

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

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Myrna Driedger  
Speaker*

**Vol. LXXVI No. 74B - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 25, 2022**

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, October 25, 2022**

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**Madam Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Wastewater Treatment and  
Highway 75 Upgrades**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** Today, I would like to recognize a fantastic investment that has been made into the communities of Springfield, Ritchot and Niverville. A couple of months ago, I had the pleasure of making two large funding announcements in our constituency.

The first announcement was for \$110 million for a wastewater treatment facility that will be built in Niverville. This is a jointly funded by the federal, provincial and civic governments as well as rate-payers. It will service the RMs of Ritchot, Hanover and Taché, as well as the town of Niverville. This project will result in an increased ability to treat and manage storm water and wastewater.

The second funding announcement that our government made was \$61 million to restore a segment of Provincial Trunk Highway 75 from Ste. Agathe to Morris. This work will include surface reconstruction, as well as shoulder, drainage and intersection improvements.

With PTH 75 being such a vital link to international trade in our transportation network, this upgrade will be a major investment into the communities along the highway. It will also improve safety to travellers and commuters along the highways as well.

I love to see investments into our communities like this. In total, we have announced over \$172 million in federal, provincial and civic funding to be invested into our communities of Springfield, Ritchot and Niverville over the past summer.

These type of investments show that Springfield, Ritchot and Niverville are thriving communities in Manitoba. In fact, just earlier this year, Niverville was

declared Manitoba's fastest growing community and Canada's fifth fastest growing community.

It's instances like this that make me proud to be the MLA for Springfield, Niverville and Ritchot.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Sean Sousa**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** It is with a heavy heart that I rise to recognize the tragic passing of a beloved community leader, Sean Sousa, just 33 years old.

Growing up in northeast Winnipeg, Sean was a big-hearted young man who believed in treating everyone, no matter who they were, with dignity and respect. Sean started as a volunteer with the Elmwood Community Resource Centre and soon became a pillar of the Reach Out! program for youth at risk.

Sean understood the value of preventative programs but also believed in not giving up on those who had already ended up on the wrong path and working to bring them back.

Sean's dedication to outreach soon grew beyond his home community of Elmwood. Sean helped start the West End 24-hour safe space and led the Gang Action Interagency Network that aimed to keep young people out of gangs.

He went on to work as manager of the community outreach van at Main Street Project and served the needs of Winnipeg's most vulnerable residents. His approachable style and exceptional ability to make personal connections left a positive and lasting impact on the lives of so many in our homeless community across the city.

As an avid outdoorsman, Sean often used his love of nature as a way to connect with youth. At the time of his death, he was visiting Pine Point Rapids with a young person that he was mentoring through Main Street Project.

Our community had an opportunity to mourn Sean with a sacred fire and a vigil immediately after his passing. He was honoured again at a recent community gathering where donations were collected for the Sean Sousa Scholarship to help at-risk youth in Elmwood.

On behalf of all members of this Legislature, I wish to offer condolences to Sean's family, friends and community. Sean will remain an inspiration to those who knew him. He will be missed by those he helped, and he leaves our community and our city a better place.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Eric Forster**

**Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** Madam Speaker, at this year's fifth annual EDAM economic development awards evening, Turtle Mountain constituent Mr. Eric Forster of Melita, Manitoba, was nominated as one of 2022's Rising Star Award nominees.

Eric has been working with the economic development in the Town of Melita and the RM of Two Borders for two-plus years. During his time, he has been a part of establishing a satellite location for offer class 1 driver training courses, all while advocating for the community to be more attractive for a destination for immigration.

He is also currently working on his expansion of fibre optic networks in the area. Eric can always be found learning new things and working hard for the betterment of southwestern Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I rise to the House today to congratulate Eric Forster for winning the Rising Star Award for this year's event.

Eric, on behalf of myself, as your MLA, and the House as the whole, thank you for your sense of direction and dedication to so many projects in Turtle Mountain constituency and the surrounding area.

Madam Speaker, Eric is with his 13-year-old son Korbin, who is very proud of him, in this gallery today. Let's give Eric a round of applause and congratulate him for winning the Rising Star for economic development.

**Government's Health and Education Record**

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, since this government was elected in 2016, we have seen their austerity agenda negatively impact the lives of everyday Manitobans. This has been especially true for the fine folks of northeast Winnipeg, who have had to endure years of austerity and cuts to essential government services.

Examples, Madam Speaker? Let's start with the government's decision to cut the ER at Concordia Hospital, forcing residents in one of the fastest

growing areas of the city to access other crowded, precariously staffed ERs.

More? How about the removal of CancerCare from the same hospital, removing an absolute gem of a facility from a neighbourhood that had grown reliant on this beautiful treatment centre.

More? How about the removal of the IV clinic from ACCESS Transcona, resulting in longer waits and inconsistent appointment times for patients.

More? How about the continued underfunding of public schools with RETSD having to do with underfunding that hasn't matched the rate of inflation that's resulted in cuts to kids and families in that school division?

More? How about the cancellation of the expansion of Park Manor personal-care home, one of the first things they cut right out of the gate in 2016. And this is despite the fact that Transcona has one of the lowest PCH spaces in the city.

And then last week we have the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) still pushing that trickle-down, tax-cut fairy tale, a fairy tale that has real-life consequences for working families, because we know that those cuts result into underfunding of government services that families rely on.

Adding insult to injury, Madam Speaker, what we have now is not one, but two trickle-down teams to identify which government services will be hollowed out next.

A government for the people, by the people? No, Madam Speaker, it's a government for their friends and by their friends.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux). [*interjection*]

Order. Order.

**Church of Christ**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to recognize Church of Christ and express my appreciation and say thank you for the humanitarian work that they have been doing, not only in my riding, but in our city, in our province and all over the world.

Madam Speaker, the district is headed by Brother Sydney, inspired by Brother Eduardo Villanueva Manalo, and I was introduced to them many years ago

through my Tito Jimi, who is up in the gallery with Brother Sydney.

Now, as I mentioned, the congregation does humanitarian work all over the world, but in Tyndall Park specifically, and just over the last year, they have distributed thousands of food hampers on numerous occasions to Winnipeg's North End, including Willow Park and northwest co-op food centre.

They have delivered many boxes of school supplies to youth and children in Tyndall Park. And they have even planted hundreds of trees at George Heshka Park; this is between Stanley Knowles School and Tyndall Park school.

Now, Madam Speaker, the members of the Church of Christ, worldwide, have dedicated so much to making our planet a better place. Their passion and drive to make the lives of so many easier is incredibly motivating, and I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to work with them even though it's in a relatively small way.

So I want to thank the members of the Church of Christ here in Winnipeg and abroad for all you do and share that I will be travelling to the Philippines next month—actually next week, Madam Speaker—and I'm going to have the opportunity to express a personal thank-you to the members of the congregation in Quezon City.

\* (13:40)

But for now, Madam Speaker, I want to wish an almost happy birthday to brother Eduardo Villanueva Manalo and ask my colleagues to help me thank those who have joined us in the gallery today for all of their humanitarian work.

Thank you.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, could you canvass the House to see if it is the will of members to revert back to ministerial statements.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to revert back to ministerial statements? *[Agreed]*

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Health—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 her statement.

#### Health Care Aide Day

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** It was my pleasure to proclaim October 18th as health-care aide day in Manitoba.

Our government acknowledges the significant contribution of the 3,700 health-care aides providing safe, quality health-care services to all Manitoba residents. Whether in hospitals, clinics or personal-care homes, health support workers are an integral part of our health-care system.

Health-care aides do so many important tasks, Madam Speaker, that it can be sometimes hard to summarize their role. First and foremost, they help patients and clients with daily tasks that are difficult for individuals living with chronic illness or recovering from a health procedure. They can help with bathing, feeding, dressing or more direct medical tasks such as replacing bandages or administering medication.

Madam Speaker, health-care aides also help in more rigorous treatments such as rehabilitation and exercise for outpatients who are regaining their strength from illness or injury.

In the last few years, health-care aides have been critical in helping public health during the pandemic. As Manitobans were staying home protecting themselves from infection, health-care aides were there to make sure patients were still getting the services that they needed.

Today, Madam Speaker, health-care aides continue to be important in home care as we transition to our home-is-best policy.

I want to say thank you to all the health-care aides in our province for the hard work and care you provide to Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to express our gratitude to all of Manitoba's dedicated and hard-working health-care aides.

Health-care aides have contributed an incredible amount of time and effort to providing the highest quality of patient care. Throughout the pandemic, their efforts have been nothing short of heroic.

Their hard work, tireless commitment to the public and dedication shows a resilience which proves worthy of the title hero.

Health-care aides are a part of every step throughout the health-care system, whether it's in our hospitals, care homes or at-home care. They provide front-line care for some of our most vulnerable citizens, and while it does not go unrecognized, it sometimes feels as though it is not well enough appreciated. The work that health-care aides do is essential, and it should be treated accordingly.

Unfortunately, the PC government has not treated health-care aides with the respect they deserve. For five years health-care aides were working without contracts and didn't see a pay bump. This lack of adequate pay led to many health-care aides leaving to find other, better paying work where they feel, and felt, that they are more appreciated. Finally, after 21 months of negotiations, health-care aides struck a new contract with the Conservative government.

The PCs failure to come to the bargaining table is a failure that should not be repeated. All workers, including our heroes working in health care, are deserving of fair pay, support and proper staffing.

Health-care aides, we thank you and honour you sincerely for your concerted efforts during the pandemic, as well as every day before it. We will continue to fight for your fair treatment and greater appreciation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I rise to recognize health-care aide day, recognizing the important work that all health-care aides do here in our province. Whether in our hospitals, care homes or private agencies, health-care aides play an important front-line role in our health-care system.

I think it is important to recognize the extraordinary difficulty that working through the pandemic has been on our front-line workers. Madam Speaker, many health-care aides have had to take extraordinary measures to protect themselves and their loved ones while going to work.

And while COVID has not disappeared, I would like to emphasize the need to ensure that the work of health-care aides are supported here in our province. In particular, adequate staffing needs to be assessed and reassessed to prevent burnout. Mental health supports need to be continually available and accessible

to our health-care aides, as many of them are mandated working back-to-back shifts with a high volume of patients.

I'd also like to recognize how many health-care aides working in our province have and continue to face barriers to credential recognition. This has been an issue for many people in my constituency and throughout the province. We have health-care professionals who are trained and want to contribute to our health-care system. However, upon moving to our province, they have been faced with hurdles to have their training re-certified.

Madam Speaker, our province must continue to address these barriers so these individuals are able to contribute their valuable training, but also so that our health-care system remains adequately staffed and Manitobans can access the care they need.

In wrapping up, I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this statement, and the many health-care aides here in Manitoba whose contribution to our health-care system continues to keep us safe and healthy.

Thank you.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Southern Health Region Mandatory Overtime for Nurses

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the crisis in our health-care system continues to get worse and worse by the day. That's because this Premier continues to cut health care, just like Brian Pallister.

We see that—in the Southern Health region just how bad the situation is getting. The amount of overtime that nurses are working continues to increase month after month. In July of 2020, nurses worked 5,400 hours of overtime. That was already a lot of OT, but in July of this year, nurses worked a combined 12,200 hours of OT.

I'll table the documents for the Premier. They show that, in Southern Health, OT rates more than doubled in just two years.

It's not sustainable for nurses. It's not good for patients.

Why is the Premier making the crisis in our hospitals worse?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Madam Speaker, once again, the litany of false accusations

from the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, we are investing more than \$1 billion more in our health-care system.

Madam Speaker, we know that the last few years have been challenging with respect to the pandemic. The Leader of the Opposition knows—and Manitobans know—that this is nothing that is unique to Manitoba. We are working diligently, and I am with my counterparts across the country to ensure that we tackle the human resource challenges that we face as a country when it comes to this. And, in fact, in North America, we know that there's a 'nurshing'-nursing shortage.

And, Madam Speaker, we are taking action and we're getting things done on behalf of Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, when you review the facts in the document that I just tabled—documents that the Premier's own government prepared—it shows that nurses are working an average of 9,000 hours of overtime each month of this year. That's a dramatic increase from even a couple of years ago, and I would point out that the situation has gotten worse month after month since this Premier took office.

What has been their response? We see only cuts to health care as the PC response. They cut beds from the Grace Hospital. We continue to lose nurses working from the bedside. And, of course, mandatory overtime and the overtime that these documents allude to drives more and more nurses away from the bedside.

Will the Premier stop the cuts and instead invest in our nurses?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, in fact, we are investing in nurses.

\* (13:50)

In fact, just over an hour ago, the Health Minister and I and—along with the minister of Advanced Education and Immigration, were at an announcement of 115 more positions, taking us over 400 seats that have been committed in the province of Manitoba.

That's another 12-and-a-half-million-dollar investment. And members opposite, what do they do? They vote against it, Madam Speaker.

We are taking action and getting things done on behalf of Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if that press conference made mention of the fact that this government cut dozens and dozens of nurse training seats at Red River College.

At the end of their second term in office, they're still playing catch-up, trying to make up for the cuts that they've overseen over seven failed years, seeing—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —destruction and damage in our health-care system.

Now, we tabled documents from the Southern Health region—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —that showed just how much more overtime nurses are forced to work because of the cuts that they made.

They cut nursing positions. That means the fewer amount of nurses remaining at the bedside have to work more and more overtime to meet the needs of patients.

Who loses out in the end? It's the patients themselves, Madam Speaker. The quality of care is getting worse and worse because of PC cuts.

When will the PCs finally stop cutting our health care?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition doesn't like to hear that we're making progress for Manitobans when it comes to the challenges that we're facing with respect to the recruitment and retention of nurses in our province.

The fact of the matter is, we've invested more than \$30 million more in this area, bringing us to over the 400-seat goal that we had, Madam Speaker, and we know that Manitobans have been asking for that. They know—we know that when it comes to our surgical and diagnostic backlogs, we need to make these kinds of investments.

But I'll remind members opposite, these are positive investments on behalf of Manitobans. And I'll remind Manitobans, Madam Speaker, that every single member of the NDP party has voted against this.

We are taking action and we are getting results for Manitobans.

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

### **Health-Care System ER Service Concerns**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, things in the health-care system are moving in the wrong direction.

A very well-respected physician who works at the emergency room in St. Boniface Hospital, speaking at around the same time that the Premier and her Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) were speaking, said, and I quote here: things are quite dire right now.

This emergency room doctor said that things in the health-care system are worse today than they were a year ago.

You know what that means, Madam Speaker? That means things are worse today than when the Premier took office. That's because she continues to pursue, just like Brian Pallister, this agenda of cuts and closures and an antagonistic relationship with our heroes working on the front lines.

Why don't the PCs listen to those on the front lines and stop cutting health care?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** I want to thank the doctor for speaking out today. In fact, he acknowledged that this is not just a situation that is unique to Manitoba. In fact, it's across the country. That's what he said.

And in fact, he did say that the direction we're taking with the 400 more seats in—nursing seats across the province to educate more nurses in our province, he applauded that, Madam Speaker. That is the same doctor that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about.

I tell you, Madam Speaker, that we will continue to help Manitobans. We know that we want them to get the surgical and diagnostic procedures that they need, when they need them.

We're taking action and we're getting things done on behalf of Manitobans, and we'll continue to do so.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, the Premier claims to take action. Well, let's review what those actions are.

According to this well-respected emergency room doctor, there was a patient with a heart attack who waited more than 10 hours. That's what's happening

as a result of the decisions being made by this decision.

Can you imagine knowing that you're having a heart attack, following the professional advice, going to the closest emergency room and then having to wait 10 hours because there isn't the staff there to care for you?

I'm sure you would reflect on the well-publicized decisions that this government has made over the course of their two terms in office that led to the closures of emergency rooms and that led to thousands of nurses leaving the bedside in our province. We know that the government wants to make announcements in this, their final year of their second term. But Manitobans simply don't believe them when it comes to health care.

When will the PCs stop making cuts to health?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, first of all, Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to the individual that the member opposite is referring to. If there's more information, we'd be happy to look into that matter.

I do recall back in the days of the previous NDP government someone dying in a hospital waiting room after waiting 33 hours, so we will take no lessons from the members opposite. That happened at a time that wasn't after a pandemic.

We recognize and acknowledge the challenges on recruitment and retention when it comes to nurses and other health-care professionals. We recognize that that's a challenge. We're working together across our country when it comes to human resources, Madam Speaker, and we will continue to take action on behalf of Manitobans and on behalf of Canadians.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, everyone knows that this government has made bad decision after bad decision when it comes to health care.

That's why staff were already burning out in 2019, before the pandemic arrived. That's why, during the pandemic, under this Premier's time as Health minister, this was the first jurisdiction whose health-care system ran out of capacity. We ran out of the ability in Manitoba to care for our sickest patients.

Now emergency room doctors are speaking out. They're speaking out at the exact same time that this government is trying to issue press releases, and what does this physician say? Again, I'll quote: things are



quite dire right now; things are worse today than they were a year ago.

Madam Speaker, reflect on that. What that means is that things have gotten worse since the Premier took office when it comes to health care. The first step towards a solution should be admitting that we have a problem.

Will the Premier stand in her place today and admit that there is a crisis in Manitoba's health-care system?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, the Leader of the Opposition needs to get off his speaking notes and start listening to what I'm saying, Madam Speaker.

We recognize that there are challenges with respect to recruitment and retention of nurses and other health-care professionals. But that is nothing that is unique to Manitoba. In fact, the doctor that's—the member opposite referred to acknowledged that today.

This is a national problem that we are having, and I will tell you that each and every day, we are working together with those across our country to help come up with solutions to the human resource challenges that we're faced with, Madam Speaker.

The question is, where is the Leader of the Opposition's plan, or is he just—did not have a plan?

#### **State of the Health-Care System Government Management Record**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** We know the damage that Brian Pallister and each and every one of his PC members have caused to our health-care system. And it was this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), when she was Brian Pallister's Health minister, who implemented all of these cuts, Madam Speaker.

The PCs fired hundreds of nurses. They cut 75 nursing seats at Red River. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** They closed ERs all across Winnipeg and all across Manitoba. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** The PCs caused this current crisis in the health-care system.

So, will the Premier get up today, admit that there's a crisis and apologize to all of the Manitobans that they've harmed? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for St. Johns for bringing to the floor the need for an apology. And I think the members opposite should apologize on behalf of their party for the number of individuals they prevented from getting licensed to work in the health system here in Manitoba during their dark days, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday, I was pleased to be at a gurdwara celebrating Diwali. Several young women came to me and talked about how appreciative they are of our government making it possible for them to get 'licent' here in Manitoba. Under that administration, that didn't happen.

\* (14:00)

They need to apologize in this House, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Surprise, surprise, the Premier is not going to get up and take responsibility and apologize.

Patients having—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:**—a heart attack have to wait 10 hours for care. That is simply shameful and unacceptable, Madam Speaker. And again, let me reiterate: this was caused by the Premier, and every single one of these PC members. And all of the cuts that they have done have created a crisis in our health-care system.

Madam Speaker, we know that you can't fix the problem until you admit that there's a problem.

Will the Premier get up today, admit there's a crisis and apologize to all Manitobans?

**Ms. Gordon:** Again, the member for St. Johns rose in this Chamber and did not apologize to all the Manitobans that have been writing to our government—our MLAs are receiving emails and phone calls from the individuals who couldn't get 'licen' during the dark days of the NDP, Madam Speaker. We are digging out from their mess.

What are we doing? Nineteen point—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:**—five million dollars to add 259 nurse training seats. I'm so pleased to join the Premier today to announce \$12.5 million to build a new, innovative

nurse simulation suite at Red River College Polytech to add 115 more seats, Madam Speaker.

We are going—

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

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Nurses are leaving our public health-care system in record numbers, but this minister and Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) simply don't care about that.

Instead of taking action, they cut beds at Grace Hospital. Instead of taking action, the minister promised to move her couch all over Southdale and try to listen to folks.

Madam Speaker, we need a minister that's actually going to action and fix the crisis in our—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —health-care system.

Will the Premier or the minister get up in the House today, admit that there's a crisis and apologize to Manitobans, and take immediate action today?

**Ms. Gordon:** I know the members opposite are worried about our government listening to Manitobans because they are sharing with us what was happening during the dark days of their administration. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** And, Madam Speaker, we are taking action today: twelve—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** —point five million dollars to build an innovative simulation centre at Red River College Polytechnic to add 115 more nurse training seats. That is action, Madam Speaker. That is action.

And, Madam Speaker, I know members opposite probably haven't done this yet, but I encourage them to welcome the 116 graduates that recently graduated from the college of nursing to the health system. Individuals are joining our health system—

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

### Mobile Overdose Prevention Site Government Involvement in Project

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, the addictions crisis in Manitoba needs an all-hands-on-deck approach.

Community organizations are stepping up as this government sits by idly. Sunshine House is one of those organizations. They were approved for funding through Health Canada to operate a mobile overdose prevention site.

Rather than get on board with this important project, the minister directly interfered in the program, which has put its entire status at risk.

Can the minister explain why their—they've interfered in this incredibly important project?

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness):** I appreciate the questions coming from the member opposite.

I will clarify that we have had no interference in any requests of any of the organizations working here in Manitoba. What we have been doing is we have been investing in harm reduction approaches of 25,000 naloxone kits distributed since 2018. We have invested \$428,000 to support counselling through a mobile crisis centre. We have invested \$342,000 to provide emergency telepsychiatry assessments for all of Manitoba.

We are investing where Manitobans need their supports and will continue to do so.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** The PC government's approach are, quite frankly, just baffling, Madam Speaker.

Not only has this government not taken meaningful action to address the addictions crisis—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —they are directly interfering in the efforts of community organizations. Sunshine House's mobile overdose prevention site would save lives. People are dying every day from toxic drug supplies and overdoses. At least three people, Madam Speaker, died this past weekend.

People are dying, Madam Speaker. Regurgitating old announcements is completely unacceptable. This government needs to step up, really step up, or just get out of the way.

Will the minister commit to stop interfering in the mobile overdose prevention site?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I mean, these are quite serious allegations that the member is making without any substantial information being presented, and I think that that's really concerning.

The member is correct that people have been dying, that the overdose issue is super important. And we are making investments. And what the member is doing right now is making this political, which I have done my utmost best to not make this political because it's not political.

Mental health and addictions issues are not political, but they are serious and they need proper investments, and our government is doing so. We invested in six RAAM clinics that never existed under the NDP government in 17 years.

We are saving lives. We are working with organizations to save lives.

Thank you.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, the PCs have provided no support for the mobile overdose prevention site, telling them that the \$50,000 they currently receive from the Province for funding is sufficient.

You don't have to be an expert to know that \$50,000 will not solve the overdose crisis, the addictions crisis, in Manitoba. Instead, the PCs have directly interfered with this project, which has significantly delayed its response.

The minister of Health could make things right today. She says it's not political. Fine. Get out of the way, stand up in her place, provide ministerial approval.

Will she do so today?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** It's become clear that the serious allegations that the member is making is essentially saying because we're not upping to organizations that the member chooses needs more money, that now we're interfering. And I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that no proposals have come before me or my department from this particular organization.

So, if the member wants to clarify what, indeed, interfering—in the member's own understanding, what that means, I would encourage the member to meet

with me and have more discussions, not on the floor of the Chamber.

Thank you.

### **Chronic Homelessness in Manitoba Request for Plan to Address**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Since the PCs took office in 2016, we've seen homelessness get worse here in Manitoba. They failed to build a single unit of social or affordable housing and instead have sold off thousands of units.

The result is that more and more people are having to call outside, home. Winnipeg is—particularly needs more housing units, wraparound addictions and mental health supports. Rather than take action, the PCs have actively made the situation worse.

Can the minister commit to reversing course and providing us with their plan to reduce homelessness here in Manitoba?

\* (14:10)

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I really appreciate a question about this very important initiative.

Our government is committed to addressing the challenges for people who are unsheltered or precariously housed. That is why we have built 745 new units since we took office. That is why we've also committed \$50 million in last year's budget to helping those who were unsheltered receive access to housing, to shelter and to those mental health supports.

And what did the NDP do? They voted against that budget.

This year we've got additional money for people who are—for—who are homeless or housing—precariously housed, including \$5.8 million for N'Dinawemak.

Is the member opposite going to vote against that again this year?

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Shelters are not a sustainable way of housing people in this province.

It's clear that the PC government has no concrete plan to address chronic homelessness. They've cut housing units and have made the situation even worse.

However, on this side of the House, we have a plan to end chronic homelessness. We're pledging to

end chronic homelessness here in Manitoba within two terms—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —by adopting a proven model—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —used by the city of Houston. This model successfully reduced homelessness by 63 per cent and housed 25,000 people.

Will the minister do the right thing, get on board and support our plan today to end chronic homelessness in this province?

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

I think everybody is going to realize that I need to be able to hear so that I can rule on anything that is not following the rules. So, I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation.

**Ms. Squires:** I understand that the member opposite is looking at modules coming out of Texas, but our government is focused on what's happening right here in Manitoba and in the city of Winnipeg. That is why last year's budget we had \$135 million for Manitoba Housing, which, of course—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** —members opposite voted against.

We know what their plan is. When they were in office they had a billion-dollar deficit in repair and maintenance, something that our government has really worked hard to address so that we can get all of our housing units repaired and maintained. They had no plan when they were in office for those 17 years, and that is why the housing stock fell into disrepair that our government is fixing, because we believe all Manitobans deserve a safe and affordable place to call home.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** It's unfortunate that that side of the House thinks that living in a bus shack, in a tent or under a bridge is acceptable. They've continued to cut maintenance costs within housing, which has left shelters boarded up.

The Houston model will reduce homelessness. It will actually give people dignity to have a place to live.

Why won't this minister get on board, join us in this plan, support the Houston model and let's get people housed in this province and off the streets?

**Ms. Squires:** Our government believes that all Manitobans deserve a safe and affordable place to call home. Our government also believes that we need to be providing supports for the most vulnerable people in the province of Manitoba.

We also know that our plan is working in the sense that we have taken 49,000 people out of poverty, according to Statistics Canada, since we've been in government. [*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** That includes lifting 35,000 children out of poverty, which includes addressing their housing needs.

We invested in a rent bank program to help people who are precariously housed. What did the NDP do? They voted against that.

We voted against—or, we invested in building 745 new units. What did they do? They voted against it.

We had over \$140 million in the budget for housing. What did they do? They voted against it.

The question is, is will they vote in favour of housing this year?

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

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

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Last year, the PCs gave legal direction to Hydro to, quote, support development and implementation of Manitoba's response to the 51 recommendations, end quote, in the Wall report. That means Hydro is being forced to implement all of Wall's report.

That means privatizing and breaking up Hydro. It also means more P3s for Hydro and higher rates for families.

The minister said he'd table a report on their progress. Will he table this report before the House rises next week?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** Madam Speaker, the member is—no wonder he's relegated to the ninth spot on the question period list with a question like that.

You know, it's no wonder that the Free Press said about that member—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —and his leader just one week ago—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** Leader of the Opposition seems to think it's his turn to answer questions. He can wait.  
*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** And besides, he has no answers, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, no wonder the Free Press said about that leader and his party: the worst kind of political theatre, the kind that plays on the anxieties of Manitobans who are already worried about the impact of rising costs on their abilities to make ends meet.

Our government is helping Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Sala:** The PCs are forcing Hydro to implement the Brad Wall report—a report that was written by not one, but two ex-Conservative premiers. That's a recipe for privatization and higher rates, and it's wrong, but the PCs are pushing it through anyway.

The PCs also said they would tell Manitobans about their plans this fall. Manitobans don't trust the PCs when it comes to Hydro.

So, the question is simple, Madam Speaker: When will this minister table his report on the Wall commission?

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, he's full of nonsense, but at least he's consistent. The same article in Free Press says there's absolutely nothing in this bill that positions Manitoba Hydro for privatization.

If anything, it says a legislative cap on rate increases makes it less attractive to a prospective purchaser. That member should learn already Manitoba Hydro is not for sale, but where they threatened it, that expert report on Keeyask gives us a path forward to know how to fix and to prevent mistakes in the future, like when the previous government overspent on planned dam and transmission line investments by about \$5 billion that Manitobans now have to pay for.

We'll get it right, where they flubbed it.

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

**Mr. Sala:** This is a very simple question for the minister. It shouldn't be hard for him to answer.

For over a year, the PCs have forced Hydro to raise rates and start on more privatization. It's wrong, and it will hurt our most important Crown corporation. Manitobans should know what the PC's plans are.

Will the minister table this report before the House rises next week? Yes or no.

**Mr. Friesen:** You know, the response on the expert report is, of course, coming—as we promised, it's coming.

But I find it interesting that this question comes today, on the same day where the Leader of the Opposition stood up and tried to suggest that natural gas increases are somehow coming by the design of this government when they know full well that natural gas rates in Manitoba are simply passed along to consumers without any profit to the group.

Madam Speaker, the question—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —becomes clear. Bill 36 is designed to protect Manitobans from the mistakes—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —of the former NDP government. They'll continue to try to shout down the answers but we know, when it comes to the NDP, Manitobans simply do not trust them on Hydro. They do not trust them on affordability.

We'll continue to stand up for Manitoba.

### Emergency Room Patients Visitation Guidelines

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** It has never been more evident that we are in a health-care crisis. Manitobans are stuck waiting extremely long hours, and sometimes days, for the care that they need, while health-care workers are doing their absolute best with the resources that they have.

\* (14:20)

We have been contacted by families across the province that are unable to accompany their loved

ones into emergency rooms. Madam Speaker, it is important to allow those who are in pain or ill to have their loved ones around for support.

Will the house—Health Minister immediately address this issue affecting many Manitobans every day in our hospitals?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for Tyndall Park for bringing forward this concern to the Chamber floor.

I will discuss the matter with Shared Health—it is Shared Health that sets the guidelines for visitations—and ensure that they look at the policies and the guidelines regarding visits and loved ones attending at the health facilities with individuals seeking care, because, of course, we want to ensure that Manitobans have the supports that they need as they enter our health-care facility. So, again, I thank the member for bringing it forward.

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

#### **Support for Health-Care Workers Mental Health Care and Burnout Prevention**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** The Province also needs to be doing more in terms of preventative health to ensure people are kept out of ERs in the first place.

Doctors and nurses are burning out, getting sick and quitting because of the lack of resources and overtime that they're being forced to work. These health-care heroes need more supports, including mental health supports, to help recover from the burnout they're experiencing.

What is this government doing to keep our health-care professionals from quitting?

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness):** Appreciate the question coming from the member opposite, and she's right to point out that there is a large need for mental health supports, not only for the general population but for those who are providing care to our Manitobans seeking care.

And our department is determined to be working alongside Doctors Manitoba, alongside the psychologists of Manitoba, to find ways that we can help support in the workplace to help retain the staff that we do have, and keep them healthy mentally and physically.

Thank you.

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

#### **Philippine Basketball Association New Gymnasium Request**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** We need to ensure Manitobans have the space and resources to keep healthy.

I want to thank the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) for attending PBA's opening ceremonies this past Sunday, as basketball is rapidly growing in Manitoba and, in 2024, the Filipino basketball association of North America will be hosting their tournament here in Winnipeg.

Typically, there are over 100 teams around North America that participate, and the economic impact of this is huge, as players and their supportive families will be utilizing our hotels, restaurants, rental cars and so on.

Will this government commit to investing in a bigger gymnasium so Winnipeg can have more basketball courts in one central location?

**Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Well, Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question, and our government is very supportive of sports in this province. In fact, we have the ACSC Fund—the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund—\$100 million over three years; \$34 million this year alone.

So, I encourage all organizations and all community organizations across this province to apply for this great opportunity, Madam Speaker.

Three years, \$100 million. We're investing in communities. We believe that communities not only should survive post-COVID, but thrive post-COVID.

So, Madam Speaker, again, I thank the member opposite, and if she does have any questions specific to that fund, I'd be happy to entertain that and discuss more in detail.

Thank you.

#### **Red River College Polytechnic New Nurse Training Centre**

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere):** Madam Speaker, nurses and other health-care professionals in Manitoba continue to be on the front lines of our health-care system, and we saw the wonderful work they did throughout the pandemic.

Now that we are moving forward and working towards the goal of 400 nursing seats, can the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration please update the House on recent funding that will help us deliver on our government's commitment to graduate 400 additional nurses right here in Manitoba?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** I'd like to thank my colleague for the question.

Earlier today, I had the privilege of joining the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) at Red River College Polytechnic to announce 12 and a half million dollars in funding towards the establishment of a new health and community services simulation centre. This centre is an innovative way to 'proactively' address education and future staffing needs in nursing and other health-care fields in Manitoba.

For years, the NDP neglected the calls of expanding the training in many health-care professions in Manitoba. Manitobans know the record of the NDP. They have the ER wait times in Canada. I do not—we don't want to go back to the dark days of the NDP.

We have a plan. The NDP has no plan. We are taking action. That's what we're doing, Madam Speaker, for the betterment of Manitobans. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

#### **Post-Secondary Education Performance-Based Funding**

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** It's getting more and more expensive to go to university and college here in Manitoba. Each and every year, students and parents have to pay hundreds of dollars more just to get the education they need here at home.

The PCs' plan for funding cuts are only making this worse. Students and faculty are warning the PCs that the plan for performance-based formula are just a pretext for cuts.

Will the minister tell the House if the PCs will implement a performance-based formula this coming school year, yes or no?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** I'm proud that our province has the lowest tuition fees in all of Western Canada and it'll maintain it that way.

I want to thank all the schools' stake—I want to thank all the stakeholders, including students and associations, for being part of our post-secondary accountability framework sessions. We want to maintain that we—to have—to be—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Reyes:** —attractive here in Manitoba for post-secondary institutions. We want to ensure that we have high-quality post-secondary institutions, the quality of programs, so that all students, including international students and domestic students come to Manitoba, not only to study but to stay and work and live in Manitoba.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

### **PETITIONS**

#### **Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library**

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of the petition is as follows:

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, the JRL, has been served notice by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school by March 31, 2023.

The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and has been home to the JRL for 48 years.

A photo of the auditorium captioned the regional library is published in a 2008 document titled heritage buildings in the RM of the Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of heritage site.

The JRL and the Red River Valley School Division have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

Students that are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefield *[phonetic]*, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1 of 2023.

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that the JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of the Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that a Memorandum of Understanding between the Red River Valley School Division and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community; and

\* (14:30)

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

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

#### **Provincial Road 224**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Ekosi.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further—oh, the honourable member for Elmwood.

#### **Louise Bridge**

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 110 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it has deteriorated extensively, become functionally obsolete, subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) Two thousand and fourteen, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.



(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed that residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge on its—in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue in—to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed. The City expropriation process has begun.

(10) The new Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the new Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping it open for active transportation in the future.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further petitions?

### **Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library has been served notice by the Red River

Valley School Division to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school by March 31st, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by the renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captured—captioned the regional library is published in a 2008 document titled heritage buildings in RM De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

(4) JRL and R-R-V-S-D-W has flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students that are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditor—auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

And this has been signed by Catherine Harder, Darryl Harder, Eileen Dueck,

Miigwech.

### Home-Care Services

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

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

(1) Home-care workers in Manitoba provide skilled and compassionate care that helps better the quality of life for thousands of Manitobans.

(2) Robust home-care services are proven to reduce the strain on health services and demand for hospital beds.

(3) Home care reduces the demand for long-term-care beds as it allows people to continue living in their own space.

(4) Studies show that a third of the 200,000 Canadians living in long-term-care homes could stay home with proper home-care support.

(5) Investing in home care saves money, as daily services cost half the price of a long-term-care bed and one seventh the daily cost of a hospital bed; the—

(6) The provincial government's cuts to home care in Manitoba has resulted in chronic staffing issues that caused the WRHA to cancel 27,000 home-care appointments in the month of April 2022 alone.

(7) Many clients in Manitoba only receive home-care services once a day, whereas countries such as Denmark offer up to six visits a day.

(8) Home-care workers in Manitoba are paid poor wages, are offered little benefits, lack sick time and are overworked, resulting in difficulty retaining and attracting workers.

(9) Home-care workers have been without a contract since 2017, due to this provincial government's interference in labour negotiations.

(10) Investing in home care is a proactive approach that would save the Province millions of dollars as well as allow more Manitobans to age in place.

\* (14:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health and the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care to immediately increase investment in home-care services so that

home-care workers can be paid a fair wage and clients can receive the level of service they require.

This has been signed by Debbie Bass, Daniel Richards and Charmaine Palacios and many other Manitobans.

### South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition—pardon me. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Residents of the River Park South community in Winnipeg are disturbed by the increasing noise levels caused by traffic on the South Perimeter Highway.

(2) South Perimeter Highway functions as a transport route for semi-trucks travelling across Canada, making this stretch of the Perimeter especially loud.

(3) According to the South Perimeter Noise Study conducted in 2019, the traffic levels are expected to increase significantly over the next 20 years and backyard noise levels have already surpassed 65 decibels.

(4) Seniuk Road, which runs alongside the South Perimeter, contributes additional truck traffic causing increased noise and air pollution.

(5) Residents face a decade of construction on the South Perimeter, making this an appropriate time to add noise mitigation for South Perimeter—for the South Perimeter to these projects.

(6) The current barriers between the South Perimeter Highway and the homes of the River Park South residents are a berm and a wooden fence, neither of which are effective at reducing the traffic noise.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to consult with noise specialists and other experts to help determine the most effective way to reduce the traffic noise and to commit to meaningful action to address resident concern; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation to help address this issue with a noise barrier wall along residential portions of the South Perimeter from St. Anne's Road to St. Mary's Road and for River Park South residents.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further petitions?

**Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library**

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, JRL, has been served notice by the Red River Valley School Division, RRVSD, to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school, ÉHS, by March 31st, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned the regional library is published in a 2008 document titled heritage buildings in RM De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

(4) JRL and RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students that are bused in from the neighbouring 'municipalities' that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal, Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize that value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an

MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

1) La Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library a été avisée par la Division scolaire Vallée de la rivière Rouge de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de l'École Heritage School d'ici le 31 mars 2023.

2) L'auditorium a été construit dans les années 1960 par le célèbre architecte manitobain Étienne Gaboury. La B-R-G y est installée depuis 48 ans.

3) Une photo de l'auditorium intitulée la bibliothèque régionale est publiée dans un document de 2008 intitulé : bâtiments patrimoniaux des MR De Salaberry et Saint-Pierre-Jolys. Il est indiqué qu'il s'agit d'un bâtiment moderne important qui pourrait atteindre le statut de site patrimonial.

4) La B-R-G et la DSVRR ont prospéré grâce à un protocole d'entente mutuellement bénéfique pendant 54 ans.

5) Leur collection commune compte plus de 50 000 livres et possède la quatrième plus grande collection de littérature de langue française dans les régions rurales du Manitoba.

6) Les élèves qui sont transportés par autobus des municipalités voisines qui n'ont pas de bibliothèque publique, comme Niverville, Grunthal et Kleefeld, ont accès gratuitement à la bibliothèque publique, et à sa quatrième plus grande collection de livres en français dans les régions rurales du Manitoba pendant l'année scolaire.

Nous présentons à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba la pétition suivante :

1) De demander au ministre du Travail, de la Protection des consommateurs et des Services

gouvernementaux d'envisager de concéder l'auditorium à la B-R-G d'ici le 1er mars 2023.

2) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation de reconnaître la valeur que la B-R-G apporte à la population étudiante de l'ÉHS, ainsi qu'aux communautés du Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys et de la MR De Salaberry.

3) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation et au ministre des Affaires francophones de reconnaître qu'un protocole d'entente entre la RRVSD et la G-R-L est mutuellement bénéfique, financièrement et culturellement.

4) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et son statut au sein de la communauté.

5) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine d'empêcher toute rénovation de l'auditorium qui détruirait et dévaloriserait l'intégrité architecturale du bâtiment.

Cette pétition a été signée par Bruno Albert [*phonetic*], Roland Maynard et Colette Hebert.

Merci.

### **Translation**

*I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.*

*The background for this petition is as follows:*

*(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library was notified by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate premises currently located in the auditorium of the École Heritage School by March 31, 2023.*

*(2) The auditorium was built in the 1960s by famous Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the B-R-G for 48 years.*

*(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned the regional library was published in a 2008 document titled significant heritage buildings of the RM of De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is described as an important modern building that could attain the status of heritage site.*

*(4) The B-R-G and the RRVSD have flourished by means of a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.*

*(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and includes the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.*

*(6) During the school year, students who are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.*

*We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:*

*(1) To urge the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the B-R-G by March 1, 2023.*

*(2) To urge the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.*

*(3) To urge the Minister of Education and the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs to recognize that a memorandum of understanding between the RRVSD and the G-R-L is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.*

*(4) To urge the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.*

*(5) To urge the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy or devalue the architectural integrity of the building.*

*This petition was signed by Bruno Albert [*phonetic*], Roland Maynard et Colette Hebert.*

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

*(Continued)*

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

#### **House Business**

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Pursuant to rule 34(11), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Antisemitism.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Antisemitism.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Could you please call for debate and hopeful passage at second reading Bills 45, 40, 43, 46, 38 and 42?

\* (14:50)

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of the following bills: Bill 45, 40, 43, 46, 38 and 42.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 45—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**Madam Speaker:** So, I will now call second reading of Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022; Loi d'exécution du budget de 2022 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has advised of this bill, and I table the message—His Honour the Administrator has been advised of this bill, and I table the message.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, that Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The Administrator has been notified of this message. No—the message has been tabled.

**Mr. Friesen:** I'm pleased to rise and to put some comments on the record in respect of Bill 45, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act for this year, 2022.

The budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act implements numerous tax statute and administrative changes, most of which were announced as part of Budget 2022, as well as some additional priority legislation. This bill implements tax measures to lower taxes for Manitobans and for businesses. It makes our economy stronger and more resilient, as well as changes to enhance Manitoba government's service delivery.

So, some highlights of the bill related to tax measures are as follows: this bill increases the exemption threshold for the Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax Levy, otherwise known as the payroll tax. It increases that threshold from \$1.7 million to \$2 million.

*Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

And it increases the threshold above which the lower rate applies from \$3.5 million to \$4 million. It effectively raises those brackets at which the payroll tax kicks in for job creators once they have that requisite number of employees or that size of a payroll.

That payroll tax has been a lot—has been an irritant a lot to employers in this province. They have made their voices known. Our government has continued to take action where the previous government did not. This change reduces the tax paid by almost 1,000 employers. It completely exempts almost 200 employers altogether from paying the payroll tax. We continue to make progress of behalf of businesses and job creators.

This bill also includes an exemption for fuel use in the off-road operation of peat harvesting equipment for Manitoba's fuel tax. It is a consistent tax treatment with a majority of Canadian jurisdictions, Mr. Acting Speaker. I don't know if you're aware, but that in Manitoba, our industry here accounts for 17 per cent of all of Canada's peatlands. Most of the time, I think even in your part of the province, the peat is harvested for horticultural industry and much of that is exported to US destinations like Texas and other places.

It's a burgeoning industry. The industry asked us for this treatment. We are extending the use of exempted fuel the same way we do for fisheries, for mining, for forestry, for agriculture and so forth.

This bill establishes an ongoing statutory appropriation for the education property tax credit and sets the rebate percentages by statute instead of regulation. So last year, we brought a stand-alone bill in order to raise that education property tax rebate to

the 37.5 per cent rebate for households and for farmland. But now, going forward, this will be done in statute, not by regulation. Our 10-year phase-out in elimination of education property taxes in Manitoba will continue. Manitobans know that this year those cheques went into the mail for many Manitobans earlier this year. A lot of those cheques went out in the spring or in the fall concurrent with when they received their property tax bill. Some people are only now receiving their property tax bill and they will get that cheque in that corresponding month.

And it matters right now. Affordability matters right now more than ever with the Bank of Canada increasing the interest rates in an effort to slow the rate of inflation, address this inflationary effect that we've seen that is causing the increase in the cost of goods and services across Canada and, indeed, across the world. And so these affordability payments are helping and this legislation points next year to the 50 per cent increase to residential and farm families. And that 10 per cent rebate continues for other properties like commercial properties and other.

At the same time, let us be clear. Education is fully funded with very significant increases to education funding as well as other amounts, special amounts that have been invested in education as educators and schools and school divisions emerge from a global pandemic. And there is more investment from this government and in this province to help students make a successful return to the classrooms and recover any learning deficiency that resulted from being away from the classroom.

So as a result of all these things, rebates for homeowners will increase from an average of almost \$400 last year to almost \$600 in this year and going to almost \$800 in the next year. Welcome relief for Manitobans who indicate that affordability right now is their No. 1 concern. At the same time, this bill, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, includes the new renters tax credit. It replaces the renters component of the education property tax credit.

So now we have a renters residential tax credit specifically for renters. It means that any renter of any apartment in Manitoba will receive a \$525 additional payment each and every year, but it gets better. Because of the changes our government has made, we have found efficiencies in this program that allow us to extend this renters benefit for the first time ever in this province to individuals who are receiving non-EIA Rent Assist and people who are in social housing. That means an additional—almost 35,000 Manitobans

through this bill become eligible to receive that payment in the mail at a point in time when affordability matters more than ever.

In addition to this, there still is that additional \$300 available to seniors under this program, not to be confused with a more recent seniors affordability payment. Those are separate payments and seniors have actually contacted our government to say thanks for the clarification that we know that those low-income seniors are still eligible for a \$300 affordability payment, but nothing compromises the \$300 payment that they previously and continue to receive under these renters tax credit programs. It means for a household paying an average \$1,000 a month in rent—and we know rental prices for properties change and they fluctuate—this renters tax credit is equal to over half of one month's rent. It's payments at the right time for Manitobans who need that help.

Two new affordability payments announced on August the 31st are included in this bill. And that are—those are the ones I just referred to now. They are established as refundable tax credits to help ease the burden of rising costs and inflation.

\* (15:00)

The first program, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, as you know, is a payment to Manitoba families with children under the age of 18 and those families who have an income of less than \$175,000 in 2021. They will receive \$250 for the first child and \$200 for every child thereafter in a one-time payment. It aligns with the return to the classroom in September. We know that is a costly month for families across the province, when children go back to school—so many costs associated with the return to school—and this payment will help.

In addition to that, the payment I just told you about, to Manitoba seniors with less than \$40,000 in net family income who claimed an education property tax credit in 2021. They will receive \$300.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, in addition to this, a few other changes as well. The Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit—we make this credit 'perment'—permanent, and we are creating a—regulatory making powers and enabling expansion of the credit to investors in specified venture capital funds, thereby improving access to capital and supporting entrepreneurs.

It was only a little while ago that the Minister responsible for Economic Development, Investment and Trade (Mr. Cullen) went out in the hall with

numerous businesses and made the announcements to make this real in terms of this \$50-million Venture Capital Fund in Manitoba. We are proud to see this province returning to this role to be able to appropriately and through third-party expertise make venture capital more available in the province of Manitoba.

In addition to this, this bill makes the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit permanent. It clarifies when information obtained under a tax act can be disclosed, but only for policy analysis and research and administration of a benefit program or a service. This is consistent with federal income tax rules applicable to Manitoba personal and corporate income tax and disclosures in some other provinces. In other words, we work with the federal government on a regular basis to address issues of equity and adopt best practice in Manitoba. Those conversations and that dialogue continues, and this is some of the result of that ongoing work.

This bill clarifies the requirements we introduced last year for operators of online sales platforms. So many people these days shop online, and while we continue to encourage people to shop in their own economies and buy local and buy from producers and from businesses who are hiring workers and paying their property tax and supporting all of our programs and services in the province, even so, we know that online sales platforms are growing. And what we've done here is we've clarified the requirements on these things so that the operators of online sales platforms can collect and remit tax on sales of taxable services made by means of their platforms instead of from multiple service providers linked to the platform.

So, in other words, you—well, I won't mention the names of online retailers, but essentially if you were shopping and you were buying something from a business, it could be that that website and that company through which you're shopping that could remit the sales tax on behalf of the other merchant. In any way, the sales tax continues to be paid and the government makes sure that everyone is paying their proper sales tax to keep the playing field level.

This bill also streamlines the approval process under the mines act for the additional processing allowance and for tax exemptions for new and expanded mines. Previously, this required an order-in-council approval. Now mining companies can self-assess eligibility for mining tax benefits as part of their business plans.

These process improvements were alluded to by our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) when she was in Toronto earlier this year with numerous ministers of our government at the mining conference. These are changes that have been called for by mining. We have indicated we are wanting to grow this sector in Manitoba, and this is part of how we bring those good jobs to Manitoba and Manitoba's North and continue to build our economy.

This bill includes a handful of other minor, technical, tax-related amendments and also being made to correct errors and improve administrative efficiency.

A number of other changes in Bill 45 enhance government service delivery and accountability to Manitobans. Notable changes include an extension to Efficiency Manitoba's current three-year plan. They have a plan and, in recognition of the impact of the COVID pandemic, it's allowing us to extend that over—forward.

It includes changes in the calculation of Manitoba Public Insurance's reserve requirements. These will ensure long-term rate stability for Manitoba rate-payers, and they ensure that MPI will always be on a solid financial foundation by essentially setting out targets for adequacy within those reserves under which there could be no returns or rebates to rate-payers. A fund would have to be to a level of adequacy defined by experts in order—and if it was determined that there was adequate provisions in the fund then, only then and after PUB approval, could such a rebate be made.

This includes the elimination of the special operating agency financing authority and its act to streamline government financing simply because special operating agencies are being folded back into departments, and so there will no longer be a need to have the financing authority in place.

There are also amendments in here that allow for federal funding to flow through the Province to Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro applied for and received an Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, what we call the ICIP award. But a federal requirement specified that a funding agreement must be with the Province, not with a Crown corporation, and this ensures that Hydro will be in receipt of the federally approved ICIP funding.

The bill includes, as well, amendments to the securities regulation to validate filing fees that have been paid by international dealers and advisers to the Manitoba Securities Commission. These fees have

been paid by international dealers and advisers since 2018, involving Manitoba institutions engaged in non-Canadian, primarily US, activities like equity acquisitions and IPOs.

And there's a small change here that authorizes board members of the Manitoba Film & Sound Recording Development Corporation—it's a government agency—to be remunerated at rates set by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council to assist with recruitment and retention. It turns out that this was an outlier and we did not have the same provisions attached to this board that would've applied to other boards and it was driving challenges in getting people to serve in this way.

So, to wrap up, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the changes in this bill are designed to make life more affordable for Manitobans. Since we were elected in 2016, our government has been clear that Manitobans have paid too much tax under the previous government, a government that did too little, too late, to try to make lives more affordable for Manitobans.

We have taken action. We made a principal pledge in 2019 to say we are committed to a \$2,020 tax rollback guarantee by 2023 for every individual taxpayer in Manitoba. Not only did we reach that target, we exceeded that target with as much as \$2,400 per individual, ahead of schedule, getting real savings for Manitobans. That means that for a family of two-income earners, it equates to nearly \$5,000 in annual tax and fee savings.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, Manitobans know the record of the former NDP government. They raised the PST. They raised 17 taxes in 17 years. They didn't even raise things as basic as the basic personal amount, which is the lowest level of applicable taxation that is taxed to the lowest income wage earners. It was those people that the NDP were taking more and more money from by not even indexing the basic personal amount.

We indexed tax brackets. We indexed the basic personal amounts. We have given rebates back through MPI. We have given affordability cheques back, the largest rebate program in Manitoba history, through the Education Property Tax Credit, while we fully fund education.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we welcome the debate on the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act. We look forward to the passage of this legislation to continue to outline our government's

plan to get value for Manitobans, to make Manitoba affordable and help families succeed in this province.

### Questions

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** 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.

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** I'm wondering if the minister can advise us why this bill does not set limits on how many times Efficiency Manitoba's plan can be extended.

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I thank the member for the question.

As I explained in my speaking notes, it is a one-time extension. It simply acknowledges that a global pandemic has taken place. Efficiency Manitoba asks for a little more time to do the important work that they're undertaking, and we think that's a reasonable request in lieu of the fact that so much of their activities were disrupted and taken offline during the global pandemic.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** We're still running a significant debt and deficit.

How is the government going to pay for the \$350 million in cheques they have sent out, especially when some of the money is going out of our province?

**Mr. Friesen:** I thank the member for her question about our government's path to balance, a path that many thought we could not achieve, and then achieved actually before the deadline we had imposed for ourselves.

Manitobans can trust that this government, again, is on its way back to the path of balance while we continue to make excellent investments in health care, education and social services. And that is how we will continue to pay for the affordability measures that Manitobans need right now.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** I want to direct the minister's attention to section 13.2(1) of the BITSA act in relation to the efficiency plan, where it expressly says that a plan may be extended more than once.



And so, I'm wondering how the minister reconciles his earlier comments with what's actually written in the act.

**Mr. Friesen:** This bill provides for the ability for Efficiency Manitoba to be able to extend its work.

As I said, I'm certain that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) accepts the rationale that the global pandemic will have caused disruption. We know it's caused disruption throughout society. But including in the excellent work, this allows for that extension going forward so that Efficiency Manitoba can complete it work. And that's what this BITSA bill provides for.

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The member for Tyndall Park. No questions?

**Mr. Wasyliw:** The PUB doesn't have oversight powers on the Efficiency Manitoba plan. In fact, the changes in BITSA expressly exclude the PUB from having the ability to review it.

And I'm wondering if the minister can enlighten us as to why they don't want the PUB to have independent oversight of their efficiency plan.

**Mr. Friesen:** This BITSA bill contains no measures that would change the relationship between the PUB and any other entities, so I'm not exactly sure what the question is that the member is alluding to.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Again, I, you—direct the minister to his own legislation, because he seems not to be familiar with it.

But a efficiency plan is expressly not reviewable by the PUB, and this government found that important enough to actually enshrine it in law.

And so I'm wondering if the minister can tell us what was the policy rationale to exclude the PUB from independent oversight of the Efficiency Manitoba plans.

**Mr. Friesen:** There is no change, I can assure the member, in this bill contemplated in respect of the relationship between the PUB and any other entities that was not previously the case.

So there's no change in this bill to any relationship between the PUB and any entities for which it has regulatory responsibility.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** From a policy perspective, there doesn't appear to be any good reason to change the MPI reserve and rebate process, and this will get rid

of a tool that the government could use to help Manitobans during a time of crisis.

I'm wondering why the government is introducing this change now, especially during an affordability crisis.

**Mr. Friesen:** Just ask the member to repeat his question one more time. I missed a few words.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So, from a policy perspective, there appears to be no good reason to change the MPI reserve and rebate process. And the changes in BITSA will get rid of a tool that the government could use to help Manitobans during times of crisis.

And I guess my question to the minister is: why did the government introduce this change, especially during a time of affordability crisis?

**Mr. Friesen:** On the contrary. The member knows that these rules for M-P-R are designed to eliminate risk, to basically ensure that there are adequate reserves to fund the programs. And I would shudder to think that that member is suggesting that we should be robbing that fund and drawing it down under a level that experts say are necessary to support the programs.

That sounds reckless. I sure hope that's not what the member is suggesting. This is on the basis of evidence. It sets minimum reserve targets and then it supports the future programs by doing so.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** The reality is, is that there will be times of crisis when we have floods and storms where MPI reserves are under stress due to unusually high number of claims. And by locking in this process in law instead of regulations, the government will lose the ability to be nimble and to respond to the crisis, especially during recessions and affordability crisis like now.

I'm wondering if the minister can explain why he wants to handcuff future governments from being able to properly be able to address affordability crisis, and why does he want to raise MPI rates on Manitobans?

**Mr. Friesen:** The member doesn't know just how much he just stepped into it in the cow pasture because actually, the PUB has supported MPI's proposal to develop a capital management plan. The PUB agrees that MPI requires adequate capital targets.

This member is suggesting that the PUB should be messed with and that he knows better than the PUB. We believe in a strong and independent PUB to continue to make these decisions.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Now, under this bill, the government will be allowed to receive federal funds on behalf of Manitoba Hydro. We have a long history from this government of hiving off federal money that's supposed to go to the bedside, that's supposed to go to the courthouse.

I'm wondering if the minister will commit on the record today that no money guaranteed by the federal government that is earmarked for Hydro will be kept by the provincial government and all funds will flow through to Hydro.

**Mr. Friesen:** The member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) is making an allegation that he supports with no facts. He just makes statements, then they blow in the wind. I don't know what he's referring to. What he sees here is a flow-through that allows for monies received by Hydro for the ICIP program to go from the feds to the Province directly to Hydro.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm wondering if the minister can tell us why he's refusing to commit on the record that 100 per cent of federal money which is earmarked for Hydro will go to Hydro, and not one penny will be kept by his government. It's a simple question. He can commit to it right now on the record to allay Manitobans' concerns about this government.

And my question to him: why is he refusing to do so?

**Mr. Friesen:** This question borders on idiotic. Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it is clear the money received from Hydro goes to Hydro. It is a flow-through provision. There is no way in law for the federal government to give money directly to Hydro. It can't be done legislatively. This creates the avenue for the feds to write a cheque from the Province, which goes to Hydro. The member won't take yes for an answer. Allow him, please, to take yes for an answer.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** The answer that I'm looking for, for the minister, which he seems to be struggling to provide and should be a red flag to all Manitobans, is that he will not commit on the record that all federal money earmarked for Hydro will go to Hydro. And the concerns are this government has diverted federal money before from what it's intended.

Will the—he now—I'll give him another opportunity to come straight with Manitobans and confirm that 100 per cent of Hydro funds will go to Hydro?

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Friesen:** I'm only too happy to burn that member's 15 minutes of question-and-answer time on this bill to say for the third time that the money intended for Hydro by the federal government under the ICIP project will go to Hydro, not to MPI, not to Liquor & Lotteries, not to the City of Winkler. It will go to Hydro.

And so I would ask, does the member want me to, for a fourth time, confirm that answer for him in this proceeding?

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Well, with the greatest of respect, that was the first time he actually answered a question here this afternoon.

Now, the education property tax rebate will put more money in the hands of massive corporations and billionaires, many of whom don't even live in Manitoba.

Why has this government provided tax breaks for those who don't need financial aid?

**Mr. Friesen:** We believe that affordability is top of mind for Manitobans right now and that member can't have it both ways. On one day, he will say that, you know, this government is not taking enough steps to help Manitobans. The next day he says they're taking too many steps to help Manitobans.

We know that when it comes to helping Manitobans on issues of finances, Manitobans don't believe them. The NDP don't have any credibility. If elected, they—we know what their plan is. They will raise taxes if elected. They know what our plan will be: to continue to make life more affordable for Manitobans. We'll take no lectures on affordability from the member for Fort Garry.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Certainly, this minister is an expert in affordability for billionaires but struggles with affordability for everyday Manitobans.

We've heard from Canadian Federation of Independent Business that their members are not getting rebates flown through into them, that their landlords are hoarding the entirety of these rebates. This—there was an opportunity in BITSA to fix this.

Why didn't the minister listen to the small business community and why did he not fix this?

**Mr. Friesen:** I challenge the member for Fort Garry to produce one iota of evidence that shows that the fundamental premise of triple net signed by two parties in a legal agreement is not being abided by.

I met with my landlord for my constituency office three days ago and he walked me right through how my education property tax credit goes back to the constituency office and is not held by the landlord. And guess what? We should look up his records and I bet the same principle for his constituency office is in effect.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So, is the minister alleging that Canadian Federation of Independent Business is making their concerns up, that they're not serious or accurate when they say that their members are not getting a flow through and they're not benefitting from the commercial property tax rebate?

**Mr. Friesen:** Let the record show that when challenged, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) could not produce one record that showed that a property manager or landowner was holding back illegally a property tax payment to a renter.

But let's be clear: I thought the member for Fort Garry was a lawyer. We're talking about a legal agreement by two parties. What's the recourse of a party that's been grieved in this way? Legal recourse. We know that under the law, a landowner cannot hold back education property tax credit and we know of no instances in which it's being done.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I wonder if the minister can explain why he raised taxes on renters by reducing their rental credit.

**Mr. Friesen:** We're proud of a \$525 payment that will be made to every single renter in Manitoba. But I wonder if that member for Fort Garry can explain why they never extended that property tax credit to renters to 35,000 Manitobans in non-EIA Rent Assist and living in social housing, because that's what we did.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Under the current rental rebate plan, those renters who are not on the lease—roommates or, often, common-law partners—have been left out and if relationships break down or if the roommate who is on the lease doesn't give the share of the credit over to the roommates or the common-law partner, they're out of luck. There was an opportunity in BITSA to fix this.

Why is this government happy with the current state of things and why wouldn't the government fix this so that all renters get a share of the rental credit?

**Mr. Friesen:** The member for Fort Garry was in a briefing with officials and his own staff less than a day and a half ago, and in that proceeding with my deputy minister and officials from the department, he made no note of a concern that he now says he had. When

he had direct access to the deputy minister, he asked no question of this nature.

So I ask him, if he's got a remedy, boy, he should be bringing it forward. Now, we believe that this is a very significant payment to renters that comes at a time when they're focused on affordability. We're proud of this payment that will go to thousands more renters than the NDP ever made eligible.

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The time for question period has expired.

### Debate

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The floor is now open for debate.

The member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith)? *[interjection]* Okay, the member for Fort Garry.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** Our concern, of course, has always been with these BITSA bills, the government uses these omnibus bills often to escape accountability. We have seen, in the past, that they have tried to hike Manitoba Hydro rates by 2.9 per cent disguised in these BITSA bills.

Unlike other bills, this BITSA bill will not go to committee. They will not be public scrutiny where the public will be asked to comment on these bills. We're obviously concerned by the tax changes that this bill puts in place is that they will disproportionately benefit those who are already well-off and they don't alleviate the financial struggles of Manitobans who are facing a current affordability crisis.

So the minister brought in these affordability cheques, and the key concern here is it took seven months for this government to act. This has not been a recent or new problem. We have been dealing with this issue since early in the year. This is the biggest affordability crisis that Manitoba has faced, certainly in my lifetime, and their response was to borrow \$89 million.

Again, this is all borrowed money. This is going to have to be paid back with interest, and this is mortgaging our children's future. And it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars in interest payments and take years to pay back. So we have to make sure that we get it right, that the money actually is going to who needs the help and it'll have a maximum impact for our economy. And this minister, time and time again, gets it wrong.

In order to hand out very small cheques to a handful of Manitobans, this government is ignoring the

needs of the vast majority of Manitobans. And, of course, you know, what's cynical about all this is it—these cheques show a real contempt for Manitobans.

This is a political stunt and it's cynical vote-buying with taxpayers' own money. And, of course, the timing of this—these cheques are coming out just before a by-election is going to be called in Kirkfield Park and on the heels of a soon-to-be general election.

So with inflation running at near 8 per cent in Manitoba, gas, groceries and housing has become absolutely unaffordable for many. And so these one-time \$200 cheques to a small collection of Manitobans, sadly, will not make much of a difference. And the cheques are very small and they go to too few people to have any meaningful impact.

But the eligibility criteria is concerning here. And it's political and cynical, and it tends to be targeted at wealthy suburban families as opposed to people who are absolutely struggling right now who need immediate relief.

These cheques are directed at families making \$170,000 a year or less. And I know, maybe to this minister, that that seems like chump change, but to average Manitobans where the average family income is \$98,000, this is almost twice the average and it puts families in the highest income bracket.

So this minister has never explained, this government has never justified why those who are in the highest tax bracket qualify for these \$200 cheques while—and that's the same amount that somebody in the lowest tax bracket would get.

\*(15:30)

Now, a professional couple making \$170,000 a year with one child would get the same \$200 cheque as a family of one child making \$300,000 of income. And the difference is that \$200 cheque will make a huge impact for that low-income family but will not make any appreciable impact on the lives of high-income couple. In no universe would Manitobans view that as fair. That's a flat rate rebate. It disproportionately benefits high-income earners, and it is a regressive rebate.

Families without children have been excluded. So there are a lot of families that are—who are struggling, that can't make ends meet, but they don't have children, so they won't even get anything from this benefit despite being hit very hard by the affordability crisis. We know that single people who are not seniors will also not get any benefit, despite two-income—singles

being hit hard by the affordability crisis. There is absolutely no help for students here. We know many of them are low-income ratepayers. As well as there's no help for renters at all.

So this government—and when we go to places like Riel, when we go to places like Radisson and Rossmere and talk to the people there, they see through this. I mean, nobody, you know, is being fooled by this. And they'll often say, you know, it's great: everybody likes to get a cheque, and that's nice. But this cheque isn't going to be life changing or altering to people in those communities, whereas for many people who aren't getting any help or the help that they get isn't enough, this is going to be hard for them.

When we talk about the education property tax rebate, the government had an opportunity here to fix what they broke. The commercial property education tax rebate has now become permanent, and last year, it cost Manitobans \$350 million in lost revenue. And that's money that we had to borrow. That's money that we're going to be paying back the interest. There's—Winnipeg Free Press has projected that that initial rebate will cost Manitobans over \$1 billion once it's paid off. There's absolutely nothing financially prudent about anything this government is doing. And it will probably cost multiple billions once the full effect of this rebate is in effect.

That's money that could be used for our schools that's not going to our schools. That's money that could be used for our failing hospitals that's not going to our hospitals. That's money that could be used to rebuild our crumbling roads and infrastructure, and it's not. And so where is that money going? It's going to bondholders in London. It's going to bondholders in New York. And that money is leaving Manitoba and is not circulating in our economy, and it's not going to help us.

We know Manitobans don't support corporate welfare, yet this government, time and time again, doesn't believe that that's a problem. And not only do they hand out cheques to some of the richest people in Canada but some of the richest people in the world. And especially at a time when this government has cut education funding for six years in a row and the education system is on life support. We know the health-care system is on life support. Obviously, we don't believe that we should be borrowing money to pay for corporate welfare. And we're going to be saddling our children with interest payments and debts for the

next 20 years so this government can reward their political donors with government money.

And yet here we are. We know that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has complained that this government doesn't listen. They certainly have come to my office and expressed frustration that this government is not pro small business. And they've brought concerns from the small business community that they're not getting commercial rebate cheques and that these large, out-of-province corporate landlords are keeping all of the money; it's not passing down to small businesses. I've been told that they have met with the minister, who reluctantly met with them and who promptly ignored their concerns. There was a real opportunity in this bill to fix this and didn't and, of course, we're going to all pay the cost for that.

This government has chosen—it is a policy choice—to give tens of millions of dollars of Manitoba taxpayer money to billionaires and large corporate entities from Toronto. They never asked for these cheques. They're not struggling. They're not hurting. And why the government thought this was a good idea, they have yet to answer.

So, Emanuele Saputo—he's the eighth richest person in Canada, has a net worth of \$5.2 billion US—he received a cheque from this minister for \$12,813. That's even more money than the former premier, Brian Pallister, received in his rebate cheque. Charles Koch, 15th richest person in the world, estimated net worth of \$70 billion US—this is a massive donor to the US Republican Party and funds anti-environmental groups—this minister sent him a cheque for \$80,414. The Thomson family, which is the 26th richest in the world, estimated wealth at \$49.2 billion. If you broke out the family as individuals, they are the third, fourth and fifth richest people in Canada—they received a shocking \$259,709 cheque from this government.

We know that Polo Park received a million-dollar cheque. St. Vital mall, Kildonan Place received over \$200,000 in cheques. We know railroads and oil companies received massive cheques.

The commercial rebate alone just for this year is \$40 million, and that's set to grow next year. You can hire a lot of nurses and teachers for \$40 million. You can fund a universal breakfast program, you can keep two full-time staffed ERs open for a year and you can reduce class sizes by a lot.

We're not doing any of these things. We are squandering Manitobans' money—we're actually borrowing money—to provide corporate welfare to some

of the richest people in the world who never asked for it, didn't need it and will not even spend their rebate cheques in Manitoba. You'd be hard pressed to design a more fiscally reckless and irresponsible rebate program.

You know, Brian Pallister finally got, sort of, one thing right—he was always concerned about being No. 1. No one can touch the Pallister-Stefanson government when it comes to corporate welfare and rewarding their political donors with public money.

And by including this in BITSA, there are, again, no committee hearings. And this government obviously doesn't want to hear from Manitobans, so they're not going to get a say, they're not going to be able to weigh in on what they think of this corporate welfare. And we saw with Bill 36—there was two days of hearings—that Manitobans completely rejected taking power away from PUB and having this government politicize the rates of hydro and for the Stefanson government to raise hydro rates year over year by 5 per cent. Well, now, Manitoba will not get their say on why we're giving corporate handouts to billionaires while starving the education system.

So, now, let's turn to renters: 40 per cent of Manitoba's—Manitobans rent. That's almost—it's well over 550,000 Manitobans. In order to provide, sort of, this corporate welfare to out-of-province billionaires, this government has reduced the rental tax credit two years in a row. That means that taxes on renters have actually increased for the past two consecutive years, and that's during an affordability crisis. This government has made life more expensive for renters. And, of course, in BITSA they plan to make this permanent and they plan to continue to raise taxes on renters each and every subsequent year. And it certainly begs the question what they have against renters. And the answer is certainly obvious: they're not donating to the PC party. And with this government, you have to be one of their donors in order to get any kind of attention from them or any response.

In previous years, if you lived in a suite not for the full 12 months, you would still get a credit and you would be provided a benefit to some—many who needed that benefit. Now, under BITSA, it's going to be changed. It would be prorated to how many months you have lived in the suite. The government claims that the savings from this are neutral, and being transferred to expand eligibility programs to include non-EIA Rent Assist renters, but they have refused to release any projections or numbers.

\* (15:40)

We don't know if this is actually running neutral. It may be two years before we actually find out. And that's of concern because we suspect that this probably isn't going to be revenue-neutral and we suspect that the government is actually saving much more money that they're paying out, which means that they could have provided a better rebate to Manitobans. But it'll be some time, because of the opaqueness of this government, before that truth comes to light.

But there's a larger issue here that this credit is not equitable, that it goes to whoever is on the lease. So, if you are roommate or in a partnership and your name is not on the lease, even though you contributed to rent, you will not get any rebate from this government.

And we have heard many stories from people who've contacted our office. I suspect they've contacted the minister as well. Roommates who didn't receive their share or couples when they split and one couple—one of the couplets takes all of the rebate. And, obviously, this has a very negative impact on Manitobans, often affecting already vulnerable Manitobans.

The government has been aware of this problem for the past two years, seems wholly uninterested in addressing who falls through the cracks, and has doubled down with BITSA and has not made changes to fix this problem yet again.

There's also an issue with the Hydro pass-through. We've been receiving record transfers from the federal government for the last six years. And the one and only balanced budget from this government was the direct result of the federal government sending money to Manitoba to the Pallister-Stefanson governments to use.

And instead of using the money from the federal government, which was—it was intended for health care, education, legal aid system—they used it to balance the budget. So the truth of the matter is, this government has never balanced a budget in its entire seven years. Justin Trudeau did, and they certainly can thank him for that.

So now the—Hydro has applied to a federal ICIP program for money. And, of course, given the track record of this government, our concern is that this government won't actually flow through all of the federal dollars that are earmarked towards Hydro.

We've seen that this government cannot be trusted, that they won't actually spend federal dollars on what they were intended for and they somehow get diverted into tax cuts for billionaires. And the—

course, the Legislature saw how cagey the minister was in his responses today, that he did not want to admit and confirm that he was going to flow through all that money. That is certainly concerning, and we will have to continue to monitor this. And so we're fearful that this money won't actually reach Hydro.

We have changes to the fuel tax. And, of course, if you needed further proof that this government is not serious about climate change, you've seen this government today try to bring in carbon subsidies for yet another industry.

Other jurisdictions are reducing their carbon footprint. Manitoba is providing tax incentives—or, you know, corporate welfare to profitable corporations so that they can use more fossil fuels, not less. And they're going to make it cheaper for them as an incentive to do so.

So, they brought in this PST exemption for fuel use in the peat industry. Now, peat is obviously a carbon sink and taking it out of the ground has been criticized as a detrimental environmental practice. But leaving that aside, that we're 'destroying' carbon sinks in Manitoba, we are now providing a financial incentive to these profitable companies to use more fuel, not less, because it will be cheaper inputs for them and their business. And we're told by this minister that they were lobbied by the industry to provide this corporate welfare, that Manitobans are now on the hook for a further \$200,000 a year to subsidize more fossil fuel use.

And, you know, the problem with this is you can't even make a business case. They're not going to invest more in Manitoba. It's not going to create any new jobs. This is full-on corporate welfare. And, in fact, in may not even be in the interests of the company. If the company has to reduce inputs, they're going to innovate, and they're going to invest in their production in order to use less fossil fuels. But if you make fossil fuels less expensive as an input, there's no incentive for that company to innovate or to find newer and better ways to produce. If anything, this will hold our research and industry back.

And then, of course, we have concerns about Efficiency Manitoba. We know that the Pallister and Stefanson governments gave themselves a three-year deadline to come up with an efficiency plan by December 2022. That plan is not existent. The deadline is coming up. They now seek to extend their deadline to March 31st, 2024. They may not be government at that time. And if there's any doubt this government has no plan for the environment or climate

change, this certainly should end that debate. It's obviously not been a priority. There's been no intention to create a plan. And it's just yet one more policy failure by this government.

But it doesn't stop there. There's no requirement to come up with a plan under BITSA. Under this, it will allow the minister to bypass legislation and simply issue a written directive extending, for another year, the fact that there's no plan. The—section 13.2(1). And so, they don't ever have to come up with a plan; they don't ever have to provide an update.

And what's concerning is that they've also sheltered any update they do come up with from independent expert review of the PUB. And the minister, in the bill briefing, was trying to say that this was only a one-year extension when they clearly have given themselves the power to extend it indefinitely. And it's concerning either the minister didn't know this in the bill or thought that he could skate around this issue.

In any event, Manitobans deserve answers as to why they don't take this seriously and why they're trying to run out the clock and to create such a legal framework that they'll never, ever have to come up with any sort of plan.

And then, our final certain—concern is the capital reserve targets. MPI is required to keep financial reserves in order to ensure that they can pay out all claims and reduce the risks to Manitobans. Under the current system, there are guidelines set out in regulations that govern how this reserve money is to be used. In good years, when the reserve has more money than it needs and there are fewer than normal claims, MPI is mandated to pay those rebates back to customers. When we have some of the lowest auto—and as a result, we have some of the lowest auto rates in Canada. But, however, in years when there's unexpected claims—hail, storms, floods, damaged vehicles—then we don't pay out those rebates, and the reserve funds get replenished.

So, when the system was in regulation, it did provide government with the flexibility to pay out reserves during the COVID recession or during the cost-of-living crisis. By codifying it into law and removing the regulation, this government is taking away discretion from the Province to use the reserves to support public policy positions that this government itself used during the COVID recession. And it will limit the opportunities for the government to assist Manitoba in the cost-of-living crisis or pandemic recessions. And it will, in fact, make it harder for

rebate cheques to be issued and thereby raising the cost of insurance on Manitoba.

So, the bottom line is this government is going to make MPI less affordable to Manitobans. This move by the minister is intended to make costs more expensive on Manitoba and life less affordable.

And when I asked him what on earth would lead the minister to do this, and I'll quote—I wrote this down when I met him yesterday—he's ensuring government is constrained by evidence and targets. Now, that's odd because as a minister in—his government didn't do that, and they provided that relief to Manitoba, but now that they're about to lose government and be kicked out of office, they're now—want to bind the hands of future governments to make it harder for them to respond to crisis in Manitoba.

\* (15:50)

So: political, cynical, and Manitobans are going to pay the price. And this is the PC government once again making life less affordable for Manitobans.

So, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I figured that the government would want to get up and talk a little more about their BITSA bill. I guess, you know, not much in there for them to talk about. So, gives me great pleasure to get up and talk about what Manitobans are talking about and what matters to them because certainly the members across aren't listening.

Affordability in this province is skyrocketed under this government. Health care has decreased under this government. People are becoming homeless under this government. Today, I talked about—I brought a question to the floor about homelessness. What is the strategy that this government has? Well, this government never has a strategy. When it comes to those that are unfortunate, that don't have homes, that are calling bus shacks home, that are pitching up tents, that are sleeping under bridges, this government has zero plan for those folks.

So, this government's talking about these, you know, rebates. Well, these aren't going to go to these folks because they don't even have a place to live. So how are they going to get the funds that these government—this government is talking about? Doesn't pertain to them. And does this government had a—have a plan for these folks? Absolutely not.

I've invited them several times to come and visit the shelters, you know, in Point Douglas—there's many

of them, they've just opened another one last year—because they have no sustainability around housing. Their solution is to, you know, precariously house people. Come every night, you know, cart around your stuff in a cart, go to the shelter. If you get a bed, great, if you don't, then people are even pitching tents outside of Siloam Mission.

I was there during break week. I went to go and visit, talk to some of the relatives that want housing—they've been on waiting list after waiting list after waiting list under this government. Whether it's to get EI, which is shelter benefits, they've been on a waiting list. Whether it's to get into housing under Manitoba Housing, they've been on a waiting list. Some of them are even waiting to get some diagnostic tests, on a waiting test.

It's wait-list after wait-list after wait-list under this government, unless you have money. If you have money, then, you know, they've created this two-tier system, you know, those who have and those who don't. So, the ones that don't, don't get, but the ones that have—which seems to be their friends—seem to get.

And then we talk about these big corporations that are getting all of these tax rebates, that don't even live in our province, that aren't even spending their money in our province, they're giving those folks money while we have folks in our province who are calling bus shelters home. One only has to leave this Legislature, walk out the front door, and we have two bus shelters always inhabited by homeless folks—people that are human, people who deserve to live in dignity. And this government doesn't think that they do.

Do they provide housing? Do they build any housing? No. You know what they've done? They've sold off housing. They've actually left units boarded up. You know, shame on this government that they can do that to Manitobans.

People that are living on the street deserve to live in housing. It's a human right. Does this government think so? I dare to say not because they're living in shelters, they're living in bus shacks, they're living in tents.

I want to draw attention to a bus stop that's on Jefferson and Main. I drove by there on Sunday. There's two couches in that bus shelter. Two couches. That's for somebody to sleep on. That's because the shelters are overloaded. They don't have enough space.

I went to visit Siloam Mission, as I was talking about. They are actually over capacity every single night and having to turn people away, including women. Women are having to sleep on the street and be put at risk—36 beds in this province are allocated for women in shelters. That's disgusting, absolutely disgusting when we have an issue of missing and murdered in our province, and women are four times more likely—that are Indigenous—to walk out of that shelter and not ever be seen again, if they even get in that shelter. And this government thinks they're doing enough?

I want to talk about EIA for a little while and, you know, shelter benefits and how folks aren't even able to access these shelter benefits. They don't have a phone, they don't have a computer. If they go down to an office, they aren't allowed to see anyone; they have to make an appointment. And then you have to make an appointment to make an appointment to actually see a worker. That's what this government has created with EIA.

Before, you used to be able to, you know, call, get an appointment within a week. The last six years under this government, people have been waiting for six weeks or longer just to get a call to actually get in to see a worker that, you know, perhaps will give them some shelter benefits that day, perhaps not. Maybe they have to come back and make another appointment.

Last year, I was fortunate enough to—Take Your MLA to Work Day, I went—I was actually able to visit the Rorie Street EIA office. And I got to, you know, talk to some of the staff there, I got to talk to some of their recipients who were waiting in the lobby to meet with their workers, and just how institutionalized that place has become.

I was on EIA, Deputy Speaker. I was a young mom. I had two children that were four and six. I was working a part-time job, and I was supplemented by EIA. I used to go there and get bus tickets, you know, weekly. You would meet with community, like, it was—there was a lot of folks in there, and you can actually just go and talk to someone at the desk. Now you can't do that. They don't even let you in the building unless you have an appointment.

You know, and this is something that people have a human right to: shelter. You know, let alone getting some food, money for food—\$87 a month, that's what EIA recipients are given for food a month. That's not a lot of money, I can't live on \$87 a month. I—you know, I do eat Kraft Dinner, but Kraft Dinner now is



almost \$2 a box, if not over \$2. Milk, you know, over \$6 for a four-litre. Cereal—cereal is so expensive.

So, when you think of the cost of feeding folks and making sure that they have the supports that they need, this government has failed. They've created this place where, you know, folks have no dignity, don't have, you know, a place to bring their things every night. Every night, we get to leave this place, and, you know, I thank, you know, Creator, every day that I get to come in this place, that I get to go home to, you know, food in my fridge; I get to go home to a roof over my head.

And now I hear that it's getting more expensive for hydro, you know, and gas; gas rates are going up. Everyone's got to be turning on their gas right about now, so Manitobans are going to start feeling that, as well, from this government, thanks to, you know, them hiking it by 11 per cent.

Manitobans are already struggling, and many I've spoken to lost their jobs during the pandemic, some of which actually had government jobs—good-paying jobs—that this government cut. And they found themselves, you know, with a mortgage; their mortgage got renewed at a higher rate, and they were pretty much, you know, had to sell their house; they had no other alternative.

We—they say, like, we're maybe two paycheques away from being homeless ourselves. You know, and I think about my own children, my grandchildren. Do I want to leave a world where I'm okay with seeing people living outside? Absolutely not. Do I want to live in a world where I'm okay with kids not being fed that are going to school hungry? Absolutely not. Am I okay with leaving folks living in pain for months while, you know, this government continues to cut health care? Absolutely not.

These are people, these are folks, these are Manitobans that deserve to have their needs met, and this government has continually put their own needs in front of Manitobans. They—it's money, you know; profit and money over people—which, you know, is not something that I want my grandkids to grow up in. I want my grandkids to grow up in a place where, you know, we take care, we share and we, you know, take care of one another and we share what we can.

\* (16:00)

So, I want to talk about this education property tax a bit. So, the PCs are phasing out the education property tax in a way that disproportionately benefits the wealthiest of Manitobans. Like I said, those folks

that are, you know, have no home, they're not going to benefit from this. Is any of that money going towards fixing up the existing social housing? No. Is any of that money going towards those folks to get them into an actual home? No.

What this government continues to do is give the wealthy money while those that are unfortunate, that don't have money, get poorer and poorer.

By 2023, in the following years, it will be reduced by 50 per cent. Commercial property owners are also receiving a 10 per cent rebate. This means tax breaks for large, out-of-province—so, not even folks that live here—big corporations and some of the wealthiest individuals in the world, they're going to be getting that money when we have folks in this province that could use that money.

Have we put any money into education and training? There's so many trades that need people to work. We have the capacity, we have the people, but do we have a government that has the political will to actually put investments into training folks? No.

You know, instead they have a suppressive model: Keep those down, keep them down and those that are up, you know, let's keep lining their pockets and propping them up.

Manitobans are struggling with affordability, and this government's choosing to give tax breaks to wealthy, out-of-province corporations. And it shows just how much they are out of touch with what's going on here in the province. One only has to, you know, drive down Main Street—and I know a lot of these MLAs don't drive down, you know, towards Logan, towards Higgins—that's not their drive home, but I drive that every day. I see that every day. I live in that every day. I've been there. When both my parents came to Winnipeg, when they moved to Winnipeg, they both lived at the Main Street Project. They actually met there, and I was probably conceived there for all I know. I think I was.

But I've lived it. I know it and I've—I got out of it, but you know what got me out of it, Deputy Speaker? A government program that helped to train me to go into a field that would help kids that were like me. I was a kid who was on the street. I was a kid who slept on roofs, I slept in moving vans. If there was a vehicle open, I slept in those.

That's what's happening right now under this government. There's kids, there's families that are having to do that and this government sits idly by and thinks

that it's okay to do that. I'm not okay with that and I know a lot of Manitobans aren't okay with that.

They go downtown to a Jets game. They're seeing people that are hungry, people that are homeless. They don't want to see that. They want to help and they want a government that's responsible, that's going to actually help get them and lift them out of poverty.

So I want to go back to that government program I was in. I also lived in social housing. So I grew up in social housing for probably a good seven to 10 years of my life. When I became a mom—I was a single mom—I told you I was—my kids were four and six. I moved into social housing with my kids, too. That unit that I lived in, at suite 4, 711 Dufferin has been boarded up for over a year. Meanwhile, we have people that are homeless, not just in Point Douglas. It's all over the city.

You know, and this government can turn a blind eye to it and act like they don't see it but these are human beings. These are Manitobans, too. And, you know, I'm—I come into this building every day and it makes me so mad. It does. Because I get to come in here and sit in here and have a privilege—and I listen to Manitobans. I bring their voices to this place but on the other side; the other side, they're not listening, they're not seeing. They've got blinders eye-on. They've got fingers in their ears and they're saying that they're listening but they're not listening.

The average Manitoban, if they could help, would help bring those people out of poverty. They would help create social programs so that they can get trained up and that has a ripple effect.

So, I went to school. I was the first one to go to university or a college. I went to college first. It was the first one ever in my family; didn't graduate high school. So I ended up going back into education; first one to graduate university.

My kids actually were the first ones to graduate high school, and then they went into trades. So, that had a ripple effect. And it was an NDP government that actually did that, that helped me get out of poverty, that helped my kids stay out of poverty, that are now going to help my grandkids stay out of poverty.

So, this is the kind of programs that this government should be investing in. And I know when we take government in the next election, that that's something that we are going to be supporting. We want to help people get out of poverty. We don't want to keep those that are, you know, struggling, continue to struggle. We want to make sure that those that want a

home and need a home will get a home and will get their needs met, their mental health needs met, their addictions needs met.

And, you know, we have a great, great program, you know, in the Union Station constituency, Sunshine House, that is trying to do the right thing, that is doing their part and has been—has had interference from the government in getting this program started. This program has asked this government for \$80,000 for a drug-testing machine. Imagine what that can do for lives; imagine how many lives that would save if I could test my drugs before I did them and knew the amount that I would have to do before I would overdose.

Like, safe consumption sites, you know, have been in this House advocating year after year after year while Manitobans continue to die, and this government says, oh, we're listening to the science; we're listening to the experts. Well, the experts all across Canada have said the same thing: consumption sites save lives. No one has ever died in a consumption site.

This government does not want to invest, they don't want to—they think it's enabling. It's not enabling, Deputy Speaker. It's setting people up so that their lives are saved, but also connecting them with the resources that they need. It's not just about them going in and using and making sure that, you know, they don't die. It's about making sure that the day that they choose to stop using, that that support is there. That if they are not housed, that there is a housing worker there that will help them get housing. Sometimes that's all it takes is a safe, warm house. But, you know, this government doesn't want to, you know, invest in these kinds of models—models that work, models that save lives, models that connect people with the resources they need.

And I can talk about this all day, but I'm going to give other people opportunity to speak, and I just want to say shame on this government for allowing our homeless population to increase and turning a blind eye to it and having no strategy. We're going into winter, and these folks—we've had people freeze. We had a woman, you know, a month or so ago, that was burned to death in her tent. We have 36 beds allocated to women in this province. Women are having to sleep on the street.

Shame on this government. They need to come up with a plan and they need to do better for our most vulnerable.

Miigwech.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to share just a few words here about this bill.

You know, in the UK, the British prime minister, Liz Truss, was forced to resign because she brought in a program of unfunded tax cuts that would have no economic benefit and ruin the government's finances. The International Monetary Fund stepped in to say that they were making a huge mistake by borrowing money they didn't have in order to enrich some of the wealthiest people. And I think it's important to recognize that.

And we'll start with the education property tax—that it's lacking in equity, particularly for those who need it the most, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. We know that the property tax rebates are incredibly unfair.

And this isn't new; we've been having this conversation for the last decade; frankly—longer than that. It's not new under this government. It was very relevant under the past government as well. There are condo owners, for example, currently in 'tuxeder'—in Tuxedo—that's the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) riding—who are getting \$6,000 cheques. Meanwhile, there are residents in Point Douglas—the last member who spoke to this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker—who are only getting \$6. Look at that discrepancy: \$6,000 to some residents, \$6 to others—and others who likely need that tax rebate more.

\* (16:10)

I want to—in CBC, there's an article—and I'm going to quote it, so I'm tabling the article now. And the quote, it's in—it's from a person who lives—a citizen who lives in Old Tuxedo in a 4,336-square-foot home, recognizing that this rebate is not doing what it was intended to do. And the quote in which I just tabled: The whole nature of this rebate shows that it's not about making life more affordable, because ultimately, the biggest rebate cheques go to the people who own the most expensive real estate. This desperately needs to change.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, companies also get cheques, including companies from outside of Manitoba. We need to be taking care of Manitobans who are here today. These companies that are owned and run by people who have never set foot in Manitoba, many of whom will never set foot in Manitoba, many of whom, they shop in different provinces, they travel in different provinces and even outside of Canada, but do not contribute to our economy,

yet are benefitting greatly from these tax rebates. The distributions of funds, they need to be reconsidered. It would be great to know just how many of these cheques are actually addressed to people who don't actually live inside of Manitoba.

These measures have added more than \$500 million—more than half a billion—to our debt, and we're going to have to pay it back somehow. And this government has not made clear how this money is actually going to be paid back. I think, at most, we deserve to know the plan, if there is a plan, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Another major concern here is the fuel break for peat mining. Peat mining adds to climate change, and this government is going out of its way to subsidize activities to accelerate climate change. This isn't mining for lithium. We are going to be borrowing with interest to give tax breaks to companies that we know are making climate change worse. Instead of encouraging inaction in terms of industry fuel, the provincial government needs to work with other levels of government to cut pollution and build a stronger, cleaner economy.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** Before I get rolling, I do want to acknowledge your service here in the Legislature these past 12 years.

I think it's important, and I want to congratulate you on the record for your retirement and the service you provided to the citizens of La Verendrye—who, which I know. Many were my educators as I was growing up in Transcona. And I did want to put that on the record and I do want to thank you for your service.

It's an honour always to get up, and a privilege, especially following the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux) and debate on this BITSA bill.

I find it concerning, Assistant Deputy Speaker, that nobody on the government's side is up speaking in support of BITSA. I think it tells us a lot. It tells us that there isn't any passion for this, there isn't anything that's really driving their agenda. Instead, what we have is we have a flat presentation of a BITSA, I'll answer a few questions, we're going to pass it anyway. And that is really concerning.

I do know that my constituents do want to see a plan that really takes into account some of the real

struggles that Manitobans are facing right now, Assistant Deputy Speaker. I can tell you in my 'constit' this very morning, there was a group of clergy that got together to talk about the real calamity of food security that's going to be occurring in the constituency of Transcona. We're finding an unprecedented demand on the food bank and food bank resources, and people are beginning to get together, minus involvement of government.

I—really, Assistant Deputy Speaker, that is an alarm bell that's ringing in my head. Winter is coming and we're going to have people that are going to struggle to get through not just the winter, week to week to make it, to provide for their families.

And what do we have here? We have a BITSA bill that is devoid of anything that provides relief to everyday, working Manitobans. And here's what I mean by that, Assistant Deputy Speaker. It was relayed before regarding how inequitable the education tax rebate is. If this government was truly, truly interested in ensuring that people had relief, they would have looked at and made it income tested.

I'll provide an example, because we need to provide these so that government can take what they hear in debate and apply it because I do believe they're listening on the other side. So here's something that could have been done. You could have said that anybody that has a housing value of \$250,000 or less, you know what we'll do? We're going to pay the whole thing. Because people that live in those accommodations, they'll need that break, and they could really use that tax thing. Instead, they get a \$6 cheque?

Meanwhile, somebody somewhere else in a different region which another member in this House outlined is getting a \$6,000 cheque? Like they really need that? That is the definition, Assistant Deputy Speaker, of a really—a haphazard plan that inadvertently—or I think purposely, actually, when I think about it—benefits people that do really well.

And I think if you were to ask Manitobans that have received these outsized cheques from their government, they'll go, why did I get this? And how are they going to pay for it? And how does it impact our everyday government services that we rely on?

So just to give you an example, Assistant Deputy Speaker, we do have many government departments that have been hollowed out, resulting in wait times for very basic items like a birth certificate that are months in the queue, that newborn Manitobans that are already turning almost one year old don't have a

birth certificate that they need to access the services that families can apply for. And they're waiting for that.

Another example, Assistant Deputy Speaker, that's missing from BITSA, is a real plan to help university students who, right now, October the 25th, I believe, are still waiting for their students' aid. Tuition fees at the U of W were due on September 28th. Tuition fees at the U of M were due on October 7. We have students almost a month in arrears having to beg their universities not to charge them a late fee because they're still waiting for their student aid.

This is what we're talking about, everyday pieces that are affecting Manitobans, Assistant Deputy Speaker. And this is something that's devoid here in this BITSA bill or anything that's really been provided since this session has started up again. What was that date? It was September 28th? Have I—have we seen an agenda, really, that impacts everyday Manitobans in a positive way? That's a question that I think we have to answer here. And what we're seeing so far is something that's completely devoid of what's required by Manitobans.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

We're still—oh, I see the Speaker's back. Good. We're still in—I said, good. We're still in the throes of a pandemic that's impacting and really having serious impacts on those most vulnerable in Manitoba.

I will say, Madam Speaker, that once-in-a-lifetime pandemic requires a once-in-a-lifetime investment and a once-in-a-lifetime dedication to making sure that we can get through this healthy and whole without having to throw to the side people that are vulnerable and that are experiencing some real hardship in this province.

\* (16:20)

Just to give you an example, Madam Speaker. There are pieces and parts of—in Transcona where we've had opportunities for this government to come in and say, okay, you know what? We recognize that because this particular part of the city has been neglected for so long in certain government services that we're going to have a plan in place that actually addresses some of that neglect.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the constituency is still very disappointed in the decision to cancel the Park Manor expansion. I mentioned that in my member's statement today. That's one thing that sticks in the craw of our constituents that is still brought up

to me on a regular basis. And that is because of the fairness of it, and the unfairness of it, especially when the plan was in place, approved and ready to go.

And so—and further to this, when we talk about those types of services that are provided by a personal-care home, in meeting with the leadership of the personal-care home, they're getting very, very concerned: concerned about the undue stress, the incredible working conditions that many have to endure. Time after time, having to mandate overtime on people and on nurses that are—already put in 10- to 12-hour days; forcing, Madam Speaker, many to reconsider who they're working for.

They don't want to work for the WRHA anymore. Instead, because of the way the working conditions are set up now, Madam Speaker, they want to work for private agencies. Why? To have some semblance of control over their lives. To regain a balance that is long gone.

And instead, what do we have, Madam Speaker? We have a BITSA bill that doesn't even deal with any of these realities. And this is really crushing the system because it's on the backs of the—of a person's goodwill. And when you continue to go to that well, that well of goodwill will run out.

And when it does, that person is not only left shattered and felt guilty about quitting, but has also had to endure family situations where, in many, many cases, they also have to apologize for not being home, for doing what they need to do in order to maintain that work-life balance. It's something that we talk about all the time.

But in order to rectify these situations, we have to make these working conditions—we have to improve these working conditions so that people don't leave, right? We're missing out on the expertise of years of experience. And right now, we're really feeling that crunch.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, in the education system, we're especially feeling that crunch right now. The Department of Ed has been completely hollowed out of any kind of leadership that it used to provide.

I can talk about—there was a time, Madam Speaker, when the department provided a tremendous amount of leadership around curriculum development, around pilot programs, around bringing people into the department, seconding people to provide leadership on new curriculum, on new pilot programs in schools. That is no longer the case.

Instead, what we have is we have a department now that's filled with policy analysts. You can have policy analysts, absolutely, but you also need leadership in that department so that smaller school divisions, Madam Speaker, can rely on the department for leadership, especially around curriculum.

Smaller school divisions don't have curriculum consultants that they can hire, by their very nature, because they are smaller. They don't have the human resource staff to tackle these issues.

That was some of the stuff that the department, Madam Speaker, used to provide; no longer do that. They don't have the capacity to do that. So we have smaller school divisions that are struggling to provide curriculum leadership for the teachers in their school divisions. And that has impact, of course, in the classroom.

The other piece, too, is that we see—is that with the FRAME documents, it's quite clear, Madam Speaker. We know that core funding to public schools hasn't kept up with inflation. It's shown in the percentage that the Province provides to run the everyday operations of schools.

In 2016—I've said this before—it was 62.4 per cent. That percentage that the Province provides now is down to 56.4 per cent. That is substantial.

This in a time of increased enrolment, of a pandemic and of increased demands on schools to provide for families the services that they need. And what am I talking about? I can get very specific, Madam Speaker, and I will.

What I'm talking about is school divisions, now, because of increased immigration into Manitoba, are having to deal with students that have English as an additional language. And in order to support those kids, you need more support in the form of either EAs, teachers or a consultant that can really co-ordinate that programming.

But right now, with the stress that school divisions are under—and I can say that in River East Transcona School Division there are 290 new English-as-additional-language students in the school division. And what they have to do, Madam Speaker, is they have to program, absolutely, for those kids. The void, now, of any kind of support, either through EA and also piling onto the backs of teachers more and more demands to ensure that they've—taking their lesson plans so that they can not just modify them, but also adapt them to the needs of those EAL kids that are now in their classroom, with very little support.

So what ends up happening, Madam Speaker, is that we have whole cohorts of kids—these first kids that have just arrived in Canada—or in Manitoba—at the end of a pandemic that need support, that enter at whatever grade will have a very rocky, uneven start to their educational experience.

And that's a problem, Madam Speaker, because they need to get the very best start right away. And those are the things that impact kids' families as a result of some of the decisions that are made by this government.

You want to help school divisions? Increase that everyday funding basket that you send to school divisions throughout the province so that the percentage that you would support ends up rising that base funding—not capital costs—sure, capital costs are one-time expenses, Madam Speaker: 300 and whatever million—okay, so you built a school. Who's going to staff that place? Who's going to work in there? What are we going to do with—provide for those kids that attend these new places?

I'll give you another example, Madam Speaker. We have—and we know that air exchange is a big deal when it comes to ensuring that we maintain our health, especially in a climate like ours. Many of us know, many of us that garden around here, we know we're in zone 3. Zone 3 means it gets cold. Zone 3 means that we're going to have to ensure that we have buildings that are able to exchange air at a rate that is higher than what the standard used to be.

These are opportunities right now that we can't pass up to ensure that we have these standards in place not only for our kids but also providing some of that leadership, right, because schools now are more than just going to school; they're used throughout the day. And I know many of us understand that here on this side of the House, and it's an important piece that needs to be rectified.

You know, Madam Speaker, when we go through this, what we see—sorry, in BITSA, is a continued—sorry for this—a continued cut-first-ask-questions-later agenda. I know one of those prime examples, and I know I remind this government regularly about this, is that when you cut ERs, you needed to have a plan in place to ensure that you can take the extra that was coming once these—the ERs were closed.

I can tell you with Concordia and Seven Oaks, all of north Winnipeg, where are these folks going to go for services? You had to know that they were going to go to Health Sciences Centre. You had to know that

they were going to go to St. Boniface Hospital. But those physical spaces still remain the same size. I mean, they can talk about having this big announcement regarding the expansion of St. B right now, but that needed to happen in 2016. Right? Especially after you've closed three ERs in this city and you've forced people into this funnel of now—a funnel of wait times, one that impacts people every day. And so this is what we're talking about when we talk about, you know, what a government's priorities are.

\* (16:30)

And still, Madam Speaker, still trying to figure out exactly what direction they want to take. I do think that there are people on the other side of the House that do understand some of the arguments that I'm making, especially when it comes around and talk about fairness and the way it impacts—way decisions a government makes impacts everyday Manitobans. I do believe in the fundamental goodness of people, but I'm really struggling in—and like I said earlier, in seeing what the direction is going to be.

And with BITSA here in front of us, we see something that is certainly right up their alley, something that continues to certainly benefit people disproportionately. I can tell you, you know, when a million-dollar cheque, Madam Speaker, goes to people like Cadillac Fairview, can you imagine what that million dollars, if it stayed in Manitoba, could've done? I can tell you what it could've done. It could've completely eliminated the Child Nutrition Council's wait-list for nutrition programs in schools, completely eliminated it. And Cadillac Fairview would've still been able to keep Polo Park rolling, Kildonan Place, all of those places.

So when we talk about, you know, thinking about how our tax policies affect everyday Manitobans, that's how they affect them, Madam Speaker. These are pieces that people fundamentally know are unfair. How in the world are we sending tens of thousands of dollars to Charles Koch of the Koch brothers? Really? What's that guy going to do with it? Going to ensure that that fertilizer cost is going to go down for that farmer in Manitoba? I don't think so. Absolutely not. That's going to feather the nests and dividends for their investors, some of whom, I guess, would be Manitobans, I don't know, but certainly not impacting that local school division that has a wait-list that they're—because they're on a wait-list for a nutrition program so they can get it into their school.

These are the decisions that have been made, and this is how it impacts people in this province. It's just

so fundamentally unfair that it leaves us scratching our heads as to what is the true direction here. Is it to buy the votes of Manitobans? Could it be that? I sure hope not, because that would be cynical, absolutely cynical. Buying peoples' votes for their own money. And that's the part that is really difficult to understand and to fathom.

And so with those few words, I hope that our message is getting across. I know the member from Steinbach is listening attentively and has enjoyed these 21 minutes that I've been able to put on the record. And like I said earlier, Madam Speaker, it's always a privilege to get up in this House and to actually debate and to hopefully have some influence on other members when it comes to the important matters of Manitoba citizens and Manitoba in general.

So thank you for that time.

**An Honourable Member:** More.

**Mr. Altomare:** More? You want more? I can't give you any more right now. I've got to save it for later. And thank you. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Grateful for a chance to speak to this bill, and it's always fantastic to hear—*[interjection]*—always fantastic to have a chance to hear my colleagues speak up for working people, speak up for Manitobans, and it's been a pleasure to listen to them today.

We know that this government needs to be watched carefully at the best of times, and that's especially true when they bring forward BITSA bills. We know that last year, when they brought forward a BITSA bill, they included a 2.9 per cent hydro rate increase, which was hidden away in that bill. Of course, BITSA bills don't go to committee, so Manitobans never had a chance to have a say on that. But that just highlighted the risks that we see with this government when they bring forward these BITSA bills. There's always a concern that they're going to try to tuck away, sneak in concerning provisions that will be bad for Manitobans.

There are a lot of changes in this bill to be concerned about, Madam Speaker, and, unfortunately, not a whole lot to be excited about or to be motivated by. And I think when we look through this bill and all the changes that have been brought forward, we can see that this government isn't paying close attention to the needs of everyday Manitobans, of working Manitobans. Instead, what we see is aimlessness. As my colleague, the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare), was alluding to, there's just a lot of

questions, head scratching that one is forced to do when they look at what's included within this bill. And, frankly, again, it's just—it suggests that this government is currently aimless, and there really isn't a lot of clarity on what it is or who that they're trying to serve with the changes that they bring forward in this bill.

Just want to say at the highest level, one of the big concerns I have in looking at this bill, and I know my colleagues share, is that this bill doesn't reflect anything that would suggest this government is concerned about the affordability crisis that a lot of Manitobans are facing right now. In fact, it suggests the opposite. It speaks to their lack of connectedness to the challenges that Manitobans are facing right now with their increased costs of food and gas, across-the-board inflationary challenges. This bill highlights their lack of connectedness to Manitobans. Manitobans know that they're disconnected. They know that they don't really have serious concern about affordability challenges. But this bill really highlights that, Madam Speaker.

I want to start just by focusing on the education property tax-related aspects of the bill. And we know, of course, that this bill locks in their disproportionate giveaway to the wealthiest Manitobans. And, of course, this bill will allow them to bypass the Estimates process and to send cheques directly to Manitobans, especially those, of course, who are much wealthier.

My colleagues have spoken a lot about that today. I've pointed that out. That is such a huge concern with the direction that this government is taking us. We know that this bill locks in those benefits for the wealthiest among us here. And they say that this bill will help all Manitobans, but we know—the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux) spoke to this—that the reality is some Manitobans are getting \$6 cheques here as a function of the changes that they're bringing forward, whereas we have others that are getting much, much bigger cheques: \$6,000, \$7,000, \$8,000. Such a wildly disproportionate benefit to the wealthiest in this province that they're receiving from the changes and the changes that are included in this BITSA bill.

Of course, this bill also fails to correct some of the worst excesses that we've seen with these changes. It fails to stop the giant giveaway to wealthy—the wealthiest among us to giant corporations. Again, others have already spoken to this: \$80,000 to the Koch brothers, \$23,000 in cheques to the Thompson

family. I mean, these are not individuals who are knocking on our door looking for support, but the PCs saw fit to, of course, you know, send big cheques to them because they're wealthy, and this is their donor class.

Forty million dollars in commercial rebates. You know, I shudder to think about what some of our health-care heroes and others who are working right now in the trenches in our hospitals would want to see done with \$40 million. They know what \$40 million could do in emergency room at the HSC, in the hospital in Thompson. People are aware of what that \$40 million could do, how that could change the realities that they're facing and help to reduce the struggles that they're facing in our hospitals.

They have not fixed that with this bill. It remains an issue. They've had a chance, but the fact that this bill maintains those provisions or—and it fails to respond to that just shows that this government is perfectly happy with sending out big cheques to those who do not need them.

And, of course, the government is borrowing money to fund these education property tax cuts. They're borrowing money to do it. They're incurring big interest costs in the process while they're benefiting these wealthy—the wealthiest among us.

And they're doing this all while they make cuts across the board, throughout government. So we're borrowing money to make these tax cuts that are benefiting, disproportionately benefiting, the wealthiest among us, paying interest to do that, and, at the same time, we're making year-after-year cuts to our education system.

\* (16:40)

You know, we're leaving school divisions to be able to hire fewer staff. Ventilation systems in our schools are going without upgrades. We're hearing concerns about this from families that know their children are attending schools that are in desperate need of improved ventilation. We're heading into a winter, one—another season here where we're seeing drastically increased risks relating to COVID and other viruses, and, again, this government has had two years now to respond to this and they've failed to do that.

Kids continue to come to school hungry. We know that the—that's the No. 1 barrier to kids succeeding and doing well in our schools. They still failed to implement a nutrition program in our schools, again, doing this, allowing these cuts to education to persist,

all while we're borrowing money to give these disproportionately large benefits to the wealthiest among us.

And, of course, these expenditures, these giant expenditures, are happening at a time when our health-care system has never seen a greater crisis, and we mentioned this today earlier in question period. We've heard about what Dr. Thompson has had to say. There was a press conference earlier today about what's happening in our health-care system. Things have never been worse, Madam Speaker. They've never been worse, and we're giving away thousands and thousands of dollars to the wealthiest Manitobans, sending \$1.5 million to Cadillac Fairview.

It is absolutely nonsensical, and it makes no sense, and it flies in the face of what's best for this province, and it is an absolute insult to our health-care providers who are working so hard to make sure that we get the care we need in our hospitals and our health-care facilities.

I want to move on and talk a bit about the renters' tax credit changes that this bill proposes. You know, the government is arguing that the changes they're proposing are going to be cost neutral, that they're not going to impact renters. They're not providing any evidence to that effect to ensure that we can have confidence. And, unfortunately, Manitobans have been taught, over the last seven years, under this government, that we cannot trust them. We cannot trust when they say something that it's true, and we have to be very judicious and very cautious about any legislative changes that this government makes, especially when it comes down to impacts on low-income people or renters.

We know that this government has a history of making life harder for renters in Manitoba. We saw that only last year they increased taxes on renters in Manitoba. They increased taxes by \$175, and then they tried to repackage that as a new tax credit for renters and tried to sell it as a benefit.

Well, Manitobans won't be fooled, Madam Speaker. They know what this government has done. I hear about it all the time from people in my community who are concerned that the government, in the midst of an affordability crisis, is raising costs on renters. That's absolute lunacy to be doing that. The people in this province who are renters are, of course, our lowest-income Manitobans. They're seniors. It's people on fixed incomes. Why in the world would we choose to raise costs on that group of Manitobans? That makes zero sense.



And, of course, all of those cost increases that this government is burdening renters with are coming on the back of their failure to do anything about our out-of-control, above-guideline rent increase issue in this province. We brought solutions forward to this government to give them an opportunity to partner with us, to put a stop to out-of-control, above-guideline rent increases. This government failed to partner with us on that, to do something, to take action, to make life more affordable for renters.

Instead, they've chosen to partner with large property owners. They've chosen to allow them to continue to apply 20, 25, 30 per cent rent increases on renters at a time when renters are facing an affordability crisis.

The government is also, in addition to making life more expensive by raising taxes on renters, has failed to do anything to deal with our tight rental housing supply. We've got no increase in social or affordable housing in this province, and, in fact, they've taken us backwards. They sold off social housing. They sold off 385 units at 185 Smith. That is unconscionable, Madam Speaker, that this is happening at a time when so many Manitobans are facing an affordability crisis or facing a housing crisis, and that decision directly contributed to market conditions that are raising rental costs and they continue to make life harder for renters in Manitoba. That's what this government seems to be all about.

And so, you know, they're bringing forward changes to this renters' tax credit. They're saying that it's going to have a neutral impact. We'll see. We have a lot of reasons not to believe this government, and Manitobans know that we need to watch them very closely any time they propose legislation that could have any kind of an impact on lower income Manitobans because we know who they stand with.

I want to talk now a bit about the changes that this legislation proposes to Efficiency Manitoba legislation. This BITSA bill allows the minister to extend the Efficiency Manitoba plan by one year, and that provision within the bill, I think, really clearly speaks to this government's failure to make energy efficiency a priority in this province. And it speaks to their failure to connect energy efficiency to affordability. That in fact, energy efficiency, while it is, of course, supports us being able to expand the use of electricity, it enables us to reduce carbon emissions. But right now—and perhaps most substantially—right now, it could help Manitobans to drastically reduce their cost of living.

This government has had that opportunity to use Efficiency Manitoba to help Manitobans to save money, but they have failed to do that because they've intentionally and wildly underspent Efficiency Manitoba's budgets over the last many years.

In their first year of operation, Efficiency Manitoba did not even come close to meeting their targets—69 per cent of their target for electricity reduction, 60 per cent of natural gas targets—and they only spent 43 per cent of their budget, Madam Speaker—43 per cent.

And, of course, this government turned around and we heard the minister today allude to the fact that they were—they blame the pandemic for what happened there. That is not an excuse—that is not an excuse. They failed to be nimble; they failed to, in any way, alter their plan to ensure that more Manitobans could take advantage of these energy saving and cost-saving measures for which they'd received a huge amount of federal funding, and they failed to do that, Madam Speaker.

The fact is it's not hard to see that this government has allowed Efficiency Manitoba to fail. They've allowed them to do that by underspending, and we've seen them massively underspend their advertising budget. They've allowed this to happen; it's not by accident. When you compare investments in Power Smart advertising, which was the predecessor to Efficiency Manitoba, to what's happening right now, we can see a huge reduction in those advertising levels.

How are Manitobans supposed to know that they've got opportunities to save money if no one's telling them about it? Madam Speaker, this failure to do this has cost Manitobans a lot of money and potential savings that could have been generated through energy efficiency upgrades in their homes.

You know, it's important to point out here, too, that, of course, this government was found—as part of this failure of Efficiency Manitoba—they were found to have appropriated \$32 million in federal government monies that were sent to Manitoba to help Manitobans become more energy efficient.

The CEO of Efficiency Manitoba herself identified that those \$32 million were recaptured and went back into general revenues. They were not spent as they were supposed to. Again, more evidence why, you know—talk about why we haven't hit our targets, talk about why the government is looking for a get-out-of-jail-free card which they've included in this

legislation. They'll let this bill, or let the plan go a year longer. It's no surprise. Everything's underspent. They're taking federal dollars that were supposed to go to Manitobans, putting them in their pocket. It's not a shock that we haven't met those targets.

Moving on to Manitoba Hydro-related changes, this bill will now allow Hydro—or creates a provision that will allow Hydro to receive federal funds. Manitobans know that we can't trust this government when they make any changes relating to Hydro. We've seen that over and over and over again. And the proposed changes here are no different. The question we all need to be asking is, why are they proposing these legislative changes when we just built a transmission line from Birtle, Manitoba, to Saskatchewan using \$16 million in federal funding? Why do we need to make this change?

Manitobans should be very worried when this government is making small, secretive changes in BITSA bills relating to Hydro. I just spoke about how the—this government pocketed \$32 million in Efficiency Manitoba funds that should have gone towards helping Manitobans to save money. Why is this change being made when we're already accepting—Hydro is already accepting federal dollars? There are real concerns here, Madam Speaker, that this positions us—that this situates this provincial government to cream off federal investments in Manitoba.

\* (16:50)

We're on the cusp of a potential—a potentially massive amount of investment in energy infrastructure in this country. Manitoba, of course, is at the heart of clean energy in this country. It's possible that we're going to see a federal government move to build a national energy grid or to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in a clean energy line to Kivalliq, from Manitoba to the North.

Well, we have strong reason to be concerned about how this positions this provincial government to be the benefactor of those federal dollars and to, of course, as we've seen them do before, to skim portions of those investments for their own benefit, to take those dollars and put them back in general revenues. That's a genuine concern. Again, the government likes to say, nothing to see here. Well, unfortunately, there's lots to see. We've seen over and over and over again why we cannot trust them. Manitobans know we can't trust them. We're going to be watching very carefully.

The last thing I want to touch on: MPI-related changes to the reserve fund. This bill changes the

process of dealing with MPI's insurance reserves, as my colleagues have alluded to. These changes create significant risks of Manitobans overpaying for their insurance. Because what it does is it removes flexibility and it forces MPI to increase its reserve rates through a formula that's now going to be plugged in to this legislation.

This is very reminiscent of how this government has made changes—or is proposing changes in Bill 36 that will, again, legislate big hydro rate increases through a wacky PC government-devised formula.

In this instance, they're baking changes into this legislation that will force MPI to ultimately raise their reserve. And in a year where we have, for example, a huge number of claims for whatever reason, there's some type of emergency, and MPI is forced to drastically increase their reserve—the funds that they have in the reserve because of this legislation, we can no longer make adjustments to that. That can no longer be dealt with in the regulations.

So that creates a significant risk of there being a need to be a huge MPI rate increase for which nothing can be done about until legislation can be brought in nine, 10, 11, 12 months later. It's absolutely the wrong direction to be taking us, Madam Speaker, and it creates significant risks, again, of Manitobans being forced to overpay for their insurance. Again, it's a pattern we've seen with this government. They're doing the same thing in Hydro. We need to be deeply concerned about this.

I'm grateful to have had a chance to speak to this legislation. I'm grateful to have had a chance to hear my colleagues—my great colleagues—speak to it, and I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to stand up today.

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on Bill 45, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, or BITSA.

In my short time here in the Legislature over these last couple years, I've come to realize what this government is using BITSA for. And they are using BITSA to basically legislate and avoid accountability without having to hear from Manitobans, communicate with Manitobans, and take advice and recommendations from Manitobans.

So there's a number of different issues in this piece of legislation but also in past where they've tried to avoid that accountability. And I think of the CSA issue that we dealt with that was put—part of—through

BITSA to avoid accountability and their attempts to legislate away the voices of children when it came time to their children's special allowances.

But, Madam Speaker, in regards to BITSA today, I asked myself, what—well, what's changed? What has changed between my perception of how this government uses BITSA when I first got here to where we are today? And they've almost doubled down on that. And what I mean by that is doubled down on their need and their want and their desire to avoid that accountability, to avoid that communication with Manitobans from all over Manitoba. But there seems to be only an accountability to the few, to the wealthy, to the larger donors, perhaps, of the governing party here.

So, we're very concerned that changes made and tax changes made in this bill disproportionately hamper and hurt everyday Manitobans all over Manitoba—not just here in Winnipeg, not just in the south, east, west, but in the North. And that's very concerning.

Time and time again, you've heard the concerns about the cost of living, the cost of rates—hydro rates, gas rates—cost of food. And this piece of legislation, and in BITSA, those are issues that this government can for sure address in a real way, in a real way that helps and benefits all of Manitoba, not just a few. Not just wealthy corporations that, for the most part, do not even do business here, do not even have headquarters here.

Madam Speaker, when an industry or an industry town here in Manitoba employs locally, they keep that money local. That economy in those communities thrives. And it's not just a matter, sometimes, of the paycheque spent at the store, spent on the—on utilities, spent on household bills, but it's just the economy of people and investment in that economy of people so they can feel like they're a contributor. They can feel like they're a part of it, not just being used to make that contribution, but actually supported in those contributions that they bring forth and they bring into our economy here in Manitoba, from all over Manitoba.

This bill, for example—I mean, there's a lot of talk that perhaps most Manitobans won't even know the details or be able to understand the details of what it means for them.

Well, it's a simple matter of that is the strongest detail that you hear is the fact that this doesn't affect me in a positive way, this doesn't make my life easier, this doesn't make my life more affordable. And you

hear that time and time again from Manitobans—and when I say Manitobans, I mean the majority of Manitobans, because that's what they're not seeing from this government. That's what they're seeing when they see pieces of legislation like this that are avoiding that accountability.

Many Manitobans are struggling with affordability, yet this government is choosing to give those rebates to the wealthy, to the privileged, to the few that don't give back, but instead will use that to kind of take advantage of Manitobans, take advantage of the fact that Manitobans are hard-working, that they're forgiving, that they're understanding, that they're going to be there no matter what. And instead of showing that appreciation, it's being used, it's being abused and it's being taken for granted.

And Madam Speaker, that is just shameful for this government to be able to do that, to be able to think they can avoid all that accountability that truly is the accountability that's due and earned by Manitobans. And that's the responsibility of a responsible government: take that accountability and say I hear you, I hear your voice, I'm here for you, I'm going to represent you, I'm going to make your life easier, I'm going to make your life more affordable because you've done your part.

And throughout this pandemic, you've heard time and time again for Manitobans to do their part. And Manitobans have stepped out and done their part—made those sacrifices, made those very difficult decisions, sometimes.

Do I go to work? Do I earn a paycheque? Do I go to school? Do I put food on the table?

And that—those are decisions that should not be a have to by Manitobans. But the reality is many Manitobans have to make that choice. They don't have all those options available because of things this government is doing. They don't have all those options available to say, yes, it's simple for me to go to work, to earn a paycheque, to earn a good living, to be able to put food on my table, to be able to feed my family and have my family prosper.

Instead, it's just, I need to get by. I need to make that choice between going to work, putting food on the table. Do I go to the hospital? Can I afford to go to the hospital?

And Manitobans shouldn't have to make those choices. This government should make it a lot easier for them, should make their life a lot easier instead of

trying to double talk it and use their money to make themselves feel better.

But, Madam Speaker, that—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 24 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

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