ready for question—for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The resolution is accordingly passed.

This concludes the business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted four resolutions respecting Supplementary Appropriation.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Concurrence Motion

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that this House concur in the report of the Committee of Supply respecting the resolutions relating to the Supplementary Appropriation bill for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

Motion agreed to.

Supplementary Supply Motion

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, out of the Consolidated Fund, sums not exceeding \$225 million as set out in part A of the Supplementary Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

* (15:10)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 20—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, that Bill 20, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 20—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice,

Attorney General, that Bill 20, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: I am pleased to be able to stand today and to speak briefly on the subject of the Supplementary Appropriation act for 2021-2022, that provides supplementary expenditure authority for this concluding fiscal year. The amount of supplementary operating expenditure authority is \$225 million. Of this aggregate amount, there are \$100 million provided as Enabling Appropriations.

The Supplementary Appropriation is to provide funding to—for other expenditures that are likely to result from COVID-19 or other contingencies. The bill provides \$75 million for Early Learning and Child Care, including the funding for the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the C-M-CW-ELCCA and funding to support the recruitment and retention of qualified early-learning-and-child-care workforce.

There's also an appropriation of \$50 million provided to the Department of Health that provides funding for medical services and the Pharmacare program. This funding is needed due to increasing usage and price increases in these programs.

When the bill reaches the committee stage, I can provide members with a section-by-section explanation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Do members wish to ask questions on the bill?

Questions

Madam Speaker: The honourable member—oh, a question period, then, of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): In the mid-year fiscal update in December, the minister's financial update stated that there was about \$381 million left out of the \$1.2 billion set aside for COVID-19 and contingency.

Could the minister explain, is the remaining dollars—have they already been spent?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): As I indicated in my remarks, this government has responded, and responded very significantly, to the challenge of COVID-19. We, of course, included in our budgetary Estimates the additional monies to help respond to those challenges, but we are forecasting at this point to spend to year end.

So, Madam Speaker, we have a—we voted authority, but this is additional authority in case it is needed.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, just a question on the allocation for Education and Early Childhood Learning, a little more detail about what these expenditures will be, and are they related to—in any way to the increased federal expenditures on early learning education and early childhood learning?

Mr. Friesen: I'm happy to provide additional detail later on, as well, during Committee of the Whole, but I can say that there's just over \$60 million here in funding for that Canada-Manitoba child—it's the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement; \$15 million more for the Early Childhood Workforce Agreement. These are the agreements that the minister announced in late February that had been reached. We're very proud to have those negotiations concluded.

And, of course, as always, the Public Accounts will detail all spending and budget will provide forecast updates.

Mr. Wasyliw: I wonder if the minister can break down for this House the \$381 million that was supposed to have still been in existence in December of last year.

Mr. Friesen: In the 40 seconds allotted to me, no, I will not be able to break down \$381 million, but I'm very happy to start on that and indicate to that member and all the members of this House that this government undertook the very serious and prompt work of responding to a global pandemic.

Those funds that were held in Internal Service Adjustments were allocated to such priorities as PPE, as vaccine and vaccine supplies, standing up vaccine—vaccination centres, campaigns to notify Canadians—or Manitobans of what resources were available to them, doctor tariffs that allowed doctors to see their physicians virtually, hiring of nurses—the lists goes on

and on and on, and I'm happy to provide whatever detail this afternoon allows me to.

Mr. Gerrard: Just a clarification on the expenditures in relationship to Health. The minister mentions that some of that may be used for hiring of nurses.

Is that \$50 million also related to a federal-provincial agreement?

Mr. Friesen: The \$50 million that is being voted for Health appropriations includes \$24 million for medical services. So we know that these are related to price and volume from—for fee-for-service remuneration, but also \$26 million for the Pharmacare program, also due to a volume and price increases. None of this is related to a federal-provincial agreement.

Mr. Wasyliv: Can the minister advise whether the \$381 million that was set aside for COVID-19 has been completely spent at this point?

Mr. Friesen: Continuing on my earlier response to the member of what constitutes the \$381 million, that was noted at the forecast report earlier this year. I would also remind that member that included in those amounts was the very, very significant support that this government offered to sectors—our very successful and well-received Sector Support Program was also included in this.

And, of course, even this afternoon in debate there was a reference to the Province's arts sector funding support, \$6 million there; \$22 million for the Sector Support Program; and as I mentioned earlier, we are forecasting to completely subscribe on these \$381-million amounts.

* (15:20)

Mr. Gerrard: My question relates to more detail on the Internal Service Adjustments.

Is this due to the finalization of labour contracts, or is this due to increase in prices, or can the Finance Minister provide some clarification?

Mr. Friesen: No. I'm happy to provide additional detail.

As the member knows that doctors, when we talk about fee-for-service, that is not a contractual arrangement—and I know he knows that well from a previous life that he lived when he was practising as a physician. So this is related to fee-for-service remuneration. I think it suggests that doctors have continued to be hard at work during the pandemic.

Our government worked very, very hard with Doctors Manitoba and with other groups to be able to enter into new arrangements for virtual tariffs. I know, as the former Health minister, this was an incredibly important piece of work to get into place and there were questions as to how well it would be received or work.

It has been incredibly well-received; it's allowed doctors to see their patients during the pandemic in a safe way. But it also means that that has cost money—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)—[interjection]—oh, sorry; the honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Wasyliv: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In the budget consultation meetings, the minister had made representations to the public that there was still \$600 million in the rainy day fund. I'm wondering if he can update the House with how much money is still in the rainy day fund.

Mr. Friesen: I will be happy to provide to that member promptly, in the course of this afternoon, the exact number, and I am seeking the exact number.

But what I can tell that member is, in general, while the analysis I most recently looked at indicated that the former NDP government drained that account by almost 80 per cent, our government has been hard at work in respect of the rainy day fund to rebuild and rebuild because it's an important fund. It's an important contingency for the Province of Manitoba, and so while that party depleted it, we will remain committed to restoring that rainy day fund, that additional area that can be of value to governments and citizens in times of need.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) tabled The Financial Administration Amendment Act, which provides for a cap on the budget, but it also provides for changes to procedures.

Can the minister explain whether it will change the procedure that we are undergoing today in terms of the supplemental Estimates?

Mr. Friesen: It's an interesting question. I would indicate that I see no interaction between the FAA bill yesterday introduced that sets parameters for total borrowing for governments and the process that we're undertaking now.

However, that member will know that because this process does refer to a loan act, this Legislature will have to consider how it's going to respond in future to work around, to be able to respect that new process. So, of course, there's advantages to government with the FAA approach, but also there's considerations for the Legislature to consider.

Mr. Wasyliv: I'm wondering if the minister can explain why, if we have money in our cash reserves, are we borrowing 225 million extra dollars and incurring those interest costs when we have these resources available, we're just simply not using them.

Mr. Friesen: I want to remind that member that the appropriations that are being sought today in way of the Supplementary Appropriations are much, much more modest than the three that were sought last year. There was a reason that larger appropriations were sought.

That member knows how government finance works—if there's controls not only on the amount of voted expenditure authority, but also in the categories of that authority, which means that there is not a direct link between those amounts being sought today and those buckets into which previous authority was sought. It's very important to make that distinction.

So it's a modest—it's a more modest amount being sought today, but an important amount nonetheless.

Mr. Gerrard: I—just—further clarification requested with regard to The Financial Administration Act. That act would mean that we would not need, in many cases, the loan act.

Is that what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) is saying, and what sort of changes would have to happen if that's the case?

Mr. Friesen: So I know that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and I are not newcomers to this building, and so what I was referring to—and I know there's the tyranny of this 45-minute answer—45-second answer period.

But, essentially, that main part of our process whereby, in budgetary debate, we essentially—there's a section set aside for the loan act. And in that part of our process as a Legislature there would need to be a change agreed to by all the members of this House and negotiated by the House leaders.

Otherwise, we will have this reference to a loan act which will no longer be active because this legislation seeks to replace the loan act with this new way of doing business of setting a debt ceiling, if you will.

Mr. Wasyliv: The minister had indicated he's setting aside \$100 million for Internal Service Adjustments.

I'm wondering if he can break down exactly what that money's going to be used for?

Mr. Friesen: As I indicated, the \$100 million being sought today provided as Enabling Appropriations in order to cover expenditures that are likely to result from COVID-19 or other contingencies.

That member knows that only two weeks ago, for instance, this government indicated that, as an initial and preliminary response to the Ukraine crisis, that we were seeking to authorize some amounts for immediate assistance. By no means does that indicate what our eventual support may be, but it is amounts like that, unforeseen, that would be covered exactly by the Internal Service Adjustments.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one further clarification with regard to the change in procedure.

Does the removal of the loan act get rid of procedures and accountability, which we normally have and we have now, so that it is easier for the government to borrow money?

Mr. Friesen: The FAA amendment act that was introduced yesterday is designed to move to a more transparent and accountable system by which government would request authority. It would do nothing to set back accountability or transparency; rather, it promotes it and advances it.

The member should know that the federal government, the federal Liberal government, has adopted this approach. Various provinces across Canada have adopted this approach.

And I would just want to make the note that the authority to borrow is what this bill contains. The authority to spend is what our processes in this Legislature go to, whereby government makes its argument to spend and must defend its plan.

Mr. Wasyliv: The minister is asking for \$50 million more for health care, but last year's budget cut acute-care and long-term-care funding, and we continue to see patients being transferred hundreds of kilometres away from home due to lack of capacity in our health-care system,

Will the minister be providing more funding and increasing capacity in our health-care system with this new money?

Mr. Friesen: Well, if the member was listening, he would have understood that that's exactly what these appropriations seek to do.

We reject his line of thought here among cuts because he knows full well that this government is investing annually almost \$1 billion more now in health care than the former NDP government ever invested in health care.

But even now, in these Supplementary Appropriations, more money for doctors' fees, more money for our Pharmacare program, more money for surgeries and procedures and much, much more.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If there are no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): When it comes to finances, obviously, this government has a long and sad history of failure and poor fiscal management.

* (15:30)

We're talking about the Pallister-Stefanson governments that originally said that they were going to take eight years to balance the budget. But in their balanced approach, they somehow claim to have done it in four. But when you actually sort of peel back the accounting tricks, they haven't actually balanced the budget once.

And how they sort of play games with the finances, of course, we know that 18 per cent of our civil servants has been cut, and our Province no longer can offer basic government services to its citizens.

You know, birth certificates used to take two weeks in Manitoba. Now, we're hearing horror stories of nine months, sometimes longer. And this problem has been going on for years. And marriage certificates, et cetera; people are having trouble with immigration, having trouble with family law issues because they can't get basic documents from this government.

It used to take for—you know, a couple weeks to get a work permit in Manitoba if you needed your licence for work. Now, it takes a minimum four months to get that.

And, of course, near in—to my concerns is the huge immigration backlog in Manitoba. We were certainly told that there's literally—there's two civil servants in Manitoba that are responsible for the Provincial Nominee Program. That's a program that's

supposed to, on a normal year, without a war and a refugee crisis, process 10,000 claims in Manitoba, and you have two people doing it. No wonder there's a backlog.

We can't even get more than seven international nurses to come to Manitoba in a nursing shortage crisis because we don't have the staff to actually process their claims. We don't have the staff to process refugee claims from Ukraine because we are so down—such few staff.

And this government has refused in six years to staff up these departments. These are all policy choices. The government is basically saying that they're okay with a lack of service and the disruption and the pain, often, that it causes.

Of course, more tragically, they've also cut and privatized road maintenance and snow clearing. Our roads are not safe. Obviously, the tragedies of the roadway have hit very close to home in this Chamber, and you would think that would sharpen the government's resolve into acting. And, of course, it simply hasn't. And they're allowing these things to occur, and, of course, yesterday was a 20-car pile up. I mean, there are—people get hurt when we don't take governing seriously, when we don't staff our services properly.

So the second way that they have tried to manage the province—it's—obviously was reduced staff complement, but it's also cuts to health care and education and infrastructure. So this government has not kept up with the rate of inflation in the education system. They haven't kept up with the rate of inflation in the health-care system and they certainly have let our infrastructure deficit balloon.

You don't have to look very far other than the municipalities. I think the City of Winnipeg projects an \$11-billion deficit. I think the province—provincial infrastructure deficit is even more than that.

Even my own former school division had a 4 or 5 hundred-million-dollar infrastructure deficit.

So, those things don't get cheaper when you neglect them and ignore them, and you have to put those in the balance sheet. You can't say that you have a balanced budget when you're allowing the province to literally crumble around you.

We're seeing school class sizes balloon, which is absolutely shameful. In the Pembina Trails portion of my riding, I'm hearing of classrooms of 30, 32 children. That's unheard of in Manitoba—[interjection]

An Honourable Member: That's not unheard of. My mother taught 40 in grade 3.

Mr. Wasyliw: And the government's reply is, we could be doing even worse, Manitoba. So be thankful that you have 32 kids crammed in a classroom, because it could be 40.

That's the mentality of this government. It is so—I think we're going to put that on a campaign flyer in south Winnipeg because I think that'll be of interest to the good people of Fort Richmond.

So, school class sizes have been ballooning, and that is in nobody's interest because children are not getting the one-on-one attention that they need. If children are vulnerable and they come to school with certain challenges, they are not going to get that sort of one-on-one attention that they need to succeed, and they are going to fall through the cracks.

And it ultimately will end up costing Manitobans more, because if we do a poor job in teaching our children, we will see more expensive outcomes in the criminal justice system, in the health-care system, in the child-welfare system, and it ends up costing all of us. It actually makes more fiscal sense to actually invest in education to prevent these things from snowballing and to mitigate the causes of social injustice and poverty in Manitoba.

But, of course, this government doesn't accept that. They think, hey, let's put 40 people in a classroom, and I guess they're not done. They're not happy with 32 children in a classroom, they want 40, says the minister.

We're seeing valuable programs, like full-day kindergarten, which are under threat, which school divisions are looking to cancel. These programs help students who may not have the same advantages as other children to catch up, and it really helps them, you know, basically stay with their classmates and have a real shot at success. So, again, this government would rather sacrifice those vulnerable students than put in the money to actually do a proper job.

And, of course, we know that we are down thousands of nursing positions in Manitoba. Our ICU and hospitals are overrun. We have 160,000 surgical backlog list, and, of course, this has tragic consequences. This affects the quality of care. This has most definitely probably resulted in deaths and further more serious illness because we just simply don't have the resources and the staff to address the health needs of Manitoba. This is exacerbated in rural and northern areas, so that we have two-tier medicine in Manitoba,

where your quality of care very much matters where you are from and what your personal circumstances are.

And, of course, we have, with this government, some of the most shameful statistics in Canada: the second highest mortality rate for COVID. We had the—one of the highest, if not the highest, hospitalization rates. And we, even now, have the highest rate of infections across Canada. We had some of the deadliest long-term-care facilities during COVID, and, of course there's no action about that; that's due to cuts and underfunding.

We can't staff any of these institutions because of nursing shortages and burnout. I had a friend of mine who just recently graduated with—as a registered nurse, and she was apprenticing in eye surgery, and the minute she finished, they were going to move her into an ICU unit, even though she had no training. And, thankfully, people in her facility were able to prevent that and allow her to actually develop in a normal, professional way in a responsible environment.

But that's how it's—desperate it has got in Manitoba, where we are sort of fighting over new nurses because this government has let this problem develop into a crisis.

So that's how this government saved money. So they saved money by firing civil service and then providing poor quality civil service.

And then, third, the civil servants that they didn't fire, they said, hey, let's just fight with them. Let's take from them—actually, wage theft, I believe, is the expression, where you had negotiated a contract in good faith that you were getting a cost of living increase to deal with rising inflation, and then what does this government do? Says no, we don't agree with contracts; we don't agree—our word isn't our bond, and you can't have your cost-of-living increase. We don't care if Manitoba families can keep up with inflation and cost of living.

* (15:40)

And, of course, you know, this government spent six years fighting with various civil servants about this. And of course, they lost. It was unconstitutional, illegal bill, and now the bill's due and it's costing this province tens of millions of dollars. The nurses' union alone had to be paid out \$216 million in back pay for four years, that this government refused to honour their agreements with them and fairly bargain with them.

Teachers just received a large settlement—tens of millions of dollars, to the point where basically school divisions were insolvent because they couldn't absorb the extra costs and were restricted by this government from actually raising their own money to cover what the government had done for them. This is going to go into the tens of millions of dollars.

If you add up just the nurses and the teachers, you're talking \$300 million or more of back pay that this government owed Manitobans. You can't claim to have slayed the deficit when you had this bill that wasn't paid, just like you can't claim you slayed the deficit when you were allowing our infrastructure to crumble into the ground and not repair it. It's basically accounting games. It's not real.

So—and then the next wonderful fiscal idea of this government is to cut taxes during this period of time. And they pat themselves routinely on the back that they've cut almost \$2 billion in taxes but, of course, whose taxes did they cut? They cut the wealthiest Manitobans' taxes, right? The wealthiest Manitobans received the lion's share of every single one of this government's tax cuts and what that means is they have pushed the tax burden off of people who can afford to pay onto people who can't. Manitobans who don't have fancy tax lawyers or expensive accounting firms can't claim deductions and everything that the wealthy Manitobans can and, therefore, end up paying a higher proportion of their income in tax to Manitoba.

This is rigging the Manitoba economy. It is making it less fair. And, of course, we have the infamous scandal of Brian Pallister, the premier, cutting his taxes by \$7,000 for his mansion on Wellington Crescent, among others, when the average Manitoban saw a fraction of that.

We have a Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) who was a large commercial landlord; a large commercial landlord who, as Housing minister, was selling off affordable housing stock, was standing by and allowing a hundred per cent above-guideline rent increase so private landlords could get a windfall and did not build in six years—six years with this government did not build one affordable housing unit. And then didn't disclose \$31 million—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —in transactions.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: Now, they—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order.

I'm going to ask members for their co-operation. While members may not like comments that are being made in the House, that is no reason to try to drown them out with heckling. So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation. Nobody likes to get heckled down.

We have differences of opinion and everybody is privileged to have differences of opinion but respecting those differences of opinion are what we should be able to show in this House. So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

Mr. Wasyliw: So, you know, what the Premier did will be illegal after the next election. She voted on that bill, yet in her own business dealings, was prepared to act in the way that she did.

Now what does that say? Do you believe in transparency and accountability or is that just for other people? And knowing this Pallister-Stefanson government, it's for other people.

But the point to be made here is that commercial landlords got the biggest tax cut from this government in Manitoba's history, right? You cannot rig the economy just for you and your political donors. It has to work for all Manitobans.

This government cut probate taxes, of all things. Those are fees that the Province administers the wealth of estates. This is money nobody earned that was passed down to them, and there's a modest fee that goes for the administration of unearned wealth. It absolutely goes to the wealthiest in Manitoba. It has no impact on the economy at all; it is welfare for the rich, and it is a handout and that is the type of tax cuts this government has brought in.

This government said, well, wait a minute. We cut PST on insurance. Well, yes, you did. The average person got \$75; the average business got \$700, almost 10 times that amount. Again, wealthy companies that are doing well, that don't need any kind of corporate welfare are getting subsidized by this government, and for every dollar they're not paying, it means some working or middle class Manitoba has to make up that amount. So we know that none of this makes Manitoba fairer or more inclusive in our economy.

Now, in January, the former Finance minister says that there's \$600 million in the rainy day fund. He tells us that there's \$391 million in unspent COVID relief. That's in January.

Ask the minister, the current one, simple question: Where is that billion dollars? And he can't answer.

An Honourable Member: Can't or won't?

Mr. Wasyliw: He can't. I'm pretty sure he can't.

And what does that tell you? That they're now coming back, borrowing \$225 million when they literally have cash reserves of \$600 million sitting in the bank? They're borrowing money, paying interest on it, when they have a billion dollars in the bank. How is that fiscal management?

And, of course, these tax cuts, we didn't actually have the money. This government borrowed money to give tax cuts to the wealthiest Manitobans. So it's not only an insult to the people who rent in Manitoba who saw their rent subsidy cut and actually lost from this. They're going to have to—and their children have to—pay the interest for large commercial landlords like our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) or, you know, wealthy landlords who own estates, like our former premier. They get a break; Manitobans get the bill, right? It's all about being in power in order to reward your friends.

An Honourable Member: I resent that. I have no friends.

Mr. Wasyliw: It's the first honest thing he said in this House.

So—[interjection]—now, I find it very curious that there seems to be a pattern developing in Manitoba, that every March, a few weeks before the budget comes out, all of a sudden, this government, which has literally billions in the bank, comes back to the Legislature, says, oh, we need more money. Well, really. And when we ask, well, what happened to the billion dollars in the bank, they have no answers, right?

We're talking about three weeks, we're going to have a brand new budget where all of this could be there. So why is this government doing this year after year? Well, I think the answer is obvious.

Again, this is more accounting games. They do not want Manitobans to see another \$225 million on the books for the next budget, and they're trying to hide it by putting it in the previous year, right? This is, again, what this government does; it's all press release politics and it's shuffling money around, and, of course, who loses is Manitobans.

So when we look at what we've actually been given here, another hundred million dollars in internal service adjustments, which the government says, well, they don't know what they're going to need in three weeks for a hundred million dollars. Well, then, why ask for it, right? And we know why: because they have no intention of actually spending any of it, and it's going to sit in the bank account.

* (15:50)

We have seen, over the past year and over the course of the pandemic, that the needs of Manitobans have not been met. Our health-care system was on the brink of collapse where we actually had to shamefully send 57 ICU patients out of province, and that hasn't been corrected. We're now highway medicine; we have people being shipped all over Manitoba because our hospital space can't cope with it.

And this government had the money; they had that billion dollars sitting in the bank, and they refused to spend it. We don't need 32 kids in a classroom, but this government won't fix a fixable problem. You know, our schools—and my colleague from Transcona is very passionate about that—they haven't been given the tools that they need. They need infrastructure upgrades; they need air and filtration upgrades that cost money, but this government isn't prepared to protect children because that costs money.

So, not only has this government not ever actually balanced a budget, they've borrowed money for rich people tax cuts—[interjection]—yes, they have paid consultants. They've spent a lot of money on corporate welfare and on consultancy, and Manitobans are poorer for it.

But the biggest issue is all the problems that aren't being solved in Manitoba and that this government has not only just shown no leadership; has abdicated its responsibility. It's actually made things worse. Tuition has skyrocketed in Manitoba—skyrocketed. It's making life much less affordable for Manitobans, and it's preventing a lot of families from even being able to access higher education.

Child-care fees have gone up in Manitoba. And, of course, this government likes to raise Manitobans' hydro rates and did so again and again and again. So, certainly more than that \$75 they got off of their PST on their insurance. They're spending a lot more money on all kinds of things. This government has made life much, much less affordable for Manitobans.

And then, of course, we are now heading into an affordability crisis where we're seeing gas prices go

up, and then we'll see grocery prices go up as well because we seem to transport, in this country, our groceries by truck, and this government has no plan. They don't even seem concerned about it or even interested that it's going on.

They haven't raised minimum wage more than a nickel in the past year. I think, in their entire six years of government, they haven't even raised cumulatively minimum wage for a dollar. I don't think we hit the dollar mark in six years. We are now, to our ever shame, the second lowest jurisdiction for minimum wage, and for the longest time we had a Finance minister who owned a company that employed low-wage Manitobans, who had a direct benefit by not paying them and raising their wages.

Now we all know that after the next election, that's illegal; you cannot do that. But that minister voted for that bill, knowing full well that it would become law after the next election and still did what he did.

So, you know, you can't talk out of both sides of your mouth. If this is, you know, a conflict of interest and you shouldn't be, you know, setting labour rates when you financially benefit by suppressing them and keeping them low, why are you doing that? Why are you doing that, right?

And, again, it's about using government, not for the benefit of Manitobans, but to enrich oneself. And that has been a consistent and very sad pattern with this government.

So this is really nothing new here. We've seen this story over and over again. This is a government that hoards money, does not provide the needs for Manitobans and can—will give these massive press release statements of, oh, we're going to spend this on health care, we're going to spend this on education, and then not do it, and then not spend the actual money, and, in fact, turn around and cut it.

You know, I think it's probably troubling, this government's view of Manitobans. But Manitobans can see what's happening. They certainly don't believe that it reflects their values and they know that the Manitoba NDP is here to fight for them and make sure that these problems get fixed and help is on the way.

So with those few comments, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm not actually sure that either the PCs or the NDP should be lecturing each other about financial accomplishments,

given the absolutely colossal debt that this province, and especially Hydro, are facing.

And I especially want to address this in terms of Hydro because, you know, there's been lots of blaming the NDP about their role in Hydro's—in the overruns and the debt that Hydro has racked up.

But the reality is that a billion—about 40 per cent—\$4 billion of \$10 billion that was added to Hydro's debt in 10 years was added by the NDP and PC governments, who were taking that money in terms of capital taxes, water rentals and fees—*[interjection]*—I was never actually doing that, but whatever.

So, in terms of—and that is actually a huge concern because the fact is—look, one of the things that's happened with our public finances is that we've been hiding—the NDP and PCs together have been hiding Manitoba's debt on Manitoba Hydro's books. It's been a—it's a debt swap. And all that risk is being transferred to Hydro. And the amount of money that's been taken out of Hydro is \$4 billion, and it was for water rentals, for—and for fees for what's called the debt fee, which is absolutely ridiculous because what it does is it actually—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —means that the more they spend on dams, on bending—on spending—on building dams, if they have massive cost overruns, the government of Manitoba actually gets more from it. The more that Hydro takes on as debt, the more the Manitoba government takes from it.

This is—I recognize this because I used to study and I used to teach a bit about finance and economics at the University of Winnipeg, and I recognized it because this is vulture capitalism. This is what Wall Street does when they take over a company. They load it with debt; they take the money out of it until it collapses the company.

They've already taken their money, and it's too late. This is why nine members of the board of Hydro resigned, because they were facing—it wasn't just about interference or a refusal to meet with the Premier and the board. It was the fact that it was an existential issue of whether Hydro continues to exist or not, whether it would be forced into default because it wouldn't have enough money.

Now, we're lucky we had lots of snow this year. But this is a—but this is something that's been—that has added massively to our debt and our risk because—it's because it's been treated as though it's Hydro has been

bad and Hydro is the problem when, in fact, it's been plundered over the years, and that is—as a result of that, it's put Hydro at risk; it's put our credit rating at risk, which we've seen multiple credit downgrades. And if Hydro were to face that default, then all of a sudden Manitoba would have to come up with \$20 billion to try to pay it, and it doesn't have it on hand.

When you also—I mean, when—the other thing about it is we talk about tax breaks in the—tax breaks which have also been an issue. Look, the NDP did exactly the same things. They also cut property taxes. They also ignored and let claims go through the Residential Tenancies board. They boasted in 2008 that they'd achieved \$1 billion worth of cuts, of—sorry, of tax cuts, most of which were delivered to business and the highest income.

There's—it's in the same policies under the two parties for 20-plus years. And I don't want to hear and pretend that the NDP have actually done anything positive or even that the PCs.

* (16:00)

This is a province that has treated people living in poverty and First Nations and Indigenous people worse than any other province in Canada. And we know that because of the number of people living in poverty. We know that because of the number of Indigenous people behind bars. The NDP campaigned to put more Indigenous children behind bars, and they succeeded. It's outrageous.

So I'm really tired of this sanctimonious attitude that—and their holier-than-thou attitude because it was—because if you look at EIA, for example, it has not changed since 1992–1992. And it's the same thing with housing. The NDP sold off housing. And, you know, they—their accusation is the NDP being tax and spend, but it's absolutely true. The PCs, they're not tax and spend. They cut and they borrow and they spend. So all these tax cuts are being paid for with borrowed money.

So we—one of the reasons we have a huge deficit and a big debt is that in the middle of a crisis, we're borrowing huge amounts of money to cut cheques to—\$5,000 cheques to oil pipelines, to businesses, and that doesn't make sense to me when we live in a province with some of the deepest poverty—the deepest poverty anywhere in Canada. And the fact is, is that year after year after year, nothing was done.

I talked to a welfare advocate who first started his job in 1999, and he said he was approached because the individual on EIA said: The government will pay

for me to have my tooth removed, but they won't pay for the freezing. They won't pay for the anesthetic. And that, to me, sums up everything that's wrong with our social assistance system.

And it never changed. In 1992 the PC government rolled back rates to 1986 levels, and they are still there; they are still there for people living with disabilities, for people with mental health issues, veterans, seniors. It's unbelievable, and it's shameful, and we're not seeing any meaningful change on that.

It's deeply frustrating. And when we talk about averages, the thing is, average is a myth—average in the sense of treating absolutely everybody the same—because we have a distribution where there are people in Manitoba who are billionaires and there are people in Manitoba who have negative assets. And look at where they've—from the point of view of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and business supports. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce was saying that Manitoba businesses are struggling under huge debt—huge debt. They are going to struggle; it's going to be very difficult for them to be able to get out of this.

And the fundamental thing that this government does not realize, and I don't think the NDP realized it either, that even borrowing and spending into the economy, if you're actually putting people to work, if you're helping them pay their bills, you're actually taking money from the 'public' sector and you're putting it into the private sector. That's how you achieve growth. That's how people pay their bills. And the more you cut, the more you shrink, the more you restrict the ability of the government to act, and people, you—actually means you're putting less money out into the private sector. That's where all government spending goes; it goes into the private sector. It doesn't all just go back into government.

And if you don't actually make those investments in health care, in education and especially in the infrastructure, which we haven't been doing, you get the sickest people in Manitoba, which we have; you get some of the biggest problems in terms of educational accomplishments, which we have, because of all sorts of reasons around discrimination, deep, deep discrimination; and we have rotten infrastructure because we haven't been putting the investments in. And that's absolutely critical, and I do want to mention it because people will say, well, you—are you, you know, they'll say, well, do you want to raise taxes? Well, you know what I want is for people who owe taxes to pay them. And this is something that's come up because we have oligarchs in Manitoba.

We have Russian oligarchs who own a company; they own 97 per cent, and they're trying to say, well, it's a Manitoba company. Well, I don't know why we're not applying sanctions to them because it's clear that even though it's a Manitoba company, if they own 97 per cent of it, 97 per cent of all the profits go to them. And I don't know why we're doing that.

But it's a bigger problem because there's a multi-trillion-dollar offshore tax avoidance problem in the world, and if people were actually paying their taxes, the people who are making money and hiding it and paying their taxes, we'd actually be able to—we wouldn't have to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: If people actually—if we actually enforced it, but part of the problem is that if we're going to have international enforcement—international enforcement on, whether it's in Panama or whether it's in the Caribbean or Malta or you name it, they will not participate because they look back at Canada and they say, well, you're a tax haven too. You know, you want us to open up our banks, books and let—find out who owns what. Well, we're not going to do it until you do it too. And we're not doing it.

That there are—we need beneficial—we need registries of beneficial ownership because Canada is just as much as the—tax haven as some other countries. It's not a tax haven for the people who live here, often. But it's a tax haven for people who want to hide their money from somewhere else.

So they can put money into a, you know, a business, a Canadian corporation, and it doesn't ever to—pay any taxes here. Right? You can hide money; you can treat houses; and you can treat real estate as a safety deposit box, as an investment, driving up the price of housing. That's one of the things that's making things so hard, because there are people all over the world who are hiding their money. They're basically treating condos in Vancouver and other places—parts of real estate around Canada as a place to hide their money because they think it's safe. Because they also think that if things go wrong with our economy, that the Canadian—that our banks are safe, but also that they'll get bailed out so that their assets are safe, even though it's pricing everyone else who actually has to work out of the market. And governments are facing challenges raising enough revenue to pay for services and pay off their debt, because so many people are avoiding tax.

So we do absolutely need to have tax reform, but that includes making sure that we are not, ourselves, a tax haven. And that's something that—we've brought it up many times because it is absolutely critical, especially in today's world. We've been talking about things like Panama—the Panama Papers because we're talking about trillions of dollars, and the companies that are avoiding it—you know, there are people who know—they are very successful, and then they can be rock stars or whoever, want to hide their money in the Caribbean because they feel overtaxed. You know, they should still pay their taxes, too, but there are also lots of people who are drug cartels, terrorism and, frankly, Russian oligarchs and other people supporting despotic regimes, and companies who profit—who just don't want to follow the law. They hide their money there.

It's not everybody. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists makes it clear, there is an actual purpose for some of these accounts. But for lots of them there isn't.

But part of it is that in this world, in this—when we look at things like the conflict in Ukraine, it was only possible because of things like hidden money. Because oligarchs were able to make money, steal it as a kleptocracy, steal from the people of Russia, sometimes stealing from the people of Ukraine, stealing from people all over the world and hiding it somewhere.

And so part of what's happening, there are even discussions that, well, if we're going to seize these assets, what are we going to do with them? Well, maybe we'll use them. We'll seize them and then we'll give them back to people. We'll give them back to Ukrainians. Maybe if we seized \$10 billion worth of oligarch assets in Manitoba—or, in Canada, my apologies—we can actually use that—we can use some of those assets—if it's cash, to support Ukraine, support Ukrainian refugees, to support the people who've been hurt because they've been stolen from.

And that—what has led us to this point is, in part, that we've seen the retreat of democracy and the rule of law around the world. We've seen that essential structures have been crumbling, that need oversight. We've created a world financial system that exists outside the law, and that is a problem. Because as long as this exists outside the law—outside the law, it's lawless. But it also makes it much, much easier for people who have—who want to do truly terrible things like finance the invasion of Ukraine.

So I do hope that, again, I hope that that's something that this government will consider. In the big picture, we have to make sure—we should really be focusing on a plan for pandemic renewal, and it needs to be more than just returning to normal. It needs to be more than just saying we're going to reopen everything because for so many businesses even reopening something—reopening now that they have four times as much debt is absolutely impossible because they are not going to be able to service that debt.

And this is absolutely critical. There's so much more we can do that we haven't because the focus has overwhelmingly been on, now, 40 years of what are called trickle-down economics, which J.K. Galbraith said it's like feeding—it's like stuffing a horse with oats and telling—and saying how great it'll be for the sparrows at the other end.

But that's the problem with trickle-down economics. It does not work. It actually is what was used in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. There were—believe it or not, there was such thing as conservative communists who believed in trickle-down economics. And what they would do is they'd take all the surplus and they'd push it all to the top. It's how famines happen. It's how crises happen. And it's how we get massive inequality.

And it's not about making sure that everybody's absolutely, perfectly—has exactly the same bank account. But we have to work toward some sort of sense of economic justice, both in Manitoba and around the world, and there is a role for this government to play, for all of us to play in making sure that things are more transparent, that—fundamentally, that the law is being enforced. We could actually—this government could be seeing much more revenue if we were actually just making sure that people are not avoiding or evading taxes.

* (16:10)

So with that, I'll just say thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank the House. I appreciate the time to make the comments.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak in debate?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I just want to put a couple of words on the record today in respect of the government's ask for more money. They weren't able to get their budget organized in the first point, so now here we are spending an afternoon so that we can approve more dollars for the government.

I want to say this: I want to echo some of the comments that my colleague from Fort Garry put on the record.

You know, people are really struggling right now. Like, really, really struggling. And it is—it's pretty disheartening and—sorry, Madam Speaker. It's really concerning and it's really disheartening to see how much Manitobans are struggling right now. And we see prices of everything increasing, and I know that my colleague noted some of them, you know. Not the least Manitoba Hydro. Our cell bills are going up. Our food costs are going up.

You know, every day I—you know—I speak with my constituency assistant and—who actually lives in the constituency of Union Station, and he, you know, tells me every single day that when he goes to Giant Tiger and he sees people in line and, you know, by the time that they get through—their items through the cash—they don't have enough money.

And so he says, you know, he saw—last week he saw an Indigenous woman with her three young children in line and put her stuff through, and she didn't have enough money because of how expensive things are right now. And he said, you know, what did she take away from, you know, what she couldn't afford—she didn't have enough money. He says she had to put away all the meat, and he says, and she was left with, you know, really unhealthy foods. And, you know, we—I know on this side of the House—are hearing from our constituents every single day about these stories.

And, you know, it's, you know, slowly but surely things have gotten more expensive under the PC Government—under the leadership, or lack thereof, of Brian Pallister and under the leadership, or lack thereof, of the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). Things have gotten so exponentially worse in our province. I don't think anybody can travel down certain areas of the city and not see our unsheltered relatives who are all of our relatives; they're all of our relatives; they are fellow human beings; they are fellow Manitobans, and they're all of our relatives.

And we all see how many of our relatives are unsheltered, and you would—I imagine that most would see—would have seen that over the years that that—the number of unsheltered persons has grown. It is self-evident for everybody to see.

And so we know that right now there's an inflation crisis. We know that people are struggling to provide and just to survive—never mind to thrive—just to survive.

And we don't see any action from this government. Not only do we not see any action from this government, we don't see any care. We don't see any compassion from this government to try and make things a little bit easier on Manitobans. Nothing.

You know, I have said this many times in the House that, you know, since 2016—I believe it was 2016, 2017—Brian Pallister didn't believe that Manitobans working minimum wage jobs—and again, two or three minimum-wage jobs—Brian Pallister didn't believe that those Manitobans deserved a raise. And so he didn't raise the minimum wage in 2016; he didn't raise the minimum wage in 2017. And I can't remember the first time that he raised it, maybe it was 25 cents. I can't remember—or it was 35 cents. I can't remember at the time, Madam Speaker. But the point is that since 2016 to this very moment, the PC government—again, under the leadership of Brian Pallister and under the current leadership of the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)—has only raised the minimum wage by 95 cents.

It is unconscionable that a government can care so little about Manitobans, can care so little about people that they can't even raise the minimum wage to a full dollar. Which, by the way, if—even if you raise the minimum wage to a full dollar—which is an extra 5 cents—still wouldn't keep up with the inflation that we are seeing right now. It still would not even keep up with the food costs and everything that people are having to kind of navigate, again, just to survive.

I, you know, I've said this many times. I honestly don't know how members opposite sleep at night knowing the conditions that they have created in our beautiful province, the conditions that they've created in our beautiful city. You know, Manitoba has some of the most generous people in our province, who, time and time again, every time there's a crisis or there's a need or there's something, people come together. And they open, you know, their pockets. They open their bank accounts. They open their pantries and they give and they give and they give.

And, similarly, throughout the pandemic, where Manitobans stepped up and did what they needed to do to protect all of us, to protect each and every one of us, that collective, they do the same thing. They always step up.

And so now, you have organizations that are doing the job of the government. So you have all kinds of organizations that are putting appeals out to the public for shampoo, for menstrual products, for food. Because these community organizations like the north

'pornt' Douglas woman's centre or the west central woman's resource centre, they're now picking up that lack, that gap, that the government has created. They're now doing the work of government.

And so they put that appeal out to Manitobans: we need help because the need is so great within the community. And Manitobans step up. They give what the folks need, They give all kinds of donations.

And I know during the month of November, in honour of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I had a hygiene donation drive. And I had so many Manitobans—my whole office was filled with hygiene products that we then donated to Ikwe-Widdjiitwin Women's Shelter—again, because the need is so much. We have women's shelters across this province who haven't had a raise in years to their operating budgets. And so, again, you have the same amount of dollars which now buys you less, and the need is up here. We have women's shelters that as soon as a bed opens, within 10 minutes that bed is gone. That's how great the need is.

You know, my colleague from Fort Garry talked about, like, the social housing stock that we have in Manitoba, or the lack thereof. We do not have an—a robust social housing infrastructure anymore because the PCs have sold that off. Why? Because they don't care about those Manitobans that need those services. That need that housing. They don't care about them. They don't care that they're raising Manitoba Hydro prices. They don't care that food costs are going through the roof. They don't care so much that I'm—we're not even going to give you a full dollar for every hour that you work at a minimum wage job.

* (16:20)

That's how little these people here care about Manitobans.

And so and here we are, on a day where we could be, you know, debating or, you know, voting in favour of a bill that would support Manitobans, that would support housing, that would put measures in place to keep Manitoba Hydro rates low. Like, any numerable things that we could be doing to help and protect Manitobans, here we are debating to give the government more money when they can't give Manitobans any breaks. And they have no infrastructure in place to take care of them.

It is, you know, honestly, I have to say it's one of the most frustrating things about being in this Chamber and being in this role, is to see how little these individuals care about Manitobans.

And so, you know, to that end, let me say this: You know, there is an election coming up; there's a multitude of elections, which I plan on speaking about in the House, but there is certainly an election coming up in 2023.

And I know that, on this side of the House, we get all kinds of emails and, you know, DMs to our social media about, you know, what can we do to get rid of this government. I don't know about anybody else; I don't know if they get those same messages, but I know I do. Like, you know, what can we do to get rid of this government. And I keep saying to people, well, you have to wait until the next election. You have to make sure that you get out and vote, that you vote for the people that are aligned with your values and that are aligned with what you want to see for this province.

And so I encourage people that are listening to this or that will watch this: you know, get involved in politics; run yourself. There's so many seats here that are available. All of these individuals here on this side, all those seats are up for grabs. So I encourage Manitobans, get involved in your local constituency; start organizing; volunteer for local constituencies. Even if you don't want to run, local constituencies need all kinds of support to be able to prepare for the next election.

That is what we need to be doing. We need to elect a government and individuals, like the individuals on this side of the House, that actually care about Manitobans, care about unsheltered Manitobans, care about that Indigenous woman with her three children who had to put all of the meat away and then feeds her kids unhealthy food because these people don't care.

Vote them out, Madam Speaker.

Miigwech.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Madam Speaker, time and time again you hear that—a phrase that's put out, I want to do more with less; more with less. And, ultimately, this government does less with less, and that's just the fact of how things go.

During a global pandemic the PC government has put money over people, has put money over the health, welfare and well-being of Manitobans. And it's just shameful to be able to sit here in 2022—and there's been a number of issues that you've seen in society—I can't believe we're doing this in the year 2022, and it's

no different than describing the actions of this government or the inactions of this government. Less with less, ultimately, is what this comes down to being.

Health care has been top of mind. It's been top of mind prior to COVID; it's been top of mind during COVID, and the cuts that this government has done prior to the pandemic, the cuts that they've done during the pandemic, have just been exasperated and amplified even more so.

Yet, we sit here today, with the government and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) asking for more money because of the pandemic, because we need to do this, we need to do that. Do you not realize—do you not know there's a global pandemic going on? That's why we need more money.

Well, is that, in fact, true? Are you, in fact, spending all the money that you're asking for? Have you spent all the money that you have been given?

I remember standing in this Chamber and asking the question when it was raised about asking for money, additional federal dollars, additional health federal dollars. And the question was simple: Are you, in fact, spending the money that you're already getting on health care? And it was a question that was just ignored, and it was very simple. If you truly needed more money because you've totally exhausted absolutely everything you have at your disposal, then that's understandable but that's absolutely not the case here, Madam Speaker.

Instead, at the expense of the health and well-being of Manitobans, this government is taking the opportunity to hoard money so they could somehow, at some point in time, miraculously come out at the end of, hopefully, this pandemic ending very soon, come out at the end and say, look at our financial position; we're doing great.

Well, tell that now to the hundreds and going into the thousands of Manitobans that have lost their lives during this pandemic because that answer is absolutely, like, unacceptable because that dollar you saved today at the health and expense of those people is unacceptable.

One life lost to COVID was unacceptable. One life lost to the cuts in health care is unacceptable. There is no mention of the failures.

Members on this side have constantly reminded the government about the inadequacies and the failures that they've done during this pandemic, that have been exacerbated by this pandemic. And keep in

mind, Madam Speaker, they existed before that and now under the pandemic, this government is trying to blame all those inactions and all those inadequacies and all those cuts and all the overruns and all the shortages on the pandemic.

And while it did play a role, that has been there well before this; well before the pandemic. They've come there and they've ignored the most vulnerable in our province: vulnerable populations, seniors. And we've talked many, many times in this Chamber about the respect that is owed to our seniors. They've lived through many hardships in this province, so we needed to do our best during this pandemic to look out for them and they were absolutely ignored by this government.

The outbreaks in personal-care homes—we all know how the minister and the previous ministers of Health referred to that. Unavoidable, it's just something that was inevitable; it was going to happen.

Well, no, those things didn't have to happen if you're properly looking out for elders and seniors in our communities.

Instead, what did Brian Pallister do? He wanted to give our elders \$200; here's a cheque. Here's my autograph—Brian Pallister—here's \$200 to say, there you go; that's all you're worth to us. And that was absolutely unacceptable.

And I'm sure members opposite—I know for sure members on this side of the Chamber, Madam Speaker, heard that disrespect from those elders and those seniors in our constituencies to say, what is this? This is a slap in the face. This is all we get for our effort to also help build Manitoba. And that was absolutely unacceptable.

And the questions were sometimes very simple, like I said earlier—very simple: Are you truly spending all the money you're getting? And even when—while we sit here and talk today, that's another question: Are you truly spending all the money that you're—that were allocated for health care, for education, for infrastructure, in those departments or are you hoarding it somewhere else in general revenue so you can look like the saviour?

That's very egotistical to be able to say this is what we're going to do, this is what we want to do. We want to look like we're coming out the best, at what expense. My colleague mentioned earlier about how the government is trying to phrase it, you know, we're building up the province; we're doing this but at the

expense of the province crumbling, of the infrastructure crumbling, of the health-care system crumbling, of the education system in dire need of true investments. Not investments like bill 64, so this government can say we put our stamp on this. Well, we all know what that stamp looked like, and Manitobans spoke loud and clear about how they disagreed with that.

* (16:30)

And instead, what was—there was a price tag on advertising—almost a million dollars—in terms of being able to promote a bill that nobody liked, that the so-called vocal majority spoke against—or vocal minority, or whatever that it was referred to by the former Education minister. And it, in fact, was the strong majority and the strong voice here in the province saying no; we disagree with this.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about investments in Manitoba and being able to invest in health care, invest in education, and we sit here in forums such as this and ask for additional funds, we need to acknowledge and we need to recognize, truly, where those funds need to be invested.

I stand here as an MLA representing northern Manitoba to be able to say, well, where is this investment in northern Manitoba? Where is this investment in the roads and infrastructure in northern Manitoba? I heard earlier the minister for Infrastructure talk about four hours. Four hours is when the roads will be done. Well, he's talking about the Perimeter. Just so you know, Manitoba exists outside of the Perimeter. Manitoba exists in central Manitoba, in northern Manitoba, in rural Manitoba. So when we hear four hours to be able to get out there, well, no, that's not the case. In some cases, four days has been difficult to be able to get that done. So where is that investment? Where is that investment in northern Manitoba? Where is that investment in health care in northern Manitoba?

Instead, what have we done in some cases with health care? We've shipped patients from southern Manitoba to northern Manitoba, further away from their families. Better health care closer to home was a slogan that was brought out by this government, and it's non-existent. There is nothing closer to home than having to travel eight hours to go see a loved one on roads that aren't plowed, on roads that are crumbling.

If you truly need more investment, then make that investment. Make that promise. Make that commitment. Not just on paper, but an actual dollar amount

to say, this is what we're going to do. There is no department of announcements, but that seems to be a department that needs to be created on that side, because that's all it is sometimes. We make the commitment. We make the announcement. But there's no actual hard funds to be able to say this is what were done.

And understandable in question period here in the House, it's very limited to be able to get a concrete answer and a concrete commitment, other than to say we're going to do this; stay tuned. But we need the investments here in Manitoba today.

So, as we sit here and we talk about being able to ask for additional funds because we're in dire need—we're in dire need in health care and education and infrastructure—we'll then show us that, in fact, you're actually spending all the money you can; you're exhausting all your resources to say we truly need help because we're maxed out here. But, instead, you know, oh, we're maxed out here because we want to keep our rainy day fund in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Well, you know what? It's pouring. It's not just raining. It's pouring here today.

So, let's get there and truly exhaust what we have, rather than come and saying we need more, we need more. Well, spend what you have. And not just figuratively, but literally. Our province this summer was burning, and there was no investment to be able to say we're going to increase that support. In fact, it was being told that it was a job well done.

And, in fact, it truly was a job well done by the limited amount of people that we have on the ground now because of cuts of this government. That job could have been a lot greater, had a lot more positive impact. There's just less people there. There's just less people to fight a fire, to fight a flood, to clear the roads because of cuts of this government.

Yet, we're standing here asking about—we need more money; we need more money, but no commitment to hire those people back. No commitment to create new employment, other than saying: this is what we're going to do; trust us.

Well, you haven't done anything yet to show that you, in fact, deserve that trust of Manitobans—nothing. In fact, you—at every opportunity, you've thrown Manitobans under the bus for your convenience, and that's unacceptable.

So, Madam Speaker, with those few words today, I just wanted to reiterate the fact that at the end of the

day, you are doing the less with less. You're not doing more with less; you're not doing more with more. You're doing, in fact, less with less because that's how you're trying to govern. You're trying to govern yourselves on limited funds, limited access and limited assistance for the people of Manitoba.

And Manitobans hear it, they see it, and we're going to be sitting here in year and a half and you'll hear their voice loud and clear.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Are there—oh, the honourable member for Transcona.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): It's always a pleasure to get up in this House and put a few words on the record, especially representing the fine people of Transcona.

I also want to thank every member of this House that has risen this afternoon to speak to this supplementary appropriation that the government is asking for.

All the—Manitobans are frustrated. There doesn't seem to be any kind of road map that's being laid out by this current government regarding fiscal matters, regarding health care, regarding public education. They're frustrated because in a pandemic we need a government to exhibit leadership, show some care, some compassion, understanding the everyday challenges that Manitoba and Transcona families are facing.

I will say, I recall the former premier standing on the site of Park Manor Personal Care Home in 2016, underneath the expansion sign, raising the hopes of residents, of course, a plan that was spearheaded by the former member for Transcona, former Speaker, Madam Speaker, who worked for years on that plan in order to get it ready because we knew that our part of the world required investment in that area. Why? The lowest per capita PCH bed rate in the city of Winnipeg is in northeast Winnipeg. Previous governments understood that—and because of that we had our hopes raised, only to be dashed because of poor fiscal planning, which is exactly what this supplementary appropriation is now asking for. So it's kind of aiding and abetting a road map that really doesn't exist, and that's a problem.

There was the member from St. Boniface who brought up the point about Hydro being raided hundreds of millions by this government in some

fiscal, shady appropriation that we still don't completely understand.

I'll talk about the member from Fort Garry who brought up a desperate attempt by government to shore up its sagging poll numbers by bringing a sibling bill, the Bill 64. I think we all remember Bill 71; it showed up in a week, is that right the member from Keewatinook? Really quick, all of a sudden we're sitting in caucus and we're debating a money bill that costs \$248 million. What kind of planning is that? Because poll numbers are in the tank? Is that what we expect here from government when we're talking about the people's money, and this is what we get? Poor planning.

So no wonder we're frustrated on this side of the House because we don't seem to see a road map, and these are serious times. People look to their provincial government to ensure that they do the two things that they're supposed to do: (1) health care, looking after the welfare of its citizens; and (2) educating its youth. And what do we get? These supplementary things that have to come out because, oh, we got to have the money for this; we got to find money for that. No plan, completely, and that's frustrating.

* (16:40)

There are many examples that I can give, Madam Speaker. I'll give you another one specific to the riding of Transcona, the constituency of Transcona. We had a K-to-8 DSFM school promised for our area, land bought. All of a sudden, gone. It's not being built. It's being built in another part of the city.

But the problem with this is—and here is the other piece that needs to be put on the record and in Hansard, is that with every new K-to-8 school comes child-care space. I won't tell you the hundreds of people that are on wait-lists for child care in Transcona. We get emails constantly.

And so—I'm looking at my member here for Point Douglas, what are you trying to tell me?

Oh, you're waving over there. Okay. Oh, you want the page?

Page, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) requires something.

Anyway, the point I'm making is, is that we need to have road maps and that these road maps clearly lay out government priorities. So far, all we have is a government that's more occupied with poll numbers and ensuring that they get some type of positive bump somewhere down the road.

But we know where it's been going, right? It's been going this way, and that's a problem.

And so what happens? Oh, we'll just bring up a money bill, and we'll hopefully be able to distract people enough from our poor planning. But that doesn't work anymore. Doesn't work because the pandemic demands real leadership, and that's what we've been missing.

An Honourable Member: Where's it been?

Mr. Altomare: Gone. Instead, we have these large real estate investment trusts outside of Manitoba that benefit to the tune of hundred of thousands of dollars because of some tax rebate that just happened to show up because some premier's poll numbers were where? Down there.

And that can't be the way you govern in Manitoba. I'm sorry, the standard has to be higher, Madam Speaker.

It's not enough to have that kind of leadership in this province during these times right now. Because like we said before, this isn't fun and games when we're dealing with really important issues like health care, education.

And I'll keep going because here's the piece: the piece we need to realize is that people are watching. They're paying attention.

And I know every member on that side of the House gets communications saying, what in the world are your plans for public education instead of cutting all the time? Why am I hearing that my school division, my school division, has to cut teachers and support staff because they're not being properly supported coming out of a pandemic?

And here's the other thing: yet to see a plan on how to deal with the crush of demand that's going to be hitting student services departments all through the province.

I will tell you that these are pieces that need to be dealt with with a proper roadmap.

And with those words, Madam Speaker, I will sit down.

Madam Speaker: Are there any other—the honourable member for Notre—oh, no.

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: It has—the question before the House is second reading of Bill 20.

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

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 20, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022, for concurrence and third reading.

Will the Deputy Speaker please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 20—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order. We will now consider Bill 20, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to put some more detail on the record this afternoon in respect of the supplementary appropriation act for '21 and 2022.

The opposition critic has asked for additional detail. I'm happy to answer and provide additional detail: \$75 million that has been alluded to under Education and Early Childhood Learning. In that category there's just over \$60 million of funding through that Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child-Care Agreement and within that—and then addition to that is also just under \$15 million for the early childhood workforce agreement, the ECWA.

And what's being funded in that agreement, as I said, is there is a funding in there to reduce licensed child-care costs for families and expand access to more quality inclusive childhood spaces for children from zero to six years old. There's a Manitoba action plan and it issues under that agreement focusing on the unique needs of Manitoba families, communities and child-care providers. It is establishing the building blocks to inform further development of these and other initiatives through consultation and engagement with parents and the early learning and child-care sector.

Under that early childhood workforce agreement there is funding being provided that will support the retention, recruitment and growth of early childhood educator workforce. I know the opposition members and members of the government will all want to

support these measures and that they increase wages for eligible current staff, that enhance economic stability and they support the lowest paid workers in the sector. They bridge gaps until the wage grid in the agreement is implemented.

It provides a one year top-up of the percentage offered by Manitoba to the pension plans for home child-care providers. It provides families with funding to provide staff a one-time investment in a tax-free savings account, to support increased financial security of the workforce based on years of service. It removes barriers into the program. It supports child-care assistants. It modernizes the ELCC sector current landscape by redeveloping competencies.

In respect of the health appropriation, I was pretty clear already: fee-for-service increases, price and volume; pharmacare program, as things have become more expensive. But let's be clear that these fee-for-service remuneration requests come because of significant surgeries and procedures continuing to come back online and taking place.

And, of course, the ISA also, as I said, pertaining mostly to COVID-19 expenses, also to the critic's point earlier—I said I would update him—\$585 million is the current balance of the fiscal stabilization account, on page 125 of the annual Public Accounts.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the official opposition critic have a statement? No.

We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause by clause. The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass.

Shall clause 2 pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. The—are—the honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I'm wondering if the minister could tell us how much of the \$391 million in COVID money that was unspent as of January 2022 is still unspent.

Mr. Friesen: As I indicated to the critic earlier this afternoon, this government was proud to be able to plan in accordance with the needs and to set aside monies in internal accounts that were attributed to COVID-19. I think the member would not try to claim

that expenses to account for COVID-19-related pandemic expenses weren't a good idea. Those amounts will be fully drawn down by the end of the year.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions?

* (16:50)

Mr. Wasyliw: The \$100 million in internal adjustments—I'm wondering if the minister can break down where that money is planning to go.

Mr. Friesen: The \$100 million indicated authority that's being sought is also attributed primarily towards COVID-19-related expenses.

Of course, that—the critic understands that these are supplementary appropriations and we vote them as an insurance. If they are not expended fully, then those amounts will lapse, and that will be reported in the Public Accounts.

But clearly, also the last number of weeks, rising fuel costs and geopolitical risks that are increasing in respect of Ukraine's situation always reminds us as a government and as legislators that we must be prudent and plan for that which we can see, but also that which we cannot clearly see.

Mr. Wasyliw: The \$26 million for Pharmacare, I'm wondering if the minister can break that out and explain where that's going specifically.

Mr. Friesen: The \$26 million for Pharmacare, the minister is—the member is alluding to, is going primarily towards volume and price increases in the regular drug program. I can tell that member that there's a higher number of prescriptions that is taking place, almost \$9 million. There's a plan to switch to lower-cost intravitreal drugs, \$7 million.

There's an increase to home-cancer-drug costs that is taking place, and we're funding that with \$5 million. In addition to that, there's also increased costs related to advanced glucose monitoring programs, a number of million dollars, I think it's \$3 million, as well.

So these legislators can clearly see that these are amounts that are impacting and that are not always easy to account for a year beforehand, but we need to take care to accommodate these costs in this year.

Mr. Wasyliw: Of the \$75 million for child care, I'm wondering if the minister can break out how much is going to increased wages.

Mr. Friesen: I believe there's almost \$20 million that's going toward wages within that category of the

early childhood learning agreement. But I would be—I could commit to the member to bring back the exact number within this category.

I know that, as I alluded to earlier, it's broken down between both a \$60-million allocation and then \$15 million specifically for that early childhood work-force agreement, and it's out of that sub-agreement that those wage top-ups and wage considerations would be made.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions—are there any further questions?

Seeing none, clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 20, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Cox), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 20—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the minister responsible for Economic Development, Investment and Trade, that Bill 20, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you seek leave of the House and not see the clock until Bill 20 has received royal assent?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not see the clock until Bill 20 has received royal assent? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

The House will now prepare for royal assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cam Steel): His Honour the Administrator.

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks Your Honour to accept the following bill:

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Vanessa Gregg):

Bill 20 – The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2021-2022; Loi de 2021-2022 portant affectation supplémentaire de crédits

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In Her Majesty's name, the Administrator of the Province of Manitoba thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Madam Speaker: The hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Southern Health Region	
		Lamont	570
		Gordon	570
Bill 17–The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act		Health-Care System	
		Lamont	570
		Gordon	570
Goertzen	559	Students Fleeing Ukraine Studying in Manitoba	
Ministerial Statements		Lamoureux	571
Taras Shevchenko		Reyes	571
A. Smith	559	Art and Culture Sector During Pandemic	
Wasyliv	560	Wishart	571
Lamoureux	560	A. Smith	571
Members' Statements		Changes to Crown Lands Program	
Altea Active		Brar	571
Reyes	561	Johnson	571
Rhonda Head		Petitions	
Lathlin	562	Foot-Care Services	
Town of Neepawa		Kinew	572
Clarke	562	Bushie	573
Student Unions		Abortion Services	
Moses	563	Fontaine	573
Dauphin Rail Museum		Provincial Road 224	
Michaleski	563	Lathlin	574
Oral Questions		Vivian Sand Facility Project– Clean Environment Commission Review	
Transfer of ICU Patients to Ontario		Gerrard	574
Kinew	563	Foot-Care Services	
Stefanson	564	Lindsey	575
Health System Support Workers		Diagnostic Testing Accessibility	
Asagwara	567	Maloway	575
Helwer	567	Lead in Soils	
Sale of Hydro Assets		Marcelino	576
Sala	567	Foot-Care Services	
Helwer	568	Naylor	576
Highway and Road Maintenance		B. Smith	577
Wiebe	568	Road Closures	
Piwniuk	568	Wiebe	577
Northern Manitoba Health Care			
Lathlin	569		
Gordon	569		

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

Messages

Friesen 578

Committee of Supply

Supplementary Supply 578

Committee Report

Micklefield 579

Concurrence Motion

Ewasko 579

Supplementary Supply Motion

Friesen 579

Introduction of Bills

Bill 20–The Supplementary Appropriation Act,
2021-2022
Friesen 579

Second Readings

Bill 20–The Supplementary Appropriation Act,
2021-2022
Friesen 579

Questions

Wasyliw 580
Friesen 580
Gerrard 580

Debate

Wasyliw 583
Lamont 587
Fontaine 590
Bushie 592
Altomare 594

Committee of the Whole

Bill 20–The Supplementary Appropriation Act,
2021-2022
Friesen 596
Wasyliw 596

Committee Report

Micklefield 597

Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 20–The Supplementary Appropriation Act,
2021-2022
Friesen 597

Royal Assent

Bill 20 – The Supplementary Appropriation Act,
2021-2022 598

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>