

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 25, 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.

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the supplement to the Estimates of expenditure for the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration for the fiscal year of 2022-23.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure—and I would indicate that the 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.

Weather Event Update

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, this past weekend Manitoba received a significant weather event, with precipitation totaling up to 80 millimetres across the province. As a result, some roadways have been closed due to localized overland flooding, as well as two municipalities declaring state of local emergencies, being that of RM of Headingley and RM of Cartier.

In response, our government, in collaboration with local governments and the emergency management organization, have taken action to provide mitigation and recovery efforts while maintaining an 'altmus' safety for all of Manitobans.

This past Saturday, the Red River Floodway was put into operations, providing relief to the Red River and Assiniboine River systems. As of—a total of 30,000 sandbags are being provided to municipalities for distribution, as well as pumping systems, where applicable. Some dikes in high-risk areas, such as St. Adolphe, have begun to close. Our provincial staff continue to monitor provincial drains and intervene where necessary to remove obstructions and restore flow in order to reduce the threat of localized flooding.

Manitobans are resilient and no strangers to flooding. As we recoup from the efforts on this weather event, I would encourage Manitobans to lend a helping hand to those who need it. The strongest way to battle a storm is together.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): For this weekend's extreme weather and significant precipitation event, many Manitobans are struggling. As of Sunday evening, over 20,000 people were without power, and many more were anxiously checking their basements for signs of flooding. This situation demands an all-hands-on-deck approach, and we commend all those who are out in the field, working around the clock to address the situation.

We ask the provincial government to continue communicating with at-risk property owners and municipal leaders so that flood prevention measures can be implemented as quickly as possible, especially

as we prepare for more rain later this week. For example, Winnipeggers should be aware that they can pick up sandbags at locations on Pacific and Thomas avenues and Waverley Street. Details can be found online at Winnipeg.ca.

Manitobans should have access to flood prevention tools when and where they need them. Winnipeggers picking up sandbags at the sites listed above need to provide identification that they live in the city and suggestions—suggesting that there might be a lack of sandbag availability in rural Manitoba.

I'd also like to commend all those who are helping each other and their communities protect their properties. Manitobans like Marion Willis from St. Boniface Street Links, and all the Manitoba Hydro employees currently restoring power to our communities like Dauphin, Morden, Winnipeg and Killarney.

As I said, Madam Speaker, we stand with Manitobans who are working through this extreme weather situation, and we look forward to receiving more updates from the minister as we go forward.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, we have very serious flooding and snow events over the weekend: East St. Paul, the RM of Stanley, the RM of Cartier and in quite a number of other areas have been very significantly affected.

Around Rossburn and Onanole there's been very heavy snow. In fact, residents are being told, where there's hydro lines out, that the Hydro people can't even come in until the roads are cleared.

April 13th, the Manitoba Liberal leader, the MLA for St. Boniface, raised concerns about flooding and asked for a briefing from the government, to be sure that the government was preparing well.

April 21st, in response to the budget, I also mentioned flooding concerns, and the government MLAs laughed at my raising this but, I'm glad today the minister and the government is taking a flood much more seriously and that we're having a ministerial statement.

We're still waiting for the briefing from the government and hope that they will give a briefing to us and other MLAs shortly.

Madam Speaker: A further ministerial statements?

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Week of the Early Childhood Educator

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak in the Chamber today to proclaim the 31st annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator and to acknowledge the importance of early childhood educators and their valuable work with children, families and communities in both centre- and home-based licensed facilities.

I want to express my appreciation to the Manitoba Child Care Association and all their advocates of learning and child care for their commitment to fostering professional development and excellence in the field of early childhood education.

To say these past two years have been challenging is an understatement. Through it all, early childhood educators have remained committed to providing quality child care to Manitoba's children, and their efforts continue to be essential to Manitoba's COVID-19 response.

I would like to acknowledge the important services that are provided by early-learning and child-care facilities to Manitoba's families.

* (13:40)

This week of the ECE is a time to recognize the important work and to celebrate the energy, creativity and expertise of all early childhood educators. The support they provide for families and communities contributes to both the social and economic development of our province. It is because of early childhood educators that families in Manitoba can go to work or school and feel assured their children are in safe, caring and capable hands.

With this in mind, it is my honour today to proclaim the 31st annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator.

The Manitoba government recognizes that access to responsive, affordable, high-quality, flexible and inclusive child care is a priority for Manitoba families.

Through the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, our federal and provincial governments continue to work together toward the shared goals of improving child care throughout Manitoba. Some of these goals include reducing parent fees by 50 per cent by the end of 2022, the creation of 23,000 new child-care spaces throughout Manitoba and the implementation of the wage grid, making wages more competitive for the child-care sector.

Early childhood educators offer valuable contributions to support families, early learning and child care, social and economic development as well as the betterment of society, and early childhood educators in Manitoba's licensed child-care centres, nursery schools and family child-care homes partner with parents to support children's well-being and developmentally appropriate early learning and care.

I want to thank early childhood educators across this province for their dedication and passion in providing exceptional care to children throughout Manitoba.

I am pleased to recognize two special guests that are in the gallery today: Jodie Kehl and Karen Kowalski from the Manitoba Child Care Association.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to thank all of Manitoba's dedicated and hard-working early childhood educators who take care of Manitoba kids every day. ECEs ensure that children have a safe, fun, educational experience while their parents or caregivers are able to work or see to other commitments.

Many studies have found that high-quality day-care has positive impacts on children. Children attending daycares and ECEs benefit from cognitive development and learn crucial language and pre-academic skills. They also benefit from social interactions with other children that can help with their emotional development and can lead to improved attention spans and conduct.

It's important to ensure that there are sufficient resources and child-care spaces available in Manitoba so that every child has the opportunity to attend this centres—or these centres if their parents so choose.

Child care needs to be affordable for all parents, regardless of income level.

However, affordable child care means nothing if there isn't enough staff or centres for all children. More can be done to ensure that affordable child care is available to all Manitobans. And one aspect of this is ensuring that existing ECE staff are supported, by paying them higher wages. Most ECEs earn little more than minimum wage, which makes it harder to attract new workers and leads many to leave the field in order to find higher paying work. Parents know the value of early childhood educators; their pay needs to reflect this.

Honouring ECEs is a nice gesture, but actions will speak louder than words in this sector, Madam Speaker. This government can do much more to support the child-care sector in our province by taking bold action to ensure that child care is affordable for all, ECEs are adequately paid and a physical space is available for the demand.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Over the last few years, as the Manitoba Liberal critic for child care, I've had the opportunity to converse with many different early childhood educators throughout the province.

I reflect upon a couple of specific late-night committees that took place about a year ago where ECE workers spoke so passionately about the needs that child-care centres have and the barriers that they face here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, child care can be a huge barrier on its own that many people face, and this was amplified during the pandemic and even more so now as people are returning to work in person.

During the pandemic, many child-care centres faced having to close cohorts. They also had to request parents pick up and drop off their children at different times, and this was all on top of having to find staffing for screening COVID symptoms, answering phone calls and meeting parents at school entrances.

Madam Speaker, more presently, this ripple effect has continued to create a huge struggle for people who are trying to find available child-care spots.

Many have been on long wait-lists and continue to be. People are struggling to find affordable child care, and people are really struggling in finding ways to manage going back to work or even just maintain their jobs.

In addition to this, we as politicians are hearing from early-learning child-care facilities and how many of them felt forgotten and not appreciated by this government throughout the pandemic.

Public child care should be accessible for everyone, and we have seen the federal government provide millions to support recruitment and retention for our early-learning child-care centres, as well as their big access-to-public-child-care-for-\$10-a-day program. But where is this government?

We know this provincial government underspent their designated funds for the pandemic support staffing benefit in 2020-2021 by \$9.2 million. And while the minister responsible says that more child-care spaces are coming, the questions of who will be staffing these spaces are ringing louder.

Madam Speaker, my hope is that the provincial government will work directly with ELCC centres and understand the importance of increasing wages and resources, and ensuring that there are spots for all children who would benefit from early learning child care.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Justin Lee

Hon. Doyle Pwiniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young athlete from the constituency of Turtle Mountain.

Justin Lee, son of Don and Carla Lee, and former Virden Oil Capitals defenceman, helped the University of Denver's men's hockey team capture its record-tying ninth national title.

Lee committed to the University of Denver during the successful junior rookie season with the Virden Oil Caps. He was the Manitoba's Junior Hockey League Rookie of the Year and the member of the MJHL All-Rookie Team.

Before Denver, Justin recorded 35 points through 57 games during the 2017 season. He registered six goals and 24 assists through the 62 games for the 2018 season. In the 2019 season, Justin appeared at three–31 out of 36 games, made his NCAA debut and recorded his first point with the assist against the

Boston College and scored his first collegiate goal with the University of Minnesota Duluth.

Justin played with–24 games in 2022 season, tallying six points and leading the–all defencemen with four goals. He also scored two goals in Denver's win over Omaha.

This season, the Waskada, Manitoba, product of assistant captain of the Denver university team posted an assist in the 5-1 victory over Minnesota State University. In the semi-finals, his team beat the University of Michigan 3-2 in overtime. Lee had an assist in the contest. The Michigan Wolverines and the Denver Pioneers are now tied with nine titles each.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, Justin Lee is–endured great success during his hockey career. Residents of Turtle Mountain, my fellow MLAs, colleagues and Manitobas across the province are proud of this Man-made hockey star–Manitoba-made hockey star, and we would like to wish him continued success moving forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Murdoch MacKay Women's Hockey Team

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Today, I'm honoured to rise and pay tribute to the Murdoch MacKay women's hockey team, who happen to be joining us today in the gallery.

Despite only being in the Winnipeg women's hockey league for only four years, the Murdoch MacKay Collegiate women's hockey team has proven once again that they are fierce competitors within the Hire Marketing Division.

Born out of a desire to represent their school, Murdoch joined the league for 2018-19 as underdogs. With most of the team experienced as ringette players that year, they were very successful in their debut season and won the Hire Marketing championship.

Looking to defend their title in 2019-20, and with most of the previous roster returning, the team made it to the finals once again, was set to play Collège Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau in a battle of Transcona. Unfortunately, though, the final round was cancelled due to COVID, and it would be another two years before they would be back on the ice.

* (13:50)

After this hiatus, the girls stepped back onto the rink with excitement, enthusiasm to represent their school. Those who kick-started the program in their

grade 9 year now return to the team as veterans to set to lead a new batch of players.

Going into a season filled with uncertainty, the resiliency and perseverance practised through pandemic proved to be essential as the season progressed. Leaning on team spirit and recognizing the unique contribution of each team member, they continued their momentum of the regular season into the playoffs.

Ultimately, they were once again able to claim the championship title. There are five graduating players on the team this year who can look back on their memories with pride, as they were the players who started the program and are now passing the torch to their teammates, who look forward to continuing this legacy.

Madam Speaker, please join me in congratulating the Murdoch MacKay hockey team and their successes. I would like to respectfully ask that we include the team roster and coaching staff into Hansard.

Thank you.

Murdoch MacKay women's hockey team: Torian Cobbett, Hailey Davy, Kaitlyn Davy, Sarah Edwards, Emily Emms, Brooklyn Ferjan, Kaleigh Fontaine, Rebecca Heintz, Alyssa Jefkins, Eve Kubesh, Kylie Loder, Caitlyn Sawatzky, Sara Taylor, Alexandra Tracy – players; Jessica Emms, Trent Heintz, Laurissa Kostiw, Samantha Robert – assistant coaches; Stuart Emms – head coach; Brienna Street – manager/teacher supervisor

Manitoba Pork Industry Award Winners

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): Earlier this month, I had the honour of attending this year's Manitoba Pork banquet, where three of the founding members of HyLife Ltd. received this year's Manitoba Pork Industry Award in the category of Industry Builder.

Don Janzen has over 45 years of farm experience and has been with HyLife since its inception in 1994. Don is heavily involved in the community, and while he was with HyLife he looked—he overlooked the 'philthropic' management of the company.

Claude Vielfaure has also been win HyLife since its inception in 1994, and during his time at HyLife he led the production, genetics and human resources teams. Claude has over 30 years of farm experience and represented HyLife and the pork industry on several boards, including the Manitoba Pork board, the Canadian Pork Council and the Canadian Pork Value Chain Roundtable.

Denis Vielfaure has also been with HyLife since 1994. His primary responsibilities while with HyLife were environmental management, asset development, construction, manufacturing and maintenance.

In 1994, the three Vielfaure brothers—Paul, Denis and Claude—partnered with Don Janzen to form VL4/Janzen, and to build Tritex sow, a 2,000-head barn. In 1997, the barn was converted to house 6,000 head and was the largest in Canada. Many more barns were added, and, in 2003, all barns were combined under the name of Hytek. In 2005, Hytek became HyLife.

HyLife's reach spread across the province and around the world. In 2008, HyLife purchased a plant in Neepawa that staffed 350 people, processing 1,300 hogs a day. Today, HyLife has grown to over 4,500 employees across multiple countries, processing over 14,000 hogs a day.

I would ask all in this Chamber to help me congratulate the founders of HyLife on their success in growing a true Manitoba success story.

Baldev Gill

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): April is the month to recognize the significant contributions Sikh Manitobans have made to the growth and prosperity of Manitoba, and I am glad to rise in the House today and recognize the founder of Radio Awaz, Mr. Baldev Gill.

In the late '60s, Baldev immigrated to Canada, first settling in Vancouver and then making Manitoba his home in the mid-'70s. Starting off as a commercial electrician, he then stepped onto the taxi business, becoming a taxi owner with Unicity and was elected as the president from 1988 to 1989.

In 2015, Baldev, along with his wife Sinder Kaur, started Radio Awaz, which is Winnipeg's first 24-7 South Asian radio station. Radio Awaz is known and loved by many families in Manitoba and is a platform for the community and by the community. Baldev and his team have done a commendable job in keeping Manitobans entertained and informed with great content.

Radio Awaz programming presents tourist information, weather and traffic updates, and regularly hosts local guest speakers to engage on a variety of topics.

The team from Radio Awaz is actively involved in the community. By raising awareness on various issues, they are able to mobilize the community to

create change. They have organized fundraisers for many community organizations, such as Winnipeg Harvest and the Children's Hospital. In 2019, Radio Awaz raised thousands of dollars for a family who had tragically lost two loved ones in an accidental drowning.

Baldev and his team's work is immeasurable in connecting South Asian Manitobans through language, music and community. Baldev's life story is one of—that resonates with many families across our province.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to join me in thanking the team of Radio Awaz and recognizing Mr. Baldev Gill for his contributions to Manitoba.

Let's welcome Mr. Baldev Gill and Mrs. Sinder Kaur, present with us in the gallery today.

Thank you.

Brett Mitchell

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I'm honoured to stand in the house to celebrate the Selkirk & District Community Foundation's 36th Citizen of the Year.

Mr. Brett Mitchell joins a list of dedicated volunteers in our community who selflessly and without hesitation steps up and works towards bettering our community. He has been a volunteer board member for the Festival on the Red, a member of the Dufferin Gang Committee, a member of the Lockport Development Group and a volunteer board member for Selkirk Biz.

He is also actively involved in most of the events that define the Tri-S area, including Selkirk's Canada Day celebrations; the Triple S Fair & Rodeo; the parade of lights; Homes for the Holidays and Holiday Alley; the Highland Gathering; and the Lockport River's Edge Run.

When Brett's father was diagnosed with Huntington's disease, Brett took up the cause, raising funds and awareness for Huntington's disease. He became an active volunteer board member with the Huntington Society of Canada, Winnipeg and area chapter.

Brett Mitchell values being part of what makes our Tri-S area the best that it can be. He is known for his endless energy, commitment and entrepreneurial

spirit, which contributes to many organizations meeting and surpassing their goals.

His community spirit is driven by the positive energy from others that share the same passion for community. He can be seen at just about every event in the Tri-S area, supporting the cause, lifting our communities and sharing his enthusiasm for life.

Brett views his time and efforts in volunteerism as a family commitment and gives thanks to his wife Janet and three sons for their support and sacrifices. Brett is proud to state that his three sons have taken up the cause as active volunteers.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues to please rise and acknowledge the Selkirk & District Community Foundation's 36th Citizen of the Year, Mr. Brett Mitchell.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Rates Application to PUB

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking all the Hydro workers and those on the front lines who are helping Manitobans through this most recent weekend storm.

Now, the Public Utilities Board has been a protector of the people of Manitoba. We know that this Premier and the PCs keep trying to raise hydro rates by hundreds of dollars a year. In fact, this year, they tried to get the rate increase approved for 5 per cent. The PUB said, no, it's not justified.

But the PCs and this Premier, they simply won't accept that. We've learned this past weekend that the PCs are now going back to the Public Utilities Board and continuing to push for that 5 per cent rate increase.

Madam Speaker, this is going to cost Manitobans hundreds of dollars a year. It doesn't make sense with gas and grocery prices going through the roof.

Why does the Premier want to raise hydro rates by hundreds of dollars a year on Manitobans?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, I don't even know where to begin with the litany of false accusations and the Leader of the Opposition's preamble when it comes to this.

* (14:00)

But Manitobans know one thing, and that is what the NDP did to Manitoba Hydro. They—in their time

in office, Madam Speaker, they tripled the debt of Manitoba Hydro, leaving that burden on the backs of the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro.

Manitobans know that the NDP doesn't stand for them, Madam Speaker. They stand for themselves. They jacked up the debt of Manitoba Hydro. Now we're having to clean up their mess. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, we know the PC plan. It's to thank Hydro workers during a fall storm and then turn around and try and lay them off and reduce their wages. That's their record when it comes to Manitoba Hydro.

Our plan is simple: let's keep hydro rates affordable, especially with the cost of living going up through the roof.

What the PCs have done with Manitoba Hydro this year is ask for a 5 per cent increase. That's going to cost the average family—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —hundreds of dollars.

It's a good thing we've got the Public Utilities Board in place to protect Manitobans, because they—PUB rejected that 5 per cent increase. They said it wasn't justified. Now, this government has gone back to that PUB and asked for them to vary the order. They've asked for an increase of hundreds of dollars a year on people's hydro bills.

Why does the Premier think that Manitobans are in a position to pay hundreds more per year on their hydro bills?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I also want to thank all of those Hydro workers out there who were working diligently over the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I know the members opposite think that's funny, but we think it's very serious.

They worked very diligently and hard over this weekend—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —and we thank them very much for the work that they have done, especially with the

severe weather that happened over the weekend, Madam Speaker.

We also want to thank those who work in Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure as well as our Emergency Measures Organization, who worked diligently around the work to ensure that—the safety of Manitobans during these times, Madam Speaker.

But the member opposite will know that tripling the debt of Manitoba Hydro, as they did under their time, it comes with consequences, Madam Speaker. And the consequences are, as a result of Manitoba—the NDP tripling the debt of Manitoba Hydro, that forced the PUB to make that decision on the increase.

We don't make those decisions, Madam Speaker. The Public Utilities Board makes that decision.

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

Mr. Kinew: That's the issue, Madam Speaker. The Public Utilities Board has made a decision. The PUB ruled that their 5 per cent increase is not justified.

But now this Premier, this PC Cabinet, they're not content with respecting the PUB. They've gone—they've now gone back and they've asked for the PUB to vary the order. They've asked for them to re-consider. They are asking the PUB to change their decision and now come back with a 5 per cent rate increase.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans are dealing with a lot right now. We see inflation is at—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —record high levels. We see the price of milk is going up under their watch. The price of gas continues to increase.

Why does this PC Cabinet not want to respect the Public Utilities Board, and why are they asking for a rate increase that'll hit Manitobans with hundreds of dollars a year in more costs?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, what we have been doing, Madam Speaker, and what we will continue to do is protect Manitobans against the NDP government who jacked taxes against Manitobans and made Manitobans' lives less affordable back in their time.

We won't go in that direction. That's why in our Budget—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: –2022, we have in—we have listed a whole range of things that we are doing to make life more affordable for Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Their way of doing things is jacking—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: –up debt in Manitoba Hydro. We will continue to make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, who in Manitoba right now thinks that life is getting more affordable under the PCs? No one.

The cost of living is going—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –through the roof, and we know that Manitoba Hydro rates are a big part of that pinch that Manitobans are feeling right now.

Everyone in Manitoba who has to pay a Hydro bill got a very stark reminder this past year that their—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –bills were going up. And then, this government decided to email everyone, and to remind them—a very difficult reminder, I would say—that the cost of living continues to increase.

And now, we learn this past weekend that this same PC government under this Premier's direction is going back to the PUB and asking for them to vary the order. We think the PUB is important to protect Manitobans from these rate increases.

The only question that we don't understand is: Why does this PC government keep going back to the Public Utilities Board and asking Manitobans to pay hundreds—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, there is absolutely nothing about the preamble in the Leader of the Opposition's question that has anything to do with reality of what's going on in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, what I will do is—I will remind Manitobans—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: –that life under the previous NDP government was less affordable, Madam Speaker. They jacked up taxes 16 of 17 years that they were in power. That is not making life more affordable for Manitobans.

Now, the members opposite—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: –have a choice this afternoon. They will have a choice to vote for a budget that makes my—life much more affordable for Manitobans; or they can choose to vote against that.

The question is, what will their choice be?

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, it's a fact: everyone in Manitoba knows that life is getting more expensive right now. Everyone knows it's a fact that they're increasing hydro rates.

It's also a fact that business groups have had enough with the PCs' interference at Hydro. Manitoba's Industrial Power Users Group—these are some of the biggest employers in the province, responsible for thousands of jobs—they say: A lack of transparency regarding the most recent rate and regular changes imposed by the Legislature means that industry in Manitoba is presently operating with an unprecedented lack of confidence. End quote, Madam Speaker.

That means a threat to thousands of jobs in our province.

Given the suspicion from these large employers, given the difficulties that Manitobans are facing, why is this government going back to the Public Utilities Board, and try and argue that rates need to increase even more?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, again, the litany of false accusations by the member opposite. What Bill 36 does is protects ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro. It also protects Manitoba Hydro, especially from an NDP government that likes to triple the debt of Manitoba Hydro.

This is a stable, sustainable approach to ensure that Manitoba Hydro remains in Manitoba, owned by Manitobans, Madam Speaker, not tripling the debt and putting that on the backs of ratepayers in Manitoba Hydro.

We have a plan to ensure the sustainability of Manitoba Hydro, to ensure that we keep rates low for Manitobans.

What is their plan? Oh, they don't have one, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we build the economy. On that side of the House, they make life more expensive.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: On this side of the House, we support workers—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—who work with companies like Gerdau Steel, a large employer in the community of Selkirk. A large employer that is expressing their skepticism with this government's approach to increasing—*[interjection]*

* (14:10)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—hydro rates at the Cabinet table, Madam Speaker.

They're asking for 5 per cent increases year after year. They've now put it—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—in Bill 36.

I'll point out, Madam Speaker, they're asking for a variance at the PUB of 5 per cent at the same time that they're bringing in a Bill 36 asking for 5 per cent. We could be looking at these hundreds-of-dollar increases each year after year for years to come.

Why do the PCs—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Certainly, I will await to see that plan by the Leader of the Opposition on how he plans to build our economy, Madam Speaker, because we do know that in the past, raising taxes 16 of 17 years that they were in power, making life less affordable for Manitobans, making it difficult to grow the Manitoba economy here in Manitoba—they didn't take a year where they didn't make it more difficult through red tape and other things to make it more difficult for

Manitoba businesses to expand and grow here in our economy here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we have a plan that will build and strengthen our economy here in Manitoba. They have a plan that will tear it down. Shame. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I'm going to give everybody fair warning that I am unable to hear some of the questions and answers that are being asked because of the amount of heckling. I'm also going to point out that there was a comment in the—one of the papers this weekend that indicated that I should be throwing hecklers out of the House, and I am going to make—give some thought to some of that and to see where I need to take that.

But it is increasingly difficult for me to do my job if this level of heckling does continue, and I'm giving fair warning to all.

Manitoba Hydro Rates Request to Withdraw Bill 36

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, even as we see 30-year-high levels of inflation, this government continues to try to make life less affordable for Manitobans.

They've introduced Bill 36, which allows the PCs to increase hydro rates by going around the Public Utilities Board. The PUB exists to ensure that hydro rates are set fairly rather than by political agenda.

It's simple: Bill 36 will allow this government to jack up hydro rates on Manitobans yet again. This is wrong, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister do the right thing and withdraw Bill 36 today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Acting Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Madam Speaker, I'm afraid, again, the allegations are not grounded in reality. Hopefully the member will take some time to do his homework, actually read Bill 36.

I do want to take the member back in history. I know this might—been before his time, but the—under the NDP, they tripled the debt of Manitoba Hydro. Cost overruns alone to the tune of \$3.8 billion, Madam Speaker. And do you know what that means for the average household in Manitoba? That means an extra debt load, just on cost overruns, of \$8,000 per household.

That's the legacy of the NDP. *[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: Throw 'em out.

Madam Speaker: I hear a member saying throw them out. Well, if that happens, then half this Chamber would be empty.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, since taking office, this government has increased hydro rates again and again, costing Manitobans hundreds of dollars, and now Bill 36 will increase them without oversight or accountability.

Manitobans are already struggling with the cost of living. Increasing hydro rates will only make things worse. That's why we've decided to delay Bill 36.

We want to give Manitobans more time to understand the implications of this bill and to let the government know what they think.

Will this government listen to Manitobans and stop raising rates?

Mr. Cullen: Well, this is interesting from the NDP—sort of a newfound interest in the Public Utilities Board.

You know, when they were talking about capital projects, the NDP spent \$1.2 billion before they even went to the Public Utilities Board, Madam Speaker.

They've created a tripling of the debt in Manitoba Hydro, almost \$4 billion overexpended in two capital projects, added the debt to the average household in Manitoba \$8,000–\$8,000 per household.

That's the legacy of the NDP. The ratepayers of Manitoba have to cover the legacy of the NDP. It was the wrong thing to do, but we have to fix it.

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

Mr. Sala: Not only does Bill 36 increase hydro rates, it would also move towards privatization by putting an end to Hydro's monopoly on the sale of electricity in Manitoba.

That's the PC agenda: raising rates and pushing privatization. We know Manitobans don't support that. They know the value of Manitoba Hydro and affordable rates.

On this side of the House, we want to keep rates low.

Will the minister do the right thing, stop raising hydro rates and withdraw Bill 36 today?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, if the NDP really wanted to keep hydro rates low, they should've thought of that 15 years ago.

Madam Speaker, if the members opposite would read Bill 36, this is a path to stability for Manitoba Hydro. The bill protects ratepayers by setting a ceiling on annual rate increases. The bill also expands the role of the Public Utilities Board to oversee and advise on rate-setting and infrastructure programs, something that the NDP chose to ignore. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Additionally, this bill establishes reasonable debt-equity targets over time.

We're giving more responsibility to the Public Utilities Board and, at the same time, we're protecting Manitoba ratepayers.

Spring Flooding Event Financial Supports Needed

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, this weekend's extreme weather has added to the near-record-breaking levels of snowfall and rain that we've seen this year, resulting in flooding, and has impacted so many Manitobans.

Flooding has resulted in widespread damage to people's property, and many are now left wondering what to do, as damages can be significant.

The government has a role to be proactive in collaborating with impacted municipalities and communities and with property owners.

With the crest and more precipitation on the way, will the government be proactively working to offer these supports?

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

Our department, when it comes to our EMO, are actually all—on a regular basis, especially during this past spring, they had communications with all municipalities in the province of Manitoba, including cities and towns—City of Brandon, Thompson and even First Nations communities.

They have communications with all and they're always working together to make sure that everyone has a plan, and they follow that plan when it's required.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, we want to thank all those municipal employees, provincial employees who worked through the weekend to ensure that folks were safe.

But we know that affected Manitobans are now wondering whether financial supports will be available to them and to at-risk Manitobans who want to know that measures are being taken to prevent flooding now.

Communication is so important during times like this, but the situation on the ground is changing rapidly. And so it's important that—the forecast right now still calls for more participation—precipitation, I should say—that we communicate well. That's why we ask this government to be proactive in offering those supports.

Will the minister comment on the specific proactive supports that he is putting in place to support Manitobans now?

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

You know, our department is proactive when it comes to communications with RMs, municipalities and, again, every community around in the province of Manitoba. They will definitely work together with people who have actually had flooding situations in their basements.

We—what we—first, what we do in our department is look at an assessment of what's—really happens and then find out what the actual cost is. We're looking at municipalities giving states of local emergency that we—I've reported in my ministerial statement, and we want to make sure that all the communication is going to be flowing both to municipalities and to the—any kind of EMO when it comes to a DFA program.

*(14:20)

Thank you.

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

Mr. Wiebe: The prospect of spring flooding has been on the minds of Manitobans now for months, and these next few weeks will be crucial.

Many Winnipeggers experienced flooding in their homes over the weekend, many more people saw flooded streets in communities like Transcona,

East St. Paul, West St. Paul, and overland flooding has extended throughout all of southern Manitoba.

During times of crisis, Manitobans need to know that the government is there to support them and to support them with financial supports.

Again, what steps will the minister be taking to support financially the impacted Manitobans in their time of need?

Mr. Piwniuk: Yes, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question.

Yes, when it comes to the locations in the city of Winnipeg, it's the City of Winnipeg that's responsible for a lot of those situations. Where we—actually, with the Province of Manitoba, we work with all our municipalities to make sure that anything that we can assist our cities, our communications, our RMs and First Nations communities, we're there for them.

And the thing is, when it comes to DFA programs, once the assessment is done and we finally get through this wicked spring that we've had, it's been a challenge for everybody—and I want to thank all our staff for all the hard work they have done. They should be commended for the work that they had when it came to the snow removal to the flood situation. I commend them and I'm very proud of being part of this department.

Ambulance Services Rural Response Times

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, people are waiting longer and longer for an ambulance in Manitoba. Last week, our team raised serious concerns with the bad EMS situation here in Winnipeg. In January of this year, for 28 hours, there were no EMS units available in Winnipeg.

The situation in rural Manitoba is just as bad. Through freedom of information, which I table, ambulances were out of service due to staff shortages for over 19,000 hours in December of 2021. Far too often in rural Manitoba, an ambulance is not there when people need it.

Why has this government done nothing to make sure 'ambulancers' are there—ambulances are there, rather, when Manitobans need it?

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

The member is very inaccurate in terms of the information they are putting on the record today. Manitobans need to know that our government has invested \$812 million to create 38 projects and

initiatives to streamline care all across our province, Madam Speaker. Budget 2022 will aid in hiring 35 more paramedics across our province, Madam Speaker.

And perhaps the member missed my announcement out in Crystal City, in Portage la Prairie, where we announced new garages for paramedics that will improve the care that Manitobans receive.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, when you call an ambulance, it's because you're experiencing an emergency, and in rural Manitoba, people don't have access to the health care they need close to home.

Over the last four years, response times in rural Manitoba have gone up—an increase in wait times as high as 35 per cent. It should only take 15 minutes for an ambulance to come in rural areas. That is, actually, by the government's own standards.

In communities like Ashern, Riverton and St. Laurent, some patients have to wait three times longer or even more, Madam Speaker.

Why has the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) done nothing to make sure ambulances are there for people who need it in Ashern and Riverton?

Ms. Gordon: I'm so pleased to see this new-found interest in rural Manitoba from a government—previous government that closed 20 emergency departments. I guess at that time they were experiencing peritonitis, and what happened outside of the boundaries of Winnipeg did not matter. But, Madam Speaker, for our government, all of Manitoba matters. That is why we're investing \$7.2 billion total for health-care budget in 2022.

This afternoon, members opposite will be able to show Manitobans whether they care about all of rural Manitoba and all of this province by voting for our budget.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, PC cuts to rural ambulances and health care are making things worse.

It takes 25 per cent longer for an ambulance to come to Russell today than it did in 2018. In Dauphin, it's nearly 50 per cent longer to get an ambulance to come than it did in 2018.

Those numbers are for the most serious medical emergencies, Madam Speaker.

The Premier was the minister of Health—the Premier was the minister of Health—when those numbers increased, Madam Speaker, and there's no plan from this Premier or her government to address the concerns that rural Manitobans have.

Why has this government done nothing to make sure ambulances are there for people in Russell and Dauphin when they need it?

Ms. Gordon: The member for Union Station is new to the NDP government and their tactics, and so they are not aware of their previous strategies to make life just—not just less affordable for Manitobans, but poor health care.

Madam Speaker, I can remember when individuals didn't bother to even call for an ambulance because they couldn't afford to pay for it. It was our government that reduced the ambulance fees by 50 per cent.

We've added more paramedics. We've purchased new ambulances. And in this budget, \$7.2 billion is an option members opposite will be able to vote for or against this afternoon.

Mental Health Funding Investments Needed

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Manitobans are facing mental health challenges like never before.

The pandemic disrupted much of people's regular lives. The VIRGO review called for much more significant investment in mental health within three years. That time has come and gone, and the funding to address the needs has not been put in place.

Why is this government not doing much more to address mental health, especially when there's a greater need here in Manitoba?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. However, she is mistaken in some of the words that she's putting on the record right now.

We have invested over \$58 million since the VIRGO report had been released. We have invested 23.1 in ongoing services for this year alone in this budget. We also have added an additional \$17.1 million.

I would ask the member opposite: How much more does the member think is necessary this year, and what is the member's plan?

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

Mrs. Smith: Quit leaving mental health money on the table: that's what this government should be doing.

Through a FIPPA that we got, Manitoba's financial statement for funding received from Ottawa for mental health—and I'll table it—this year—or, in fiscal year 2019-20, \$1.9 million promised for mental health went unspent. In 2021, \$1.8 million was left unspent.

In short, the PC government is leaving money on the table that should be used to address urgent mental health challenges in Manitoba.

Why has million dollars—why has millions of dollars been left unspent to address mental health, especially when Manitobans are suffering more than ever?

Mrs. Guillemard: Again, I appreciate the questions coming from the member opposite. It allows me to really focus on the investments that our government is making in mental health.

And although the member is speaking about pre-pandemic numbers and services, I'd like to speak about how we are addressing the needs of Manitobans as we are coming out of this—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: —pandemic.

Madam Speaker, we've invested \$2.8 million for a sobering centre in Thompson in the North. It is effective alternative to police- and hospital-based responses to public intoxication.

We have descheduled naloxone, so now it can be distributed by retailers and bought without prescription.

Madam Speaker, I have further details to add from this list.

* (14:30)

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

Mrs. Smith: Madam Speaker, this government is not taking steps to address mental health problems brought on by the pandemic.

The 'auditor' general found this government has not taken appropriate action to address mental health needs in our schools. Funding called for by the VIRGO review has not happened. In fact, millions of federal dollars are being left unspent by this government and this minister.

Why is the minister not properly addressing Manitoba health challenges, especially in our schools?

Mrs. Guillemard: Again, I do believe the member opposite is a little bit confused.

Over the past two years, there has been something we've all been dealing with. It's called a pandemic. And, Madam Speaker, that disrupted in-school learning. There's a lot of disruption that has happened throughout the province.

Madam Speaker, we are prepared to assist students and all Manitobans as we come out of this pandemic together: their mental health needs, their health-care needs, their education needs. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Spring Weather Events State of Emergency Inquiry

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We've now had two Colorado lows with massive snowfalls in the Riding Mountain area, where people are without power, significant overland flooding across southern Manitoba and another Colorado low projected for the end of this week. People are already sandbagging.

Now, we had a record snowfall this winter so there should have been considerable flood preparations in place, but in 2020, after a thousand-year downpour washed away roads and bridges in Westman, it took a month to declare a state of emergency and residents there are still waiting for their compensation.

If the situation turns, is this Province ready to declare a state of emergency and prepared to call in the federal government for assistance?

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

When it comes to our DFA, this is all going to be done with—based on the amount of claims that each individual person will have and in an area. Each of the municipalities, towns, they will declare their local

state of emergency. Once we get an assessment, that's when we work with the federal government on a DFA program and that's what we'll be waiting for until we deal with the assessment with all the stuff that's coming our way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Basement Flooding Protection Program

Mr. Lamont: It's clear that municipalities—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —are going to face massive extra costs from this flood and it's equally clear they're being shortchanged by this government.

For the seventh year this—straight, this PC government has frozen funding to the municipalities even while they face unprecedented pandemic costs. As this article I table shows, there used to be a program to help subsidize the cost of protecting basements from flooding through municipalities that was cancelled due to funding cuts by this PC government.

Will this government thaw the funding freeze and flow funding to the municipalities to cover the costs of dealing with this flood, including restoring the basement flooding protection program?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Acting Minister of Municipal Relations): As the member knows, we continue to flow \$280 million towards municipalities this year and part of that funding alone is \$230 million towards municipal capital investments, \$42 million for water services projects and \$3.1 million for municipal enforcement support program, and there are millions of dollars more and other great projects, as well, Madam Speaker.

Provincial Nominee Program Request for Review of Program

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I want to table some information demonstrating the positive changes that the Saskatchewan nominee program recently made that connects applicants with jobs in demand.

Now, Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program has played a critical role in our social and economic development and it is clear that it's time to have a thorough review of the program. The program needs to be modernized to better fit today's needs, whether

it be through health-care workers, international students or workers in general.

Will this minister commit to attend an open forum that I will host, around his availability, to hear out ideas from Manitobans who are familiar with the program?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I'm very proud of the flagship program called the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program that other provinces have emulated.

It is my duty and my job to ensure that we enhance and improve this program, Madam Speaker. Since our government was elected in 2016, we have committed to addressing the well-being of all Manitobans, including newcomers and immigrants.

Immigration is a key part of our government's whole plan for economic recovery to address labour and skill shortages and to attract and recruit international talent and newcomers to Manitoba. While COVID-19 has impacted the arrival of newcomers to our province, I would remind all members that in 2021 we had the highest number of MPNP nominations, at just under 6,300, during the pandemic.

We are proud of that record and we'll continue to improve and enhance that program that we created back in 1998, Madam Speaker.

Former Hudson's Bay Building Indigenous Housing Initiative

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): On Friday, it was inspiring to see the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Prime Minister join Southern Chiefs Organization leadership for historic announcement regarding the future of the Bay building. A major component of this proposed project will be on housing.

Can the Minister of Families explain how her department has contributed to this goal?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I'd like to thank my friend from Portage for that excellent question.

What was once called the largest reinforced concrete building in Canada now serves as a concrete example of what Grand Chief Jerry Daniels calls the standard of what reconciliation in this country looks like.

On Friday, our government and our Premier was very proud to be supporting this exciting initiative,

which includes for—a mix of residential units, including affordable housing units and units dedicated for seniors.

Our government committed \$10 million towards this initiative, for upwards of 200 of the 300 planned affordable housing units. This funding is in addition to the \$25 million our government had already set aside for the renovation of the building, making it a grand total of twenty—\$35 million.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Northern Manitoba Health Care ER Staffing and Water Services

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Five times in the last month, I've brought before this House concerns with northern Manitobans regarding deplorable state of health care.

There are facilities with more agency staff than normal staff now. Thompson ER has half of its regular nurses missing. The same hospital is forcing patients to use a thing called shower in a bag because this government won't fix the hot water.

Why won't the minister address these problems now?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for raising this issue again in the House.

The member, quite obviously, is not in touch with anyone who works in the Thompson General Hospital or any of the maintenance staff. He fabricates and puts inaccurate information on the record.

The parts have arrived, Madam Speaker. My understanding is that, by this week, all the repairs to the hot water system in that hospital will be addressed. Perhaps the member isn't aware that we had a two-year pandemic—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —where supply chains were interrupted. It is not just in—hot water, but even here in the Legislative Building, one of elevators have been down—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —for several months now waiting for parts—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Thompson General Hospital Hot Water Service Repair

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, comparing an elevator not functioning in this building when there are three others that are is shameful for this Minister of Health to compare that to not having hot water in a hospital.

Workers in that hospital are forced to carry five-gallon jugs of hot water to patient areas so that patients can have at least a warm sponge bath. This minister doesn't even know when it's going to be fixed. She won't answer if the parts have been ordered. She won't answer any questions. She just refuses to pay attention to people in the North. She should be ashamed of herself.

When will the hot water be turned on in Thompson? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): The member opposite should be completely and utterly ashamed that he continues to come into this Chamber and discredit the work of the leadership at the—*[interjection]*

* (14:40)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —Thompson General Hospital.

The northern regional health authority has—they—he has no communication whatsoever with the leadership there. If he did, he would know the parts have arrived and the issue will be resolved this week.

But, instead, the member comes into this House and fear mongers and discredits the work of people—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —who are on the floor trying to resolve this issue, Madam Speaker. I thank them for all their efforts.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Health-Care Coverage

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care: migrant workers with work permits of less than one year; international students; and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

(2) Racialized people—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: —and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(3) Without adequate health-care coverage, if they are ill, many of the uninsured will avoid seeking health care due to fear of being charged for their care, and some will fear possible detention and deportation if their immigration status is reported to the authorities.

(4) According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care to undocumented, irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(5) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration statuses with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

(6) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba regardless of their immigration status, including: refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependant children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the minister of Health and seniors to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the minister of Health and seniors to inform all health-care institutions and providers of expanded coverage for those without health insurance and the details of how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

(4) To urge the minister of Health and seniors to create and enforce strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with training to protect the safety of residents with precarious immigration statuses and ensure they can access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Are there any further petitions? If not, orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, I would like to table a list of the five bills designated by the official opposition for this Fourth Session of the 42nd Legislature.

Our designated bills for this session are: Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions); Bill 36, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act; Bill 13, Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; and Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'm announcing that the following bills will be considered by the government as specified for the Fourth Session of the 42nd Legislature.

Bills 2, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the following bills will be considered by the government as specified for this Fourth Session of the 42nd Legislature: Bills 2, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34.

Mr. Goertzen: Just in terms of orders of the rest of the day, and how to order the days, in consultation with the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), I have a number of leave requests—series of leave requests regarding the completion of second readings of specified bills this session.

Could you please canvass the House for leave to allow the following provisions to govern debate today and tomorrow:

(1) on April 25th, 2022, immediately following the conclusion of the votes on the budget motion and amendments, the House will consider second readings for specified bills, and the hour of adjournment will be midnight;

(2) on April 26th, 2022, starting at the beginning of orders of the day, government business, the House will consider second readings of specified bills, and the House will not rise until the questions have been put on all specified bills;

(3) despite subrule 2(11), on April 25th and 26th, 2022, the provisions outlined for debate on specified bills in rule 2(10) will apply, with the following exceptions:

(a) the Government House Leader will have the ability to call the orders of bills for debate;

(b) after each debate concludes, the Speaker shall put the question; and

(c) matters of privilege and points of order will be deferred until all questions have been put;

(4) at midnight on April 26, 2022, for any remaining specified bills, the minister shall move the second reading motions and the Speaker shall put the questions immediately, without debate, division bells shall ring for no more than one minute on each question, and the House shall rise following the consideration of the last motion.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the following provisions to govern debate today and tomorrow:

(1) on April 25th, 2022, immediately following the conclusion of the votes on the budget motion and amendments, the House will consider second readings for specified bills and the hour of adjournment will be midnight;

(2) on April 26, 2022, starting at the beginning of orders of the day, government business, the House will consider second readings of specified bills, and

the House will not rise until the questions have been put on all specified bills;

(3) despite subrule 2(11), on April 25th and 26, 2022, the provisions outlined for debate on specified bills in rule 2(10) will apply, with the following exceptions:

(a) the Government House Leader will have the ability to call the order of bills for debate;

(b) after each debate concludes, the Speaker shall put the question; and

(c) matters of privilege and points of order will be deferred until all questions have been put; and

(4) at midnight on April 26th, 2022, for any remaining specified bills, the minister shall move the second reading motions and the Speaker shall put the questions immediately, without debate, the division bells shall ring for no more than one minute on each question, and the House shall rise following the consideration of the last motion.

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, could you please resume debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows, who has one minute remaining.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I will be really brief. Thanks the opportunity—for the opportunity to allow me conclude my remarks in continuation from Friday.

Simply, I want to say that this budget does not meet the expectations, and Manitobans deserve a lot better than what's offered in this budget.

* (14:50)

So, myself and my friends on this side of the House would be voting against this budget.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Manitobans were looking for hope in this budget: hope for health care, hope for an economic recovery, hope for the environment and hope for a better future for their kids. But Premier Stefanson failed them.

I said at the time of the Throne Speech that my measure of a leader is their ability and commitment to bring a gendered lens—and anti-oppression lens—to leadership. This Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) said she would be different from Brian Pallister, but nothing has changed. I had hoped that Premier Stefanson would signal a new era for the PC government, one in which the needs of women and non-binary people were a priority; one in which the needs of LGBTQ2S people and Indigenous, Black and other racialized people were a priority.

I was hoping that this Premier would—could deliver a budget that showed us she cared about the needs and problems of regular Manitobans and would address pandemic recovery through the lens of nurses, health-care aides, patients, education assistants, early childhood educators, teachers and students.

I was hoping that she could deliver a budget that would make a genuine difference for folks who are unhoused, underhoused or suffering from addictions or mental health issues or awaiting surgery.

I was also really hoping the Premier could deliver a budget that made a clear commitment to addressing climate change.

But Budget 2022 has only shown us that the priorities of this Premier and this government are to reward the wealthy and do little for the rest of Manitobans.

I represent a diverse community. Some Wolseley family owns—families own their own homes. Some even own a cottage and were mostly doing okay a few years ago. But many of these folks are pretty stressed these days with the cost of living, hydro bills going up, no child-care spaces available, and now Budget 2022 makes it more expensive for their children to get a college or university education.

Many families are stressed because they're waiting for health care or mental health services, and have been for years. They may need a hip replacement or a knee replacement, or their child may need an assessment for an eating disorder or addiction. They may have a parent who needs long-term care, perhaps stuck in a hospital far from home because of this government's cuts to health care.

There are now less personal-care homes in Manitoba than there were when the PCs took office. Not one new personal-care-home bed is announced in the budget. Instead, the budget for health infrastructure, including for personal-care homes, is frozen for the next three years.

There are many other families in my community who don't own their own home: thousands of renters, many of whom have experienced above-guideline rent increases and some who live in Manitoba Housing, struggling with safety and security issues or cockroach—roach infestations. There is no commitment in this budget to care for the most vulnerable people in our communities, and that is shameful, Madam Speaker. For folks who are low income but going to work every day, sometimes working two or three jobs just to make ends meet, they are so discouraged by the lack of commitment from this government to a fair living wage.

Overall, this government is still finding ways to make things less affordable for Manitobans. They've frozen funding for City services so families will pay more and go with less. They've raised hydro rates at the Cabinet table and they've done nothing in this budget to address the rising cost of groceries and transportation.

So many families in Wolseley and across Manitoba are just stressed by the Stefanson government's continuing Pallister's plan to slash funding for public schools. There is no plan and no investment to help our kids recover from the pandemic.

What the education property tax cut really means is more crowded classrooms, fewer teachers and EAs and less resources for kids this year and next. The loss of schools' ability to be able to charge a property levy meant the loss of a subsidized milk program for hungry kids at Winnipeg School Division.

Every time we ask the government to fund menstrual supplies in schools, they like to push this responsibility off to school divisions while cutting school divisions off at the knees, but no longer allowing them to raise funds for essential services like milk, let alone menstrual supplies, through property taxes.

The PC government is also not doing what is needed to address the addictions crisis or address mental health wait-lists. Madam Speaker, 407 people died of a drug overdose in 2021. Since the pandemic, opiate overdoses have doubled and reached a record high. Barriers to supports and services have only increased during the pandemic for people who need help with substance abuse and mental health concerns.

Instead of offering service and action on the VIRGO report, the Province hired yet another consultant to do another review. The minister announced that Manitoba is entering the consulting phase for a five-year mental health action plan, but Manitobans

deserve help now, not in five years after lengthy reviews and cost-cutting plans.

Another thing that makes life harder for Manitobans is having the second worst minimum wage in the country. Budget 2022 maintains the PC commitment to do the least possible for workers. Manitoba low-wage earners make only 5 cents more than they did a year ago—they're 17 cents away from being the worst paid in the country. No one should be forced to live in poverty—especially not while working full time—and one of the best ways to lift people out of poverty is to make the minimum wage a living wage.

According to 'statistics' Canada, 38,600 Manitobans work for minimum wage, and 55 per cent are over age 20. The majority of the people working minimum wage jobs are women with children, and many of them are working multiple jobs to make ends meet. They are also the ones who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The pandemic has revealed to us the importance and value of front-line employees, and also has revealed that many of them are not making a living wage. Manitoban workers don't want a one-time bonus for risking their lives during a pandemic, they want a living wage, paid sick leave and stronger worker protections.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In addition to the PC's offensive minimum wage increase, they also refused to implement permanent paid sick leave for all Manitoban workers. The Pandemic Sick Leave Program has proven to be woefully inadequate in meeting the needs of Manitoban workers. The PCs continue to reject the need for a living wage for working people and refuse to address the challenges experienced by women, BIPOC and other marginalized groups to fully participate in a pandemic recovery.

Manitoba's Auditor General just told us last week that the provincial government has not lived up to its commitments to advance reconciliation with Indigenous people. And reconciliation would demand investments in housing, mental health, health care and education to help repair the damage of the past, but also to ensure good health, good opportunities and well-being for Indigenous people going forward.

I know a lot of my colleagues have already discussed the health-care cuts, so I'll keep my remarks brief on that, only because I'm eager to outline all the problems with the lack of investment in the environment. But I want to briefly reiterate that this

budget has no plan to fix the damage the government has caused to health care. And I will reiterate that 170,000 Manitobans are waiting in pain with a reduced quality of life for surgeries.

There's so much more to respond to when it comes to the day-to-day needs of Manitobans for health care, housing and affordability, but I need to highlight my concerns with this government's inaction on climate change and stewardship of our parks. In six years in office, this government has shown time and time again a profound lack of commitment to addressing climate change.

Earlier this month, the IPCC released the third part of its Sixth Assessment Report looking at ways to limit and prevent human-caused emissions that commit—contribute to global warming. The co-chair of the I-P-P-C working group made a clear statement: It is now or never. And this budget shows us that the Stefanson government is choosing to continue inaction in the face of a terrible climate crisis that will eventually impact all Manitobans.

So far, the Pallister and Stefanson governments have spent millions of dollars fighting the federal carbon levy in court. Recently, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) sent a letter asking the federal government to excuse Manitoba from doing its part. Budget 2022 reveals that millions were left unspent in efficient—Efficiency Manitoba last year, and this is money that should have been spent to help Manitobans transition to cleaner choices.

As deputy premier, the Premier sat silent when environmental organizations had their funding cut and there were no new initiatives provided by her government. Not only was funding cut for non-profits, but the Conservation and Climate department had 58 fewer full-time positions than they did six years ago. Parks and resource protection had 22 fewer full-time positions in that same time frame, and there remain many vacancies, and this budget appears to maintain the status quo. Year after year, this government is cutting positions, leaving fewer and fewer people whose role it is to protect our environment.

Budget 2022 reveals that the PCs left millions of dollars unspent to help Manitobans switch to cleaner energy and appliances. Efficiency Manitoba has missed their own legislated targets of electricity and natural gas consumption in their first year. They only reached 69 per cent and 60 per cent of their respective targets in 2020 and 2021.

Madam Speaker, Friday was Earth Day, and despite the lingering snow piles, many Manitobans are thinking about parks. They want to get outside now more than ever.

* (15:00)

Yet, here we are with a government that has doubled the cost of park passes so they can continue to send hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to a Texas company. They failed to fix the technical failings of the booking system for campers and yurt reservations.

Madam Speaker, provincial parks are protected wilderness areas set aside by and for the people of Manitoba. They provide space for wildlife to roam, feed and raise their young away from the threat of human development, and for people to spend time with family and friends, learn about nature and enjoy healthy outdoor activities.

Parks moderate our climate by storing carbon in their soils and forests. For some Indigenous people, parks offer a way to maintain and share cultural traditions.

Manitobans can enjoy many provincial parks, but they only account for approximately 11 per cent of the province's territory. However, we need to do more and go further for protection of land and waterways. There's a global movement to protect 30 per cent of the world's land mass and water by 2030, and our federal government has made this commitment. But, in six years, this government has made almost no movement in protecting more of Manitoba.

Budget 2022—sorry—Manitobans could even lose access to nature under a proposal to run provincial parks like a business and to shed unprofitable assets. Privatization of park services has already begun. Campsites are three times higher at Saint Ambrose provincial park after a private company was awarded a 21-year contract to manage what used to be a public service. A private company was awarded a contract to build cabins in Turtle Mountain Provincial Park in violation of the park's own management plan.

The provincial government is looking to potentially decommission provincial parks while also seeking greater financial sustainability for the parks that remain according to their own internal documents. And the government is also considering expanding user fees as part of a new trail strategy.

Madam Speaker, we need more investments in parks, not less. We need these to be recognized as

what they are: a sacred provincial treasure that is worth protecting.

Manitobans want us to protect these diverse landscapes, from the rare grasslands to the boreal forest, and from the rich wetlands to pristine Arctic tundra, as well as our freshwater lakes and marine coastland. We need to protect our complex community of plants and animals and ensure a network of protected conserved areas that contain biological diversity and unique features.

We also have a responsibility, as part of our Province's reconciliation journey, to ensure that Indigenous people can continue traditional practices, such as trapping, hunting, fishing and medicinal plant collection. And we need our government to remember that protected and conserved areas are natural solutions to climate change and can help protect communities during extreme weather events like our current flooding situation and last summer's wildfires.

This budget fails Manitobans on so many levels. It doesn't go far enough for the climate, for the environment, and, certainly, it leaves our health-care system in crisis. For those reasons and many more, I will have to vote against this budget this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regards to this budget.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that my colleagues have done a fantastic job. My colleagues on this side of the House have done a fantastic job speaking to this budget and articulating very clearly why we can't support this budget.

So, I'm not going to take up too much time, but I do want to make sure that I highlight a few areas of my own concerns, certainly as it pertains to the constituents I represent in Union Station, but certainly, you know, what I'm about to talk about is relevant across the board to all Manitobans.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget was really important. This budget is really important. We have all, alongside our fellow neighbours and Manitobans across the province, we have all been going through this pandemic. It has been over two years of some of the most challenging times that our province has had to face. It has certainly been the health-care crisis of our generation. And, globally, we've all seen the impacts that COVID-19, this novel virus, has had on communities.

The inequities that we knew existed pre-pandemic have been exacerbated during this pandemic, and this budget was an—a great opportunity, an opportunity that not everybody has in their experience as a legislator. This budget was an opportunity to inspire hope across our province, to instill confidence in Manitobans that this government—throughout this pandemic, as everybody has been struggling day after day to get through this—that this government has been paying close attention to the needs of Manitobans and was ready to bring forward a budget that would address those needs.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sad fact is that this government missed an important—a golden opportunity to show Manitobans that this is a government that has their back. And where we saw the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) in the media, for all Manitobans to see, tell Manitobans that they had to look after themselves, that they were on their own, that she was not the kind of leader that would show up and stand up for Manitobans—this Premier had a chance—she had an opportunity to turn that narrative around and actually show by way of her first budget that she is the Premier that cares about Manitobans.

And, unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this budget does is solidifies for Manitobans that, in fact, their Premier is not there for them. And that is reflected in the absolutely abysmal lack of planning, strategy, meaningful investment, acknowledgment of the realities that Manitobans are facing in this budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am annoyed when members opposite talk about us not having a plan. We do have great plans. We've got great ideas. We bring them forward every day on behalf of Manitobans. I think it's interesting, though, that this government's strategy of recent is to project their own failings onto members on this side of the House.

This is a government that doesn't have a plan for Manitobans in recovering from this pandemic. This is a government that doesn't have a plan to address some of the most important areas that we need to see a clear strategy around. This is a government whose budget reflects the fact that they don't have a plan for Manitobans that works for Manitobans. And the residents of this province see that. They know that. I hear that from constituents every single day. It's plain, plain to see.

So, when we're talking about lack of a plan, I'm talking about things as concrete as, you know, addressing the recovery. This is a government that for some reason has just neglected, just closed their eyes

to entirely the core of our city: Union Station, other constituencies like Notre Dame that are impacted, aspects of St. James, Point Douglas, core communities that are not recovering from this pandemic the way other communities are.

This government was keen, eager to make sure that their candidate for Fort Whyte got half a million dollars for his business. They were quick to cut him—make sure he got cut a cheque for half a million dollars. Take a walk in the constituency of Union Station and go talk to the businesses, the small-business owners who have fought day in and day out to keep their doors open, to keep their staff paid, to remain an active part of our communities as small businesses, and ask each and every one of those business owners if they would have benefited from a fraction of what one single company run by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) received in support.

It is absolutely shameful that these small-business owners saw nothing by the way of that kind of financial support and are doing so much for our communities, especially in Union Station.

And I encourage members opposite—I encourage the member for Fort Whyte: go, talk to these small-business owners, hear from them directly how this government has failed them throughout this pandemic and is failing them in this budget. Small businesses need support—consistent support, meaningful support. They need to be heard by this government. That's not reflected in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Take a walk in the community of Union Station. See what's going on in terms of the challenges for those folks who are unsheltered—the housing crisis that we see. Take a look at what's going on in terms of the Manitoba Housing buildings in our constituency. We've lost hundreds of units of housing in Union Station because this government was quick to sell those units to private corporations. And now we've got a housing crisis across Manitoba, but certainly you can see it right in the core of the city where folks do not have access to affordable housing whatsoever. There's no plan, there's no strategy outlined by this government to address that.

* (15:10)

When we talk about things like housing, when we talk about things like small businesses and income, and, I mean, I could talk about living wage. My colleagues have all, I think for the most part, talked about the fact that this government has absolutely forced

people into poverty by doing nothing to address the living wage, not providing a living wage, providing embarrassing—you can't even call them, really, increments to minimum wage. It's beyond shameful, and the impacts of that are significant—people working two and three and four jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know folks living in Union Station who are going to school, who are working multiple part-time jobs trying to make ends meet, providing for their families on poverty wages. And this government is doing nothing to address that while raising their cost of living, be it by hydro, and taking no meaningful steps to address affordability.

I talked to a senior. I talk to her fairly regularly. Her name is Jean and she lives in the constituency and I spoke with her maybe last week, and Jean asked me to bring up in this House the fact that this government shuttered urgent care at Misericordia and the impacts that was having on Jean and many other seniors. Jean is 91 years old. She's very active, but when Jean has health issues arise, she had to take a \$27 cab ride to, often, the Grace. She can't go to Misericordia like she used to be able to and pay a \$6 cab ride it was, for her to get her health needs met.

Jean represents—she's just one of thousands of Manitobans, one of thousands who are affected by this government's cuts to health care, their closures of emergency rooms, urgent care, their refusal to invest meaningfully in health care. And yet, again, we see that lack of understanding of the impacts, the lived impacts their cuts have had in this budget.

This budget, the health-care funding that they all tout, seemingly not understanding basic math that the funding to health care was well below the rate of inflation—it's a health-care cut, not realizing that the health-care crisis we're in right now is in no way going to get better, based on their pattern of lack of investment in our health-care system and mistreating the health-care workers who work within it.

I remember, like, way back, 2016, 2017, I remember, under Brian Pallister, the disrespect from this government. I was working as a front-line nurse at the time. We used to—when we, you know, had a moment, we used to just kind of shake our heads and ask one another, what is going on? How out of touch can this guy be and this government be, to be treating health-care workers this way, treating us this way and thinking the outcomes are going to be good?

Fast-forward years later, new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson): I think they've had 17 different

ministers of Health. No change, if you can believe it. I actually hear from people in the community that they think—they didn't think it was possible, but they actually are questioning whether or not this Premier's worse than Brian Pallister. The point of that is just to say that this government, this Premier missed an important opportunity to right the wrongs over the past several years and improve the relationships with health-care workers. They just have refused to do so.

They continue to refuse to provide a fair contract for thousands of health-care support staff. They refuse to provide a fair contract for thousands of allied health-care professionals. They refuse to listen to those front-line experts, hear their concerns and take action. There are experts, doctors, telling us that perhaps this government is just kind of frozen, unsure what to do because they have made such a mess of things, they don't know how to proceed.

This is a government that looks over this way and actually says to people on this side of the House—they've even said it to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker: We'll take no lessons. This is a government that takes no lessons from anybody. This is a government that listens to no one. It is unbelievable, the lack of willingness this government has put on display since 2016 to listen to anyone who actually puts people in Manitoba first.

If your priority—it's become plain as day—if your priority is Manitobans having the best outcomes possible—communities of all demographics, no matter where you live, thriving; your kids have great outcomes; seniors having the ability to live in their communities for as long as possible, have access to recreation; health-care workers being happy to go to work because they're not going to be mandated to stay for a double or triple shift—if you are someone who puts people first, this government doesn't want to listen to you. They don't want to hear from you.

That is one of the greatest shames that this government will have to carry. Not past 2023—not in government, anyway—they'll carry it with them for whatever it is they choose to do after that. But this Premier will carry that shame with her. It started under Brian Pallister. She championed it, championed that approach, and she's carried it forward, unfortunately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could talk a long time about how they have damaged health care and how this budget fails to address any of the concerns—the growing surgical and diagnostic backlog. No idea—they have no idea how that's going to be addressed. Nothing in the budget reflects that they understand

how serious it is. They spent \$21 million of the \$50 million they've announced 70 times on just regular, routine primary-care visits. They've announced \$110,000 to address a surgical backlog that they can't produce a plan for, that they've said they're going to provide regular updates for and they don't. They said they'd be transparent to Manitobans and they're not. There's no end date or targets set for any aspect of the backlog whatsoever. Manitobans continue to wait in pain.

Or they say, you know what, get in your car if you have a vehicle, make sure you have a passport—or if you don't, get one—and drive yourself to the United States of America and get health care over there, as if that's a reasonable thing for Manitobans to expect from their government; never mind they're sending hundreds of Manitobans hundreds of kilometres away from their homes to get health care, 70 of which are still stranded in hospitals and facilities away from home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget fails. That's what it does. This budget fails Manitobans across the board. There is no plan to make sure that our economy moves forward without leaving people behind. There is no strategy to close the growing gap of inequity for pay for folks who are really struggling. Thousands of Manitobans, more now than ever, are struggling with affordability. This budget does nothing to address that. There's no meaningful action taken to address the climate emergency.

This—we know this government gets a failing grade on reconciliation. This budget, to be blunt, is completely out of touch with the realities that Manitobans are facing.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is because this government is completely out of touch with the realities that Manitobans are facing. And what's worse is they have no motivation. I don't know if it's because they're tired; I don't know if it's because they see the writing on the wall and they're actually secretly hoping for 2023 to just hurry up and get here. I don't know, but this is a government that has no interest on working on behalf of Manitobans.

And so, this is a government that can absolutely not get the support on this side of the House because on this side of the House we represent Manitobans. We put people first, and the people have made clear that this budget is inadequate. Woefully.

Thank you.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to put some words on record in how concerning this budget is to me as a northerner, as somebody who is living in The Pas, as somebody who has been living in a community of have-nots.

First of all, what's really concerning is, you know, imagine yourself living in The Pas, living in Moose Lake, trying to access health care. I've always been a fan of telehealth, but that only is strong when there's actual Internet connection. And with the pandemic that went by, within my communities, it became even more important and more highlighted that the fact that our communities in northern Manitoba need Internet connection, when it comes to health and education.

* (15:20)

And within northern Manitoba, we have facilities that have shut down. We're having problems retaining and recruiting nurses and doctors. We have a problem with agency nurses, as well. There was a few concerns at the personal-care home in The Pas, St. Paul's, about agency 'nurses' coming in and out, especially during the pandemic.

So, when it comes to doing with have-nots with health care; for example, a lot of our people have to travel to Winnipeg to access health care. And, at one time, we had this really good idea to have this—The Pas clinic, that was supposed to have been built in 2016. Everything was done; the shovels were ready to hit the ground until this government came into play and thought it was not important; it wasn't an emergency to have this site built.

And I did talk to—oh, I did talk to the former minister of Health, when it came to Estimates—in regards to the Northern Patient Transportation Program, even though the health—the current Health Minister has contributed money to this Northern Patient Transportation Program, still is a very, very bad program.

So, with the site that would have been built, investment—an investment in The Pas—if that site would have been built, it would have housed specialists that could have come to us rather than sending hundreds and hundreds of patients from northern Manitoba to access health care here.

So, imagine if you—if that investment was made, the former minister of Health did admit during Estimates that the budget for M-P-T-P program would have eventually met halfway.

And another example—personal example: northern Manitoba, we have many, many, many diabetics, especially within our Indigenous community, especially with myself, and I come here—and also many, many other people—for eye injections for diabetics. And just looking at the doctor's schedule, you know, in my mind, why can't we have this one doctor invest—this one doctor to come up to The Pas or be based in The Pas and Thompson, to provide these services that diabetics need every five weeks. And you can imagine we have thousands and thousands of diabetics in northern Manitoba.

And because this investment is not made, northern Manitoba's not—to me, somebody who lives there—we're always looked upon as second-class citizens. So just imagine if we got this eye doctor to come there. Many, many people, including my family, relatives and myself would not further go blind, right?

So, just again coming from northern Manitoba, of have-nots, my goal is to actually see—have more services provided, especially with mental health, when it comes to our youth. Just recently, I tried to get a mental health therapist to see my second oldest and I was told it's a six-month wait in The Pas. And so, okay, I tried my resources here in Winnipeg. I was told it's a one-year wait in The Pas—I mean, in Winnipeg.

So even though there's announcements and announcements coming from here, how is that actually going to reduce wait times? How is that going to reduce wait times, too, for—in The Pas, for kids in Moose Lake, for kids in Shamattawa? How is that going to actually accommodate our children's lives and future?

I also wanted to look back and not forget as to what happened when it came to this government's stance on truth, reconciliation—TRC, sorry, I cannot remember that right now. I was at home, working from—working virtually when I seen the former premier, along with the government that stood behind him and stood quiet while this individual spoke harshly about Indigenous people, about me, about my children, about my ancestors. And it was quite disheartening to see every single person there quiet and not sticking up for what I'm pretty sure would—be good principles, but for some reason were muzzled.

And with those same actions, we—you know, they have elected a leader, a new leader. They put together this budget. But it's not fooling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This group of people stood behind a leader that they followed, voted with, voted against with, and to me, like I said, you got to be careful of who you run

with, right? Because you catch the fleas from the dogs that you run with. So I'm not being fooled. What I see here is still fleas from that dog they ran with.

So with this new budget, this new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), the Cabinet shuffle, it's still a government that is still completely out of touch, and this is clearly demonstrated through their action items in their budget. This is demonstrated through when they cheered and hollered for themselves and patted themselves on the back when it came to awful, awful legislative policies for poor people, if you will, and that's what I'm starting to feel in this House. And when we have debates, they come back with rebuttals saying, announcement this, announcement this, I'm going to bring my couch here. That's not helpful to Manitobans, especially when you're living in northern Manitoba.

You know, for example, again, have-nots: we have—I sent a handwritten letter to the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) in regards to the medical examiner. Why does it take so long—up to four weeks—to get our families' bodies' back into northern Manitoba and slightly less wait period for our people here in Winnipeg. So, again, a lot of have-nots that we deal with. We have to wait much, much longer to bury our loved ones.

So I just wanted to talk about—a little bit more about—with education. I'm very—I'm proud of many people in my constituency. When it came to bill 64, many called my office to ask how to get involved; how could we stop this. And with that, a huge mass grew of people who did not like that horrible, horrible bill. And it was such excitement to see our constituents, our people, see this rise, see how many people wanted to speak against it at committee. I think there was over 500 people that wanted to speak against this horrible bill. And I would like to see how many evenings, how many days, hours, it would have been if that would have went through.

And so, again, that idea, that huge idea about dismantling board—boards for our school divisions, we would have lost voices for our teachers, our children. Issues would not have been understood, versus being in northern Manitoba, versus having our schools in southern Manitoba as well.

So I just wanted to end with that it's been an absolute honour to stand here as the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak. It's been an absolute honour to see my constituency grow from 10 to 17 communities. And it's been an absolute honour to get to know every single one—communities, health-care workers, teachers,

especially the kids. I really enjoy meeting the kids in the schools. They have probably the most interesting and most important questions to ask, such as: how much money do you make?

And so things, like—I just wanted to say, even though it could be quite frustrating being in this Chamber, it could be quite frustrating walking into this building, this huge, massive building which could be tiring on your body and on your soul sometimes. But I just want to give gratitude to the constituents who have got me here. I want to give gratitude to every single colleague of mine in here. We all sacrifice a lot. We all have to deal with a lot at home and put on a brave 'face'—brave face once we step into this Chamber. And I want to thank everyone who has supported me along this way as well.

* (15:30)

And I also want to give a shout out—I was just thinking about them the other day when I was looking at speeches and reading Hansard for research—I want to thank the people in Hansard for having to put up and listen to every single word we say and, with that, I'd like to thank them—keep up the good work—and, hello—hello, Hansard—see, that's going to be in there.

So, with that, I will end my speech by saying, as you know, I clearly do not agree with this budget; it's very concerning, and actions speak louder than words. So I'd like to see more investment in northern Manitoba so we can actually have more healthier, more happier, more educated communities. And I'd like to see more change, too, towards—when it comes to children in care. There needs to be more investment and towards raising the age from 21 to 25. I can name you 10 children right away off the cuff that are falling off the edge of that cliff and could be—potentially be homeless, could potentially be housed in a prison, a jail.

So, with that, I want to work with this government to ensure that these realities become a reality and to include us—us—our Manitobans, because I just feel there's just a certain type that is represented over there than the type that we represent here—real people, real realities. And that's where I want to end off.

Ekosi.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think we're going to have to wait too long before we find the government prowling around northern Manitoba, making all sorts of announcements, to be quite honest with you, but it may be very temporary.

So, you know, the budget, this is the first budget of the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and, you know, we should expect to see a little bit different—a little bit of difference in it than the previous, but I have some issues that I want to deal with regarding the old premier. He didn't stay around long enough to be able to answer the—answer all these questions.

But, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when COVID first started, we were trying to catch up with what was happening in the world and to take appropriate action. But there was some obvious things that we should have been able to see just by, you know, watching CNN and watching the news. We had—we were not—Manitoba was not the first jurisdiction to have COVID cases, and, in fact, we didn't really get any for the first round and we got them in the second. But we were able to watch what was happening in other jurisdictions, in Italy, other parts of Europe, United States, New York, where they had a big rush of people. They had to put together hospital facilities. They had to—they even brought in a naval vessel in New York, which they, in fact, ended up not using.

But what we found during that whole period was that we discovered who was being hit the hardest with COVID. We could see, unlike the Spanish flu of 1918, that it wasn't young people, that this particular virus was attacking the older people, and we saw the death rate in those jurisdictions to be where the deaths were, with the older people.

So, knowing all that and seeing all that, we have to try to comprehend what was going on here in Manitoba, what was the premier doing, or what was the premier not doing about the situation. It was painfully obvious where the deaths were, and one would think that the first thing you should be doing is going out and protecting your personal-care homes. And that's not what happened.

You know, I mean, I—you would think that from the time that Mr. Cuomo was having his daily news conferences and they were having huge amount of deaths and they went through the entire wave, you saw where the deaths were. You saw they were in these nursing homes. That's the first place you should have gone to and make certain that the issue was taken care of.

Now, my long-time assistant of—for—of many, many years, had the misfortune of getting into Parkview—literally, I think, about a week before the outbreak occurred—and so he survived Parkview only to be transferred to Maples. And my current assistant would make weekly visits to see him there, and there

were people all around him that were—had passed away because of the virus.

So it didn't seem to me like anybody was really in charge here of taking preventative action in situations where you would expect that that's where the problem will be two or three weeks from now.

And when I did read and did hear that we still have, in Manitoba, homes where people were sharing—the member for union centre mentioned just previously that Manitoba and people in Manitoba were sharing rooms for four people to a room. Well, that would make sense if you know what you're dealing with. You know you're dealing with a virus. The first thing you should be doing is getting people out of those four-room situations—maybe out of any sharing of a room. There should be maybe one person per room.

So that should tell us something right there.

Also, it didn't go unnoticed during the pandemic that even the Health minister of the day, himself, talked about, oh, how we're going to rebuild in the future. When this is all over, we're going to be building on—based on a newer and better model.

Well, where's this newer and better model? Well, evidently it was, I think, Holland and/or Norway or Denmark—certainly Scandinavian countries or Holland—and evidently, there they kind of learned a little ahead of us that older people didn't thrive in these big skyscrapers of—buildings that we are—what we—been building for the last 40 years—that, in fact, they are—the new centres that are being developed now are being done in low level—you know, sort of like Washington-height, three-story high, and there is like a building code. They're not allowed to be any higher than that. And they mix up people, the older people with younger people. So you can't—you know, and that's how it's being set up now.

The minister, I did listen to him on one of his press conferences, and gave the impression that we're just on the verge of breaking ground for one of these things, right? Well, that was like a year ago or more and haven't heard a word about it.

But, I mean, that's what we should be doing is the government should be announcing a plan here for, you know, the next 20 years that we're going to do, you know, 1,000 a year or 2,000 a year and we're going to redevelop the concept on—and get away from these buildings, the tall buildings. And I think you're going to see a lot of financial perks coming out of the pandemic from the downtown areas of cities like Winnipeg here. We're going to have a big problem

getting people to come back to the downtown, and that we may see a big overdevelopment in real estate in there and we may see a suppression of the pricing in those areas where people just don't want to go in there anymore, right? But that's just the way things should happen given the pandemic.

We've had the, you know, the architects for quite a few years talking about how we've got to, you know, make people live—I say, anyway—make people live on top of one another, that we've got have density in the city. And I don't know anybody that came to this country from other countries hundreds of years ago that wanted to live on top of one another.

* (15:40)

But that's what we want to do. We simply say, oh, no, you can't afford to be driving your own car and you can't afford to be, you know, living in a bigger home. You have to be, you know, right along the bus route, right, and you're going to ride that bus.

Well, guess what? When—as soon as that virus started, people didn't want to be on that bus anymore. They—the used-car market just exploded and people were buying cars because they wanted to get away from the people they were riding with the day before, right?

So this is the kind of new view of the world that we were looking at just, like, a year or two ago. And I don't know that maybe, you know, we're going to all forget about all this, that as we get past the pandemic, we're going to forget what we were talking about here and how scared we really were and we're going to say, oh, well, no, don't worry about it anymore; I'll ride, you know, four people to my car and I'll go and live in high-rises and stuff like that. You know, they may get back to that.

So I'd—I'm not going to say that this is going to change for good, but there was some good ideas that, you know, were employed elsewhere, that fit the new reality that we were looking at just two years ago. And I was hoping that we are going to see some developments in that.

So, you know, I do look forward to a government in the future announcing new personal-care homes and approaches, but I would hope that when they do that, that they look at the—what's being used in other parts of the world.

And I do have some concerns about the private sector, you know, being involved in the home-care business, in the long-term care, you know, because we

did find, here in Manitoba, in our group of facilities, that two of these big ones were part—and, you know, and the fact that they are owned by the Canada pension fund or whatever, you know, doesn't really, you know, doesn't make any stronger point with me. The question is, why are—why were these the most poorly run of the bunch? And maybe they are trying to, you know, run the homes with half the staff, or, you know, I'm not sure.

An Honourable Member: Got to make money.

Mr. Maloway: I'm not sure why it is, but it's a good enough question for us to be asking about that. *[interjection]* Yes, I'm not saying it's the case all the time, but it's—I'd bet on it, right, that that's, in fact, what they are doing.

So I—and I also wanted to talk about how, you know, how the health care has totally changed, too, with the new—well, with the new realities that we're in right now.

I mean, when the government came in and they found this Peachey report lying around somewhere and dusted it off and decided to do some pretty crazy things, one of them being shut down the Concordia ER, I mean, the reality is this goes to show you why your MLA can be important.

Because, you know, the—they had—the government had 38 seats that a premier who doesn't listen to anybody other than himself—and you know what he did with those poor people, I mean, not only the poor public, but his own members? He dragged them through a process where they announced they're going to close the ER completely, right? Like, completely, just leave it vacant. And that whole mess went on for about a year while people got really worked up about it.

And then he announced that he's going to have a walk-in clinic, big monster walk-in clinic, he's going to set that up, right? And then never said who's going to operate this thing, but that's what he was going to do. Well, that went by another year and he found people just got madder at him.

And meanwhile, his MLAs, they were, like, starting to sink underwater over there because they couldn't talk to him.

At least when this whole scenario happened way back in the Filmon days, Bonnie Mitchelson, the MLA, got it—stormed into—well, that's what I was told—stormed into Filmon's office and read the riot act

to him, and that was the end of it. Concordia was saved.

And—but he did the opposite with Misericordia. Remember, Misericordia is out in Wolseley, right; at least, that's where it used to be. So, he had it over there. Well, Bonnie—you know, like, nobody was able to stop him from closing Misericordia, and there's a good argument for keeping that one open too, right?

But he got stopped on Concordia because of Bonnie, because of the MLA. And that should tell you something right there, that she had some influence at that time, right, but when the new group come—I'm not saying they didn't try—but they didn't get anywhere with the leader of the time.

Now—so, now it sat vacant for another year, and then we ramped up the campaign again. Well, guess what happened? June came, when we thought the election was going to be. He didn't call it in June.

But what did he do in June? He went and he said, we're going to keep urgent care. At that point, even the staff said to me, oh, that's enough, we're happy. So I said, okay, fine, if you're—I'm not happy, but if you're—if you say you're happy, and you've got most of your positions and stuff like that, well then, then fine, right?

But that's how we got to where we got. We didn't get there just by accepting what they were going to do, right, and we took them step by step by step, and we got to urgent care, and that was June. The election was September, and didn't get as good a result as he thought he probably would've got in June, maybe, right, but nevertheless.

So, that's just a—and who would've thought then that we would be having a pandemic just a little while later, when we would be saying that all this reorg was totally bogus in the first place, right, that it wasn't required. Because once again, there—we're trying to—we've been on both sides of the issue over the years, right? We've been in the government. We had to make decisions.

And what happens in those situations is it's hard to justify staffing up for, you know, the worst-case scenario, right? Like—

An Honourable Member: 'Til you actually need it.

Mr. Maloway: Yes, until you actually need it, that's right. You know, so that's what we always have got and you have to work on that. And the problem is, they're always weak on the health care side of it.

You know, let's take a look at education, right? Bill 64—there's a case where they just practically overthrew—threw the whole education system into, you know, a big mess; took apart their whole support base, right, even, like, teachers that were supporting them walked away from them, right. And they just left it—it was like a tornado came through town, right, that just tore the whole school system apart. That's what they actually did.

So now, Premier Pallister is long gone, and these guys are walking around trying to figure out, like, what went wrong and how do we clean up the mess that was left behind here and then how do we gain any trust back? Because when you see what they did, I don't think a lot of teachers or the education system is going to tell—they can come back and say, oh, well, we have sinned—well, I have sinned—and forgive us, and we're going to make good on what it is that we did wrong.

Well, you know something, people are not going to believe that. And I don't think today that there's a whole lot of people believe that they trust them on the Concordia ER either, for that matter, right; that—or on the Concordia urgent care, that they won't, you know, win again and then say, oh, surprise. But, you know, we were wrong all the time and Peachey was right, and we're going to go back and start over again, right.

And that's where they run aground all the time, because they're not trustworthy on these kind of issues. The telephone system, you know, everything was fine with the telephone system. Out of the blue, and then next thing you know, way goes the telephone system, right. Sold it off. Sold it off and it's gone.

* (15:50)

And they want us to believe that they won't do the same thing with Hydro. They say, oh, believe us; no, we're not going to do that, you guys are totally wrong.

Well, we weren't wrong at all on the telephone system and this government. It's what—what we had a big list of things that sold off. We're just selling off all sorts of Crown assets over the last, you know, couple years, right? So, you know—so they don't have a very good record at all.

And, actually, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just last week the Auditor General would—talked about Manitoba's implementation of The Path to Reconciliation Act, and they haven't followed through on that, either. Like, so anything that they're not actually, you know, looking at and being watched on an almost—a daily basis, they are, in this case, just

walked away from this—the reconciliation act that they passed in 2016 and there's no credible movement on this file according to the Auditor General. I mean, you can't get any better than that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know there's a few more people that wish to speak on this budget. We, obviously, are not going to be voting for it.

An Honourable Member: What?

Mr. Maloway: I'm getting some surprise here from my colleagues, but I just want to, you know, assure them that they're on the right track.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): It is my honour to put a few comments on the record regarding Budget 2022.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans were looking for hope in this budget: hope for health care, hope for economic recovery and hope for a better future for their kids. But the Stefanson government failed to meet the moment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cost for everything is going up. Inflation is up 6 and 7 per cent this month. In Manitoba, it's up 7.3 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, being a critic for MPI, I'd like to talk about how MPI can play a role in affordability. According to the documents submitted to the Public Utilities Board, in 2022, 2020 and 2021, the DVA fees MPI collected and transferred to government totalled around \$240.3 million. In return for the service, government paid MPI \$30.2 million; however, the actual costs to MPI were \$32.9 million, for a shortfall of \$2.7 million.

Here's the shell game. In March of 2021, MPI transferred \$60 million from extensive reserve to offset the cost of the administration of the DVA. At that time, MPI announced that they will transfer an additional \$53 million in March of 2022. This money belongs to ratepayers. It should be returned to the ratepayers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know what MPI transferred, an additional \$12 million, so making it \$65 million total.

In the budget, the Stefanson government announced a \$10 administration fee reduction, or \$15 million. The Stefanson government is playing the shell game with the MPI ratepayers. So, what does the shell game mean? Like, I was just googling it. What that really means is a swindling trick in which a small ball or a pea is quickly shifted from under one to

another of three walnut shells or cups to fool the spectators guessing at its location.

So Manitobans are smart, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though they were twisting it or they were taking the money, returning a little is a shell game. MPI transferred \$125 million. In return, the government returned over \$15 million to the ratepayers, about \$10 to each person, but, in reality, MPI take an additional—even if you take, like, MPI ratepayers got \$15 million back, in reality they also got—take—MP—government took another \$115 million from the ratepayers.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't have much time and—but there's lots of other issues to be talked about, such as underfunding to the public schools. We're—Seven Oaks School Division had to cut eight teaching positions and 20 supporting staffs.

And there's also underfunding to the health-care system, where over 170,000 people are waiting, in pain, for surgeries and no timelines to list it. So this—these are the few things that are concerning in the budget.

Actually, there's a lot more than that but I don't have much time to put it on the record but, again, if I'm looking at being a part of The Maples, Seven Oaks—during the pandemic, Seven Oaks hospital lost its CancerCare outpatient services. I know I have heard a lot from the PCs that they want to bring health care close to home but people travelling from The Maples all the way to Victoria doesn't make it closer.

With this few moments, I like to conclude my comments and will not be supporting this budget. This budget doesn't go far enough.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I know I don't have much time here today, but I'm appreciative that I get a chance to put a few words on the record.

First and foremost, to thank our health-care workers, thank all the front-line workers throughout this province. This pandemic has been difficult on so many people and it is has been tough for so many, but for those folks who have been coming in to work day after day, it—I have nothing but respect for them and I just, at the outset, want to make sure that they are thanked and they understand how much we on this side of the House appreciate the work that they do.

You know, this budget was an opportunity—a very unique opportunity—to show some reflection, to show some humility and to really go back and look at, you

know, what were some of the failures of this pandemic.

And, you know, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) said, when she came into—assumed the leadership of the PC Party, that she was going to do things differently. Those were words, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This budget represents action and the action that we see from this government is, once again, more of the same continuation of Brian Pallister's bad mistakes and failed government.

You know, if we have one consensus right now in this province, it is around health care and the importance of health care, and the importance to fund and enhance health care. And at the same time that we have that broad consensus, this government brings forward a budget that actually freezes or nominally increases the amount of spending on health care, but doesn't even account for inflation. It's literally a cut that our health-care system is going to now have to endure once again.

I know that's been an issue in my constituency in the northeast part of the city, but it is across the province. And the issue we see around patient transfers right now is a significant issue that this government seems to be leaning into, they have no plans to pull back on and it's really affecting the people. We want to make sure that they have health care in their communities and even, at the very least, health care in their home town or home city. In this case, people are going across this province to get health care.

You know, I have so much to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will keep it brief. I'll just say that I was at AMM convention in Brandon, heard directly from municipalities there who are telling me how profoundly disappointed they are in this government. And again, a funding freeze—the seventh budget in a row now—and municipalities are at their wits' end. They're not only dealing with increased costs due to the pandemic and a slow down in revenues, they're also dealing with now a seventh freeze by this government and inflation that's over 5 per cent.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So, you know, they—I know that it was all hands on deck out there to do damage control by this government, but I was in the room there and I heard the profound disappointment first-hand from councillors, and they're going to hear a lot more as things go forward as well. We know that, you know, even the inflation pressures on capital spending are going to be an issue.

* (16:00)

Finally, I had an opportunity in February to travel up to Thompson, and I drove up there to take the opportunity to meet with municipal officials up there, but—and to get an idea of some of the issues on the ground in the North, but also—very importantly, Madam Speaker—to drive Highway 6 from this building to the hometown of our colleague, Danielle Adams.

And, you know, that was an important endeavour that I felt I had to do, but it was also eye-opening, and we've heard it now from our colleagues from the North who have been advocating day after day; we hear it from the residents of Thompson who have, you know, 5,300 signatures on a petition begging this government for upgrades to Highway 6. There is so much that needs to be done, not just there, but across our province.

So, when this government again leaves money on the table year over year over year, how can anybody believe them when they say, no, don't worry. Trust us, this year we're going to spend our budget.

You know, that is the ultimate take-away from this budget, Madam Speaker, the issue around trust. Nobody trusts this government, because they have broken that trust year after year after year.

And it's one thing to say the words that things are going to be different, but what we've seen from this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) now again, writ large, in this budget, is again a failure to understand the needs of Manitobans and to actually listen to their concerns.

So, yes, again, spoiler alert. I don't know why the message isn't getting through to the members opposite. We will be voting against this budget, and we will be voting in favour of our amendment which helps try to address just a fraction of the issues that we're hearing on the doorstep, and we'll continue to do that every single day in this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Before I even start, I just want to thank my colleague, the honourable member from Rossmere, for being the new Deputy Speaker. I didn't have the opportunity to congratulate him in the Chamber here, so let's give him a hand for doing such a great job. And I do miss that role, by the way, and—but I'm happy to be part of this—the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

I was actually appointed by the—I would honestly have to say I was appointed—one of the first new ministers appointed by the first female Premier of Manitoba. So I'll take that as a—my fame to—and, but I also want to say I had an opportunity, when it came to the leadership race, with the new potential leader, and I actually was dedicated to making sure that our Premier was going to win the leadership race because she had the background that everybody in this caucus can honestly say that, you know, we're all one big part of a team, here.

And when it comes to our Premier, now, she has a vision, and a vision that we can all relate to, and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —I'm so honoured to be part of the—our Cabinet at this point in time.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to the budget, I have to honestly say that there's actually a lot of spending for Infrastructure. The Infrastructure's going to be over \$567 million this year just on new investments in this province, and that includes work on Highway 6 going north.

You know, Madam Speaker, the NDP had 16 years and they underspent every single year when it came to Infrastructure. They would overspend in every other department but they would actually way underspend in Infrastructure.

This is an opportunity that they could have took that time, that money, and invested it in—well, especially with constituencies that they had, they could have made sure that the highways were looked after there where there was a lot of deficits when it came to us rural MLAs that were in the opposition at the time. So, we're going to look after all of Manitobans when we go forward when it comes to infrastructure investments.

And, Madam Speaker, it's very exciting that we are going to be looking at a three-year budget of over one point five—\$5.6 billion that we're going to be investing the next three years in our infrastructure. That includes the corridors when it comes to the Trans-Canada Highway, the Highway 75 to the US, to make sure that we have a corridor when it comes to trade with the—our American partners.

We're also using that Trans-Canada Highway to make sure that we have trade when it comes to our other—our provincial partners on the—all across Canada. So, this is very important that Manitoba, and

especially Winnipeg, becomes the trucking hub of North America.

And we have a great opportunity with our CentrePort right now. We just actually announced a railway park that we are going to do right now at CentrePort. This will bring a lot of investments into the city of Winnipeg and to the province of Manitoba, and we really feel that there's an opportunity to attract outside investment. Not like what the NDP did over the years of—when they were in power. They basically chased investment out of this province by overtaking.

And we feel that in this—on our team here, we want to make sure that it's not if we can afford all the services that are out there, it's how we can afford them. And the thing is, it's about economic development in this province. And we're going to continue working with Economic Development and working with all the different departments to make sure that we set up policy that investors who want—or from outside the country, the province or even investors who want to expand their businesses, we provide a policy that we allow them to—want to encourage them to invest into the province of Manitoba and to provide jobs. And there we would, obviously, have the opportunity to create more tax revenue when it comes to making sure that we have the services that we want Manitobans—that—deserve.

And we want to make sure that we spent proper money in investing into our health-care system. I see the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) is right here, and we want to make sure that our health-care system is invested. And we're actually building a number of hospitals in rural Manitoba, whereas the NDP actually closed rural hospitals. And they say they're 'ponents' of rural hospitals, rural Manitobans. They are not, Madam Speaker.

We are actually building a new hospital in Portage la Prairie. We're building a new hospital in Neepawa. We're—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Piwniuk: —expanding our hospital in Dauphin and we're going to expand expansion in Boundary Trails.

We're doing a lot of investments, you know, when it comes to our hospitals and our health-care system.

And when it comes to education, we're—I believe the Minister of Education just announced that we're doing 20 new schools—22 new schools across the

province. And that's so important now. With the education system that we have here, we want to make sure that we invest in our youth when it comes to making sure that they have the best education system, not like the—what we—the trap—track record that the NDP had when it came to education. We want to make sure that we get our value for our money when it comes to our youth. It's important.

And I see the minister of advanced education and immigration. It's important that, yes, he's also focusing on making sure that our young—our students who come out of high school go to proper post-education like universities of U of M, Brandon University, when it comes to university—University of Winnipeg and Red River College and my—where I went to college—and also ACC. You have opportunities—and university of the North, too. We often want to make sure that we have—actually have opportunities for our youth to make sure that they're trained properly, they get the education and they be productive in our economy.

We also want to make sure that our immigration policies are set up so that we attract talented people from around the world to come to this province to make sure that they have an opportunity, like my grandfather who came back in 1911 at the age of 17.

And we want to make sure that we have Ukrainian refugees, too. The opportunity—if they have the opportunity to come to Canada, to give them opportunities to make sure that their kids are taken care of, their—the education system is looked after, their health-care needs are looked after, and also providing opportunities for jobs if they have the classification that they had in Ukraine. Until, you know, such time if they want to go back—well, hopefully, it's—we—the conflict will be resolved at some point in the near future, but it doesn't seem like it with Putin in power. It looks like it might go for a little bit longer than we expect, and it's unfortunate.

And with all the Ukrainians that are Manitobans—they say one out of seven—us as residents have Ukrainian background—and it's important. Even in this Chamber, I see there's probably—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —about 10 people in this—members here that probably have a Ukrainian heritage background. So it's important that we look out to—look out for Ukrainians from all across the world to make sure that they have a place to come to, a safe haven to come to and to make sure that they have opportunities that we—our forefathers had generations ago.

And so, Madam Speaker, when this come—when it comes to this budget, too, we have an opportunity to look at—also looking at the Perimeter Highway. I want to focus on some of the projects that I'm going to be looking at. We are looking at the South Perimeter. We did a study. My predecessor, I want to thank for all his work that he did, the member from—now it's—I think it's Springfield-Ritchot—all the work he's done in the past with—at the time, it was Manitoba Infrastructure.

* (16:10)

The work that we're going to continue doing when it comes to the Perimeter Highway—we want to make sure that we look at a north study to make sure that—we wanted to look at investing in making the Perimeter Highway around Winnipeg a freeway system. And we're looking right now—the exciting part is that we're doing this construction of St. Mary's interchange. It's starting right now—you see some construction happening right now in—around the St. Mary's Road intersection, there. It's going to continue for all summer and it's going to be—I believe it's going to be completed next fall.

And for traffic to flow smoother through—along—around the Perimeter Highway, we're looking at possibly looking at next is our—doing the exchange in—the interchange and when it comes to highway—McGillivray and the Perimeter Highway at Oak Bluff. We're actually looking at doing a project there next and we're looking at different parts of—around the city of Winnipeg, some north—we're—once we finished the study, we're going to look at doing some interchanges there too and making sure that, at one point in the future—and we're going to do a 10-year plan, too.

And we're also looking at doing RTAC highways, which is a qualification of weight restriction when it comes to no weight restrictions on highways throughout the rural Manitoba, throughout the province, that network; we're looking at making such highways at Highway 16, Highway 1, Highway 2 and Highway 3 as RTAC highways going east and west. But we're also looking at Highway 83, Highway 21, Highway 10, Highway 5, Highway 244, 305, Highway 13, 75 and the Highway 59 and Highway 12 as RTAC highways going north and south, Madam Speaker.

And these are important investments for this province, and we want to make sure that we continue investing into infrastructure. Like I said, this is an opportunity to attract out—investors who want to come and—say, outside processing centres, you know—right now, in my constituency of Turtle Mountain, we

actually have HyLife, for instance. They actually invested some big amounts of money in the constituency, and we wanted to make sure that the flow of commodities that go to Neepawa—for instance, at the slaughter plant—they have the proper highways to make sure that the commodities go to the market very well.

We also have potato plants in the Portage area and the Carberry area. We want to make sure that our highways are invested in so that there's no rate restriction when it comes to farmers hauling potatoes and hogs, grain—any type of grain—into market.

We also looking at—we—the investment that we actually did in Manitoba when it comes to Roquette pea plant—we attracted that business to Portage la Prairie. We want to make sure that our highways are proper so that farmers can take their peas to the processing centres at Roquette pea plant in Portage la Prairie.

So now, I just wanted to be able to put a few words on the table, Madam Speaker, and I'm going to pass it on to the Premier.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I am pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record with respect to our 2022 budget.

I want to begin by thanking the over 51,000 Manitobans who completed our online survey and participated in town halls and other virtual events throughout our province. This budget is for you and it is for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, on February 24th, Vladimir Putin began his brutal assault on the Ukrainian people that has claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians. Since the invasion, Manitobans have come together like never before to raise funds, to attend rallies and open their homes to resettled families. And our government has joined them in our unwavering support for the Ukrainian people.

We have provided \$800,000 in humanitarian aid through the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation. We have established our Ukrainian Refugee Task Force to welcome resettled families. We have expedited Ukrainian applications and waived all fees for our Provincial Nominee Program and earlier this month, Madam Speaker, we opened a new welcome centre for Ukrainians arriving at the Winnipeg airport, connecting them with the resources they need to rebuild their lives.

Madam Speaker, the Putin regime is taking notice of Manitoba's support for Ukrainian people. He can ban me and others from Russia all he wants, but our message is very clear: Manitobans won't be intimidated. We will continue to stand with Ukrainian people and against this unjust war.

Madam Speaker, last year I ran to become the Leader of the—of Manitoba's Progressive Conservative Party and Premier of Manitoba because I believe in Manitobans. I believe in their strength, I believe in their integrity and I believe in their entrepreneurial spirit. And I believe that government should create the conditions for their success, ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

We outlined that vision in our Throne Speech, a vision of a strong economic and social recovery with a focus on the health and well-being of all Manitobans. It is a plan to listen, to heal and bring Manitobans together, and along with the feedback we received from the thousands of Manitobans, our Throne Speech informed this year's five budget priorities: strengthening health care, making life more affordable, building our economy, investing in our communities and protecting our environment.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2022 puts our Throne Speech into action. It strengthens, it invests and it builds our province. It implements our plan to recover together.

Madam Speaker, the past two years of the pandemic have caused many hardships for Manitoba families and businesses, and as we transition to the new normal in our province, we need to learn to live with the virus.

That's why, in Budget 2022, we are investing \$630 million to continue our fight against COVID-19, preparing us for new variants and other pressures on our health-care system and we are strengthening health care to give Manitobans the quality of care that they deserve.

We are investing \$110 million in our surgical and diagnostic recovery task force so Manitobans can stop waiting and start living.

We are investing \$20 million in our seniors strategy to expand home- and community-care options, as well as \$32 million to implement Dr. Lynn Stevenson's recommendations to improve long-term care.

We are investing \$390 million in mental health and addictions services, expanding supports throughout our province.

And we are investing \$2.3 billion in health-care capital, including St. Boniface Hospital emergency room redevelopment, tripling the size of its ER.

New hospitals are coming in Portage la Prairie, in Neepawa, and we are expanding hospitals in Ashern, Brandon, Dauphin, Morden, Winkler, Selkirk and Steinbach, with more exciting news to come for northern and other communities across this great province of ours.

Madam Speaker, we are investing \$7.2 billion in health care. That is \$1 billion more than the NDP ever invested. It is the largest health-care investment in the history of our province.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans elected us to make their lives more affordable. Over the last six years, we kept our promises to them. We reduced the PST from 8 to 7 per cent. We exempted P-S-C from will preparation, property insurance, tax preparation and personal services and we indexed the basic personal amount in all income tax brackets to the rate of inflation, removing nearly 16,000 Manitobans from the tax roll.

But we know that inflation, interest rate hikes and supply chain challenges are driving up the cost of living, Madam Speaker, but we are taking action. This year, we are increasing the education property tax rebate from 25 per cent to 37.5 per cent, a savings for the average home owner of another \$581 this year alone.

Madam Speaker, that puts another \$103 million back in the pockets of Manitobans, and we are bringing total rebates up to \$350 million annually. And by creating our new residential renter's credit, we are providing up to \$525 each year for 45,000 low-income households that were previously ineligible for the credit. That makes life more affordable for Manitobans.

* (16:20)

In fact, Madam Speaker, thanks to the investments in this budget, the average Manitoban will have \$2,400 more in their pockets this year than they ever did under the previous NDP government. We are keeping our promises. We have a plan to make life more affordable for Manitoba families.

After two years of the pandemic, our economy is on the rebound: employment is up; retail sales,

manufacturing sales and farm cash receipts are at historic levels; and we continue to see unprecedented investment in job creation across our province. Madam Speaker, we are recovering. But we know we need to do more to succeed in a highly competitive world economy.

Our government is taking action. This year's budget invests \$50 million to create a new venture capital fund to provide businesses with the access to capital and funding for innovation that they need. We are making the Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit permanent and expanding the credit to include contributions to venture capital funds. And we are reducing the payroll tax burden for almost 1,000 businesses and completely eliminating the tax for 200 employers in the province. Madam Speaker, we are making Manitoba a competitive destination for capital and innovation, and we are improving labour market conditions.

It was a Progressive Conservative government that started the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, and our government is strengthening it. We are investing in our Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy, aligning our post-secondary education and immigration systems with labour market needs. We are investing \$5 million in programming to attract and support more newcomers through the Provincial Nominee Program, and our Immigration Advisory Council is working to make Manitoba a dynamic destination for immigration and investment.

We are also committed, Madam Speaker, to supporting our mining and natural resource sector, which is why we created the new Department of Natural Resources and Northern Development. The members opposite want to keep resources in the ground and keep our economy stagnant. They don't want to partner with First Nations or Indigenous communities to create a better, brighter future for them, but we do.

Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we know that inclusive, thriving communities are the backbone of our province. That is why our budget invests in our communities now and into the future.

We are investing in new schools. Over the next three years, we will build new schools in Sage Creek, Waverley West, Inkster Gardens, Steinbach and Morden, and we are well on our way to 22 new schools by 2027.

Madam Speaker, we are investing in affordable child care. Our partnership with the federal government will see \$326 million invested over two years—

that's creating over 700 spaces in new child-care centres and supporting 50 new home-based spaces this year alone.

We are investing in community infrastructure. This year's budget doubles funding for the Building Sustainable Communities fund, providing \$25 million annually to fund new playgrounds, to fund community centres and swimming pools across our province.

And we are investing in our arts, culture and sports sector with \$34 million this year and \$100 million over three years to revitalize our communities. Those are the investments we are making for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, our government recognizes the historic injustices faced by Indigenous peoples and we are moving forward in a spirit of truth and reconciliation. We are investing in initiatives to advance reconciliation throughout Manitoba, including the \$35 million we have dedicated to the Hudson Bay building redevelopment announced just last week with Prime Minister and Grand Chief Jerry Daniels.

And there is plenty more to come, Madam Speaker, because we have a plan, a plan to invest in inclusive and thriving communities for all Manitobans.

Finally, Madam Speaker, our government recognizes the challenges of climate change, and we are committed to protecting our environment.

We are investing \$50 million in rehabilitation programs for orphaned and abandoned mines. We are investing \$6.4 million in our Climate and Green Plan. And we are increasing contributions to the Conservation and Climate Fund to support a cleaner environment and low-carbon economic growth. This is on top, Madam Speaker, of provincial investments of over \$182 million to upgrade the City of Winnipeg's North End water pollution control centre.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to work with other levels of government and our private sector partners to meet our climate targets, because we have a plan for a cleaner, greener economy here in Manitoba.

So, Madam Speaker, the NDP and Liberals in this Chamber, well, they can criticize all they want. They can make things up on the fly. The Leader of the Opposition and many members opposite just make things up and put them on the record, think that they're facts, that that would make them facts. But the fact is, they're not facts.

They continue to be negative, and they can be negative all they want, Madam Speaker, but that's not what Manitobans want. What they want is a plan. The NDP and the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have a plan.

Well, I will tell Manitobans that we do have a plan. We have a plan to strengthen health care, Madam Speaker. We have a plan to make life more affordable. We have a plan to build our economy. We have a plan to invest in communities. We have a plan to protect the environment.

And our plan provides a better, brighter future for all Manitobans. That's what the 51,000 Manitobans who participated in wanted. That's what Manitobans want. They want a brighter future for themselves. They want hope and opportunity for the future.

That's what we will give them, Madam Speaker.

Now, let's get on with passing this budget.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Therefore, the question before the House is the proposed subamendment of the leader of the independent—or, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont).

Do members wish to have the subamendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

An Honourable Member: Yes, please.

Madam Speaker: I heard a yes.

The proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Boniface:

THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (ff) the following clauses:

- (gg) failing to make new investments in improving the lives and abilities people of Manitoba, choosing instead to expand existing inequities and selecting the status quo over growth and innovation; and
- (hh) failing to increase funding for the Emergency Measures Organization, despite two years of historic crisis, including paramedics, fires and floods; and
- (ii) failing to provide any sort of a plan for individuals seeking to escape wars in

Ukraine and Afghanistan by partnering with local organizations to ensure a proper and smooth resettlement transition to Manitoba; and

- (jj) failing to commit to equitable health and education funding for all Manitobans, choosing instead to continue concentrating services in Winnipeg; and
- (kk) failing to provide adequate relief and support to smaller enterprises in Manitoba and mom and pop businesses who are struggling to survive after two years of pandemic struggles; and
- (ll) failing to create an independent, non-political means of distributing \$50 million in venture capital, which is essential to establishing business confidence; and
- (mm) failing to pursue fiscally sound measures, choosing to issue cheques with no lasting economic benefit that will have to be paid back by future generations, while shunning meaningful investments in growth and stability; and

* (16:30)

- (nn) failing to make desperately needed new investments in education, and in reducing barriers and obstacles that block Manitobans from meeting their full potential; and
- (oo) failing to make proactive investments to avoid health concerns, especially areas such as diabetes supplies and medications that can prevent death and disability; and
- (pp) failing to provide a plan of relief for the thousands of Manitobans who have waited weeks, months and sometimes years on a waiting list to have necessary medical needs addressed; and
- (qq) failing to address the significant impact COVID-19 has had on the mental well-being of Manitobans and the development of children by providing a plan that focuses on mental wellness and brain health to ensure that Manitobans are living healthy, fulfilled lives; and
- (rr) failing to ensure children attending Manitoba schools receive a minimum of one meal or snack each day; and

- (ss) failing to recognize that health-care reforms to date have been a disaster, and choosing to build new hospitals across Manitoba while failing to recruit and hire enough doctors, nurses and other health professionals to staff existing facilities; failing to—
- (tt) failing to provide a seamless, integrated and effective approach to addictions where people can get the help they need at any time of day or night, instead of through RAAM clinics, which have limited hours and therefore limited effectiveness; and
- (uu) failing to close the wage gap to ensure that rural paramedics are given a wage incentive to live and work in rural Manitoba; and
- (vv) failing to present a plan to address economic issues, while at the same time making Manitoba more sustainable by making drastic reductions in net carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide emissions; and
- (ww) failing to allow Manitobans to take steps to reducing their own carbon footprint by following the federal government's lead by providing rebates for the purchase of electric vehicles, major retrofits to existing buildings and adaptations of agriculture.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

I declare the subamendment lost.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded—does the member have the support of three other members for a recorded vote?

The member does not have support for a recorded vote.

The amendment is lost. *[interjection]* The subamendment is lost.

* * *

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

Do members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a yes.

The proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Opposition and amendment is as follows:

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

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

- (a) continuing with Brian Pallister's plan and failed approach to health care, education, reconciliation and the economy; and
- (b) taking Brian Pallister's failed plan to health-care cuts from Winnipeg to rural Manitoba; and
- (c) instituting a de facto cut to hospitals, emergency rooms and clinics—*[interjection]*

Order.

- (c) instituting a de facto cut to hospitals, emergency rooms and clinics across Winnipeg, Brandon, Swan River, Dauphin, Selkirk, Gimli, Thompson, Flin Flon, The Pas, Churchill and many other rural, northern and remote communities across the province; and
- (d) offering more empty promises to fix the extremely high surgical and diagnostic caseload backlog that has only grown larger because of the inaction and refusal to work with front-line workers and invest in real solutions; and
- (e) refusing to stop the practice of sending seniors hundreds of kilometres away from home for health care because the PC cuts have removed capacity from the system; and

- (f) failing to increase the amount of personal-care-home beds as Manitoba now has fewer personal-care-home beds today than when the Progressive Conservatives took power in 2016; and
- (g) refusing to offer a comprehensive workforce agenda for the health-care sector or for reversing their cut to health-care coverage for international students in Manitoba; and
- (h) failing to present a plan for adult education or other supports for Manitobans;
- (i) rejecting evidence of the effectiveness of safe consumption sites to address the addictions and mental health crisis, as the province experienced the highest number of overdose deaths last year in its history; and
- (j) continuing to underfund, underspend and cut the K-to-12 education system leading to larger classes and fewer supports in the classroom for students; and
- (k) offering no plan to create the spaces needed in the early-learning and child-care sector, no real capital program or a workforce strategy to staff the sector; and
- (l) failing to implement a universal school breakfast program to ensure every child succeeds in the classroom; and
- (m) refusing to provide products in schools, to make sure no student is subjected to period poverty; and
- (n) failing to provide for regular families as the cost of everyday essentials including electricity and natural gas bills increase; and
- (o) making permanent a renters' tax hike in the midst of the highest inflation in decades; and
- (p) making life more unaffordable by increasing tuition for colleges and universities by millions, while continuing to freeze support for post-secondary institutions across the province; and
- (q) refusing to help municipalities deliver their essential services by not increasing the funding for municipalities for a 6th consecutive year; and
- (r) underspending last year's infrastructure budget by nearly \$60 million and freezing the maintenance and repair budget for provincial roads and highways for at least the next three years, while refusing to invest in important projects like repairs to Highway 6 or improvements to Chief Peguis Trail; and
- (s) continuing to send hundreds of thousands of dollars of Manitobans' money to a Texas-based company in order to access our provincial parks, while failing to fix the technical failings of the booking system; and
- (t) ignoring the climate crisis by not offering a real plan or targets to address it, underfunding programs meant to support cleaner energy and not adopting measures to support transition, like updated building codes; and
- (u) failing to offer leadership or a plan to grow Manitoba's economy for the next 10 years; and
- (v) refusing to offer a real plan to create good jobs in rural and northern Manitoba, or to invest in the mining sector; and
- (w) jeopardizing access to rural broadband by pursuing privatization and failing to provide investments to ensure rural and northern communities can get connected to high-speed Internet; and
- (x) ignoring the needs of small businesses who have been left behind by this provincial government, while it rewards its friends and other well-connected insiders; and
- (y) lacking any real action on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples; and
- (z) refusing to engage in good faith negotiation with rights holders like the Manitoba Métis Federation; and
- (aa) failing to offer a plan to build or repair social housing in Manitoba, housing for seniors or a comprehensive plan to address homelessness; and
- (bb) refusing to offer real support for settlement services for people fleeing the war in Ukraine, while at the same time cutting funding for programs such as immigration pathways; and
- (cc) cutting funding to the Fair Registration Office, after having failed to support internationally educated nurses and other professionals in having their credentials recognized in Manitoba; and

- (dd) failing to address the concerns of producers, including their concerns regarding increased lease costs, a failing Crown lands program and closed Agriculture offices across the province; and
- (ee) rejecting the need to provide proper salaries for working people, failing to properly address the needs of workers in sectors like Community Living disABILITY Services or Home Care workers or other health-care workers, and refusing to address the challenges experienced by women, BIPOC and other marginalized groups to fully participate in a pandemic recovery; and
- (ff) failing to learn the lessons of the pandemic by further cutting health-care funding, refusing to release up-to-date data about the spread of COVID 19 and refusing to call for an independent investigation into the provincial government's pandemic response.

* (16:40)

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

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

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

The question before the House now is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of

Finance (Mr. Friesen) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Khan, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 20, Nays 32.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly lost.

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

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

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

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. *[interjection]*

Order. Order, please. I'm going to ask for everybody to remain silent. This is a difficult enough job for the pages, and it is something where we normally have an expectation that there be no heckling or sounds made while they are making this tremendous effort to do this.

I will ask the page, then, to go ahead with the vote.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk: Yeas 32, Nays 20.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly passed.

* * *

* (16:50)

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for second reading debate bills 17, 18, 19, 23, 29, followed by resuming second reading debate on Bill 26.

Madam Speaker: As agreed to by the House earlier today, the House will be dealing with second reading of government bills that are on the specified track. Limited debates will be taking place, in accordance with rule 2(10), with the exception that after each debate concludes, the Speaker shall put the question on the bill under consideration. For government bills that have not yet had the second reading motion moved, for each bill the minister responsible will move the second reading motion and then speak for up to 10 minutes.

An up-to-15-minute question period will be held, followed by the official opposition critic and the independent Liberals getting to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Once these steps have been completed, the question will be put on the second reading motion for that bill. This will happen for bills in the following sequence: bills 17, 18, 19, 23, 29. Once these bills have been completed, the House will then deal with the resumed debate of Bill 26. For that bill, the independent Liberals will have the opportunity to speak for 10 minutes each.

Following this, the question is to be put. The House is to sit until midnight, with points of order and matters of privilege to be deferred until all questions have been put.

SECOND READINGS

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

Madam Speaker: I will now call second reading of 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): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), that Bill 17, the family law act, family support enforcement act, the inter-jurisdictional support amendments—support orders amendment act, be now read a second time, referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Families, that Bill 17, The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Goertzen: Modernizing and improving the justice system in Manitoba continues to be a priority for our government. We believe that this bill is another step forward in our government's commitment to modernize family law in Manitoba's part of the family law modernization strategy.

This bill is important to ensure that there is consistency between the federal Divorce Act and the legislation that governs separation and other matters related to families in Manitoba. It includes significant enhancements or—and improvements and brings us into better alignment with other provinces and amendments of the aforementioned federal Divorce Act.

Members of this House might know that when it comes to matters of marriage or divorce, there are different responsibilities that exist with the federal government and with the provincial government. So, for example, when it comes to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —marriage—for example, when it comes to marriage, the definition of marriage is the responsibility of the federal government. But the solemnization, the actual act of marriage, is a provincial responsibility. In a similar way, there are responsibilities under the federal Divorce Act that don't exist in the same way under provincial legislation, but it's important to harmonize those issues.

The bill will also improve access to justice by including simpler language with less adversarial, modernized terminology and is organized to make family law more accessible and understandable to Manitobans. It will also fill the gaps in Manitoba law and provide the opportunity for improving procedure for families and inter-jurisdictional child and spousal support cases, which I know is important to many different families.

The bill repeals The Family Maintenance Act and replaces it with a new family law act that governs the rights and duties of family members and a new family support enforcement act that governs the enforcement of support obligations by Maintenance Enforcement Program.

The bill also amends the inter-jurisdictional support act and adds to the procedures under the act, and streamlines—and accessible procedures are extremely important for families who rely on child support and spousal support in these cross-border situations.

The Family Maintenance Act, which came into force in 1988, is Manitoba's primary family law statute and has been amended over 30 different times. It is now a patchwork of provisions with outdated language and is difficult for Manitobans to navigate.

Madam Speaker, The Family Law Act would be the primary law statute in Manitoba that would guide families as they restructure and make decisions about

matters such as parenting arrangements, child support and spousal supports. The Manitoba court will also apply this law if required to make a court order relating to these matters in cases other than those in which divorcing or divorced spouses ask the court to make an order under the federal Divorce Act.

With respect to these very important issues for families, the provisions are harmonized with recent amendments to the federal Divorce Act to the greatest extent possible. Differences between provincial and federal family law legislation create confusion for Manitoba families and can encourage litigation for separating parties who may view one legislative regime as more advantageous to the other.

Harmonizing a Manitoba family law with the federal Divorce Act will help parents resolve their most important responsibility, the care of their children, with new terminology that emphasizes parental responsibilities, parenting time and decision-making responsibility in place of outdated language such as custody and access.

Consistency in the law with the new terminology and concepts will encourage parents to focus on the best interests of their children regardless of whether they are married and divorcing, separating without divorcing or for making a common-law relationship or working out parenting time, decision-making responsibilities or contact with others that are important individuals in a child's life.

The bill replaces the terms custody and access with terminology focused on parents' responsibilities for their children. This change in terminology is intended to encourage parents to focus on the needs of their children as ongoing responsibilities and helps reduce conflict by removing the terms that have connotations as winners versus losers and ownership of children. Terms such as sole custody and joint custody are replaced with parenting time and decision-making responsibility.

* (17:00)

The bill will continue to require the best interests of the child as the only consideration for parenting decisions and to promote the best interests of the child. For example, the bill emphasizes that the court must give effect to the principle that a child should have as much time with each parent as is consistent with the child's best interest, and creates a duty for parents to exercise their responsibilities for their children in a manner consistent with the best interests of the child.

The bill also includes new provisions to help parents and courts resolve disputes over relocation after separation and divorce. These provisions also are harmonized with the federal Divorce Act and those provisions, which are important, as disputes between parents about mobility and relocation of children have been very litigious over their last few years.

A parent or a guardian who wishes to relocate a child will be required to give notice of that fact to the other parent. The provisions clearly set out who must give notice, who is entitled to notice and who is entitled to object. The provisions set out whether the relocating parent or a person objecting to relocation has the burden of proof, depending on the child's existing care arrangements.

Providing the same clear statutory guidelines under the Divorce Act and Manitoba law will provide greater certainty to help more families resolve these disputes without having to return to court.

Schedule B is The Family Support Enforcement Act, which will replace part 6 of The Family Maintenance Act to create a separate act to deal with support enforcement by Maintenance Enforcement Program.

The proposed act continues the substantive provisions of part 6, modernizes terminology, reorganizes the provisions into clear categories, includes new administrative provisions to reduce the need for parties to make court applications and provides greater clarity and transparency with respect to certain existing processes.

Schedule C is The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act, which amends the act to enhance the process by which family support orders are obtained, varied and recognized for enforcement in cases between Manitobans and parties in other jurisdictions in Canada and elsewhere. It includes provisions that facilitate the electronic transmission of documents and enables greater use of technology to streamline procedures in inter-jurisdictional child and spousal support.

Madam Speaker, I know that this bill is significant in terms of its volume and its complexity. I recognize that there'll be a question-and-answer period. I look forward to the questions from the members opposite.

I would simply say as a caveat before we go to those questions that I am not going to be providing legal advice in certain situations—not that the members

would be seeking it—but, in general context, sometimes members say we know what happens in a situation like this. It is not my role to provide legal advice in this context, but if there are broad questions about the bill, I'm certainly happy to answer those questions; or, if I do not have the answers with me here today, as I have in the past, I'll take those questions as notice and report back at the committee stage, as I've done with previous bills, to provide the answers to members at committee.

And with that, I look forward to the questions by members opposite.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period 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. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): This legislation is an attempt to harmonize changes between the federal Divorce Act, which came into effect on March 1st, 2021.

Is there further work to do to bring the federal and provincial statutes more in line with one another?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for the question.

And she's correct that this does bring it in line with the federal act. That's important so that there's not choices being made artificially in terms of a party that might be separated but not divorcing, but looking to find an advantageous way to go down a different route. So, having the provisions the same is important.

It appears from the department's perspective that the work that can be done is done in this bill. But we'll certainly monitor it to see if there's other work that needs to be done as it is implicated and it is applied in Manitoba.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): There can be instances where there is conflict between this act and the CFS act. For example, there can be a marital dispute, a parenting dispute and there is an accusation of child abuse.

Which act takes priority under that circumstance?

Mr. Goertzen: I would need to know the specific details of the situation to have an opinion rendered by officials in terms of which act would take paramountcy, but the member opposite is right.

So, for example, when we talk about the ability for a parent to stand in the place—or somebody to stand in the place of a parent and to have rights attributed to grandparents or rights attributed to somebody who's standing in the place of a parent, that also exists to some extent under CFS. But I would need to see the exact situation to ask for a determination to be made.

Ms. Fontaine: This bill changes the interjurisdictional support orders amendment act to explicitly allow the court to receive evidence by phone or Zoom.

Is that something that's currently happening right now, or will that be something that's new after the royal assent of this bill?

Mr. Goertzen: So, the member is correct that the bill does provide for electronic and other means for evidence to be provided when it comes to support payments from other jurisdictions. And that is both a timeliness issue, and sometimes it is difficult to get documents provided from other jurisdictions.

And so this is a greater ability to be able to provide that evidentiary basis for support from another jurisdiction, to get support to a parent who is in Manitoba in a quicker way.

Mr. Gerrard: In a follow-up to my earlier question, I've—know that there have been examples where there has been an accusation of child abuse levelled in the middle of a parenting or custody dispute, and one would think that that would take priority. But, in fact, what I'm told is that ordinarily when there is an accusation of child abuse under those circumstances, that Child and Family Services consider that this is a parenting issue and that they don't get involved until they're actually giving de facto priority to this act over the CFS act.

And I just raise that for further clarification from the minister.

Mr. Goertzen: As I've done in the past, because I don't want to sort of provide legal advice on the floor, I will seek clarity and provide it to the member when the bill goes to committee.

Ms. Fontaine: In what ways does this bill reduce wait times for court proceedings while ensuring that fair decisions are made in various family disputes?

Mr. Goertzen: So, there's some ability, particularly when it comes to issues of maintenance.

Is—opposed to having to go to court and seek a variation of a court order, which is often the only way a court order can be varied, this provides an opportunity where there are former spouses or former partners who can agree to vary a maintenance enforcement order for it to be done without it having to go to court, or to allow an arbitrator to enforce orders as opposed to it having to go to court.

Mr. Gerrard: To the minister, I have observed situations in the past where, occasionally, the least responsible parent is given sole custody, and sometimes this is on the basis of one parent calling out the other parent for being involved in parental alienation and that this being an excuse to prevent one parent from getting custody or shared custody.

This has happened in the past. I just wondered if the minister would comment.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I think the member opposite is asking me to comment on decisions that are being made by judges, and there's a reason why these matters are heard before a judge and that evidence can be provided—or sometimes before a master or some other sort of judicial authority.

So I'm not going to comment about individual decisions that are made by judges. I do know the act, again, stresses the best interests of the child. And, of course, it would be our expectation that any decision maker would apply that to decisions that they're making.

Ms. Fontaine: I do just want to put on the record for the purposes of Hansard and for the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), parental alienation has been shown to be debunked. I mean, it's not true. It's not accurate, and it's wholly unfounded.

So I just want to throw that out there, but I would ask the minister: How will this bill make it easier to enforce court decisions in other jurisdictions?

* (17:10)

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for the question.

So there's a couple of issues. I mean, one is the ability to get that information from another jurisdiction and then to be able to apply it here in Manitoba. And that's often a big part of the challenge, is to try to find the information and get it into Manitoba. So that ability to provide it in an electronic way or a way that isn't traditionally done through, you know, through a

physical hard copy, but still ensuring that it's a valid form of documentation, will ensure that it's an easier way to enforce inter-jurisdictional orders.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the MLA for St. Johns for speaking about parental alienation being debunked. She's absolutely right. The problem is that even as in the last few years it has been used—used in the courts to prevent, in this case, a woman from getting access to her child. And I want to—and hope that the minister would make a clear statement of this when it comes to committee so that this matter can be clarified.

Mr. Goertzen: If the two members want to argue amongst themselves, I'm happy to step out of the debate and allow them to continue in that way.

I've already indicated to the member we can bring forward some of this in committee. I—his original question, I think, was asking me to weigh in on the decisions that judges have been making which, he would know, is not an appropriate thing for the Attorney General—putting on the Attorney General hat of my job—to do.

We could have the discussion and I think that we'll find some common understanding, in principle, in terms of what he's saying, but I'm not going to use this opportunity to make opinions about decisions that judges have made.

Ms. Fontaine: In which ways will this bill give more rights to children?

Mr. Goertzen: There's a few different ways, but one that comes quickly to mind is, currently, a child—it's not clear if they have the ability to ask for child support themselves, to make an application as a child for child support if there's a parent that's unwilling to make that application for them. So the bill will provide the opportunity for the child themselves to make the application. That brings clarity to the law which didn't exist before, I understand.

Mr. Gerrard: My question to the minister, it has to do with the ability to change maintenance arrangements or parenting arrangements without necessarily going to court.

Will the minister tell us, in more detail, what specific circumstances it would allow the maintenance and parenting agreements be—to be made without going to court?

Mr. Goertzen: So it's my understanding that where there is a common agreement between two parents, one who's providing support and one who's receiving support, that the amount should be varied.

This doesn't deal with the arrears. If there are arrears, I believe, that would still have to go to court, but where there is a common understanding between the two parents that they want to see the amount varied for whatever reason, that might be that that can find a way to be done outside of the court. And so it's a much speedier process where there's a common agreement between the parties.

Mr. Gerrard: It's my understanding that the current circumstances where there is shared 50-50 custody that there may be some maintenance support, but often there's not maintenance support because both parents are actively parenting.

But if a parent only has the child for two days a week or less than 40 per cent over a year, then there is a requirement to pay full maintenance payments. And because that person also has various other expenses in looking after the child for two days a week, it almost feels like the person is paying double maintenance.

Would the minister consider changing the regulation so that it would be—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, we can have, if there's further suggestions the member has and wants to bring forward to committee, whether it's regulatory or from a legislative perspective, we can have that discussion.

Again, the legislation permits parties to enter into an agreement to change a court order of supports making choices and it can enable them to then avoid further involvement in the court system. So, it allows people to make consent changes about the amount being enforced by maintenance enforcement where there is consent between the two parties.

Mr. Gerrard: I'd like to bring up a situation to the minister and get his view on this.

In one recent case, one parent was providing maintenance or payments, and the other parent was covering the child-care costs in a child-care and early-education facility. And the payment from parent A to parent B to cover those costs, parent A was not given a receipt for, and therefore, parent A was charged double, had to pay the regular maintenance—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not sure if the member is seeking legal advice. If he is, I can refer him to many good family lawyers in Winnipeg.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the things that has come up is a situation in terms of maintenance payments. There's been quite some changes in this bill, but it seems to me that it would be smart to have a larger review of maintenance payments and how it's approached.

Would the minister be interested in pursuing this?

Mr. Goertzen: I don't think it's a bad idea to ever look at reviews on how systems are working. I mean, this already moves maintenance enforcement into a separate act. So, it's understanding that it's different than some of the basic family law portions.

And so, I'm not close-minded to ever reviewing. If the member has specific examples—and he may have been trying to refer to one before where he doesn't believe maintenance enforcement is working well—absolutely, I'm always willing to review that with him and department officials.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for that, and I will communicate back to others who are interested in having such a review and feel that there are some inequities in the way that the maintenance system is working at the moment.

That's not to say that there aren't some really good aspects of the maintenance program in Manitoba, including the inter-jurisdictional agreements. Maybe the minister can comment on the inter-jurisdictional agreements which cover other countries, as well as other provinces.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the member for the question.

I do believe there's been great work done—and I'll credit former governments for this as well, and former ministers of Justice—to ensure that there are agreements between other countries and other jurisdictions on maintenance enforcement.

I know that there are other countries that are not covered. The Hague Convention on children, I think, from 2008 would include other countries. I know that other provinces are looking at adopting the Hague Convention recommendations and to have other countries included, and Manitoba is looking at the same thing.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Being no further questions, the honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to put on a couple of words in respect of Bill 17, The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement

Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act.

I don't think anybody would disagree that it's really important that, you know, the legislation that administers particularly family law should keep up and should modernize. I think all of us on this—in this Chamber would agree that that's important to continue the modernization of that—those laws that particularly impact on children.

And so, we will be supporting Bill 17 today. I think that any time we can align both federal and provincial is—statutes is important to do, and we have that—it's—we have to be doing that.

So, it's—I just want to say a couple of things, and I do want to just kind of touch on some of the points that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was trying to make in his questions.

I don't think that anybody would argue that the child maintenance program here in Manitoba can do better. I know that I receive calls from Manitobans—and they do what they can with the parameters of which they operate; we know that, right. This isn't a commentary or a critique of the folks that are working in those—in that program and doing really important work, including trying to fine people, right?

* (17:20)

Like, you know, a lot of the work is like investigative; they're trying to actually find parents who don't want to be found, who don't want to pay child maintenance payments. And so, you know, this is not a critique on the individuals that work in the child maintenance program. They are good individuals. They do good work. They do important work.

But I think, like, alongside some of the bills that we've seen or yet to see—I know that we've discussed maybe there's a bill coming that makes—brings Manitoba more in line with the 2007 Hague Convention. I think that's great. Anytime we can kind of modernize and ensure that those are all in line with one another is a good thing.

But I do think that, here in Manitoba, we have to look at the child maintenance program. I've—I receive many calls since I got elected in 2016 in respect of, like, gaps that parents will fall through, particularly, and again, going back to this, you know, not being able to find a particular parent. And, you know, I talk from experience, having gone through that system, as well, with my youngest son.

And it's, you know, it's not an easy process to go through when, you know, for some parents, they're very reliant on those dollars that are court-ordered to be able to raise their little human being or little human beings and being able to give them everything that they should be able to give them and every opportunity that they should. And often, we know that individuals don't want to pay the money that the court has ordered for them to pay and will make up all kinds of excuses.

And so I think that we need to do a little bit more work here in Manitoba at strengthening that child maintenance system because, again, you know, every system that doesn't operate to the fullest potential actually is detrimental to children and children's rights.

And I know that this bill is trying to ensure that we're kind of pushing the boundaries of children's rights and I agree that I think that it's really important that a child, and I believe the age was 16, I could be wrong there, but a child could apply for child support—I actually think that that's quite good—for whatever reasons. We don't know the particulars of families and why a particular parent wouldn't apply for child maintenance, but to be able to give that legal authority to a child to be able to apply for child support, I think, is actually quite good.

And so there's no argument on this side about strengthening those systems.

And then, you know, this bill also expands access to child and spouses' support by making it, sorry—the bill also places an explicit duty on families to try and resolve divorce matters through family dispute resolution processes. I think that that is really important that we provide that infrastructure to have those, you know, structures or that case conferencing to allow people that are divorcing to come together and hopefully do what's in the best interest of children and not have it so difficult at—as it often is and has historically been.

And then while the rights of the child are not mentioned in this bill, it does place the emphasis on the best interests of the child, parents having a—clear legal rights and responsibilities is critical to a child's life. Last year's amendments to The Manitoba Family Maintenance Act clarified the legal definition of a parentage for a child who is conceived through assisted reproduction with or without 'surrogacy', and the PCs made this—the members opposite made this change after the ruling for—by the courts.

Madam Speaker, I will just keep my comments very short on this bill because, I said, we are in support of this bill, we are in support of modernizing that infrastructure, those legal frameworks that would put the best interest of children first and would ensure that there are, again, mechanisms whereby you can have the best possible outcome and processes going through a divorce and looking at child custody and all of the support maintenance.

And with that, I close my comments.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, several comments on Bill 17. In general, this bill is an improvement over previous legislation and we will support it. In part, it replaces the concepts of custody and access respecting children with the concept of parenting arrangements, parenting time and decision-making responsibility.

I think the move to have more decisions are—resolved without the courts is a good one but, clearly, where there is disputes, it is still going to have to go to courts. Although, maybe we can have mediators who are better able to get parents working together, but that we shall see.

I think it's too bad that with the major changes being made here there wasn't more time to debate and to discuss this bill here. It should have been discussed, in my view, earlier on instead of having it debated at the deadline with very limited times.

I welcome the comments from the MLA for St. Johns, which I interpret as being in support of a review of the maintenance payment system because there continue to be issues which come up on a regular basis. And I think—not to be, you know, critical of the individuals in the system who are doing their very best, and not to not recognize that there are some very positive aspects of the system—that I think there's aspects and areas where we can, in fact, do better.

One comment on the issues of the best interests of the child: in the experience that I have had over a number of years, one factor which is often not adequately considered in the best interest of the child or in this revised 'legislation'—legislation is breastfeeding of the child by the mother.

It's well-established that breastfeeding a child in most instances is better for the child physically and mentally and psychologically, and for the mother than alternative feeding approaches to the child. And yet, repeatedly in the past, breastfeeding has not been adequately considered in decision-making because the current and proposed law consider the child's

needs, but most times, what is considered is the need for food, not the desire for breastfeeding where the mother desires to breastfeed.

The need for breastfeeding, I suggest, needs to be added specifically with respect to the court considering the need the—for the mother to be able to breastfeed the child when the mother so wishes. This could put some constraints on possible parenting arrangements for the first few months of life, but it certainly would recognize the fact that breastfeeding can make a very important contribution to the whole life of the child.

This legislation deals with family parenting arrangements and some issues, now, with Child and Family Services, like apprehension, are separate, but there is an overlap. And I raised this briefly in the situation in the question period and look forward to comments from the minister at the committee stage.

I think it's important to point out that no situation, no family is perfect. Apprehension of a child by Child and Family Services and the transfer of custody from the birth family has risks, just as leaving a child with the birth family has risks. And the best interests of the child means providing the best option for a child in an imperfect world.

The decision to award all parenting in the past, at least, to one parent has certainly occurred in a number of instances. There is increasing recognition of the importance of having both parents involved in the life of a child, and I believe there's a special duty of the court, with respect to situations where one parent is given all or almost all parenting responsibilities.

I have seen one parent being given sole or almost all responsibilities. Sometimes, this has happened where a parent who drinks alcohol excessively and is an alcoholic—even if not so diagnosed formally—is given the sole parenting responsibility, sometimes because the parent who drinks excessively is the better talker and persuader in the courtroom.

It has also happened in my experience in the past where one person—parent is given sole responsibility where a parent, A, who is an abuser, is given the sole parenting. And this has happened because the alternative parent is said to be using parental alienation or other problematic actions, and this has been an excuse for the parent A to become sole custody.

* (17:30)

Now, Child and Family Services routinely don't get involved where there's a child custody or parenting

conflict case, even if there's a charge by one parent about the other parent being abusive, because they seem to be concerned that they—charge may be used inappropriately. But, certainly, in the circumstance of where there really is abuse by one parent, this sometimes needs to be taken much more seriously than it is currently.

One 'pyrent' has been given, I have seen, sole custody, when one parent is Indigenous and the other is not Indigenous. There should not be a racial bias and discrimination, as has happened too often in the past, and there needs to be improved protection against it happening in the future. One parent, sometimes, has been given sole custody where one parent has more financial resources than the other parent and that parent can then use the financial resources to have a better lawyer to make the case in court. There needs to be better equity in the ability of people and parents to be represented in court.

Sometimes one parent is given custody because the one parent has autism or a neurodevelopmental condition or mental health condition. The parent with autism is often less able to present their case for being a parent and can easily be perceived as less able as a parent, when, in fact, the reality is that parents with autism can be extremely good parents.

We have talked during question period about maintenance support, and I have put forward my view and the minister has showed some receptivity to that, that there is a need for a greater review—a larger review of the maintenance support approach.

I mentioned as an example a person having two days a week custody, making significant financial expenditures to enable to have the child two days a week, including a larger apartment where there's room for the child to sleep, expenses for transportation, for toys, other items for the child—and I'm informed that if this person is paying full maintenance plus all the necessary costs of looking after a child two days a week, that that person sometimes feels like they're paying twice. This could be looked at in terms of maintenance 'payntence' and maybe, in the way of looking at parenting instead of custody, that there may be better resolution of this—we will see.

There are circumstances in the past where parent A and parent B, as examples, have been in dispute about payments for child care, where one payment is receiving maintenance support and paying for child care. The parent receiving maintenance support may have an income which puts them over the threshold for getting the subsidy for child support.

And if that happens, then, in one case in which I was trying to help a parent, they, in fact, were not allowed to get a receipt for their maintenance payments because it would be detrimental to the other parent in that the child care would no longer be subsidized.

I think there's a lot of other aspects within the system which could and should be reviewed and I hope that this will be an opportunity to do that in the near future.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 17, The Family Law Act, The Family Support Enforcement Act and The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act.

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

Bill 18—The Legislative Security Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education, that Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, many provincial legislatures across Canada have been enhancing their security through things such as controlled access points, state-of-the-art security cameras and, in some cases, armed presence capable of responding to violent incidences.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

While the previous government, I know, had some concerns about this approach, I think we all know that the world is changing and, in some ways, that's unfortunate.

We have here now, in the Manitoba Legislature, developed controlled access points with metal detectors preventing unlawful access to the building. We've enhanced security for guests to the Legislative Chamber. We've established protocols with the Winnipeg Police Service to ensure that we can appropriately respond to violent threats to the seat of our democracy here in Manitoba. And we've made real progress, I think, in educating MLAs and staff about the common sense security protocols that are necessary.

I also want to acknowledge the good work that's been done by the Speaker's Office over the last several years in co-ordination with the Clerk's Office and the Sergeant-at-Arms here in the Legislature.

Members will know that security in this building is complex, and it's sometimes complex because it's a shared responsibility, but that's important that it's a shared responsibility. The Chamber itself is the purview and the responsibility of the Speaker, as are the committee rooms; I believe, the gift shop in the building. And yet, the precinct and the remainder of the building has different jurisdiction and the Department of Justice has Protective Services employees who provide protection on the grounds.

So, it is a complex building in many ways, and is complex in terms of how security is provided. This bill will build upon some of the work that's been done before. That's important.

It's also important to note that this bill is not about prohibiting protests. The Manitoba Legislature, as the seat of democracy in Manitoba, is an appropriate place for protests to happen. Let me repeat that: it is an appropriate place for protests to happen. That is a part of our democracy.

People should be able to come to the Legislature and have a peaceful protest about something that they don't feel is right that's happening here in the Legislature, or sometimes around the world. We've had protests regarding the unjust and unjustifiable war in Ukraine, and those have happened here, even though the actions, of course, are not emanated here in the Legislature. But we do support peaceful protests here in the Legislature.

However, not all protests are peaceful, and there does need to be an ability to respond, Madam Speaker. We need a clear, command structure—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sorry—we need a clear command structure and enhanced authorities for legislative security officers who are dealing with volatile situations.

This bill will establish the chief legislative security officer as the single point of contact for all security operations of the legislative precinct. They will receive policy direction from the Speaker and the Minister of Justice, so there is that shared responsibility again. And the chief legislative security officer has the authority to hire and direct all legislative security officers after—and, of course, in co-ordination with receiving policy direction from the Speaker and the Minister of Justice.

The bill also provides legislative security officers with the authority to evict individuals who are engaged in unlawful activities on the legislative precinct. Again, if there is something beyond a peaceful protest, that ability has to happen.

And when MLAs and government officials are faced with threats to their constituency offices or in the community, our legislative security officers must be empowered to provide protection outside of this building as well.

* (17:40)

It also grants government new authorities to ensure that certain activities, such as prolonged encampments and blockades that impede the access to the Legislature or disrupt its operations, that there can be actions taken against those as well. And the bill provides the government the right to establish regulations to give legislative security officers the equipment they need to better protect our democracy.

Now, I just want to conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying this: there are some that'll look at this bill and—I think I've made it as clear as possible, this is not about stopping protests. Protests are—peaceful protests are a welcome part of our democracy and they're welcome here at the Manitoba Legislature as well.

And it's also not specifically about MLAs, although I know that a large part of this talks about MLAs. But the 57 of us who are here in the building are not the only ones who work in this building. This is a unique building in legislatures across Canada where we have the executive branch and the legislative branch all in one building. We have deputy ministers. We have a lot of other government officials who work in this building.

So, unlike some other legislatures, other provinces where staff are spread out around the precinct but aren't primarily located in the building, the majority of our staff, our political staff and otherwise, are in this building, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And while

MLAs are here for certain times of the year, they're here all the time and we owe a responsibility to protect them in this building because it can be, by what it represents, a target. We know that.

We know that those who tour this building—and we're looking forward to tours resuming here again—schoolchildren who come to the building, who come to the gallery, others who come from other parts of Canada or other parts of the world who tour this building, they deserve to feel safe as well. We owe them a responsibility to have a system that ensures that we can keep them as safe as possible, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it is not simply about MLAs. It is about anyone who accesses, works in this building. They deserve to be safe and protected in this building.

And I'll close with this: members will remember in 2014 when an armed 'assailant' murdered Nathan Cirillo, a Canadian Armed Forces member standing on guard over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa, and then that same 'assailant'—salient stormed into Canada's Parliament and opened fire on innocent Canadians, and he was subdued because of the heroic actions of the veteran Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Vickers and the RCMP officers who responded to the scene. It's their bravery that ensured that there was not more losses of life.

But Parliament was targeted, no doubt, because it was the seat of political power. But it's not a politician who was ultimately killed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's not a politician who ultimately paid that price of losing their life. And in this building there are many other people who come here to visit or to work who are not politicians, and we owe a responsibility to everyone in this place and the precinct to ensure that it is safe for people to work in and to visit, and while we all wish we lived in a world where these sorts of measures were not necessary, that is not the world that we currently live in.

And so we simply have to ensure that we have reasonable and responsible and balanced measures to ensure that the democracy can take place in this building, that people can come and express their concerns about decisions that are made in this building as a part of democracy, but that that can all be done in a peaceful way and where people who visit, work and otherwise come to this building are protected.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the questions from members opposite.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period 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; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): How will Cabinet decide which activities will be prohibited?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there'll be policy consultations between the Speaker's office. There's going to be consultation with the Minister of Justice, whoever that is at the time, and those are the ways that policies will be crafted and the way that actions will be directed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This has always been a shared responsibility. There ultimately has to be somebody who's responsible for enacting those responsibilities, but there will continue to be, in terms of consultation, a shared responsibility.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I—to the minister: I would have presumed that the activities which were prohibited would have been discussed at LAMC or a legislative committee before there'd be changes made. The Legislative Assembly management committee has some fairly broad responsibility for looking after things within the Legislature, and I would hope that these sorts of things would come to LAMC.

I have a question for the minister specifically about the chief legislative officer's responsibility. What's the mechanism—

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

Mr. Goertzen: I'd remind the member opposite, of course—and he wasn't divulging, I don't think, any secrets when it comes to LAMC in his question, but it is a committee that works in camera for a variety of different reasons.

But he will know, as the member who has sat on LAMC for many years, that issues of security have been discussed at LAMC. There's been lots of discussions but not always a lot of action. But it was—and there will be matters discussed at LAMC, I'm

sure, again in the future, that relate to security. This is about taking necessary action to protect those who come and visit and work in this building.

Ms. Fontaine: How will Cabinet balance security considerations with the right for peacefully protesting?

Mr. Goertzen: In consultation with the Speaker and in consultation with others who have jurisdictional security, it has been made clear already that the right to peaceful protest is important and will be protected here in the Legislature. We've said that over and over again.

That is different than a protest that is not peaceful. That is different than a protest that is intended to stay here for a very great deal of time, that prohibit the ability for members to access the building or otherwise provide—or present a threat.

But this is—and I've said this publicly—this is the right place for a peaceful protest to happen.

Mr. Gerrard: In terms of the chief officer who will be responsible for security, what is the mechanism for ensuring that the officer will have adequate funding to be able to carry out the security functions that he's charged with?

Mr. Goertzen: These are matters, when it comes to security in the Legislature generally, which are funded through the Department of Justice, when it comes to Protective Services, as will this particular function or the position that the member references. There are some shared responsibilities that exist within the Legislature, and then Central Services, the former department of Central Services also has responsibility for the grounds more generally, but in terms of the position the member references, that is housed in the Department of Justice.

Ms. Fontaine: Who will enforce the orders of Cabinet?

Mr. Goertzen: So, I want to, again, because I know the member's on a certain track here in terms of Cabinet making these decisions—again, it's already been stated these will be under the policy directions of not only the Department of Justice but by the Speaker, as well, because there is shared responsibility.

And I know the narrative that she's trying to put forward, but it's not—it might be purposeful on her part to put forward that narrative, but it's not actually the right narrative. There was shared responsibility before, and there'll continue to be shared responsibility.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question for the minister: This legislation provides for legislative security officers being authorized to provide security services outside the legislative precinct to members of the Legislative Assembly and government officials.

* (17:50)

I think this is a positive development, but I would ask the minister: What are the limits on providing that service? It's unlikely to be an unlimited service.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I don't think it would be unlimited, and I don't know that I can give him a clear, you know, definition, because there are so many situations that arise. And I've heard from members in this Chamber of situations—and I won't divulge any of them—but that have come up where members have felt unsafe, and they wanted to have security either outside of the building or at events that they were at or in their constituency offices. This will allow that happen.

Now, I recognize members, at some points, all ask for additional security when they think that they need it, but then in—sometimes they're challenged to vote for the actual provisions that allow it. This is important to allow those services that members have asked for at different times for their own personal protection or, in some cases, the protection of their family—

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

Ms. Fontaine: Bill 18 proposes the ability for Cabinet to prescribe additional training for security.

What additional training does the minister envision?

Mr. Goertzen: The chief legislative security officer will make those determinations, as they do now with Protective Services—not that position, but Justice makes the determination—what sort of training is required. While they will, of course, determine what that prescribed training is based on an assessment of the needs of those who visit and work in this building, obviously, I don't—even if I had all the details about what the training would be, I wouldn't get into the, sort of, operational details because it's not prudent to talk about the type of things that people are prepared to respond to in the public.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, as the member is very much aware, we had a truckers' convoy rally at the Legislature. One of the things that was quite unique to that, in my experience, was that a number of MLAs felt very intimidated by these large machines and by the approach that was taken at the rally.

I ask the minister: Have there been any lessons learned from the truckers' rally that can be applied to future rallies and decisions?

Mr. Goertzen: The blockade as it existed both at the Legislature and at the border were on roads, and so there 'wers' legislation that could be applied to enforce—to not have those blockades on the roads or on the highways.

Of course, I do not have the operational authority to direct the police in terms of how to do their job, but I do appreciate that the fact that the police were able to clear up those blockades, both at the border and outside the Legislature, without the needs of the Emergencies Act, for example, and they did it in a peaceful way.

Ms. Fontaine: What oversight measures will be in place to review Cabinet's decisions on security changes here at the Leg.?

Mr. Goertzen: Again, there'll be shared directional responsibility from the Speaker's office and from the Department of Justice in the similar way, currently, there is a memorandum of understanding and there are committees that are formed to ensure that there is an understanding of what's happening on security.

I would propose that those sorts of activities continue—that there can continue to be those committees, that there should be that sort of understanding of what's happening between the various parts of government and the Speaker's office and the Clerk's office. This is about ensuring there's a clear line of accountability, but still shared responsibility.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I wonder if, just to help us understand what the prohibitions will be—the prohibitions of activities by regulation, can the minister give us some examples of activities that would be prohibited?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I would—not to prescribe what they will all be, but—obviously, because that will be determined by a process, but I would expect that, you know, activities that could cause harm to others, that could prevent others from accessing the building, activities that, you know, could be intimidating to others who are coming into the building and, of course, those that are threatening to those who come to the building, would be a small list of those, I suppose, that could be prohibited.

But this building will always—or, I will always and I think others always will encourage peaceful protests to happen at the Legislature. They shouldn't happen at hospitals. They shouldn't happen at schools.

They should happen at places like the Manitoba Legislature.

Ms. Fontaine: Who did the minister consult with on the drafting of this bill?

Mr. Goertzen: There's been significant discussions, of course, within the Department of Justice. There's been many discussions over the years when it comes to security and how it could be better aligned with the Speaker's office. There have been reports that have been written. There have been discussions at LAMC.

So, over many years there have been reports and opinions provided—and including members—members who have come to me and others who have been concerned about their personal security, who've also provided advice in terms of what they were concerned about.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, to the minister: I've dealt with quite a number of people who have autism on the Asperger scale, and sometimes these individuals can appear to be obnoxious or intimidating and of concern and—but they can be helped to, you know, understand what's happening if they're dealt with by people who have expertise in dealing with people who are neurodiverse.

What is the plan, in terms of security, to work with people who are neurodiverse, who have, for example, autism, Asperger's type?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not aware of situations where somebody is sort of been misidentified at the Legislature as being aggressive for reasons that were other than being purposely aggressive. But I do take the point and I think it's a valid point and it's one I'll make note of, and when this individual's hired as the chief legislative security officer, it's something that I will raise with them in terms of the possibility for training.

Ms. Fontaine: Who is currently allowed to carry a firearm at the Legislature and what additional officials does the government intend to arm?

Mr. Goertzen: The member might know, either from public discourse or from just seeing the individual, that there are Winnipeg Police Service personnel who we have an arrangement with who are present in the building. They, of course, by virtue of having peace officer status, are able to carry firearms and I wouldn't go further into identifying individuals or future plans at this point for operational security reasons.

Mr. Gerrard: A quick follow-up on my last one: I'm aware of an individual who has Asperger's who was

misidentified by MLAs within the Legislature as somebody who was terrible, potentially dangerous and so on; so, I mean it does clearly happen.

My last question has to do with, you know, people nowadays are finding on social media that there are comments that are there which are, you know, premonition of problems.

Will there be a monitoring of social media looking for potential problems coming up at the Legislature?

Mr. Goertzen: That monitoring already happens through officials in the Department of Justice as they do security assessments on a regular basis.

If the member opposite has details he wants to share privately on the issue he raised previously about an individual being misidentified, I'm happy to bring that up in a confidential way with officials as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, Deputy Speaker, let me just start by saying, I agree with the minister that things have shifted in the last couple of years, and particularly during COVID.

We've seen citizens' level of frustration, you know, warranted or not, grow exponentially throughout COVID. And that has created an environment whereby, you know, some of us have been targeted by folks, by citizens and, you know, have been put a little bit more at risk than we typically have been prior to COVID.

* (18:00)

And, certainly, I agree with the minister in respect of what happened in Ottawa. We know that that occurred. We know that it could have been a lot worse had it not been for the sergeant in arms' quick actions.

So, I don't disagree with the minister that there are additional added security concerns, and I know because I've gone through them myself, here at the Leg.

The problem with this bill for many of us on this side is when we talk about, you know, peaceful protest, who defines what a peaceful protest is? You know, the minister repeatedly got up to talk about that. It is the Speaker's office and the Minister of Justice's office that will determine the criteria by which

activities will be allowed on the Legislative grounds. And that will be borne through their own analytical lens, what they see to be a peaceful protest and what they deem not to be a peaceful protest.

So therein lies the conflict with this bill. My definition of a peaceful protest may be very different than the minister's definition of a peaceful protest. Manitobans' definition of a peaceful protest may be very different than what the minister's definition of a peaceful protest may be.

And a really good example of that is this illegal blockade that we had here in front of the Legislature for three weeks. Which, again, I want to remind folks, you know, was started by two well-known, celebrated, unapologetic white nationalists, and allowed to spread that hate and that misinformation and that drive for white supremacy across the country. And for what? You know, under the guise of not being—you know, wanting not to wear masks, or not taking vaccines.

And what we saw, we saw in that three weeks citizens, downtown citizens, get harassed physically, verbally harassed, sexually harassed in some instances. And while I agree with the minister that it took place on the road—and that the legislative security doesn't have jurisdiction on that, I get that. But the problem becomes when you have members of your own caucus that actually support and go and visit and have coffee, and then actually publicly talk about how they're supporting white nationalists that are blockading the border, that cost us billions of dollars for—taxpayer dollars.

And so, you know—and we've said this in many, many instances—you know, we don't believe members opposite when they talk about, you know, the work that they are supposedly doing in health care, or they supposedly want to do in health care; we don't believe members opposite when they talk about, you know, the work that they want to, or supposedly are doing in education. And in this instant, I have a very, very hard time believing that members opposite are going to put criteria in that is reflective of what Manitobans view as peaceful protests.

The—it's problematic that the only two departments or agencies that are going to be doing this is the Speaker's office and the Department of Justice. Again, you know, we've seen already—you know, I've been working in this building since 2011, and I've seen so much changes to this building.

And in the last two years, what are some of the changes that we've saw? We see now barriers in front

of the front of the—well, everywhere, barriers throughout the whole building.

We have a police officer, a Winnipeg Police Service officer, who's now stationed at the front doors. I don't know why. I don't know why we have a Winnipeg police officer stationed at the front door, why taxpayers' dollars are paying for this individual to sit in the corner at security.

We now have, like, everywhere you go, you have to go through these metal detectors. And people have to, you know, give all their IDs, all of this, practically giving their first born to be able to come into the people's House.

This is the people's House. This building, this beautiful building, belongs to Manitobans. And yet in the last two years, this government has put so many obstacles, and it's like a paramilitary space now that we operate within. We've got police; we've got new uniforms for security, who are doing good jobs—they're doing the best that they can do with the orders that they're given.

And I—you know, let me just be very, very clear, because I know that members opposite tried to misconstrue some of the things that I was saying. I know that we've got great security that work at the Leg. All of us come in every day. They greet us; they're happy; they help us. Today, somebody—I couldn't park; they were helping me figure out where I could park my car. They're great. So it's not that.

We know that the head of security, Nicole, is wonderful. I have a great working relationship with her. I have an enormous amount of respect for what she does. She does, you know, again, within the parameters of what her job is and what the criteria by which they put in place, she actually does a really good job. When there are people, they—she knows that there's going to be a rally on this or a protest on that, she does a phenomenal job. So I have no complaints on any of that.

The complaints come and the concern comes, Deputy Speaker, when we have only two entities that will be deciding what is a peaceful protest and then what are the consequences of that. And, you know, the minister said in his comments, you know, is it a peaceful protest if you stay too long? Well, who are we to decide what constitutes staying too long on the people's grounds? This building doesn't belong to us just because we're elected in here.

And I also agree with the minister: we know that there are so many people that work in this building

and ought to be safe as well. But we ought not create a system to get into this building where it doesn't feel comfortable anymore. It's not comfortable to come in here. You feel like you're almost, like, doing something wrong to come into this building.

I remember, and I'm sure most members that were elected, you know, previous to this will remember when we had schools coming in and we had people walking around and people doing tours. It was a place that people could come to, to feel pride, to learn about our history, to learn about the beautiful architecture in this building. And now it's just become a fortress. And it's become a fortress by individuals that I would suggest and submit to the House that are bent ideologically to a different way on a more far right.

So, you know, let me just say in the last 50 seconds that I have, you can't say that you're in support of peaceful protest when no one, including the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) of this province, spoke out against the illegal blockaders, the white nationalists that were in front of our grounds. Not once did anybody speak out. Not once from any member of the PC caucus spoke out to tell these people to go home and leave residents from that area alone, unharassed, let them get on with their life. Nobody spoke on that. But now we have a bill before the House that is going to talk about what's allowed, what's a peaceful protest, by only two entities: the Department of Justice and the Speaker's office. That's problematic, Deputy Speaker, and we will not be supporting this bill.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The—there is clearly a need for a chief legislative security officer to make sure that the security in the building and the security of MLAs outside the building is there. There is, at the same time, a really important need to balance the openness of the Legislature, the fact that it is welcoming to Manitobans, with the need for security.

*(18:10)

In the time that I've been here, going back to the moment when aircraft flew into the World Trade Center, there has been a steady and gradual shift to more and more security here in the building. And in the case after the World Trade Center attack, there was an all-party group that met regularly to deal with security issues. There hasn't been such an all-party group, committee, a task force dealing with the changes now.

And I think that there needs to be, in the discussion of what is to be a restricted activity, how we make this building welcoming and secure at the same

time. There needs to be regular all-party input. And I would urge the minister to consider this very seriously because I think unless we have all parties buying in and contributing to decisions of how we make the Legislature secure and open at the same time, that we risk losing some of the welcoming spirit that we need to have to welcome Manitobans to come here and be part of what happens in this building.

It's true that in the last two years, there has been an edginess of people in relationship to the COVID pandemic and some of the public health measures that have been taken, and that we're seeing at times—in some ways a little bit similar to what happened with the attack on the World Trade Center—a shifting in viewpoints in terms of what's needed in terms of security.

There is a view, and it's been discussed elsewhere and brought here as part of this bill. There are now and will be measures to provide security to MLAs outside of the Legislature where it is needed. The—exactly where it is needed will presumably depend on the experience over time with what is happening, the issues that are brought forward by MLAs. This security outside the Legislature clearly is not going to be unlimited, and so there is much that yet has to be defined and worked with and based on experience as we move forward.

The truckers' rally, as I talked on earlier, was different from other rallies or protests at the Manitoba Legislature. It was different, not only in that some MLAs felt very intimidated by what was happening, but it was also very different, as the minister himself has mentioned, that the truckers were, in fact, breaking the laws of the road, the laws of the highway, the rules of the road, that it was left to police to make decisions about what they should do when laws are being broken.

We honestly don't know to what extent the Premier and other Cabinet ministers had any input into what was happening. There is not, as it were, a provincial police force, but certainly this situation of individuals breaking the law and being part of a rally or protest at the Legislature is something that needs more discussion and more attention, moving forward, and clearer decision making in terms of what should happen. I would hope that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) will engage in some of this work, which is really important and which needs to be done as we prepare for whatever happens in the future.

I have brought up the case of individuals with autism and on the Asperger spectrum, in particular.

These are individuals who are very bright but they are not as socially adept and they can be quite easily mistaken for people who could be causing difficulties.

And so I think that, increasingly, the work of police forces, it is being recognized that you need, as part of security efforts, the ability to manage, talk to, interact with, work with, in a positive way, individuals who may have autism or Tourette's syndrome or other conditions where they may appear to be disruptive, but in fact are just part of a spectrum of neuro-diversity, and we need to be better able to manage situations where we have interactions with such individuals so that we can create a positive environment for—an accepting environment for people with diverse brain conditions.

And that is something that I think is going to be increasingly important in the years ahead. We know that autism has become more common—more recognized in the last two decades than it was previously. And we will need to be dealing with this problem more and more, I suspect.

The issue of monitoring social media becomes important. It is not necessarily easy to make sure that the useful scanning and useful information is found. It can seem to be something which is very simple to do, but there have been a number of occasions where, when people looked back after a problem arose, that they could see that there was a lead-up of mentions on social media before the event occurred. And I am sure that there is yet much to be learned in this area so that we can better predict what's happening and better understand and be ready for things which may happen.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to put those few comments on the record and look forward to further discussion as this goes to committee stage and moves on from there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act.

Isn't it—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Acting Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote being called, call in the members.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

* (18:50)

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Gerrard, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Khan, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart.

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 31, Nays 17.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion accordingly passed.

Bill 19—The Beneficiary Designation (Retirement, Savings and Other Plans) Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to second reading of Bill 19, The Beneficiary Designation (Retirement, Savings and Other Plans) Amendment Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 19, The Beneficiary

Designation (Retirement, Savings and Other Plans) Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: I am pleased to present The Beneficiary Designation (Retirement, Savings and Other Plans) Amendment Act. The bill contains small but important amendments. The changes will better enable legal representatives—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —better enable legal representatives and financial institutions to respect and fulfill the testamentary intentions of individuals who become incapacitated. They'll also support and improve access to e-commerce services for Manitobans.

I was surprised to learn of some of the barriers that exist for those who are acting in the best interests of incapacitated persons as a designated decision maker. Take the example of an incapacitated person who has a tax-free savings account or a retirement savings plan or a retirement income fund and has a designated beneficiary. If the representative of the incapacitated person renews, replaces or converts that investment, the subsequent fund is considered a new plan and the beneficiary designation is not carried forward; it is lost. These amendments will enable the representative to designate a beneficiary if the new plan is similar to the current plan and the beneficiary in the new plan is the same person designated on the current plan. So it fulfills the will of the individual who made the designation before they became incapacitated.

So right now, a person may set up a long-term savings account such as the TFSA, retirement, RRIF or an RSP—retirement savings plan—electronically. However, if that person then wants to designate a beneficiary, it appears they cannot make the designation electronically, they must do so by signing a paper form. This can be inconvenient, particularly for those who live in remote or northern areas where travel is required.

So there are two changes: one is to allow the designation, the beneficiary, to be carried over into a new plan where they are incapacitated, and now also to allow for a designation to be made electronically. All designations must be made by an instrument signed by the participant.

Moving forward, we intend to enable the use of e-signatures so that when Manitobans set up their

long-term savings accounts electronically, they'll have the option of designating their beneficiaries electronically. Provisions in this bill will be designated under The Manitoba Electronic Commerce and Information Act as a law for which an electronic document satisfies the requirement for a signed instrument. In making these changes, Manitoba will align itself with other provinces, including British Columbia and Alberta.

Recognizing that e-transactions can be more vulnerable to fraud and identity theft and that designating a beneficiary is like making a gift through a will, amendments in this bill will require the financial institution to verify the identity of the person making a designation, and if the person is a proxy, the authority of the proxy must be verified; for example, a committee would need to provide a copy of the court order appointing them.

All of these changes will affect financial institutions, but I understand that several are looking to update their systems to implement this change as has been done in other jurisdictions. Ultimately, the amendments in this bill will benefit consumers and their representatives by smoothing the process for financial management and ensuring that the intention and the will of those who make a beneficiary is fulfilled.

* (19:00)

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period 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. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Can the minister take us through an example of a situation that changes in this bill will address?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): So, in a situation where an individual makes a beneficiary because they've set up a retirement savings plan is an example, and then that individual becomes incapacitated and somebody becomes the substitute decision maker, if in the future that substitute decision maker wants to convert that retirement fund into something, into another type of

fund, they can't convert that and keep the same beneficiary, which frustrates the intention of the individual who initially made it.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I wonder if the minister could clarify what happened in the past. If there was no designated beneficiary, what happened to the funds in the TFSA—or whatever—when the individual passed away?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I don't know all the situations that would have happened. I think that a couple of situations may have happened. One is it might've dissuaded the person who is the substitute decision maker from making a conversion or where there was a conversion that had've happened, the beneficiary might have been lost and then the funds would have gone into the estate if the individual had died and then would have been distributed in the manner in which the estate was set up.

Ms. Fontaine: As it currently stands, if a change to a plan needs to be made, what are the processes for doing so?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not sure if I entirely understood the question that the member's asking: as it currently stands, if there is a need to change the beneficiary of an individual who is incapacitated, how does that happen? And I think that the reasons for this legislation is it can't happen by converting into a new fund. And so this will allow the conversion to happen and allow for that initial beneficiary designation to be fulfilled and to be done in the way that the person who's incapacitated wanted to have before they were incapacitated.

Mr. Gerrard: To the minister: I am presuming that a good example of where this might happen is where the individual who has the tax-free savings account, or RRIF or R-S-P-P, has dementia and can no longer adequately make decisions. Just maybe the minister can provide other examples where this would also happen.

Mr. Goertzen: I think that that certainly is one example where it could happen. I mean, there's other ways that people become incapacitated and aren't able to take ownership over their own affairs. I mean, people can be in accidents or can be other medical situations that happen other than dementia. I think there's probably a long and difficult list of things to go through. But in any situation where a person loses the ability to make decisions on their own and they have to have a substitute decision maker, this is beneficial for them.

Ms. Fontaine: How will this bill ensure that a person's beneficiaries will receive the benefits to which they are entitled?

Mr. Goertzen: It'll ensure that they receive the—that which they're entitled to because it allows for that beneficiary to remain if the instrument is in some way changed or converted either through choice or because the instrument needs to be converted at a certain time frame.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, just to be entirely clear: the application of this bill is so solely for when a person who made the initial decision to name a beneficiary no longer has the 'menic'-mental capacity to designate a beneficiary?

Mr. Goertzen: I believe that that is correct. I'm not sure that there's a situation the member might be thinking about that might be different. But this deals specifically when an individual is incapacitated but they designated a beneficiary and then the substitute decision maker needs to make a conversion.

I can seek out if there is any other situations that might apply and provide the information at committee, if there are any others.

Ms. Fontaine: This bill allows substitute decision makers to maintain the original beneficiary designation under certain conditions, such as moving our RRSP to another financial institution.

Does the minister have an understanding of how frequently this issue has actually been a problem?

Mr. Goertzen: I can—I don't know to what extent it's recorded because probably a lot of substitute decision makers either chose not to make the conversion or not to move it to another financial institution because they might have lost a beneficiary.

I can find out how many situations that's recorded, in terms of how many conversions are made where the beneficiary was lost but my guess is that many substitute decision makers probably didn't make the conversion or the transfer because of what might happen to the beneficiary.

Mr. Gerrard: What happens if, you know, as time passes and then you get into this situation, if, at that point, the designated beneficiary has died or passed away or the designated charity has gone—is defunct?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'm not trying to give legal advice again on the floor of the House, but my assumption is that if a beneficiary is made, that beneficiary predeceases the individual who made the gift,

that any funds that couldn't be flowed to that beneficiary I'm assuming would go into the estate and then they would flow through the estate, or if that person died intestate without a will, then there are rules and regulations by which funds are distributed. But if the member wants more specific legal advice, I could seek it out for him.

Ms. Fontaine: Upon introduction, the minister cited a request from financial institutions in making this change.

Which financial institutions did the minister speak to with regard to the proposed changes here?

Mr. Goertzen: I did not personally speak to financial institutions, but my understanding is that there's been requests that have come to the department and to government.

I can provide a list of financial institutions who might have been in contact with the government at committee.

Mr. Gerrard: This would apply where the plan is changed or modified in some fashion, and, you know, one presumes that the decision to modify a plan is made in the best interests of the client, but could this be used, just to be the devil's advocate as it were, in—to change the plan so that it wouldn't, you know, be the same plan that the individual had?

I mean, for instance, changing the TFSA so that you have it investing—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: I think I understood the minister—or the member's question, not that he's unused to playing the devil's advocate, but I suspect that, you know, a substitute decision maker generally is operating under some fiduciary duties to act in the best interests of those who—which they have decision-making power over. Some of that's governed by legislation, so can't speak to any individual specific situations because there might be various ways that that's done. But, generally, there is some fiduciary responsibility, I believe, to the person for whom you're making decisions on behalf of.

Ms. Fontaine: What safeguards are in place to make sure legal representatives act in the best interests of the person that they're representing?

Mr. Goertzen: Similar to the answer to my friend from River Heights, again, under lots of different provisions, whether it's the public trustee act or otherwise. There's fiduciary responsibilities; some of them

are legislated. If it's a lawyer who is making those decisions or acting on a person's behalf, of course, there are—responsibilities are put on lawyers through their individual bar associations and other responsibilities.

So, generally, substitute decision makers of a variety of different forms have fiduciary responsibilities to those who they are acting on behalf of.

* (19:10)

Mr. Gerrard: Just to take the point that I raised a moment ago a little bit further: I mean, if you have a committee or a substitute decision maker who decides to take the money in a tax-free savings account—which has been in a fairly safe investment—and put it in a very risky investment, there's a—would this change make that easier to do?

Mr. Goertzen: I don't believe it would make it easier to do. I think if somebody was acting in a way that wasn't in the best interests of the person for whom they had decision-making power over, they wouldn't be worried about who the beneficiary would be in one form or the other. They would be acting in a way to—that was not in the best interests of the person they were acting in.

Again, though, generally, there would be some rules around that and there could be action taken against that. But if somebody is determined to act in a way that's not in the best interests of the person they should be acting for, my guess is that this would have nothing to dissuade them.

Madam Speaker: Further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If not, I will recognize the honourable member for St. Johns in debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm just going to put a couple of words on the record in respect to Bill 19, The Beneficiary Designation (Retirement, Savings and Other Plans) Amendment Act.

Recognizing that many Manitobans live with a condition that may leave them unable to change plans which affect the beneficiaries, it's important to give legal representatives the ability to make best choices on behalf of the person that they're representing.

This bill proposes that a legal representative of a person be able to make a beneficiary designation on behalf of a participant or an individual if the individual cannot make the designation for themselves. This

step is safeguarded by the fact that legal representatives can only designate a beneficiary if the beneficiary was already listed as a beneficiary of an older plan which is being renewed or replaced.

Currently, legal representatives can only make decisions regarding beneficiaries on behalf of other people, while a plan, such as a bank account, is ongoing. However, if changes to the plan need to be made, for example, if a type of a bank account needs to be changed, the representative is not able to make this decision without the express consent of the person they're representing who may no longer be able to make such a decision due to a disability or health condition.

This bill will add additional safeguards to ensure that a plan administrator is expressly required to verify the person—the identity of a person making a designation and the identity and authority of the representative before accepting a designation.

This bill is one small step for Manitobans living with health conditions or a disability, and those who support them. The government needs to do a lot more to support vulnerable Manitobans.

I do just want to put on the record some of the things that the members opposite in the PC Cabinet have done since taking office. They've continued to cut services for Manitobans with disabilities, and now, what we've seen in the last couple of years is they're using the pandemic to also further and make these cuts.

Disability advocates and concerned community members spoke out against the PC government's failure to provide inclusive health policy during the pandemic—which, again, I'll remind folks we're still in it—and despite the requests from disability advocates and physicians, the PC government did not develop any triage protocols. Manitoba Health—Shared Health said it doesn't need any guidance, even though its own ethical framework for pandemic decision-making called for it over—many years ago.

I'm just showing the lack of concern for folks with disabilities that the PC government has shown in the last couple of years, which goes to show—to illustrate that we still need a lot more from this PC government in respect of safeguarding individuals.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I think it's important that we understand that now, for years after receiving the VIRGO report, the Province has hired yet another consultant to do another review instead of action.

With those few words, I will leave it there.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): This bill follows legislation which has been passed in British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, in which substitute decision makers can carry over a beneficiary designation in situations where a plan is renewed, replaced or converted.

This legislation seems, from my perspective, to be sensible. There is, I'm sure, some experience with the legislation in other jurisdictions, and it would certainly help to have at the committee stage somebody from one of these other jurisdictions talk about their experience with this legislation and whether there have been any problems or pitfalls with it.

In the types or the concerns or the problems with a legislation like this is often they're in the—finding that there are people who will not follow precisely what the intent of the legislation is, but they will divert it in a way that is not beneficial to the intent—or the original intent.

I think that the safeguards, from what I can see are reasonable, and I'm optimistic that this can work well. It will be important support for decisions which are made by individuals who later develop dementia or other mental disabilities and are unable to make decisions for themselves anymore.

I'm glad to see that the government is paying some attention to individuals with mental health or brain health or, broadly, disabilities. We, certainly, during the pandemic have seen situations where people in personal-care homes with various stages of dementia have not been treated well, and where there are major shortcomings.

And so we hope that this is a step in a better direction than we've seen in the past from this government. I look forward to discussion at committee stage, and to this legislation moving forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Merci. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 19, The Beneficiary Designation (Retirement, Savings and Other Plans) Amendment Act.

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

Bill 23—The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2022

Madam Speaker: I will now call Bill 23, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2022.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 23, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2022, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education, that Bill 23, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2022, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Goertzen: I am pleased to speak to this annual piece of legislation that comes forward, that this year amends 10 acts to reduce or eliminate regulatory requirements and streamline government operations that support Manitoba residents and organizations.

I'm pleased, also, to inform the House, as part of this government's efforts to reduce red tape, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB, recently released its report card for jurisdictions in terms of their red tape reduction. And Manitoba finished first in the country, receiving an A grade in terms of its efforts, and this annual piece of legislation's a significant part of the reason for receiving that top grade.

* (19:20)

The proposed amendments make meaningful changes across multiple departments and they include: amending the Employment Standards Code to allow for documents, including notices and orders, to be served by email; amending The Executive Government Organization Act to provide for the appointment and remuneration of a military liaison.

Members will know the good work of the military liaison. There was a time one year where the NDP, I believe, paid the then-military liaison, who was the former member for St. James, Bonnie Korzeniowski. This doesn't propose to pay quite as much as the NDP paid, but it still recognizes that it's important work.

It amends The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology Act to repeal unproclaimed provisions that require the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology to obtain the minister's approval before establishing or making significant changes to a program of study or a facility that receives government grants. This, again, isn't proclaimed, so it's just removing it. It was never put in place.

Amending The Insurance Act to make the provisions dealing with automobile insurance, unless required—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —by a vehicle's contract of insurance, to no longer apply to a vehicle that does not have to be registered, such as a snowplow, which is relevant this winter. And forms of automobile insurance also no longer have to be pre-approved by the Superintendent of Insurance.

It amends The Personal Property Security Act to clarify the type of statement that must be filed to reregister a financial statement—financing statement; clarify that a clear demonstration of the intention of the parties is needed to create a security interest through a subrogation agreement; require that financial statement be filed electronically, subject to certain exceptions; clarify when registrations are invalidated by error; provide that the regulations may be set out—may set out the form, content and manner of use of certain demands issued under the act; extend the time that a secured party has to comply with certain demands from 20 to 30 days; and eliminate special rules applicable to discharging registrations relating to trust indentures.

Amending The Real Property Act to allow the Registrar-General to make rules of practice specifying circumstances in which excepted status may be given to certain instruments. The type of instrument may be set in regulation.

It amends The Residential Tenancies Act to remove the requirement for the members of an appeal panel to be in the same place for a hearing. It also permits hearings to be held in—by electronic means. That's a learning coming out of the pandemic, in terms of electronic and virtual meetings.

It amends The Statutes and Regulations Act to establish the statutes and regulations review board, a committee of Cabinet, which replaces the Regulatory Accountability Committee of Cabinet to better reflect the activities and responsibilities of the committee. As

the chair of that committee, I am happy to answer questions about that change.

And it amends The Regulatory Accountability Act to remove references to the Regulatory Accountability Committee—subsequent change to the previous one I just announced.

And amends The Workers Compensation Act to enable that the minister no longer has the power to determine which program offered under the act is to be reviewed by an independent auditor. Rather, the board of directors must determine which program is reviewed, hence making it more independent.

And, Madam Speaker, we'll have the opportunity to discuss this bill at committee in more details. As it's a bill that reflects a number of different departments, by the nature of this bill, if there are detailed questions regarding a particular piece of legislation that is not in the Department of Justice, I'm happy to answer as best I can, but where I cannot, I'll take those questions as notice and bring them—the answers to the committee when that is held.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period 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. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Providing easy access for people to attend appeal hearings on rental disputes is great, but I would ask the minister what he's doing to keep—help keep rent affordable and provide housing for many Manitobans who are in desperate need of it.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): While it's not directly under my ministry, the member will know that the government froze rent for two years during the pandemic as a result of concerns regarding increasing rent rates. So the two-year freeze was important, I think, for those who are renting.

There's many other things that the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) is doing when it comes to affordable housing. We were very excited to hear the announcement last week about the redevelopment of

The Bay downtown, and the affordable housing that'll be happening within that facility as well.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I wonder if the minister would provide more details on the replacement for the regulatory accountability committee.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the member for the question.

It's a committee that I chair, and that I've chaired on and off during our time in government. It's not per se replacing the committee as much as it is renaming it. It's currently called the Regulatory Accountability Committee of Cabinet, but it also deals with statutes, so the renaming of the committee reflects the fact that it doesn't just deal with regulatory issues.

Ms. Fontaine: If the purpose of this bill is to reduce red tape, I would ask the minister why his government is adding an additional deputy minister.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'm not sure if the member opposite feels that deputy ministers are red tape. I know that at one point, they made a significant issue about the loss of an ADM, an assistant deputy minister, when it came to French language services in the Department of Education. I think the government re-organizes in a way that best provides services to both the department and subsequently to the public. But if the member opposite feels that a deputy minister is red tape, that is certainly an opinion that she can hold.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, my question to the minister deals with snowplows. The minister's moving the requirement that a snowplow have insurance. So what happens, can the minister tell us, if a snowplow gets into an accident or—which affects other vehicles?

Mr. Goertzen: So my understanding is that currently there are certain vehicles including snowplows which do not have to be registered in that way, but I believe the question should get a more technical answer from those who are registering vehicles, so I will provide that to the member at committee.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, in the changes to The Real Property Act, the rules of practice specifying circumstances in which accepted status may be given to certain instruments. Can the minister provide examples of what instruments he's talking about?

Mr. Goertzen: I'll provide a list at committee from the relevant department.

Mr. Gerrard: Under The Workers Compensation Act, the board of directors must determine which

program is reviewed by the independent auditor. Why is it that the independent auditor is not given the ability to make decisions about what programs should be reviewed?

Mr. Goertzen: So the only changes happening here is that it is the board that will make the determination on which program gets reviewed and not the minister, so that I think the intention here is to make this more independent as Workers Compensation is more of an independent entity. So it doesn't change the nature of the auditor's abilities, but if the member opposite feels there should be changes to how the auditor can engage in these reviews, that's an amendment he could entertain.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, under The Employment Standards Code, there is a reference before the email is sent. The person had notified the sender in writing that the email address may no longer be used for the service of documents. By notifying the sender in writing, does that include by email or does it have to be a written letter signed?

Mr. Goertzen: I'll ask the relevant department to provide that answer at committee.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, under The Executive Government Organization Act, the military liaison shall be paid an amount equivalent to the indemnity provided for legislative assistance in the regulations.

* (19:30)

Can the minister tell us what the situation is now, whether the military liaison is receiving remuneration or an indemnity and on what basis it—is it currently being provided?

Mr. Goertzen: Currently the military envoy, who does tremendous work as did the previous military envoy, is not remunerated, is not paid for that service. I think the only exception that I'm aware of in the last—since the position was created, is that the former member for St. James—the former NDP member for St. James, who was the military envoy, was employed by the former NDP government to continue on in that role, and I believe that they were paid what the equivalent salary of an MLA was at that time.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, so this would provide the indemnity like a legislative assistant. Can the minister provide more details of the job description of the military liaison and the amount of time that is consumed in that job?

Mr. Goertzen: I know that the work of the former minister—military envoy, current minister responsible

for advanced education and immigration, and the current military envoy, they've done exceptional work in meeting with military personnel in Manitoba, discussing what various needs they have. Sometimes it's issues regarding drivers and certification if they're coming from other places in Canada. Sometimes it's providing other support. Often it's attending military events, ensuring there's a provincial government perspective there.

I can tell you that both of the individuals who have fulfilled that role in our time in government have done an exceptional job and whatever they're going to get paid, which is equivalent to a legislative assistant, isn't reflective of the great work they do.

Mr. Gerrard: Is there any requirement of the military liaison to provide a report to government, to the Legislature, of the work that's done?

Mr. Goertzen: I can tell you that during my time as the minister of Legislative and Public Affairs and Deputy Premier, at that point, the military envoy was reporting to me in that role and they regularly reported to me on their activities.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Seeing as there are no further questions then, the floor is open for debate, and I would recognize the honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Okay. Miigwech, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 23, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2022. This bill is cleaning up a lot of things that should have already been addressed in previous bills, but, like often, the PC government failed to do so.

This act makes it easier for people to attend appeals online, which is necessary because the PC's government policy decisions when it comes to housing and the rights of renters, as we all know and as Manitobans know, has been a disaster. They're still cleaning up The Workers Compensation Act four years after having received a qualified opinion from the Auditor General.

This bill is supposedly supposed to reduce red tape, but it gives this government the potential to add another deputy minister when they already have two more deputy ministers in place than the previous NDP government.

Housing is a right, as we know, Madam Speaker, and all Manitobans should be able to access affordable, safe, quality housing. It's important that people be able to participate in appeals virtually, as this increases access and hopefully more people will be able to have their appeals heard. This is necessarily—necessary, especially in light of all the hardships of the last few years and rent increases that too many Manitobans have been dealing with.

Unfortunately, this PC caucus is not doing enough to help renters and especially low-income Manitobans to be able to afford housing. In fact, as I've said in this Chamber many, many times, and as almost every single member of our team here has said, housing—the housing crisis has only grown exponentially under the administration of these folks here opposite, who really, again—once again—do not care about Manitobans who are unsheltered or those folks that are just struggling to try and find affordable, adequate, safe social housing.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Every week, we bring up social housing in QP, trying to implore this government to actually do things. I know that the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino), have brought up in this Chamber the conditions of some of the housing units in their constituency, particularly for Manitoba Housing, and the need for extra security. And, I mean, again—once again it falls, you know, on folks that just do not want to hear or listen to that message or simply don't care.

They've also—the PC caucus have also demonstrated this by approving all 310 above-guideline rent increases applications in the 2019-2020 year despite, you know, the impacts on renters.

I remember—I guess this would have been before the—or, the 'Manichoba' Legislature had closed down—we had brought in an older retired Manitoban who had her rent increase by 30 per cent, which was hundreds of dollars—which, when you're on a fixed income is money that, you know, is taken from other budget lines: your food.

In some cases, we know that older Manitobans won't get their prescriptions filled and, you know, the members opposite have allowed that to happen here. And the way that it currently exists is that landlords can apply for above-guideline rent increases for reason as—for reasons as minute as operating expenses, which is simply just ongoing maintenance.

Many of these increases came immediately after the rent freeze was lifted and, again, some of them were, you know, as 30 per cent but some were as high as 50 per cent. And, you know, again, as I said, this puts Manitobans in a very difficult situation, particularly those that are on fixed incomes, choosing which of their necessities they're going to be able to do that particular month.

Many renters are low income, meaning that any increase to rent is hard for them to deal with and not to mention like, you know, rents that are as high as 30 or 50 per cent just at, you know, at the stroke of a pen by members opposite. I, you know, to imagine that your rent would go up by 50 per cent is—incredible.

And when you think about the fact that many Manitobans lost their job during the pandemic and now, you know, is not the time to be making increases to what is a human right. You know, Manitobans have a human right to access housing: safe, affordable, healthy housing, and here under this PC administration, you know, many folks have had their rents increase by 50 per cent. It's absolutely shameful, Deputy Speaker.

And what does that do? Well, we know what that does. That ends up in showing that, you know, more and more Manitobans are living under the poverty line. And, you know, instead of, you know, this government understanding that, you know, it's in everybody's best interest to lift up Manitobans; to ensure—particularly in times of crisis like a pandemic that has only occurred, you know—the last time this occurred was 100 years ago—instead of stepping up, ensuring that Manitobans are taken care of, this government has done the absolute worse.

And what ends—the opposite—and what ends up happening is that it—the outcomes are worse for not only those individuals but for all of us because when people are struggling, their health starts to go down, their social determinants of health start to in—so, it's just bad all around.

That's not all they did, though. The amendment to The Employment Standards Code makes it easier to submit documents but again, members opposite could have done this months ago.

Again, this government—this PC government—got a qualified opinion from the Auditor General, which is why last year they introduced a bill on changes to Workers Compensation Board, where obviously important things were missed, Deputy Speaker.

I'm trying to go as fast as I can; I have very few minutes here. But this government has been ignoring the Auditor General for four years, even though they got a qualified opinion and pretended like they did not have a direct control of the Workers Compensation Board. Manitobans expect, you know, their government legislative agenda to be driven by public policy and by the needs of Manitobans and not a financial shell game.

* (19:40)

We know that the PC government drafted bill 18 last year to address the fact that they cooked the books, even introducing legislation to satisfy the auditor's definition of financial control.

As everything else that the members opposite have done and continue to do, that's not good governance, Deputy Speaker. Three years ago, the Pallister and Stefanson governments stopped reporting WCB as part of their summary budget accounting, despite the objections of the Attorney General, or—Auditor General, they continued to do this for years and it's clear why. They're cooking the books to hide how they've been cutting.

Oh, there's just so much to get through, here, Deputy Speaker. For the first time in Manitoba history, the Manitoba government received three qualified opinions from the provincial auditor for its Public Accounts. This is unprecedented and is clearly an attempt by the PC government to avoid fair presentation of the Province's finances by generally accepted accounting rules. The PC government moved money around at the end of the fiscal year and defied auditor's direction about what organizations can count.

Deputy Speaker, there's a lot more that we could go on all night. Unfortunately, I don't have much time in respect of laying out or making the case in respect of what a disaster that this PC caucus and every single member opposite have been for Manitobans.

And, you know, I know that we on this side, you know, think about—very seriously—all of the things that we're going to have to clean up and the years of how—of trying to even just figure out what the PCs have done—and then the years that it's going to take to clean up the mess of members opposite, the mess that members opposite have created with no concern and no care on the lives of Manitobans.

Deputy Speaker, it can be overwhelming when you think about everything that we will have to fix, hopefully, in 2023 if Manitobans know and trust that we're willing to do the job. We're going to do the job

a thousand times better than members opposite because the difference between us and them is that we care. We care about Manitobans. We care about lifting up Manitobans from poverty. You know, we believe that everybody has the right to equal opportunities and should be—*[interjection]*

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Deputy Speaker, a few comments on Bill 23.

I asked a whole series of questions and I look forward to the committee stage when, hopefully, I will get some answers. *[interjection]* Well, I appreciate—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —and I'm look forward to the answer. I told you that.

There are not some of the egregious concerns that we saw in previous reducing-red-tape act, which 'weres' a cover-up for making some poor changes to reduce environmental protections.

But there are issues here related to how this government is addressing housing and residential tenancies and rent increases, and it's—there's no doubt that there have been major increases in rents, and yet the support for housing under programs like Employment and Income Assistance and Rent Assist hasn't kept pace with the increase in costs.

And so one of the problems is that people are making decisions whether they're going to have a place to live in or whether they're going to have food to eat. And that's not a very nice decision to have to make, and so, clearly, the situation needs to be substantially improved from what it is currently with a government which has refused to increase the basic EIA rate, as an example.

It is, I think, a reasonable move to have the military liaison receive indemnity, but I think it would be desirable also to have a report from the military liaison that could be tabled in the Legislature so that not just the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) but others in the Chamber would know what the military liaison is doing and the contributions of the military liaison. So, that would certainly be my recommendation in respect to that.

With those comments, as I said, I look forward to the answers at committee stage and any discussion that may be coming.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 23, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2022.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 29—The Mennonite College Federation Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will now proceed to Bill 29, Mennonite College Federation Amendment Act.

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 29, The Mennonite College Federation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fédération des collèges mennonites, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Reyes: I'm pleased to rise today to explain the objectives of Bill 29, The Mennonite College Federation Amendment Act. This bill will modernize the legislative framework of the Canadian Mennonite University and support its effective governance.

The 'canadonite'—Canadian Mennonite University has requested these changes be made to reflect the evolution of the Mennonite College Federation into the Canadian Mennonite University, CMU, and to support the operational needs of the institution.

The Canadian Mennonite University was once a quasi-federated body of three previously independent member colleges: Concord College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Menno Simons College. Today, this is no longer the case.

The once-decentralized operating functions of the founding colleges, including mandates, governance activities, assets and relationships, had previously been consolidated into a single, centralized university known as Canadian Mennonite University.

The current governance structure of Canadian Mennonite University consists of a Canadian Mennonite University council and board of governors. This structure is outlined in the bill, and the act is retitled the Canadian Mennonite University act to reflect the shift to a single university.

The Menno Simons Incorporation Act is repealed to reflect that the corporation has been dissolved as part of the evolution of Canadian Mennonite University's governance. Menno Simons College continues to operate as a program of the university in affiliation with the University of Winnipeg.

Government is committed to ensuring high quality post-secondary for all Manitobans as—and is pleased to support Canadian Mennonite University in these necessary updates to the institution's legislative framework.

In closing, I want to send advanced congratulations to the graduating class of 2022 of CMU, who will be having their ceremony on Saturday, April 30th. I wish you all well in your future endeavours.

Thank you, Madam—thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period 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; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

* (19:50)

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'd like to ask the minister how long he's been working on this bill and who he consulted with the crafting of this bill.

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I'd like to thank the member for the question.

CMU's governance model evolved over time, and legislative changes were requested by CMU in 2019 to reflect the changes. The project faced some delays due to the prioritization of the pandemic response legislation and was revisited in 2021-2022.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank for—the minister for bringing forward this legislation.

As I understand it—as the act comes into force on the day that the bill receives royal assent, can the

minister please share with us where the status currently is with the governance of CMU—just knowing some action would have had to have taken place up until this point if it does come into effect the day it receives royal assent?

Mr. Reyes: What I can tell the member is that the three founding member colleges that made up the federation—the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Concord College and the Menno Simons College—have since amalgamated as a single, private, religious university known as Canadian Mennonite University.

Oversight is provided to the university by way of a CMU council and governing board.

Mr. Moses: What impact will this have—this bill have on the day-to-day operations of CMU?

Mr. Reyes: Well, the changes are primary legal in nature, with the day-to-day operations of CMU remaining unchanged. The act is retitled to the Canadian 'Mynnonite' university act.

The roles of the three previous member colleges, as I mentioned, are removed from the act.

Mr. Moses: Will the changes proposed in this bill impact the appointees—the government appointees on the board of CMU?

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

First of all, government does not appoint any 'boarn' members to CMU or other private, religious institutions. They are subject to the general reporting requirements of The Advanced Education Administration Act for money received from the Legislature. This includes providing financial information, budgets and access to other records as requested by the minister, as well as the requirement to have a sexual violence policy.

Mr. Moses: Since the minister mentioned funding for universities such as CMU, is the minister looking at funding reviews and can provide a little of information about funding models reviews for CMU and for other universities in Manitoba?

Mr. Reyes: What I can tell the member is that private, religious institutions in Manitoba are not considered government-reporting entities and receive normal operating grants. Private, religious institutions receive significantly less money—funding than is provided to public post-secondary institutions.

For the 2021-2022 academic year, government provided CMU with an operating grant of just over \$4 million.

Mr. Moses: During the pandemic, I know some universities and colleges received one-time funding to deal with pandemic-related expenses.

Did CMU also receive pandemic-related expenses, a one-time amount from the government? And if so, how much was that amount?

Mr. Reyes: I just told the member about the funding that they normally get, but I can get back to him on that question that he had later.

Mr. Moses: Thanks, I appreciate the minister's willingness to just get back to me and touch base on that particular point 'wherdegarded' to pandemic-related expenses.

I wanted to touch just on general grants for CMU and for other universities. With the general grants remaining relatively the same, more burden of cost of universities are falling on students' tuitions.

Is the minister satisfied with cost of universities falling more and more on students?

Mr. Reyes: What I can say is that I know that, having a daughter that goes to CMU, I know that she was attending university within the institution because, you know, the lower amount of class size that they had, and as a private religious institution, they co-operated—they coped really well during the pandemic.

Mr. Moses: I, you know, applaud, you know, anything we can do, whether it's in K to 12 or in post-secondary, to make sure that we have good, you know, teacher-to-student ratios with smaller class sizes, but I think that goes to—even further to the point of having—importance of having well-funded universities.

I'll ask the minister: If he's going to keep the grant the same for CMU and other universities, is he satisfied that more and more burden of costs of colleges and universities fall to students through tuition—is he satisfied with that?

Mr. Reyes: The member has some pretty legitimate questions, and I'm looking forward to answering them in Estimates.

An Honourable Member: At committee.

Mr. Reyes: At committee.

Mr. Moses: So yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to find out whether the tuition fee review for all institutions this year—the revenue for the tuitions across all institutions has gone up by \$35 million in this year's budget.

Is the minister going to reconsider that approach of relying on tuition to be revenue for the government, increasing amounts every year, and maybe make tuition a little bit more affordable for students in Manitoba?

Mr. Reyes: I have to remind the member that private religious institutions are not funded like post-secondary institutions, as I answered to him earlier.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Seeing no questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I think, you know, we're looking forward to the changes on bill—through this bill, the CMU amendment act. I think the reason that we're seeing this change is because this is how CMU has been operating. They've been looking at a more efficient model of running their organizations through the different institutions that are associated with CMU, and they've found a model that works.

This bill would align with more efficient operations that CMU is doing. It's unfortunate that it's taken, you know, three years for the government to catch up with this. This is something that CMU had wanted since 2019, as the minister mentioned, so we're three years on and the—this bill is just being put forward.

And I know the pandemic puts lots of wrenches and wrinkles, delays into certain things, but you know, as a government who's responsive to the needs of institutions, the needs of students, the needs of what's going on with Manitobans, it should take more—it should have happened more—with more urgency than three-year delay from when it was first, really, requested and discussed between the government and the Canadian Mennonite University.

Now, I think the changes in this bill really go to CMU seeing how they can run their 'operation' better, now and into the future. They're looking at the health of their institution, their organization, what's best for their administration, what's best for their faculty and what's best for their students. And that's why we have this bill in front of us today.

But as it comes and it relates to what's best for the health of students, it's impossible for us to ignore the increasing tuition that every Manitoban student is facing, with greater challenge and greater difficulty year after year at tuitions increased under this government.

We see that, in this budget alone—with a very small increase for grants for institutions well below the rate of inflation—that this government is relying on an increase of revenue from tuition of \$35 million. That's going to put greater challenge for every student in Manitoba to be able to afford their tuition. Every single student in Manitoba is going to face a further challenge in a year where we already have record-setting inflation rates.

So now do they not only—do students not only have to face a burden of higher food costs, of higher transportation costs, of higher housing costs, of perhaps higher child-care costs. This government has also chosen to put the burden of higher tuition costs onto students.

* (20:00)

They didn't have to do this; there were other options presented to them in this budget. They had other choices to go around. But the government has chosen to make tuition higher for students at a record-setting pace over the last six years, and that's exactly what we're continuing to see: that students are more and more taking on the burden of tuition instead of getting the assistance that this government could be providing. And that's the choice of this government's making each and every year: to raise that tuition up higher and higher and higher.

And so I ask you, how are we setting up the young people in our province for success? Are we setting them up with the opportunities to have an accessible post-secondary education—the opportunities that many of us in this Chamber were afforded: to go to school at an affordable rate; to get yourself ahead through the opportunity that education allows us and give us hope for a brighter future in Manitoba, a future where we can invest in young people in this province to be the leaders, the drivers of our economy into the future. Do we give them that opportunity and do we do our best as leaders in this province to set them up for success?

That's what we should be doing. But yet, every time we think this government has a choice, they seem to find a way to make those things more challenging for students, make the tuition a little bit more expensive every year—no, no, sorry—I correct myself: a

lot more expensive every year. Make the—make a—do not make an investment in transportation which affects students; don't see those investments in affordable housing which impact students, and the list goes on and on.

And I bring up one more—or two more points, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The fact that there's a desperate need for additional mental health supports for students in university who've suffered the challenges of going through the pandemic as students. The difficulties of having to navigate online classes, some classes in person, worrying about being safe on campus and that stress of doing so, and yet we see very little, if not any, mental health supports from this government specific for post-secondary students.

And the other point I want to bring up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the continued challenge that international students have in Manitoba. And in addition to all the other I've raised for students in this province, international students face an even higher burden of tuition, an even higher cost that is often three or four times the cost of domestic students. And so they face that additional higher burden of tuition, and at the same time this government refuses to allow them to be participants in our public health-care system. They've chosen to disallow, to refuse, to remove international students from our health-care system. International students who attend CMU and attend all of our colleges and universities in Manitoba—they are not allowed by this government's word to be and participate in our public health-care system.

Now, you think that public health care should be something that we all are proud of and that we all allow to as many people to take advantage of this amazing system, which we as Canadians are proud to have: a public health-care system. And what introduction do international students have to our country, to our province in Manitoba? A government, a provincial government, that slammed the door in their face when it comes to public health care.

When internationals come into the students, they'll see friendly Manitoba on the bumper sticker—on the driver's licence of every car in the province. When they see that friendly Manitoba, do they see friendly Manitoba from this PC government? No—they see them slamming the door in their face when it comes to public health care. And they see that every single time that they have to pay for their own private health insurance—private health insurance. They see that slam in the door every time they try to go to get

the health-care system, and they have to bring up a separate card and someone looks at it more closely, judges it and has to deem whether it's worthy of them getting health care.

And this in turn scares off international students from even trying to access health care. And what more worrying time do students, do international students, have to concern for their health than during a global pandemic?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we went through a global pandemic. We're—in fact, we're still going through a global pandemic, and international students have had the most difficult time trying to navigate the health-care system because this government has removed them and disallowed them from the public health-care system. And we ought to do our best to allow them to come back on to our public health-care system. These international students who attend CMU and attend all the colleges and universities in our province are begging and asking and demanding that this government take concrete action to allow them to get back on our public health-care system.

It's not just good for them. It's not just the right thing to do. It's not just to show them that we really are friendly Manitobans and we should be welcoming international students into our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's what's right for our health-care system. It keeps all of us safe when people can get access to health care, when we can all have equitable access to health care in our province. That is what's the right thing to do, and this government has, for years, refused to do this in the face of a pandemic.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just close in my remarks on this bill by saying that not only are these some of the most important issues in our province but this is what sets up our future. These young people who are attending colleges and universities in our province are going to be around here for decades and decades in this province. They're going to be the ones to call this place home for the next generation and generation after that, and we want them all to be successful parts of this province.

So how do we set them off right? We ought to make university and colleges more accessible, more affordable and ensure that all international students can get public health care in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): It's nice to have the opportunity to rise and speak just for a few

minutes on Bill 29, The Mennonite College Federation Act.

And just before getting into the legislation itself, I wanted to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward and for the bill briefing in which we had—I think the minister had shared with us at the bill briefing that this was, in fact, his first bill briefing in his portfolio, and between him and the departmental staff I really want to thank them all for fielding all the conversations, all the questions that the member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses) and myself had about the legislation and all the conversation that came from the bill briefing itself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to use this as an opportunity to talk a bit about the importance of autonomy in our post-secondary institutions from a student and faculty perspective. We have seen the harm that interference can play. It's important that post-secondary schools and students have this autonomy because no one knows how to deal with the issues at hand better than the people who are dealing with the issues.

And we can bring examples here into this Manitoba Legislature. A minister who is responsible for a portfolio should have some experience in the department in which they are representing the Province of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And just to give an example of this, and this is all on top of tuition going up—keep this in mind—there was a time when this government first got elected they made the decision to get rid of tuition rebates, and tuition rebates is something that many, many students here in Manitoba relied upon. Oftentimes, tuition rebates were—became the down payment for the first house a student—a post-student might then buy. It oftentimes became payment towards their first vehicle or paying off all of their student debts.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And one of the first things this government did when they came into government was take away these tuition rebates. And, again, this is just on top of tuition prices continuing to rise over the years, Madam Speaker.

Another reason the government needs to respect autonomy is because post-secondary institutions have been built and set up in a way that enables them to make the decisions that best suit their needs. Madam Speaker, different schools in our province have different needs. Schools in Brandon, universities in Brandon, colleges in Brandon, they have different

needs than the colleges and universities and all post-secondary facilities have here in Winnipeg. And that's why it's not right for government to have their hand in the pot here and be the one pulling all the strings and making all the decisions.

* (20:10)

That's why we have school boards. That's why we have student elections. We have people to advocate for these issues, the issues being experienced in the schools.

You know, we recently saw this with the faculty members, and this government needs to encourage and enable negotiations, not cut off people's opportunities. You know, the member for St. Vital was—explained it very well in his speech, Madam Speaker. We need to be creating opportunities for students, providing incentive, getting people excited to come to school here in Manitoba, not taking away all of their opportunities.

And, you know, this was mentioned during the question portion just—here this afternoon, Madam Speaker—this evening, but we need to think about how students have been affected during the pandemic.

No, not every student was affected in negative ways, but many students were. Many students were affected when it comes to mental health and we are at—in a dire state right now in the province of Manitoba, where mental health resources are not accessible.

We need more going into our mental health resources because our students, they have been coming to us and I know they've been going to members across the way, as well, expressing their concerns, saying that: I have been struggling because of what has happened to my post-secondary degree, Madam Speaker, in relation to the pandemic.

Many post-secondary students also were unable to attend classes in person. And, you know, you think about this: some people wait their whole lives to go to post-secondary, some people who are very excited to attend post-secondary, and a huge part of that experience is being on campus, being with your fellow classmates. It's not just about the academics, Madam Speaker. It's a social setting, as well, where you learn much, much more than just academics.

And all of these things were adjusted and students had to be adaptable throughout the pandemic. And again, we needed this government to step up at the time and help these students out.

And we need to talk about international students. You know, I spoke about this for quite a bit the other day in the House, Madam Speaker, but international students continue to be taken advantage of by this government. International students pay so much money to come to Manitoba and bring all of their skills, all of their knowledge, all of their education and then they pay so much more than any domestic student, on top of room and on top of board, and yet this government made the decision that they are not worthy of free health care here in Manitoba.

That's ridiculous. Every person in Manitoba, every person in Canada, quite frankly, but for the sake of this government, every person in Manitoba should have access to health care, Madam Speaker.

Education as a whole, it's much, much more than just a nine-to-five typical job. As students, we learn many critical skills and, you know, I can attest to this, Madam Speaker. I've been in school essentially my entire life and about a month ago I submitted my final paper and I get to graduate this June and I'll have my master's in marriage and family therapy. *[interjection]* And I want to thank my colleagues.

It has been a very difficult time being a full-time politician and taking one class and one practicum at a time. I've been in—doing my master's for about seven years but it's helped me appreciate the needs that many students here in the province do, in fact, have and do, in fact, face. And that's why I feel quite passionate about it, Madam Speaker, that we need to be doing more. We need to encourage students and we need to provide opportunities for them to succeed in our province.

Madam Speaker, we are going to be supporting this legislation because we believe what the legislation entails, but I want to encourage the minister to

continue to do more for students because what's happening is not enough and they deserve better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 29, The Mennonite College Federation Amendment Act.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 26—The Officers of the Assembly Act (Various Acts Amended)

Madam Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 26, resuming debate on second reading of Bill 26, The Officers of the Assembly Act (Various Acts Amended).

Are there any members wishing to—if not—oh, right.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 26, The Officers of the Assembly Act (Various Acts Amended) act.

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Is it the will of the House to call it midnight?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it midnight? *[Agreed]*

So, the hour being midnight, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 25, 2022

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