

**Fifth 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. LXXVII No. 25 - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, March 9, 2023**

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
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	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, Hon.	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, Hon.	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>	Morden-Winkler	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 9, 2023

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

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 24—The Wildfires Amendment Act

**Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate (MLA Klein), that Bill 24, The Wildfires Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce The Wildfires Amendment Act. The purpose of this bill is to enhance public safety by strengthening measures to mitigate human-caused wildfire risks.

The bill strengthens the enforceability of fire-safety requirements and compliance tools, clarifies the officer powers to inspect and investigate wildfire causes and standardizes fire-safety requirements for all industries and individuals within a new regulation.

Amendments will also increase maximum penalties that have not been updated since 1998 to align with other provincial jurisdictions. These amendments are important for fire prevention and public safety—that help reduce the threat of human-caused wildfires.

Therefore, on behalf of my department, it is my honour to introduce Bill 24, The Wildfires Amendment Act.

Thank you.

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

#### Bill 23—The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Amendment Act

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Smith), that Bill 23, The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les personnes vulnérables ayant une déficience mentale, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Squires:** Bill 23 amends The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act to address several recommendations made by the vulnerable persons task force. These proposed amendments will make changes in three key areas.

First, Bill 23 will update terminology and the principles of the act to reflect the current legal landscape and increase integration of Manitoba law with international standards.

Second, Bill 23 uses more inclusive and modern language when addressing individuals with intellectual disabilities, including renaming the legislation to reflect that new language.

Third, Bill 23 provides a new approach to our protection mandate by aligning the act with best practices in other jurisdictions and reducing the threshold in which abuse and neglect can be substantiated.

Finally, Bill 23 amends the act to involve victims and their support persons in the abuse investigation process, ensuring that adults living with intellectual disabilities have access to case information and are

notified of those findings and protective actions to be taken.

I'm pleased to present this bill to the House for consideration and I'd like to thank the vulnerable persons task force for the work that they've done, some of whom are in the gallery here today.

Thank you for your work.

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

Further first readings of bills?

**Bill 30—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act (2)**

**Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation):** I move, seconded by the Minister for Families, that Bill 30, the liquor, gaming and cannabis control amendment and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation amendment act, be now read a first time.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Smith), seconded by the honourable Minister for Families, that Bill 30, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act (2), be now read a first time.

**Mr. Smith:** This bill amends The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act and Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act in order to create the legislative ability for government to initiate a pilot project for the retail of liquor following public engagement.

The proposed legislation enables Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to remain nimble in the rapidly changing retail landscape by creating the ability—on a limited, pilot-project basis—to offer products in select areas where consumers are looking for and would welcome choice. This legislation enables pilot projects to be authorized for up to five years under conditions set by the provincial government after a mandatory public consultation period.

Madam Speaker, this initiative is another step toward our government's priority to grow the economy while providing more responsible choices and added convenience for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

### Canada Winter Games—Team Manitoba

**Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Team Toba and their achievements at the Canada Winter Games.

As you can see, I am proudly supporting Team Toba colours today. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to wear this jacket in the Chamber. I do also want to point out that Team Manitoba did win best team uniform.

Since 1967, the Canada Games has provided a stage for Canada's next generation of athletes to shine. It is the largest multi-sport event in the country and brought together over 3,600 athletes, managers and coaches across 20 different sports.

\* (13:40)

From February 18th to March 5th in PEI, Team Toba sent 207 athletes, 68 coaches, managers and technical sports staff and 22 mission staff.

Madam Speaker, I had the privilege of joining Team Toba in PEI while attending the FPT on sport, physical activity and recreation in February.

While in PEI, I was proud to hand the flag to the flag-bearer, Sofia Bieber, who while competing in the games won three gold medals for Manitoba. Unfortunately, she can't be here today; she's training and competing in Alberta.

I was also proud to watch the female curling team curl their hearts out against Nova Scotia; the female, male, singles and doubles table-tennis team in PEI and the males' hockey team against Quebec and Saskatchewan.

After two weeks of competition, Team Toba made Manitoba proud and finished the Canada Games with 19 medals: six gold, six silver and seven bronze.

Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge all of the families, friends and others from the provincial sports organizations, Sport Manitoba staff and board and everyone else that had a hand in helping build something great.

And to all the athletes, no matter the outcome of the competition, be sure to pause and appreciate the special time that was spent with others with that same dedication and passion to their sports.

It is important to always remember the fun and enjoyment and experience of the Canada Games. As a former professional athlete, I know the time and dedication and sacrifice that has been put to get to this point. We are all so proud of you.

Madam Speaker, these athletes have all proven that they are the best of the best in Manitoba and have earned the privilege of being able to wear the uniform. I hope they will carry these moments with them forever.

Madam Speaker, I also ask that the names of medalists, those joining us today in the gallery and the entire team of Team Toba be included in Hansard.

And that's a wrap. Thank you so much, and thank you, thank you, thank you for making Team Manitoba so proud of you.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*Attendees in the gallery: Kelly Babb, Sofia Bieber, Cheryl Cheung, Peter Conway, Gabrielle Desrochers, Kylo Harris, Victoria Lee, Georgette Lessard, Julie Lessard, Khloé Lessard-Kulchyski, Janet McMahon, Grace Qi, Drew Todd, Sarah Tone, Arvin Tronco, Terry Zhang*

*Gold: Sofia Bieber, speed skating, long track, women's 500 m, 1,000 m, mass start; Chyler Sanders, archery, compound individual female; Ryder Wilson, archery, recurve individual male; Julia Xiao, Keith Lau, figure skating, pairs pre-novice mix*

*Silver: Sofia Bieber, speed skating, long track, women's 1,500 m; Cheryl Cheung, fencing, female épée; Victoria Lee, Grace Qi, table tennis, female doubles; Khloé Lessard-Kulchyski, fencing, sabre; Robyn Salie, Lindsay Smart, Sofia Bieber, Skylar Van Horne, speed skating, long track, women's team pursuit; Ryder Wilson, Emily Love, archery, recurve mix team*

*Bronze: Jesse Bachinsky, para nordic/cross country ski, standing 2.5 km classic race; Ryan Cherniak, archery, compound individual male; Ryan Cherniak, Chyler Sanders, archery, compound mix team; Daniel Ekosky, judo, 81 kg male individual; Matias Enciso, fencing, male épée; Emily Love, archery, recurve individual female; Avery Pampolina, judo, 50 kg male individual*

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** The only thing I'll say in direct response to the minister's statements are, you know, why aren't the rest of us also wearing those jackets? How do we get our hands on those? They're very, very nice.

So, the 2023 Canada Winter Games recently concluded, and we are all very happy to take a moment to recognize the accomplishments of our very own team Manitoba.

This year, the games were held in Prince Edward Island from February 18th to the March—to March 5th, and more than three—had more than 3,600 participants. Manitoba sent nearly 300 athletes to compete in sports ranging from figure skating and hockey to wheelchair gymnastics, badminton and so many more.

Team Manitoba is represented by the bison. A symbol of our province, the bison is a resourceful and—dedicated to the pursuit of success, a social creature that travels in herds, is highly intelligent and playful and is proud, fast and strong. Team Manitoba shares these characteristics, and strives to always create an inspiring and supportive environment for all participants to perform—sorry, to perform at their very best and treat all Canada Games participants with respect and dignity.

Team Manitoba had a very strong showing at the Canada Winter Games this year, and did especially well in fencing, archery and speed skating. They brought home 19 medals, including six gold medals; and I want to extend a special congratulations to our gold medalists: Sofia Bieber in speed skating, Chyler Brynn Sanders and Ryder Wilson in archery, and the figuring skating pair Keith Lau and Julia Xiao who set a new Canadian record.

While we congratulate the athletes and medalists, we also know that sports are a community effort, so we want to take a minute to thank all the coaches, family members, volunteers and friends who support Manitoba athletes every single day. And I know, Madam Speaker, that we have many members of this House who have kids, and members of their own families who are active and participating in those sports as well.

We want to thank all of those who make it possible for these athletes to participate and thrive in their sports. And to all the athletes who competed in the 2023 Canadian—Canada Winter Games, we congratulate you on your 'amazing'—on your amazing accomplishments. Every single one of you has made

Manitoba proud. We look forward to continuing to support you in all of your athletic careers.

Congratulations.

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

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague for allowing me to borrow their jacket today, as well, here in the Chamber.

Madam Speaker, the Canada Winter Games are an annual competition for Canada's top up-and-coming athletes to showcase their skills on the national stage.

Team Toba athletes are among the best, and maybe it's our cold climate that has something to do with our success on the ice as Sofia Bieber, for example, our flagbearer, captured one of Manitoba's six gold medals in the 500-metre speed skating, and other medals in figure skating and archery.

Madam Speaker, athletes have to travel far and wide to participate in competition. They are often overworked with demanding travel schedules. They're extremely disciplined with practices and drills and often, a lot of sacrifices have to be made.

This is why it's really important that we, as a province, do what we can to support our athletes, and we can better do this through providing affordable spaces to practice in; through bringing awareness to the sacrifices that are made by our athletes and their families to promote, in this case, our country; and through providing mental health supports to all of our athletes and their families as well, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank all 207 Manitoba athletes, their families, volunteers and coaches and support staff who, I understand, have joined us here in the gallery today, for another successful winter games. And thank you for showcasing Manitoba's high-level talent on the national stage and making us so proud.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** I think this would be a good time for me to introduce to you some of the guests that we have in the gallery, who are from Team Manitoba.

We have Victoria Lee, silver medallist in table tennis, female doubles—maybe everybody could just hold their applause. I have a list of them.

We have Grace Qi, silver medalist in table tennis, female doubles; Khloe Lessard-Kulchyski, silver medallist, fencing, sabre; Cheryl Cheung, silver medallist, fencing, female épée; and Matias Enciso, bronze medallist, fencing, male épée; who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Khan).

And on behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Agriculture—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

### Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture):** As the Minister of Agriculture, I rise today to recognize March 12th to 18th as Canadian agriculture safety week.

For over more than a decade, the Canadian agriculture safety association, or CASA, has been raising awareness about the importance of agriculture safety across Canadian farms with their Canadian agriculture safety week campaign.

This year's campaign theme is Safety is Our Promise and is part of a three-year safety campaign, Your Farm, Your Family, Your Success.

We know that farming can be dangerous profession. This campaign not only brings awareness to ag safety, but provides resources for producers to make their farm safer.

For example, Manitoba Hydro has developed a Go Underground Program to give farmers the opportunity to eliminate overhead power lines by having them buried on their farms. This helps eliminate the danger of equipment contact and therefore helping prevent downed electrical lines. Through this program, potential hazardous situations for producers are reduced.

If you're interested in this program, go to Manitoba Hydro, safety on the farm.

Today, we wear our burlap ribbons, historically a common resource found on our farms. In addition to

being the fabric of commerce in seed, feed and grain, it also represents our unwavering support for CASA and ag safety. I encourage my colleagues to wear their ribbons all next week to show our support and commitment in keeping Manitoba farmers, their families and their workers safe.

\* (13:50)

Please join me in wishing everyone a safe Canadian agriculture week as well as a safe and successful spring.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** The importance of safe agricultural practices cannot be overemphasized, and Ag Safety Week is a great opportunity to raise awareness on this subject.

This year's celebration is part of a three-year campaign tagged your farm, your family and your success, which serves as a call to action for farm workers and communities to commit to farm safety.

Manitoba farmers do incredible work each and every day, but this work does not come without its risks. Farmers are at greater risk of injury and death due to working with large machines, sharp tools, silos, livestock and more. This is why it's so important that we prioritize the health and safety of farming families through awareness and appropriate training.

Manitoba Farm Safety is highlighting this year's Agricultural Safety Week by sharing a message: a healthy farmer is a safe farmer, and a safe farmer is a strong farmer.

I commend SAFE Work Manitoba for organizing a drawing contest for kids aged six to 12 to promote safety on farms and also encourage all Manitoba schools to use this opportunity to engage the younger generation about the importance of safe farming practices.

Once again, I urge this House and everyone listening to take part in Agricultural Safety Week so that, together, we can raise awareness on safe ag practices, which will help ensure safe farming, safe farmers, as well as the longevity and prosperity of our agricultural sector.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Lamont:** It's Farm Safety Week and, as always, it's critical to remind all Canadians of the challenges that people working farms face.

On a recent meeting with a rural municipal council, one member reminded me that we here in Winnipeg don't eat without the people we rely on in rural Manitoba who grow and harvest our food.

Farming is stressful, it's risky and it can be dangerous. Growing up, I knew a young man who lost his arm in a tragic accident on his family farm.

It goes beyond physical and personal safety, because the stress and mental health challenges can be tremendous. Farmers may feel isolated and alone, and as an industry they are at the mercy of so many factors beyond their control: weather, international markets and disease. That powerlessness can contribute directly to a sense of anxiety and depression, which in itself is isolating.

In the last years, Manitoba's producers have fought drought, flood and extraordinary challenges, and that's why we need to ensure that farmers have a place to reach out to to keep them out of crisis and get back to a place of wellness.

The Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing is doing just such work. They just received \$160,000 in support from the federal government, which today's Free Press reports that the federal government's decision to put up money for mental health programs for farmers has been hailed as welcome recognition of a problem that is often ignored.

Gerry Friesen, chief administrative officer of the Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program, said: When the federal government starts handing out money for farmer mental wellness, that's huge. That sends a message across the board, to provincial governments, to industry people, to lenders, saying, hey, there is a problem out there that we need to address.

Manitoba Liberals are committed to ensuring that producers have access to mental health supports, to safety supports, and we also have to work to ensure that financial and other supports are in place to keep farmers out of crisis in the first place.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Hope's Cradle

**Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Today, I am recognizing a project in my riding and the compassionate team that brought it to fruition.

Today, I recognize the Hope's Cradle project team that consists of the Taché fire chief, Allan Rau; Deputy Chief Jason Kroeker; Susan Penner from Life Culture; and Trevor and Sheila Braun.

To–Hope's Cradle is the first safe surrender site in Manitoba and the second in Canada. This initiative is of the utmost importance to help prevent the unsafe abandonment of infant children by giving them a safe surrender station in a centralized location in Manitoba. There is a temperature-controlled bassinet inside of a specially designed room where the—an infant can safely be placed. There is also an envelope for the parent to take to inform them of their rights and available resources.

Trevor and Sheila Braun were inspired by a documentary they saw years ago called The Drop Box, and that is when they came across an article from Life Culture that was looking for a location to place Hope's Cradle. After hearing the story of a newborn baby girl that was found in a dumpster in Winnipeg, the realization set in that Manitoba should have a safe surrender site.

Life Culture Canada executive director, Susan Penner, started the fundraising campaign and raised \$20,000 that was needed to install the cradle.

Hope's Cradle is located at the Landmark fire hall in Landmark, Manitoba. The RM of Taché Fire Department was involved in every step of the way and, together, the team is about to celebrate the grand opening of Hope's 'cradle'–Cradle on March 18th, 2023.

I would like everyone to join me in congratulating the team and their dedication to this project.

### Shenika Chornoby

**Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson):** Today, I would like to recognize a hero from the community of Tataskweyak Cree Nation.

Seventeen-year-old Shenika Chornoby was walking to work on the afternoon of February 14th, found herself in the midst of a terrifying situation that would put her bravery and quick thinking to the ultimate test.

On her way to work, Shenika saw smoke coming from a nearby apartment building while two others were outside screaming. Seemingly without hesitation, this young hero sprang into action. Entering the apartment, Shenika's quick thinking was able to save the lives of two youth from that fire before firefighters and six other citizens arrived on scene.

Upon their arrival they entered the building to find the remaining tenants trapped inside. Once the building was cleared, Shenika and the others vacated. Only moments later, she collapsed from smoke inhalation. After receiving CPR from a bystander on-site, Shenika and a two-year-old resident from the building were airlifted to Health Sciences Centre where they were treated.

Shenika woke up three days later to recognize she had become an overnight hero in our province. Thanks to her actions, all of the residents from the building were able to escape the inferno. Her quick thinking, bravery, selflessness saved the lives that day and earned her gratitude and admiration from her community.

Shenika Chornoby, while still humble, is a hero, and her selfless act of courage should be seen as an inspiration to others. In the end, this young woman's bravery, selflessness serves as a powerful reminder and true meaning of heroism. It is not about fame or recognition, but about putting other's needs before your own and doing whatever it takes to help those in need. We can all learn from her example and strive to be a hero in our own lives, no matter how big or small the situation may be.

We are truly honoured to have her joining us today in the gallery, so I would like to ask my colleagues in joining me in selling–celebrating the inspiration–inspiring youth and the hero of Tataskweyak, Shenika Chornoby.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Beverley Bragg

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** It is an honour and a pleasure to recognize Beverley Bragg for her strong vision and efforts in promoting and strengthening the West St. Paul community in McPhillips constituency.

Beverley Bragg volunteered as a West St. Paul convener since 1968, and currently sits on the West St. Paul Recreation Committee. Fifty years ago, Beverley got together with other community members and formed the West St. Paul baseball team. She has been a visionary and a leader in providing quality services throughout our community.

In 1969, with her neighbours, she resurrected the McNaught [*phonetic*] Community Centre in West St. Paul and served as president for 15 years. Beverley and the executive of the McNaughton Community Centre, together with the Rivercrest club, organized



the first Canada Day celebration in West St. Paul. She is still a—she was a member of that committee for 13 years and still participates in each Canada Day celebration.

\* (14:00)

During the flood of 2009, Beverley organized food for the volunteers. In 2013, she organized a short Remembrance Day service at the Rivercrest and municipal hall, and West St. Paul has held a Remembrance Day service each and every year since then.

In 1992, on Canada's 125th birthday, she was honoured with a plaque signed by the governor of Canada for her outstanding contributions.

In 2002, she received the "Chic" Balderson [*phonetic*] award; she was also awarded the Queen Elizabeth II medal. And in 2011, the play structure at the community centre was named Bev Bragg Park in honour of Beverley's services. And understand, when talking with Beverley, there's a plaque there, and says that you can make a difference.

I would like to thank Beverley Bragg for helping build our community, establishing goals, executing them and giving back through community service.

Please join me in thanking Beverley Bragg and her family and guests for 50-plus years of volunteer services within our community.

Thank you, Beverley.

### Northern Health Care

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** I rise today to recognize northern paramedics and emergency medical technicians for their continued diligence in spite of numerous challenges they currently face as a result of cuts and insufficient funding by this government.

Health care in the North is not only understaffed but also underequipped. This government's cuts to northern health care is forcing health-care staff to make use of ambulances that lack basic requirements like heat or air conditioning. One ambulance in The Pas leaks into the patient area when it rains.

More than a hazard, these ambulances have become unsafe for staff and patients. An eight-hour drive from Leaf Rapids to Snow Lake took 23 hours because one of the ambulances lost a tire and landed up in the ditch.

The state of ambulances in the North is unacceptable. Oil changes not done in a timely manner,

tires are not rotated or changed between seasons so that snow tires are worn out next winter, which is a major hazard, considering the PC cuts to northern 'infrastructure' which leaves our roads in terrible condition.

As if their working conditions are not frustrating enough, N-R-H-A employees are made to pay \$40 a day to secure accommodations away from home, whereas their contemporaries down south are provided accommodations free of charge.

N-H-R-A employees deserve better, and this PC government has failed them, making cuts and more cuts while withholding funds that would make their job safer and health care more accessible. The health and safety of northern health-care workers need to be prioritized as well as 24-7 mental health support services—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Lindsey:** —specialized in PTSD.

What N-H-R-A employees feel—really need is a government that listens and prioritizes their working conditions. The NDP is committed to investing in northern health care for the welfare of staff and patients.

Thank you.

### Health-Care Services

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I begin by extending my condolences to the friends and family of the man who died in the Health Sciences Centre emergency room last week. This death should not have happened.

We hear from a nurse in the emergency room that managers were slow to implement the overcapacity protocol. We know little else.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is now saying that it's inappropriate to ask questions about specific patient issues. This is a new rule which applies to everyone—except, of course, herself when she was asking questions in opposition.

Manitobans deserve answers quickly. We had major recommendations in reports following the deaths of Dorothy Madden and Brian Sinclair. Were those recommendations ever implemented and, if so, are they still being followed, or were the lessons from previous deaths forgotten? Manitobans need to know the answers.

Now, I wish to talk about the historic increase of net debt projected in this year's budget. The budget projects an increase in Manitoba's net debt of 1 billion, 642 million for this fiscal year. This is an extraordinary increase in the province's net debt for a year without a major flood or pandemic. It is a 71 per cent increase compared with the increase in the net debt last year.

It's extraordinary to have such an increase in the net debt in a year like this one, when there are an unprecedented increase in revenues, including an increase of about \$1 billion from the federal government this year. Overall, the increase in net debt under this PC government will be more than \$9 billion; this is a 42 per cent increase in the eight years of this government.

Will the—with the current higher interest rates, the cost of servicing this debt will be larger.

The budget will go down in history for the large increase in debt burden imposed—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Transport of Critically Ill Patients Licence Status of a Company

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Krystal Mousseau's life mattered. She's dearly missed by her family and friends. Krystal Mousseau deserves justice.

We're now learning new information about the situation which led to her death. The company hired to transport Krystal Mousseau was not licensed to provide critical-care transportation in Manitoba. This is deeply concerning.

We know that the Premier was the Health minister at the time that this death occurred.

Why did she contract with companies to transport critically ill patients who did not have a licence to do so?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to Krystal Mousseau's family and all of the loved ones who cared very deeply for her.

The Leader of the Opposition will know that this case has undergone a process—a formal process through critical incident reporting. It has also gone to the Chief Medical Examiner who has reviewed the

incident and the report's findings. And as you know, Madam Speaker, the Chief Medical Examiner has the official capacity and authority to make the determination if further action is required.

I understand the matter could be before the courts, Madam Speaker. And we will respect the process and refrain from further comment, because it is before the courts.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Manitobans deserve to hear answers, and they deserve to have accountability.

The Province of Manitoba employed a company that did not have properly trained staff and did not have the right equipment to care for an ICU patient. Now we learn that this company did also not have a licence to transport critically ill patients.

We don't know what due diligence, if any, this government conducted on this company prior to asking them to move ICU patients during the third wave, when we ran out of ICU beds in this province.

The Premier was the Health minister at the time that these decisions were made.

Will the Premier tell this House why she hired a company that was not licensed to provide critical care to patients like Krystal Mousseau during the third wave of the pandemic?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, again, Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to Krystal Mousseau's family and all of those who loved her very dearly.

I also want to just thank all of the health-care professionals who were involved at the time. They were doing incredible work at the time during a very, very unprecedented, difficult time; not just here in Manitoba, but right across the country. We know that physicians were making—having to make difficult decisions, Madam Speaker, and we know that those decisions, of course, were made by physicians, not by politicians.

Madam Speaker, there was an investigation that took place. It was declared a critical incident. This was also investigated by the Chief Medical Examiner. Now, as I understand, Madam Speaker, this is before the courts, and I think it would be inappropriate to comment further on this until that process takes its course.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** The Premier's answer reveals that she's willing to say quite a lot about this case on the floor of the Legislature here today.

So, the remaining questions, among others, which should be answered, is: Why was a company contracted to provide care and to transport for critically ill patients when they did not have a licence to do so?

I think Manitobans would also like to know what due diligence, if any, was conducted on this company prior to them being contracted to move these ICU patients.

And, of course, one of the important questions that has been asked since early on in the wake of this tragedy is: Why was a team used that did not have the right training or the right equipment to transport ICU patients?

I would like the Premier to answer these questions.

\* (14:10)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** The Leader of the Opposition will know that I have not revealed anything that hasn't already been revealed publicly with respect to this particular situation, Madam Speaker.

We know that this was—this underwent investigation through the critical incident reporting. It also went under investigation by the Chief Medical Examiner. And I know that the family is going in a certain direction here. That's their right and we respect that, and we will allow that process to transpire as well.

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

#### **Privatization of Air Ambulance Services**

**Mr. Kinew:** The family of Krystal Mousseau deserves answers. The company hired to transport her did not have the proper training, did not have the proper equipment; and now we find out they did not have a licence to transport critically ill patients, which was what they were asked to do during the third wave of the pandemic.

We also know that the government privatized Lifeflight, the air ambulance service that, prior to that privatization, had previously transported critically ill patients. Going to offer a quote here, Madam Speaker: Several critical-care and transport physicians warned the government at the time that its privatization plan for air ambulance services would lead to preventable deaths. End quote.

Does the Premier acknowledge that privatization of Lifeflight led to failures in the transportation of critically ill patients?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** The Leader of the Opposition will know that this was very difficult and challenging times, in the middle of a pandemic where critically ill people were, you know, were being looked after by physicians within our hospitals, and difficult decisions needed to be made—clinical decisions needed to be made.

Those clinical decisions are made by doctors. And we know that it was very difficult at that time; there's no question. And we thank the doctors and the nurses and all of the—our health-care professionals for the incredible work they did during a very, very difficult time.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** The privatization of Lifeflight, including air ambulance services, was made many years prior to the pandemic, and it was a political decision taken by this PC Cabinet.

We find out—of course, now—that among the contributing factors to Krystal Mousseau's death is the fact that the team transporting her did not have the adequate training, did not have the right equipment. And, of course, newly released details show that they did not even have a licence to transport critically ill patients.

In light of these facts, does the Premier acknowledge that the privatization of Lifeflight Air Ambulance contributed to worse outcomes for critically ill patients in Manitoba?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Again, our hearts go out to the Mousseau family, Madam Speaker.

And I do know that within that incident that was—it went through a critical incident reporting. It also went through and was investigated by the Chief Medical Examiner, who has the official capacity and authority to make the determination if further action was required. He felt that it wasn't required at that time.

We know that the family has now come forward, and they have the right to take this in the direction that they are, and we know that that process will take place, as well. And we respect that process, Madam Speaker.

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

### **Health-Care System Reform ICU Bed Availability During Pandemic**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I think it's very telling that the Premier refuses to engage with their government's decision to privatize Lifeflight Air Ambulance services.

Yet, the Krystal Mousseau family deserves answers. We know that one of the reasons that she was forced to be transported out of Manitoba by this team—that was not licensed to do so, that did not have the proper training, did not have the proper equipment—is because our province simply ran out of ICU beds. We did not have the ability to care for the sickest of Manitobans when they needed it.

We also know that, in 2019, this government cut the number of ICU beds in Manitoba as part of their so-called consolidation plan. When we ran out of beds a few years later, it's difficult for the average Manitoban to understand that these two things were not connected.

Does the Premier acknowledge that her cutting of ICU beds, along with Brian Pallister, contributed to the outcomes Manitobans saw during the pandemic?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** When it comes to the ICU beds, Madam Speaker, I know we have increased significantly the number of ICU beds in the province of Manitoba from 70 to 100 and beyond, I believe, right now.

And so we recognized from the pandemic—we've learned a lot from the pandemic, Madam Speaker. We recognize that those critically ill individuals who needed and required ICU at that time—that was nothing that was unique to Manitoba.

But I will tell you that, Madam Speaker, that we have listened and we have learned from the past, and that's why we have put many more investments into ICU capacity in the province of Manitoba.

### **Physician Shortage in Manitoba Funding for Recruitment and Retention**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, Doctors Manitoba said they are disappointed this PC government's budget completely ignores the province's physician shortage. Health care is in a crisis in our province, plagued with shortages of health-care workers, and yet this Conservative government has

frozen physician recruitment and retention funds for years.

It's been frozen since 2017, when it was cut by this PC government by \$1.6 million. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** Why would the government still freeze funding to recruit and support more doctors during a health-care crisis?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Once again, I rise today in the House very disappointed with the members opposite for putting inaccurate information on the record, Madam Speaker.

I'm so pleased that, as part of our health human resource action plan, Doctors Manitoba is one of the organizations we have been working very closely with to launch our incentives, Madam Speaker. And I'd like to put them on the record: 80 new physician training seats were recently announced, we extended primary-care patient hours for family and pediatric clinics, \$450,000 for physician mental health supports through the peer support program, \$5 million for the new emergency-care services we call vectors.

And we're partnering with Doctors Manitoba to reduce physician administrative—

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

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

**MLA Asagwara:** This PC government's own budget papers show that they are misleading Manitobans and continue to mislead Manitobans in this very House.

Last November, Doctors Manitoba warned this government that the shortage of physicians had reached 405. That's the highest it's ever been. But the Premier refused to listen to the doctors' warnings.

Doctors Manitoba was clear that more was needed from the budget for doctors to be able to be recruited and retained in our province.

Why did this Premier ignore the advice of Manitoba physicians who were calling out for help during our health-care crisis? And I'll table this government's own documents.

**Ms. Gordon:** What the members opposite don't want Manitobans to know is during their 17 years in power—the dark days of the NDP—Manitoba dropped from having amongst the highest physician numbers per capita to the third lowest in Canada, Madam Speaker.

We are rolling back the dark days of the NDP. That is why our government has moved to increase the physician training seats at our post-secondary institutions: 40 undergraduate physician seats, 10 international medical graduate seats, 30 two-year post-grad medical seats for internationally educated medical students—something the NDP never did.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, currently, right now—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:**—under this government, due to this government's cuts, the shortage of physicians in Manitoba sits at 405. We need hundreds of doctors in our province. Under this government, due to their cuts, Manitobans are desperately looking for answers.

They're waiting for family doctors. They're waiting in emergency rooms. They're waiting for surgeries. Patients are left waiting and waiting and waiting while this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) decides to freeze recruitment funds for physicians for yet another year in her budget. That's the Premier's record, just like Brian Pallister.

Will the government stop their cuts to recruiting for physicians and find a way—finally—to dig deep, do the right thing, invest in those dollars right now so we have more physicians in Manitoba for patients who need them?

\* (14:20)

**Ms. Gordon:** Madam Speaker, our government announced the single largest investment to Manitoba's public health-care system: \$200 million to add 2,000 more doctors, nurses and allied health professionals.

We are working with Doctors Manitoba to strengthen physician practices here in our province, Madam Speaker. And I know the member opposite is having an issue with addition, so I'll state again some of the incentives: \$450,000 for physician medical health supports, \$5 million for vectors; we have added 80 new physician training seats.

Again, Madam Speaker, this is something the NDP never had the courage to do for Manitobans.

#### **Prescription Costs for Dialysis Patients Constituent Case Concern**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** The home 'hemeodialysis' program allows people to receive life-

saving medical care in their homes. Now, this is an important program for Manitobans. It's life-saving, and patients rely on prescription drugs for this program—patients like Martin Solodyuk.

Up until now, Martin has been—never been charged for these life-saving drugs. However, starting April 1st, because of this government's privatization, he will now have to pay money every time he receives care.

Can the Premier tell this House why her government is forcing Martin to pay money for life-saving medication?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Our government has made a significant investment in the Pharmacare program in Budget 2023, Madam Speaker.

And that investment is going to help individuals who are receiving services across our health system, including renal dialysis: \$120 million to be exact, Madam Speaker, has been added to the Pharmacare program, including—I want to put this on record because I'm so pleased for Manitobans—extending the coverage for insulin pumps for adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

I'm not sure if the member opposite knows, but majority of individuals with diabetes will go on to develop end-stage renal disease, and we are going upstream to prevent kidney disease.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, Martin Solodyuk knows. He knows that he's now paying money for drugs that used to be free. He's paying dispensing fees for home dialysis.

And the minister is looking through her book to find the answer to this. Maybe she can answer Martin Solodyuk when she stands up to answer the question next. [*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** These—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:**—dispensing fees, Madam Speaker, amount to hundreds of dollars per year for patients who need these services.

I'll table the minister's own documents, so that she'll be aware of what patients are now paying.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) or the minister tell the House why they are forcing dialysis patients like Martin to pay out-of-pocket for this life-saving care?

**Ms. Gordon:** We respect and value all Manitobans—those that are receiving life-saving end-stage renal dialysis. And that is why, Madam Speaker, we recognize the need to add more dollars to our Pharmacare program.

In Budget 2023—\$120 million to the Pharmacare program, Madam Speaker. That will help to alleviate the pressures that are being felt by Manitobans all across this province.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Not only is Martin now having to pay out-of-pocket along with other patients, he also found out about this change when Shoppers Drug Mart called his wife Suzanne [*phonetic*] to ask for her credit card information over the phone to receive these life-saving medications.

In Manitoba, Madam Speaker, you shouldn't need a credit card to get health care. But that's what this Premier is doing to all seniors across this province. It's shameful.

We wrote the government to reverse this, but we've since—haven't heard any response. I'm going to ask the minister once again, on the floor of this Legislature: Will she apologize to Martin and Suzanne [*phonetic*], and immediately cover the cost of prescription drugs for home dialysis patients?

**Ms. Gordon:** Madam Speaker, my heart goes out to all the dialysis patients and individuals who are receiving care at many facilities—health facilities—across this province.

For over five years, I worked in the kidney dialysis program and saw first-hand what those individuals were experiencing, and I have brought all of that expertise and all of that knowledge here to the Manitoba Legislature to be the voice of individuals who are receiving care in our province.

That is why our government is responding, Madam Speaker, with \$120 million added to the Pharmacare program to alleviate the pressures that seniors and all Manitobans are experiencing with the rising cost of prescriptions.

## Education System Funding Concerns

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** While the PCs need—mislead the public about education funding, schools are struggling with the harsh reality of their policies. Seven straight years of PC cuts and underfunding are forcing them, yet again, to cut. Teaching positions, after-school programs, student transportation and more are on the chopping block.

These cuts hurt our Manitoba students, Madam Speaker, and worsen education outcomes.

Will the Premier do the right thing and stop cutting public education?

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Madam Speaker, you know, it has been a great many, many years here in Manitoba, especially in the education field, working closely with our education partners. It's just unfortunate the member, my friend from Transcona, stands up and puts misinformation on the record.

Madam Speaker, this year alone, \$100 million going to the K-to-12 system—that's a 6.1 per cent increase. Each and every year we've seen historical, astronomical funding going to the education field.

I'll table the charts. More is not less. I wish the member would get on board and stop fear mongering Manitobans.

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

The honourable member for Transcona, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Altomare:** Madam Speaker, misinformation? Let's put some real, factual information on the record. Winnipeg School Division is raising the alarm regarding chronic underfunding, which has forced them to eliminate 130 teaching positions.

Seven Oaks is being forced to cut up to 50 teaching positions and programs, like Learn to Swim. Pembina Trails has had to eliminate their full-day kindergarten program. These cuts hurt our kids in schools, and that's the reality under this Premier today in Manitoba.

Can the Premier tell us when she'll finally stop cutting education for our citizens?

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate that the member from Transcona again is putting misinformation on the record. He could just look

behind him and see that the member from Fort Garry, at one time, was doing self—some self-promoting advertising when he was a chairperson or a trustee with Winnipeg School Division.

Madam Speaker, Winnipeg School Division's receiving 6 per cent—or a \$12.6-million—increase in this year's '23-24 budget.

Madam Speaker, overall, education has received over 23 per cent increase since 2016. So, again, some of those initiatives that the member is mentioning, those are school board decisions, and he needs to go back and maybe talk to Winnipeg School Division.

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

**Mr. Altomare:** Well, somewhere buried in those responses, I think, is an admiration for what we're doing on this side of the House: standing up for kids, communities and fairness—absolutely, and that's not what they want to hear.

\* (14:30)

What's their legacy, Madam Speaker? Fewer teachers, larger class sizes. That's their PC plan, and that's their legacy.

And just like they planned with bill 64, Madam Speaker, they wanted to get rid of those pesky school boards that hold them accountable for each and every decision that they've made.

So, finally, I will ask again: Will—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altomare:** —the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) do the right thing and stop cutting education?

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I almost wish that we had unlimited time in QP today, Madam Speaker, because it would take me that long to continue to talk down to the—unfortunately, the member from—my friend from Transcona—his misinformation that he continues to put on the record.

Hundred million dollars this year, Madam Speaker. The largest—6.1 per cent increase, the largest increase in well over 25 years. We'll get the members opposite, the NDP, to maybe do some of their own research to actually check all that out.

But, Madam Speaker, we've also annualized another \$106 million on top of that—on top of a \$260 million in capital funding.

Madam Speaker, we are cleaning up the mess than the NDP made and we're educating our youth in this great province of ours, and they're going to stay in the province of Manitoba.

### **Health-Care System Government Record**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Brian Pallister and this current Premier cut health care together with all of their colleagues on that side of the House. They fired nurses, they closed emergency rooms and they cut critical health care even during the middle of a global pandemic.

When will the minister stop running from questions and admit to Manitobans that the PCs have no plan to fix health care?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, the—a 22 per cent increase in health-care funding since we took office in 2016. That is more, not less. And in Budget 2023, nearly \$8 billion, a historic investment into our health-care system, providing \$668 million more to strengthen health care for all Manitobans.

Will the members opposite vote in favour of additional monies for health care? Yes or no?

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

**Ms. Naylor:** Madam Speaker, the PCs love to make big announcements, but Manitobans know they cannot trust them to follow through.

They promised to build 1,200 long-term-care homes, but they didn't. They promised to handle the surgical backlog, but they didn't. And they promised to hire nurses, but they didn't.

Will this minister apologize to the people of Manitoba for her government's many broken promises?

**Ms. Gordon:** I rise again to ask the members opposite: Will they vote in favour of \$130 million in funding dedicated to reducing the surgical and diagnostic backlog? Will they vote in favour of more money—\$120 million—to the Pharmacare program, including extending the coverage for insulin pumps for adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes? Will they vote in favour of more dollars for our health human resource action plan to add more health professionals to the health system?

The question is simple, Madam Speaker, yes or no?

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

**Ms. Naylor:** Madam Speaker, I think it's admirable that folks on that side of the House are practising for when they're asking the questions in question period, but today it's still me.

So, make no mistake, if given the chance to cut—  
[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** —health care again, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) will take it. The things that will stop the cuts is a change in government. So, keep practising.

When we look at their so-called plan in the PC budget, again and again we see the government fail to adequately fund health care, including community health centres like Women's Health Clinic.

Will the minister apologize to the people of Manitoba for her government's failure to support the health of women?

**Ms. Gordon:** Madam Speaker, the questions take on a different spin each time I rise in the House, but we remain focused on our path forward.

Madam Speaker, \$200 million for the health human resource action plan to add 2,000 additional health-care professionals. I was pleased to announce \$123 million has already been committed for nine nurse incentives: new hourly premiums, up to \$10,000 for nurses who hold a full-time position, reimbursing nurses' professional licensing fees and more.

We will continue to address our staffing shortages in this province with a concrete plan.

### **Education in Budget 2023 Funding for Grants**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** The Minister of Education may be lost in space when he calls the budget astronomical, but I'll bring him back to earth: the increase in general support and grants in this budget for education is zero, and that—the rest doesn't even cover inflation.

I attended a meeting of the Louis Riel School Division, which is having to reach into its rainy day fund to prevent layoffs—and that's before any new wage settlements.

Can the Premier explain what's historic about a PC budget that forces cuts and layoffs in education? Because that seems pretty routine.

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate that the member from St. Boniface is too busy reading something else during question period. He should be focusing and listening to the answers from the questions coming from the NDP side.

Hundred million dollars in education this year alone, Madam Speaker: a 6.1 per cent increase overall to the K-to-12 system. That's more, not less. Louis Riel School Division is receiving an 8.4 per cent increase. They're almost at \$8.1-million increase this year alone.

I wish the member from St. Boniface would do more reading and less talking, and get his facts straight.

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

### **P3 School Construction Project—KPMG Report Honorarium for Unsuccessful Applicants**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I was hoping the Premier could explain this 2022 document from KPMG that we obtained entitled Manitoba P3 Schools Project, which I table.

It says that, quote, Manitoba is considering a public-private partnership, P3, to bundle the remaining nine schools. The cost of the project is an estimated \$400 million to design, build, finance and maintain the nine schools under a single contract, with the plan for request for proposal to be issued this spring and a promise to pay an honorarium to the applicants who don't win. It includes market sounding questions than include how much that honorarium for failed applications should be and what risks the private proponents want to stick the public with.

Can the Premier explain this report, how much KPMG was paid for it and if the PCs discussed it with current KPMG partner and former PC 'finister' of Finance, Scott Fielding? [interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I'm incredibly proud of our government's record when it comes to building schools, something that the previous NDP certainly neglected for many, many years—and when



they did finally get around to building a few schools, it was for political purposes.

Our side here, we have prioritized the construction of schools based on the needs of students. I'm incredibly proud of the 14 schools so far—on track to deliver 20 schools, as mentioned in the budget.

That's what we're about.

\* (14:40)

### **Provincial Nominee Program Recommended Use for Application Fee**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Back in 2016, I raised a number of concerns about the Provincial Nominee Program and their \$500 application fee. At the time, the minister responsible for immigration assured the House that the \$500 fee would be reinvested to support newcomers here in Manitoba.

However, now, seven years later, the Immigration Advisory Council is recommending that 100 per cent of the application fee be committed to settlement services.

So, what has the government been doing with all this extra money, and why wasn't this being done all along, when the government promised that it would be?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I'm always—I always welcome a question with regards to the Provincial Nominee Program that a PC Party—government created back in 1998.

Madam Speaker, I want to share some good news today: Manitoba will receive 3,175 additional nomination spaces from 2022, which represents a 50 per cent year-over-year increase. This means, for 2023, Manitoba's allocation will be 9,500 nominations.

Madam Speaker, more allocations was recommended by the Immigration Advisory Council, as well as investment into newcomer settlement support organizations. That's why there was a \$7.1-million grant funding towards those settlement organizations.

We are taking action in terms of immigration, Madam Speaker.

### **Seniors Strategy Funding for Initiatives**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Since the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) created the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care, we have continually

heard from Manitobans that programs and services related to seniors need a greater focus.

Can the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care explain what the seniors strategy will do to better support seniors across our province?

**Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Thank you to my honourable friend for that excellent question.

I was proud to announce the seniors strategy, as well as a number of initiatives relating to the seniors strategy: \$12.6 million to expand the self- and family-managed care program; with an additional \$1.3 million, Madam Speaker—\$1.3 million to expand palliative-care services in Manitoba; \$450,000 to accelerate Habitat for Humanity's home modification program; \$300,000 in support of the Rainbow Resource Centre's Over the Rainbow program; \$12.6 million for a hearing-aid grant program, which I hope that the opposition will support.

This strategy is a—

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

### **Lynn Lake Hospital Restoration of Services**

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** This government's cuts to health care have made already unlivable conditions worse in northern Manitoba.

The Lynn Lake hospital now only exists as an emergency room, as all patients have been shipped to hospitals far from home. It was said to be temporary, totally dependent on staffing levels. We have no idea when these people are going to be returned to their homes in Lynn Lake, to the hospital. People want this service restored now.

Will the minister commit to doing that today?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring individuals who live across our province receive the care that they need, as well as in Lynn Lake. That is why we are investing \$812 million into northern and rural health.

A significant portion of these dollars will be used in the creation of a new intermediary health-care hub in northern Manitoba, and we are excited to be working with our northern partners to reduce the need for travel to regions outside of their home.

I was so pleased to be up in Thompson meeting with 30 stakeholder groups from across the North on—

to address the challenges that northern communities face.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a supplementary question.

**MLA Lindsey:** Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, it was told to the residents of Lynn Lake that it was entirely dependant on staffing levels when their hospital services would be restored.

We now have a letter that has been sent to the minister—and I'll table it today, just in case she never got around to reading it—that says staffing levels are now back where they need to be at the Lynn Lake hospital.

Will the minister commit to restoring those hospital services, bringing those patients back to Lynn Lake and to Marcel Colomb Cree Nation today?

**Ms. Gordon:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for thanking our government for staffing the centre, and this is all being done through our health human resource action plan that I ask the members to vote in favour of.

We are going to continue to have discussions with health system leaders in the North, with stakeholder groups in the North, about the timing of opening of various facilities. This is all being done as part of the clinical preventative services plan, and we are going to continue to have that dialogue.

**Madam Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Community Living disABILITY Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Currently, adults with specific or non-specific disabilities, or a combination of disabilities, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory or language processing disorders and/or non-verbal learning disabilities, will be denied access to services under the Province of Manitoba's community living and disability services if their IQ is above 80.

(2) People with these or other borderline cognitive functioning issues also have extremely low adaptive skills and are not able to live independently without supports.

(3) Recently, it has become widely recognized that access to CLDS should not be based solely on IQ, which is only a measure of a person's disability to answer questions verbally or in writing in relation to mathematics, science or material which is read.

(4) Very often, persons with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities have very specific needs related to their executive functioning—function or support when they are adults or are transitioning to adulthood, which are not necessarily connected to their IQ.

(5) Executive function is the learned ability to do the normal activities of life—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** —including being organized, being able to plan and to carry out plans and adapt to changing conditions.

(6) Those who have major defects in executive function have a learning disability requiring assistance under CLDS to be able to make a contribution to society and be self-sustaining.

(7) Provision of CLDS services to individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities or executive function disability, would free them from being dependent on Employment and Income Assistance and have the potential to make an important change in the person's life.

(8) Newfoundland and Labrador have now recognized that access to services should be based on the nature of the disability and the person's needs, rather than IQ.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to change the requirements for accessing community living and disability services so that these requirements are based on the needs of individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities, including executive function or a combination of disabilities, rather than solely on the basis of their IQ.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

### Security System Incentive Program

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Cities across Canada and the United States, including Chicago; Washington, DC; Salinas, California; and Orillia, Ontario, are offering home security rebate programs that enhance public safety and allow for more efficient use of their policing resources.

(2) Home security surveillance systems protect homes and businesses by potentially deterring burglaries, reducing homeowners' and business insurance costs.

(3) Home security surveillance systems can also be remotely monitored with personal electronic devices such as smart phones.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to work with municipalities to establish a provincial-wide tax rebate or other incentive program to encourage students—encourage residents and businesses to purchase approved home and business security protection systems.

This petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Further petitions?

\* (14:50)

### House Business

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Underfunding Education.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Transcona. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Underfunding Education.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Acting Government House Leader):** Yes, if we can resume debate, please, on the budget.

#### BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

**Madam Speaker:** Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James, who has 14 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Yesterday, I started debate by making the case that this budget, Madam Speaker, is fundamentally about trust. It's about this government asking Manitobans to trust them, to trust that they're going to do what they say they're going to do and to trust that they're actually going to fix the chaos and problems that they've created across this province. That's what they're asking Manitobans. And they're doing that, of course, after seven long years of giving us no shortage of reasons not to trust them.

They've now brought forward this budget, which is filled with a lot of big promises and a lot of big announcements. But, of course, they're doing that seven months before an election.

And Manitobans can see exactly what this government is up to with this budget. They know that it's a desperate bid at trying to save their political futures. We know that it's a self-serving act to bring this budget forward seven months from an election. And frankly, it looks desperate, and Manitobans can see that.

It's quite clear to Manitobans why they're doing this. They're not doing this because it's what's right for Manitobans. They're doing this to save their jobs. That's why this government brought this budget forward. It's not about Manitobans. It's about them, and Manitobans can see that.

And that's what I know my colleagues are hearing when we speak with people in our communities. That's certainly what I'm hearing in St. James from folks in my own community, which is, this government can't be trusted and they're trying to buy our votes. Everybody sees it except for these folks across the way.

We know that we need investments in health care. We know that we need big investments in education. We know that we need to invest in municipalities.

We know that we need more than announcements, which is what this government has offered us.

But what this government has brought forward, this whipsaw ride that they're proposing to take Manitobans on, is not a responsible approach to governing. It is not a responsible approach.

The last seven years of PC governance in this province has put us in a terrible place, Madam Speaker. And to catch up, we, of course, need major investments to catch up, to get to where we need to be, to make up for a—inflation. And, of course, we're still far behind where we need to be, even with the proposals that this government has brought forward.

But, of course, we know that the last seven years have done untold damage in other ways and we don't—we not only need now to invest, of course, in catching up to inflation, but we also have to make up for all the costs and damage of their failure to invest over the last seven years. And really, what we need to do is repair the huge health and social deficits that have been created along the way as this PC government has done the damage that they've done over the last seven years.

Madam Speaker, there's a very long list of things that are missing from this budget. One of the, I think, the most concerning gaps in this budget—and I know on speaking with folks in my community and that they really wanted to see was a focus on responding to child poverty—responding to child poverty in particular. One easy opportunity to respond to that, which is to bring in funding for nutrition programs for kids in our schools to make sure that they can have what's necessary to learn and to be successful. That's one really concerning gap in this budget.

Another, of course, is real affordability improvements. We've seen that this budget failed to mention anything about the out of control rental costs that Manitobans are facing in this province.

We, on this side of the House, have worked hard to spell that out, to help this government understand just how big of an impact that's having on Manitobans, on low-income Manitobans, on Manitobans with disabilities, on seniors.

But nothing, Madam Speaker; this budget has no relief for those Manitobans. In fact, this budget continues to apply tax increases to renters. They've continued to apply that \$175 tax increase to renters across the province.

Climate action—complete and totally absent—completely and totally absent from this budget.

No reference to climate, and we know that this province is one of the worst performing provinces in the entire country for reducing our GHG emissions. That is a shame because that is our children's future that this government is playing with.

There has been absolutely no focus on that. That's a huge concern, and I think, frankly, at this point in 2023, after seven years of failure on that front, this government and every member over there should feel ashamed about their failure to take action on climate.

And then, of course, on harm reduction; we continue to see an ideological approach being brought forward by this government. They're unwilling to invest in a safe injection site. They're unwilling to listen to experts, the medical experts, that know how we can save lives. And they've brought forward—again, it's just a proposal; Manitobans don't believe what they're announcing, but they've brought forward proposed funding to respond to our homelessness challenges here in the province.

Well, tackling homelessness really will not go very far unless we focus on harm reduction and we ensure that those people struggling with addictions can get the help that they need, Madam Speaker.

But, again, this is a glaring omission from this budget.

Of course they've proposed, made a bunch of big promises in this budget; they've made some proposals for increases in funding. But, in many cases, even those proposals that they've made, those promises don't even keep up with inflation. And we know that's especially true in health care when it comes to long-term care, home care, and community health agencies. In those areas we're actually seeing what amounts again to more cuts because this government has failed to fund those areas adequately to help them catch up for the funds that they've lost over the last seven years.

My colleagues that have already spoken have done a great job speaking to some of these concerns. I look forward to hearing more from them in a variety of these program areas.

But as Finance critic I want to spend a little bit of time specifically on the lack of—the continued lack of economic vision that we've seen from this government. Not just in this budget, of course; the lack of vision goes back. It goes back to Brian Pallister's time and it continues on with this government.

But this budget, again, showed no sign that this government has any economic vision or plan for this province.

There's no plan for creating good jobs for Manitobans, no plan in here spelling out how this province help—will help to create good family supporting jobs. There's no supports for small businesses to help them to continue to recover from the damage they suffered during the pandemic. And there's no plan to help them grow and thrive.

I'd say that that's probably, you know, one of the most glaring omissions that this government that likes to think of themselves as the great champions of business, have left small business completely out in the cold, have offered them no support to ensure that they can continue to thrive or that they can thrive and continue to create jobs for Manitobans.

There's no vision for attracting more industry to invest in this province, no sign that this government here has any sense about the need to ensure we bring more dollars, more capital, more industry to invest in building jobs across this province.

And there's certainly no evidence to suggest that this government understands that accelerating our transition away from imported non-renewable fossil fuels and moving towards renewable, abundant clean hydro electricity is the single greatest economic opportunity of our lifetime. Again, no sign of that of any kind.

\* (15:00)

I also see no sign that this government has a plan of any kind to unlock the potential of critical mineral wealth. There's no sign that they're actually looking to partner with Indigenous communities to ensure that we can bring those critical minerals to global markets, to unlock those job opportunities in northern Manitoba.

There's no sign that this government has any interest in helping to increase processing—local processing of agricultural goods in our rural communities, to help us ensure we can create more jobs in our rural communities.

No sign at all, and there's certainly no plan to help to make Manitoba a global shipping and transportation hub by taking advantage of CentrePort and, of course, the Port of Churchill.

There's no sign that this government has any economic vision of any kind. It's completely absent.

That is a concern, Madam Speaker. It's an absolute huge concern.

Instead, the centerpiece of this government's economic plan is a program of tax cuts that disproportionately benefits millionaires and big out-of-province corporations. That's what they've brought forward for an economic vision, Madam Speaker.

And, of course, it's early days. We haven't yet seen all the analysis but we're starting to get a sense of what the impacts of their proposed tax changes will be. And we can see, of course, as with their previous tax changes with the education property tax that as usual with the PCs, when they go to make changes to our taxation system, we know that it's always done with an eye in ensuring that the ultra-wealthy—that millionaires end up taking the lion's share of those benefits.

And the changes that they're proposing here, Madam Speaker, with the increase to the basic personal exemption is no exception to that.

The tax changes that are being proposed here are a poisoned pill for Manitobans. They're a poisoned pill for Manitobans because in order to get the help that those tax changes offer, Manitobans—low-income Manitobans and middle-income Manitobans have to accept giant giveaways to millionaires and out-of-province corporations in order to get that little bit of help that they're going to get.

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

And making it even worse, they have to accept continued cuts and underinvestment across government. That's the reality of it and that's the trade-off that they're being forced to accept. And that continued underinvestment has a major cost, a real cost that will eat away at any of the supposed help that this small return in revenues to them through these tax breaks will offer.

You know, my colleague from Fort Garry has done a great job outlining the way that these tax changes have impacted Manitobans in the past, in debates about the education property tax rebate. And we know, through their cuts to municipalities—well, as a result of that we're now seeing the City of Winnipeg is raising property taxes because they have to, because this government has starved them for many years. So, Manitobans are paying more there because of this government's underinvestment.

Look at education. We have a number of examples there. Families are paying more for school outings or for instruments in band. Those costs are rising because of this gun-government's underinvestment.

So, we—we're ultimately losing the small amount of benefit; those low- and middle-income families are losing those benefits that they're purportedly gaining. And in the end, we're helping the ultra-wealthy to make away with massive amounts of money that should stay in our province, helping to pay for the things we need.

Making all this worse, the giant giveaway to millionaires is largely being paid by time-limited windfall revenues that could dry up at any time. We know that we've got this \$2 billion in windfall revenues that's driven by a huge year for Hydro, that's driven by massive increase in equalization payments, which are temporary.

These are things that could dry up tomorrow, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That creates massive financial risk for this province. We've booked in millions of dollars of tax giveaways to millionaires at a time when we are in a very high level—we're experiencing a high level of financial risk.

So, what happens when those dollars dry up? Well, we're going to have a very big problem on our hands, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Making all this worse, of course, the government is going to have to borrow money to pay for the giveaways to millionaires because even though they have a \$2-billion windfall, they're still running a deficit.

Giant tax giveaways subsidized by windfall revenues and paid for with interest by Manitobans. Zero fiscal responsibility on that side of the House. And I'm guessing a lot of their base will be questioning their votes in this upcoming election because I don't think they can even recognize this party. I think they're going to have a hard time recognizing this party.

And I think Dan Lett, you know, in commenting about this government's fiscal approach overall, said it very well in his recent Free Press article: on the fiscal side of the equation, Stefanson's plan is—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sala:**—pure madness. And I agree—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. When quoting an article, one cannot use the name or the surname of someone who is a sitting member of this House. One has to use the member's constituency or title.

Also, just a general caution of order to all members: the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) does have the floor.

**Mr. Sala:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans deserve a government that will act as a good steward of our economy, that will act as a good steward of our finances. But we know we can't expect that from this PC government.

As I said at the beginning, this budget is about trust, and I believe the same can be said about our upcoming election. We deserve more than broken promises. We deserve a government that will actually make the investments that we need in health care, in education, and we deserve a government we can trust and believe in. And unfortunately, Manitobans cannot trust this PC government.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care.

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

**Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Obviously a crowd favourite, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care, it is my pleasure to address this historic budget of 2023-24. I am proud to be a part of this government as we continue to stand for the best interests of all Manitobans ever since this government received its first mandate in 2016, and elected with quite majorities in '16 and '19.

Our government has always and will continue to recognize the challenges that Manitoba face, and we will continue to address those challenges. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have always done when I have spoken to a Throne Speech or a budget, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize and expressed my deepest appreciation to the constituents of Assiniboia for the continuing support that they give me in representing their interests in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since elected to the constituency of Assiniboia, I have been humbled and honoured to represent this wonderful, diverse constituency. As a matter of fact, I have also been very fortunate, very fortunate—one of the few members in this Legislature that has the—had had the honour of representing two constituencies, and I was fortunate enough to be elected in the constituency of St. James and—in 2016 and certainly, it was an honour to do that.

And I follow the member from St. James when he was speaking and I certainly still have a lot of close ties and a lot of close friends that live in that constituency. And I can tell you that the people that I've spoken to from St. James are very, very supportive of the initiatives that this government's taken in this budget.

As a matter of fact, based on the demographic in St. James, there is a very significant, significant demographic of seniors who have been nothing but supportive for some of the initiatives that we have brought forward from the seniors strategy and I can assure you their expectation is that the members across, particularly the member of St. James, will be supporting the initiatives we take, and particularly the hearing aid initiative, which is very, very well received by that constituency, as well as the rest of Manitoba.

\* (15:10)

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I have been very fortunate to represent the areas that I grew up in, in St. James-Assiniboia. I grew up on Overdale Street in St. James-Assiniboia, which is actually just a couple of—the home that I grew up is a couple of home—street—or, a couple houses away from the member of St. James' residence, and I see him and his family in the 'aibourhood' all the time. So, it's a great neighbourhood to grow up in and be part of.

I've raised my two children in the area with my wife, and I've been always pleased to be part of the thriving community of St. James-Assiniboia. As a matter of fact, as I'd indicated, my mother still lives in that area and I'm—we're very pleased to be in west Winnipeg. I have fond memories of that area growing up: down the street, Assiniboine Park; the St. James Civic Centre; won a couple of city championships out of Deer Lodge Community Club, actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And now, living in Assiniboia in that neighbourhood and growing up, our kids, it's extremely great, so.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) created the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care to further commit to seniors and caregivers in this province, and I have been proud to do that. The Premier designated a special mandate for this portfolio: the implementation of all 17 recommendations of the Stevenson review, as well as developing the seniors strategy, which was the mandate that I was given by the Premier.

This is an ongoing initiative and it is our goal to fulfill the goals that have been laid out in—to these

particular initiatives, not only the ones that we have fulfilled and the ones that we are going to fulfill. We are certainly humbled and honoured to bring forward this mandate to the Manitoba Legislature, to the Manitoba people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier recognized that health care needed to be expanded, and as minister, I am thrilled to be able to address the priorities, to implement these critical and necessary comprehensive initiatives for the seniors of Manitoba.

As a government, we are proud to say we have—we are implementing all 17 recommendations of the Stevenson review. The majority have been completed and the remaining are in the process of being completed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's fair to say there's challenges when you ever take on these challenges—these type of initiatives, but we—our government is forging ahead and we will fulfill our obligations.

Just two months after the department was created, we committed \$15 million in initial funding to support and implement those 17 recommendations of the Stevenson review, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Over \$15 million in additional funding supports the following: enhancing infection prevention and control within the long-care sector, which includes a provincial program manager to oversee those initiatives; regional leads to further support those initiatives; and 50 infectious control staff to address those needs; more than 200 full-time equivalent housekeeping staff, as well as the first phase of allied health staffing, 44 full-time equivalents; and improvements to the information and communications technology to better support the operations and patient care.

On top of this critical investment, our government has also invested \$16 million to expand staffing and training in personal-care homes to fulfill the critical recommendations laid out by the Stevenson review. Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are initiatives—that initiative was taking place in—when we budgeted through two thousand and—our first mandate in 2016. They continued through our mandate in 2019 and will continue in the next mandate that we receive.

On top of this critical investment, our government also invested \$16 million to expand staffing and training. Madam Speaker, this is a total of \$31 million—\$31 million—invested in personal-care homes through the Stevenson report.

Unfortunately, the opposition voted against that expenditure, \$31 million for the—to implement the

recommendations of the Stevenson report, and the opposition voted against that expenditure in the budget.

**An Honourable Member:** Why? Why?

**Mr. Johnston:** That's a big question of why.

We also have further expenditures coming up through this budget, which continues to—the initiation of the Stevenson report, and it's my expectation and it's my hope that the members across realize the importance of this initiative and support that extra and further investment.

Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled with the \$55 million that is coming forward within this, our new budget, our home run budget, is what I call it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're looking forward to the people of Manitoba congratulating us as we finish—as we go through the finish line, Madam Speaker, as we hit home plate.

I look forward to pursuing further initiatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in regards to this, and more and more, we are continuing to address the needs of Manitobans by initiating the Manitoba seniors strategy, which I have released, with a number of initiatives that are—that have—I have indicated, and will be coming—more coming forward as we announce further initiatives.

I reached out to Manitobans through Engage Manitoba, where we received over 10,000 responses, 10,000 responses helping us to develop the seniors strategy.

I engaged with seniors and stakeholders, both online and directly to the people in the communities of Manitoba. I have visited seniors in Selkirk, Brandon, Dauphin, Ste. Anne, Steinbach, just to name a few and look—

**An Honourable Member:** Minnedosa.

**Mr. Johnston:** —Lac du Bonnet, Minnedosa. Any other takers? Because I've been there.

**An Honourable Member:** Arborg, you've been there.

**Mr. Johnston:** Arborg, I've been there to Arborg, everywhere, and I look forward to—*[interjection]*

I've been looking forward to continuing consultations in all parts of the province because the seniors document is a living document, and we're continuing to develop and fulfill the needs of seniors. These consultations helped inform the seniors strategy that we brought forward.

And, Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to commend my colleague, the member from Portage la Prairie, for travelling up North to get the insight and input of those communities of Thompson, Flin Flon and The Pas.

On a personal note, I was unable to attend those events due to an accident that I had in the fall, and my colleague, the member from Portage la Prairie, did an excellent job filling and gaining the input of those communities. Thank you for that, MLA—I can't say his last name, Wishart. *[interjection]* I can't say MLA Wishart, can—*[interjection]* Okay.

All of these responses have helped shape the strategy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly we enjoyed getting out there, whether it be through surveys, meetings, stakeholders, touring the facilities of this province, and most importantly, sitting down and actually chatting with Manitobans over—Manitobans over coffee and seniors and listening to them and hearing exactly what they had to say, and that was really what built the foundation of the seniors strategy, which we brought forward.

Our government has been able to construct a highly competitive seniors strategy, and we have started initiating the results of those seniors strategies. This historic budget has made it clear that seniors are on the top of the mind for this government, and I emphasize a 12.6 investment into hearing aids, which we heard loud and clear. We heard loud and clear from Manitobans that's what they wanted because the costs of hearing aids have become prohibitive, and seniors have told us.

\* (15:20)

Not only are we addressing this for low-income seniors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are addressing this for middle-income seniors, who have a tendency not to be able to get the same benefit as the initiatives or the emphasis that we put on people who are—have a very difficult time affording it.

Now we're saying to the middle-income seniors that they also, too, are able to be—to be able to utilize this program. And, Madam Speaker, I'm—again, I emphasize that we are dealing with home care, and we've initiated \$13.9 million in the self- and family-managed care.

And that's a very significant investment, and it's a very significant initiative.

Home care—we've all—has been discussed many times in the House, and we acknowledge it; it's a



challenge. And we need to do all we can to try to find solutions to home care. And we're doing that with this program, and the announcements that are going to be coming forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through—as part of the seniors strategy, is going to—even further—not only find solutions to home care, but it's going to revisit it. It's going to revise it. It's going to come to—it's going to modernize it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking very, very forward to having that discussion with my friends on the opposite side.

**An Honourable Member:** Hopefully they'll support it.

**Mr. Johnston:** I have no doubt that after they've read it and everything they will support it. As well as all of the financial initiatives that are coming forward with the other—with the—

**An Honourable Member:** They like the budget.

**Mr. Johnston:** Oh, they love—I know it. A lot of them, behind the scenes they're smiling at this budget.

And our government continues to be supportive of long-term-care needs. As Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care, I recognize that the baby-boomer population has significantly increased in age and we need to be responsive to this, and we are, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have good people working tremendously hard towards addressing these future demographic increases; and I couldn't be more proud of my department for all the work, and the challenge they took on in helping develop the seniors strategy.

And to date, our government has announced a number of different initiatives. Over and above what I've indicated and emphasized, we have \$450,000 that was established in '22-23 to accelerate the ability of Habitat for Humanity to modify, renovate and rehabilitate existing housing for older Manitobans.

So people who want to stay at home more, want to stay at home longer—now, all of a sudden, we've gone to a very credible group who's going to go in there and help Manitobans stay at home longer. An excellent initiative, and I'm very proud of the fact—and also, too, I must say the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) was also part of those initial discussions, and I compliment her wisdom for supporting this particular initiative, Madam Speaker. Another great minister.

We have \$100,000 to support the historic initiative of—on the historic budget to support the Rainbow Resource Centre. And we're a forward-thinking government. We understand that there are situations that have to be addressed to ensure that the rights and situations are addressed for seniors also, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And therefore, we worked with the rainbow society to ensure that those initiatives are taking place.

We have a—\$1.3 million to support the first phase of 'extending' palliative care—palliative care in Manitoba. We heard loud and clear; loud and clear from our inner consultations that the people of Manitoba needed further support for palliative care within their own environments. People who are in the last legs of their life, they needed that support. And frankly, this 1.3 that we're starting to initiate in Southern Health area is going to be expanded to the rest of the province of Manitoba, and we're looking forward to that further initiative. Because that's what Manitoba asked for, and that's what they got.

And, Madam Speaker, I can't be—I can't tell you how impressed and how pleased I was to work with the Manitoba Alzheimer Society. These people are committed and passionate and dedicated people. And when we recognized that dementia is a tough disease that really affects a number of families that—and there's different levels of it—and as we went through it with the Manitoba Alzheimer's Society it became very, very clear that this government had to take a role in ensuring that we try to do everything we can to try to address this very difficult, difficult disease.

And we have addressed it; \$325,000 in the First Link program, which not only works for the person that's having the challenge, but it also, too—it also, too, works with the people—the people, the families, the caregivers—that are having to deal with this very difficult.

I know myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my mother-in-law passed away having dementia, and it's tough. You know, it's very difficult. It's very difficult when you go to visit somebody who you love and you've had the opportunity and you respect and they have a tough time recognizing you. That's very difficult.

And so this First Link program really helps those families and something that we felt that we needed to address as well as other initiatives that we'll be announcing to support Alzheimer's society in regards to dementia.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as usual I'm running out of time when I get rolling in regards to things that I'm passionate about, and I certainly am here. I wish to indicate certainly my support for this budget. I feel that it's a budget that, historically, has been—

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

Before recognizing the member for Tyndall Park, I just request out of respect for Madam Speaker, please refer to me as the Deputy Speaker.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very happy to rise this afternoon and be able to share a few words on record here in response to the budget.

And I'm going to be talking about a whole lot of topics that were mentioned throughout the budget, but I do want to start with post-secondary education. And the reason for this is since the budget on Tuesday, so just a couple days ago, I've had countless students reach out to me and share with me their concerns from what was actually lacking in the budget.

And to truly be able to appreciate this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to go back in time just a little bit but still under this government. When this government first formed government back in 2016 one of the first things they did was they took away the tuition rebate. And this tuition rebate, it was incredibly important for students. Oftentimes it was used for down payments on houses or to pay off loans or to pay for their first vehicle. And it was well utilized and students across the province really appreciated it. It was sort of giving them a leg up right after they finished post-secondary.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was noticed when it was taken away, and that sort of—that was their first step when they formed government.

Since then they've cut health care for international students. International students contribute so much to our province. We need international students more than international students need us. And we should be thanking them. We should be providing incentives for them, not getting rid of their health-care coverage.

And we have some amazing groups here in Manitoba, like MAPSS, in the Canadian Federation of Students, who really take the time to meet with all of us MLAs, and I appreciate their work so much.

And I know my colleague from St. James and I, we meet with them quite often and they take time to do Zoom calls with us. They—St. Vital—sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the member from St. Vital and myself. I know these students will often reach out to

us through email and through text message and have conversations over Zoom. They'll come to the Manitoba Legislature. They'll do lobby days, and they express to us the very real concerns that they're facing every single day through post-secondary institutions that are affected by this provincial government.

And one of the issues that they always raise is mental health, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think it's really important we talk about mental health because, for a while now, I'd say about two years, I've been mentioning and bringing forward the importance of regulating mental health, regulating psychotherapy here in the province of Manitoba.

\* (15:30)

And, you know, there's a multitude of reasons why this would be important, but the two big ones is, one, affordability. Right now, many people do not have coverage for talk therapy, for psychotherapy. This is a huge resource that we desperately need. And we saw how evident this was throughout the pandemic and even more so now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. By regulating psychotherapy here in the province of Manitoba, it will ensure that people who need it, who want to utilize it and have the resource, they'll actually be able to afford to do so.

The second reason it's incredibly important to regulate psychotherapy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is because we want to make sure that those who are providing the services are properly trained to do so. And allow me to give an example.

If you go into the hospital and maybe you broke your arm, you want to make sure that the person who is fixing your arm has their medical degree, knows what they're doing. When someone goes in to talk to a therapist, that therapist should be properly trained if they are providing mental-health advice. We need to make sure—and by regulating it here in Manitoba—Manitoba's starting to fall behind because other province are doing it—if we regulate it here in Manitoba, it will benefit many, many clients. It will also benefit the therapist, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's why it's so important.

And just on the topic of mental health, too, if we regulate it, it's actually going to save money in the province of Manitoba. It's a preventative thing we can be doing in health care today. Just like diabetes prevention—we can make sure that insulin and pumps are affordable. And one concern that I'm hearing—and again, this is since Tuesday, so for the last couple of days—is people who use these tools—like insulin

pumps, for example—their concern is they're not actually going to be eligible for them.

So, what is this Province going to do to make sure that, across the board here in Manitoba, if you have diabetes and you need these resources, that you're going to have access to them, that you're going to be able to afford them, that you're going to be able to do this right away rather than maybe years down the road. And again, this is a preventative thing we can be doing in health care today.

Now, if I actually refer to the budget, here, physician recruitment and retention initiatives, this is frozen; \$25.5 million. This is on page 96. Mr. Deputy Speaker, why are they freezing this right now? We're—we need resources in health care more than ever right now.

And we can go back to nursing recruitment and retention initiatives, also frozen. Again, just—it makes no sense why these—health care is the most important thing in Manitoba right now. Why is this government freezing it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also need to be prioritizing people who are in Manitoba who are trained in health care and would like to work. You know, I have countless examples of this.

I go to the McDonald's every Saturday, and constituents come and they tell me about their personal stories. And I have one constituent who used to be a gynecologist in India. And they did this for many, many years. They come to Manitoba, they're not allowed to practise. If they want to practise, they have to start from scratch in post-secondary.

I'm sorry, but if you can practise gynecology in India, I am sure you can practise it here. And if the government wants, we can do a standardized testing, something that will make sure that it's fair, make sure it provides comfort for everyone.

I also—I have a constituent now; she recently moved here, actually, but her husband has been in Tyndall Park for a long time. She moved here from BC. Originally, she's from China. She moves to BC working as a health-care aide, things are going well. She meets this wonderful gentleman, he lives in Tyndall Park. They get married. She moves to Tyndall Park. Now, here in Manitoba, not allowed to work as a health-care aide.

She was allowed to in BC, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're provinces away. Why is she not allowed to work in health care here in the province of Manitoba,

especially when we're so desperately in need of health-care workers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care is almost half of our budget, and it's been neglected from this government, it's been neglected from the previous NDP government, for the last 25 years. We need to learn from our mistakes.

We had inquiry done back in 2008 about a tragedy that happened, and we've been speaking about it a lot here in the Manitoba Chamber—here in the Chamber of the Manitoba Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And nothing was done over the last 15 years about this inquiry. And, unfortunately, that's why we had another tragedy just this past week.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is tragic what's happening in our health-care system, and it—people need clarity. You know, I hear from people—people were commenting on it on my social media the other day. They don't know where to go if they need to have hospital services. All the—all these signs, all these billboards everywhere, U for urgent care, E for emergency room—people don't actually know which hospital they are supposed to go to when they need services for something.

We need clarity. Manitobans need to know what to do if their health is being jeopardized. And the wait-list for surgeries and for MRIs. We had a guest here at the Manitoba Legislature the other day who has been waiting for an MRI literally on his brain, and he can't even get an appointment because the wait-list is so long. The hospital is actually telling him, sorry, sir, the wait-list is so long we cannot give you an appointment.

Health care is, hands down, the biggest issue in our province right now, and we should be doing everything—whether in government, whether in opposition, whether at a federal level, a city level—to work together and actually improve it. Manitobans deserve for health care not to be partisan and deserve for their health to be the No. 1 priority, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to pivot here just a little bit. I want to talk about affordable child care. And this perfect example, if we did what we did with affordable child care here with health care, good things can happen.

We saw the federal and the provincial government work together and come together and do this \$10-a-day child care, which is excellent, especially when you just spell it out like that. But there are a few concerns with this recent announcement, and we're

trying to better understand it and work with the government to have some more information brought to us so we are all on the same page.

With this week's announcement, we were led to believe—and I am hoping this is still the case—that child care for any child that is 12 and under living in Manitoba would be \$10 a day. That is the way the announcement was presented, that is what Manitobans believed.

We have since learned that it is now called regular hours, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Regular hours for child care. I'm sorry, but if I go to work—if you're—if you have a child and you go to work Monday through Friday, 9 to 5, but your child has an in-service that day, is that not still regular hours? Does your child still not need child-care services if you are going to work on the in-service day?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether it's in-services, whether it's holidays, whether it's over the summer, it is very deceptive to say that a child will have \$10-a-day child care when, in fact, the reality is that's only during regular hours. It was misleading and that should be clarified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I look in the budget here, child and youth services was actually frozen at \$7.7 million as well. And, again, with the surge of people going back into the workforce, we want to make sure that child-care services are being invested in. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I'm looking forward to meeting with child-care facilities within my constituency over the next few weeks. I've already begun reaching out to them. I've heard from a couple, and I'm curious to learn how this has actually affected them. And I'm really—I'm hopeful that I'm going to come back with positive news on it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I do want to briefly talk about the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, as well.

And historically, this has been an excellent program. And, you know what? I even want to give the government a little bit of credit: it was invented, it was brought into these Manitoba Chambers under the Filmon government, and it was a success, a great program. Manitoba would be nowhere near where it is today in prosperity if it wasn't for the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

So, great, it's going, it's running. Then, the NDP-form government. Completely destroyed the program.

I remember when I first got elected in 2016, people were coming to me and saying, I've been waiting five years just to hear if I'm going to be accepted, Cindy.

And—so, put this in perspective, Mr. Deputy Speaker, imagine living in a different country, applying for the Provincial Nominee Program, waiting five years, putting your life on hold, not knowing if you should move, not knowing where you should send your children—school, not knowing if you should have children because you could be immigrating right away.

This is—it was completely unfair. Wait times were 'trocious' here in Manitoban, and I am glad that that ended up being cleaned up.

And I'd like to think it's because, back in 2016, early on when I first got elected, because it was so bad, I actually did a sit-in here at the Manitoba Legislature. And, surprisingly, it wasn't my first time sleeping on the floors here in the Manitoba Legislature, but it was a very neat experience.

And I even had—the member from Notre Dame's mom even brought us treats to help keep us fed overnight, because it was tough; it was tough having to sleep outside of the minister's office, but it turned out to provide some very encouraging results, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

\* (15:40)

**Ms. Lamoureux:** So, since 2016, I believe that the Provincial Nominee Program began to heal. It started to do a little bit better. These wait times—it took a little while, but it actually dissipated. It was good. People were applying; they were hearing back relatively quickly.

And then this government brings in a \$500 fee, that is often known as this head tax. And I don't quite understand it because when the program was first invented, under Filmon, it ran great. There wasn't a \$500 fee. So, it's not justifiable that we would need it now if we didn't need it before. Frankly, I think it was people taking advantage of immigrants. Immigrants are willing to pay the \$500 fee if they are willing to come here.

And, at the time, I was told in these Chambers, on Hansard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this \$500 fee was going towards settlement services. And now I recently found out—I asked about it in question period earlier today—that this was not actually the case because the

Immigration Advisory Council is now suggesting that the department do this.

So, where has all this money gone? The \$500 fee that all accepted applicants have been providing to this government over the last—since 2016—six, seven years here—where has the money actually been going when we were told it was going into the resettlement process?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a mess. And we're trying to make sense of it, quite frankly.

Last thing I want to talk about today are seniors here in the province, and following the minister who just spoke to seniors, who is responsible for seniors in the province.

In 2016, I started fighting for what's called an independent office of a seniors advocate. I actually went down to Victoria because they have an independent office for a seniors advocate, and I met with her and we sat down and we talked about all the services that they actually provide and how beneficial it actually is. So I thought, this is a great idea; let's bring this to Manitoba.

So, started talking about it here. We've done member statements on it. I brought forward legislation on it. I worked with different departments on it. And we can see how beneficial a seniors advocate could truly be in the province.

We know that there are huge issues with seniors and how they're being treated in the province of Manitoba. This was highlighted so much throughout the pandemic. We can talk about home care, how home-care workers are often having to rush from one side of the city to the other side of the city. We can talk about fees like ambulance fees.

And dental work. You know, just a couple of weeks ago, I had—someone came and saw me at the McDonald's, and they were telling me how they cannot afford their dental bill, just not an option. So now, this senior is going to end up having way more bills in the future. It's going to hurt our health-care system. It's like this very terrible ripple effect, and if we were to just take care of our seniors, this wouldn't be happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Also, home repairs. Something so simple—installing a rail in a person's home, installing a ramp outside of the door—this could enable a senior to remain in their home for years longer. But if the senior cannot afford it, and the government won't step up and help them do this, they're forced to leave; they're forced to move out

of their communities, out of the familiarity and go into a care home where they don't even want to go, often-times away from their families, because of the smallest thing. We could be making huge differences in the lives of seniors here in the province of Manitoba.

And this budget, there's no mention of increasing beds or the preventative strategy to ensure personal-care homes is a last resort for seniors; no mention of it whatsoever. It's disheartening. It's discouraging. And it is very, very difficult to, in any form or context, say that we're going to support this budget.

Manitobans deserve way more that is in this budget right now. If anything, the government should take it back, rewrite it, give us something that Manitobans actually need and want.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I'll pass the floor on here.

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about this great budget.

Let me be very clear: it is a historic, consequential, transformational budget for Manitobans, and it's a budget that speaks to the needs of many Manitobans and responds to our times. And it's a—its balanced in many respects, and it focuses increased spending on the social services that Manitobans depend on like health care and education where spending is at a record.

It also delivers record tax relief—something we haven't seen probably in the history of this province—while at the same time putting us solidly on track to balancing the budget and the return to a balanced budget.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, listening to the speeches across the way, it's truly—I mean, it's almost depressing. Because what's going on is a lot of sucking and blowing from the other side, and I think what they're trying to do is figure out a line of attack on this budget because they're trying to grapple with it. They're having a difficult time trying to figure out how to come at us on this one, because they'll say things like, well, you're not spending enough. But then they'll turn around in the next breath and then they'll say that, you know, we didn't complain that we didn't balance the budget, or that we're spending too much.

They'll say that we—you know, the budget doesn't provide enough supports to Manitobans, but then they turn around and criticize the historic tax relief. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think what's going on, though, is we know that the members opposite don't play as a

team; the Manitoba NDP is not a team. And so they're, you know, individuals with sharp elbows looking out for their own interests, and what is going on is a lot of positioning there within the NDP.

And I suspect that the Leader of the Opposition knows that if he bungles this and gets this wrong, the members for St. James (Mr. Sala), St. Vital (Mr. Moses), St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) are angling for that seat. And so I just think it's interesting to listen to them try to figure this out.

But, truly, this is a great budget. And I think of, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that it's informed by the input—*[interjection]*

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

**Mr. Guenter:** —of so many tens of thousands of Manitobans. And I was pleased to be a part of that process, the prebudget consultation process, and to travel to places like Steinbach and Brandon, and Thompson as well. And interestingly enough, the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development (Mr. Nesbitt) was there, and invited me along for a tour of Vale's T3 Mine. And so it was really cool to go almost a mile underground in Vale's nickel mine.

And what's interesting is, with the electric car industry and all of that, the Tesla was actually the first one to come knocking and want to do business with Vale in northern Manitoba. There's other manufacturers that have signed on with them as well. Of course, the supply of nickel is limited, and so we know that competition's a good thing and we've got a lot of great quality nickel in Manitoba.

But the opportunities and the potential there for mining in Manitoba, and just to—a shame to see the setbacks that the NDP foisted on the—Manitoba's mining sector, and I think it's also interesting that the Leader of the Opposition is signatory to the Leap Manifesto, the overriding mantra of which is leave it in the ground.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we were there touring Vale's mine and talking about the potential for, I mean, just incredible amounts of investment in northern Manitoba, in particular in the thousands of jobs and all the social services that that money could support, to think that we have an opposition here in Manitoba, the opposition NDP, who are dedicated to opposing that kind of economic development and activity, and they want to leave it in the ground.

So I think that that's something that Manitobans will have to settle on October 30. And—*[interjection]*—absolutely; they signed their name to it; they put their name to paper; they put pen to paper and committed themselves to leaving it in the ground. That's devastating.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what do we do here in Manitoba? We do mining and we do agriculture. I'm from southern Manitoba; we do a lot of great agriculture, and you see a lot of the investments—Roquette, Simplot. In Portage, you see Bunge with a quarter-million-dollar expansion several years ago, and they're looking at another significant expansion in Altona.

And there's other great announcements to come that I wish I could talk about here, but I can't. But there's some really positive news to come for southern Manitoba in the field of agriculture and in particular the value-added stuff, the processing of agricultural goods.

So, so much potential in Manitoba, and this budget really speaks to that. And this budget hangs the open-for-business sign in the window like never before. Manitoba is truly open for business, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen) has so eloquently shared in his budget speech, and I'm excited about the opportunities ahead. There's a lot of work that has been done, and there's a lot more to do, and there's just so much great potential.

\* (15:50)

Madam Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about some of the—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize. I do want to talk about some of the historic elements of this budget, such as our government's bold move on personal income taxes, in particular, increasing the basic personal exemption from \$10,800 to \$15,000. And then also taking the first income tax bracket from \$36,000 to \$47,000, and the second income tax bracket from \$79,000 to \$100,000. So these changes taken together will save the average two-income household \$1,250 in income taxes this year alone.

And so that's amazing and that's the kind of stuff that makes Manitoba competitive. It makes Manitoba—people want to come here, raise their families here and live here.

As I think about all the great things in this budget, though, I can't help but think that the only thing that's standing between Manitobans and this historic help in this budget is the members across the way—the NDP. And that's why the fundamental question here, and the question that Manitobans will answer on October 3rd,

is will the members of the official opposition, the NDP, support our historic help to Manitobans through the things like the income tax changes, the phase-out of the education property tax, a \$10-a-day child care for those rural and suburban moms and parents across this province who so depend on it.

Will they support the \$1.2 billion in multiyear capital investments in rural hospitals? We're seeing two new hospitals being built in Portage la Prairie and Neepawa, expansions at six others. We are seeing investments in the Health Human Resource Action Plan of \$200 million to get 2,000 health professionals into the system. And so, an increased spending in the health portfolio of \$668 million this year alone.

The question is, will the NDP continue to stand between Manitobans and these critical investments and this critical support, or will they get out of the way and help us get this support to Manitobans? Because it is so desperately needed. I think of the \$120-million infusion to the Pharmacare program, including extending coverage for insulin pumps for eligible adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes. This is incredible support, and again, not going to happen unless the NDP do the right thing and support this budget.

We are also putting \$81 million into Community Living and Children's disABILITY Services to fund an average wage of \$19 an hour, bringing the total budget for disability services to an historic \$640 million this year.

That \$19 an hour, that is coming up from \$15 an hour just last year. And so, this, again, is historic help in the words of the head of Abilities Manitoba. This is—would be the largest injection of cash into the sector in over two decades.

So, this is very substantial. Again, will the NDP support this help for Manitobans for disability service workers? That's a question they will have to answer. And Manitobans will render their verdict on October 3rd.

There's a number of other things in here, and I was pleased to have several—just in recent weeks and months, to have several ministers in southern Manitoba, in my constituency of Borderland, to talk about some of these things, and we had the Minister of Education in Morden to turn the sod on the new Discovery Trails School, so it's a pleasure to have him there. And it was fun. It was a great day, an exciting day for the area.

As the member who represents the area that takes in a lot of the rural catchment of the Western School Division, you know, a lot of my constituents send their

children to schools in the Western School Division and will be attending the Discovery Trails School in Morden, and so it was great to see that there. And we experienced—we've experienced a lot of growth across southern Manitoba in the constituency of Borderland. And so, obviously, investing in schools is an important part of supporting that growth.

It was also a pleasure to have the Minister for Seniors in Altona for a tour of The Gardens on Tenth, an assisted living facility for seniors in Altona, and one that is really ahead of the curve in so many ways. And so it was a pleasure to have him down and show him the great work that residents in Altona are doing, in particular the gardens of tenth—Gardens on Tenth.

And then, Madam Speaker, investments, like, in water and waste water projects. This budget provides an additional \$160 million, I believe it is, in critical water and waste water infrastructure projects. This is huge support for municipalities across the province.

I think the thing that escapes the NDP is that in order to support economic growth, you need investments in water and waste water projects, and that's something that just did not happen in the 17 years that they were in power. And they choked economic growth in Manitoba, and—[interjection]—absolutely.

And so, they did not care about rural Manitoba at all, and we're still trying to overcome that in southern Manitoba. But the can-do spirit of rural Manitobans is real, and we're overcoming. And with the support of our government—this historic help of \$160 million in water and waste water investment—we're able to turn the sod on many of these important projects that enable economic growth, so much wet industry, which is really important, as well as all these other economic drivers that depend on a reliable source of water.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of great of things in the budget. But, again, I think it's just interesting to listen to members opposite trying to figure out what line of attack is actually going to work here, because—and I understand they're perplexed—but it truly is such a great budget, and it is—it's a hard one to criticize, so I think, you know, they're having a tough time over there.

But I am really proud of the budget and what our government has done because it really does speak to the needs of Manitoba families, Manitoba taxpayers. It increases investments in the services that we depend on, like education, which is seeing incredible—I don't want to use the word astronomical because I almost feel it's proprietary—but I will say it's such a great word

and—with the Minister of Education's permission—astronomical support within the department sector.

And then, health care, as well—which, again, is receiving almost \$700 million this year alone in additional investments. So, that comes to nine—a 9.2 per cent increase in Health this year alone.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that increased spending, we're also providing tax relief for Manitoba families and taxpayers, the kind of thing that makes Manitoba competitive and draws people to our province in a way that, like, has never been done before while, at the same time, reducing our deficit. And it now sits, this year, at about \$300 million, which is an improvement over last year of—where the deficit sat at around \$700 million.

So, you know, this really is a balanced approach. It's a responsible approach, and it's a budget that responds to the needs of Manitobans. And I'm proud of it and pleased to vote in favour of it.

The question is: will the NDP also support this?

Thank you.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, hearing my friends from across the way here talk about the budget, I—it occurs to me that they really don't think much of Manitobans. They really don't think that Manitobans can't see what's happening here, that they don't know what's going on.

This government is so tired, you know, so toxic, so cynical, that they think that Manitobans, after seven years of cuts, savaging our health-care system, having the worst mortality rate for COVID from across the country, tanking our economy, seeing record numbers of people fleeing the province and moving out, that coming up with this budget that they're—Manitobans are just going to forget about all of that.

\* (16:00)

I mean, politics at its fundamental, basic truth is about credibility and trust, and this government doesn't have any of it.

You know, they say a budget is about—is a moral document. It's about values—what a government actually cares about and who they care about—and it's telling. And this budget speaks loudly about who this government doesn't care about and doesn't value, and there are many Manitobans who have been left behind by this budget.

You know, on a very personal note to me is, of course, this government's response to the invasion of

Ukraine. You know, we're a year out and there was absolutely no mention in this budget—none at all—about Ukraine. None.

And what you have—this is a classic example of the, sort of, empty, performative politics—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** —of this government. That it's all about the press release and never about the follow-through. And it's just—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** —you cannot trust them for what they say, right. They trotted out, during the beginning of the invasion, all these Ukrainians to be props in a press release. And then the minute the media—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** —and the cameras are gone, so is the government's will and motivation to help. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** You know, when this government came out and the invasion occurred, they offered up a paltry \$300,000 to assist. They had to be shamed into giving more, and this government was shamed into—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** —giving \$800,000.

The Ukrainian community came to this Legislature and said, you know what, we're going to have a lot of newcomers and refugees coming to Manitoba, we need assistance. We cannot do this with volunteers. This is too big of a job, it's too historic of a moment. We need support.

When the Ukrainian community asked for that, what did this government do? They said no. They provided—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** —no assistance. It has now been a year, and—*[interjection]*

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

When I'm standing, nobody talks.

I'm calling all members to order. And I'm calling all members to respect the individual speaking, whether that is the Speaker or the member who has the floor. And right now, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) has the floor.



**Mr. Wasyliw:** And so, a year later, no new money, no new support.

Let's compare that to Alberta, that actually has a smaller percentage of Ukrainians living there than our province. They have given \$23 million—\$23 million—in direct support to our \$800,000. They have provided support to the Ukrainian community. They have provided support for settlement services, and that's another retrograde Conservative government over there.

So, who else have been left out of this budget?

Well, small business. There was not one mention of small business in this entire budget. You know, you can just walk a few feet from this Legislature and see the devastation to downtown, all the empty storefronts from this government. Small-business community has, for years, been saying, you know what, we're labouring under COVID debt, we need help. None comes from this.

Downtown Brandon, downtown Winnipeg are in—our high streets are emptying out, and this government has no support, no plan, no time. They were not even mentioned in this budget, right. They have money for the MLA for Fort Whyte, but they don't have money for small business owners in Manitoba.

There is no economic plan in this budget, none at all. No industrial strategy, no plan to grow the economy. The only thing, if you want to call it a plan, is, basically, tax giveaways to billionaires from out of province and to large corporations.

And I'm sure the Koch Brothers in Kansas City appreciated the extra money, I'm sure they're going to be able to hire another servant for their mansion, but it doesn't do anything for Manitoba. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** It doesn't create any jobs in Manitoba. What it does is increase child poverty, increases income inequality—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** —and it hurts our economy.

If working people in Manitoba don't have any money, they can't spend in our stores; our stores close, those stores can't pay taxes; and so on and so on.

And, you know, talking about that, this has been the PC economic record. When they took office in 2016, Manitoba had the second fastest growing

economy in Canada. It had the fastest growing economy for a non-petroleum-based province.

Where are we now? Seventh. We are seventh and dropping. And that's the legacy of seven years of absolute economic illiteracy from this government. Rewarding your political donors is not an economic strategy.

You know, I recently took over the Economic Development portfolio, and it's interesting. When I dug into the numbers in this budget it's actually froze funding for this department. So if you figure there's about a 6 per cent inflation, that's actually a cut. So this government is cutting Economic Development in Manitoba. This government has cut training and skill development in Manitoba.

They've cut financial assistance to industry programs by 7.5 per cent. I mean, it's just something they don't value. So their whole entire economic program has been to redistribute wealth from working and middle-class Manitobans to out-of-province billionaires. That is not a plan to grow the province.

You know, one of the—when I'm looking at the ministerial briefing binder, it's telling. One of the first sections of it, it goes through, sort of, the economic situation in Manitoba. Here's all the facts in there that this minister's ignoring, and this government doesn't care about.

Manitoba has a youth unemployment rate of 9.9 per cent. No initiatives. Average weekly earnings: so, how much money the individual in Manitoba makes, is seventh out of ten in Canada. Absolutely shameful. No initiatives; no initiatives.

Our shelter costs have risen 7.3 per cent from 2020. That is the second worst in Canada. That is a crisis in housing and affordability, and there is no response.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

We have some of the lowest income immobility rates in Canada, meaning if you grow up poor in Winnipeg, or in Manitoba, you will die poor in Winnipeg or Manitoba. Because this government puts no energy in actually helping its citizens to succeed and to have a better life. There is no plan, no initiative, no recognition of this—failed economic policies of this government. It means Manitobans don't have hope.

And we're seeing, for the first time in 20 years, record out-migration. We have more people leaving Manitoba than coming. You know, I saw the minister

puffing his chest a few weeks ago about our unemployment rate. Well, the only reason we have such a low unemployment rate is 8,500 young people have left the province. If they stayed, we would have one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada.

So instead of patting yourselves on the back, how about getting to work, how about building an economy, one that is fair and one that includes all Manitobans.

Our immigration rate since 2018 has gotten worse. We have a hard time keeping newcomers; once they get here, and they see that they don't have any opportunity under this government, they leave. And when you compare that to other provinces, that doesn't happen. When they get newcomers, they stay. And part of it is the lack of newcomer services and supports, but part of it is building an economy where only a handful of people are successful here in Manitoba, and the rest are left adrift to sort of go it on their own.

\* (16:10)

We've lost 18 per cent of our civil service. Absolutely devastating. We can't provide basic services to Manitobans. You can't get a birth certificate in the province of Manitoba, you know? And people need these things to, you know, all kinds of extra government services.

And it actually hinders our economy when you can't do that, when we can't just do basic things that governments used to do. We can't even take care of our roads anymore. But none of that's getting fixed in this budget.

You know, it's interesting because I went to the budget presentations, the town halls, and the business community were at these things, and I would say to the—every single one of these presentations, the business community wasn't going up and saying, you know what? We need tax cuts in Manitoba; we're not competitive—whatever hogwash that is.

They came out and said, you know what we need? We need investments in health care, says the business community. We need investments in education, says the business community, because you can't run a business if your employees are sick. You can't innovate if your employees don't have the skills to do it.

So, the business community is coming out and saying this government doesn't get it; they do not know how to build an economy, and their cuts have hurt businesses in Manitoba. It has set us back as a province.

You cannot have a healthy economy without a healthy community. You need to have a functioning health-care system to have a healthy economy. You need to have a functioning education system to have a healthy economy. So, tax cuts for billionaires doesn't cut it.

You can give the Saputos all the money in the world. You can give the Koch brothers all the money in the world; that will not help Manitobans. They come to Manitoba not to invest, but to take money out of the province.

And, of course, this government has all made us less safe, right? You know, the safest way to have a downtown is to have lots of people in it, lots of stores open, lots of people circulating. But, if you build a business climate where all the small businesses are shut down and downtown is empty, it can become a scary place for some people.

This government has cut all kinds of mental health services, housing, addictions treatment. All these things make us less safe, and it hurts our economy.

You know, the employer council—no friend to labour—came out, and their latest report says that Manitoba finished dead last in 11 economic categories. Dead last, right? That's this government's legacy. That's seven years of this government that we picked up the bottom in Manitoba.

We have the lowest number of businesses in Manitoba; even less than Saskatchewan, even though we have a bigger population. We have a smaller percentage of residents with post-secondary education. Again, cuts.

So, going to put a few comments on the record about the environment; that's also one of my critique portfolios. And, again, we saw the Climate Minister yesterday didn't want to talk about the climate. I think he thought he was the Justice Minister and he just wanted to talk about justice.

He did mention, though, that when he was the City, he saw Brian Mayes bring in some environmental programs—and it was a little confusing because he was talking about fake news. I don't know if he was next to Brian when he made these announcements or if he just waved at him from across the hallway. But, anyways, apparently Brian Mayes brought some environmental policies to the city of Winnipeg, so, kudos for them.

But it's very telling that we have a Environment Minister that has nothing to say on the environment. And, of course, we have a checkered history when it comes to that, because this government hasn't done anything to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, we are the worst province when it comes to reductions. In fact, every other province is leading Manitoba when it comes to greenhouse reductions.

And, you know, again, it—this is about our health. We have droughts, we have floods, we have wildfires. These are—we have Colorado lows. These are all because of climate change. They have been devastating to our agricultural industry because you can't grow crops in a drought. Our cattle herds were devastated from this. You have—Hydro is losing hundreds of millions of dollars in a drought year; they don't have money to export.

When we had—in October of 2019, we had that freak snowstorm—again, you're going to see a rise in extreme weather events because of climate change—that cost Hydro \$100 million just to fix power lines. And that doesn't even count how much was spent in municipalities or individual homeowners who had to clean up the broken wreckage of trees and debris from that store. And that's happening more and more and more, and this government's plan is to ignore it.

You know, like, I appreciate they have some tension in their caucus, that there are climate deniers in their caucus. And I appreciate that—you know, like, some of the convoy-sympathetic folks in your caucus, you probably have some very interesting caucus discussions. And I don't want to discount how trying and difficult that might be. But at some point, you just got to tell them no.

But the problem is, who's telling them no? You have the client delayers in this caucus. And it seems to be the government approach that they accept that climate change is real, they just don't want to do anything about it. And there was absolutely no new programs, none, not one new program that was announced in this budget that would actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

And then we get this absolute patent nonsense from this government about the carbon tax. The first line in this government's green plan is—well, other than, you know, as a Conservative government, they have to affirm that they actually believe in science and, like, you know, climate change is real—the very next one is that they believe the approach to it is a carbon tax.

And for six years, this government was pushing a carbon tax and was going to the Supreme Court of Canada or anybody else and saying no, no, we don't want a federal carbon tax, we want our carbon tax. And now, in the seventh year, when it's election time, oh, no, we don't want a carbon tax and that's so evil, even though we've been talking about it for the last six years and this was the centrepiece of our entire environmental platform, which is still on the web and anybody can see that, apparently, this is what you believe.

So, how are Manitobans supposed to trust you when, for six years, you're saying you believe in a carbon tax, but around election time, all sudden it's really bad and you don't believe it?

But what's very interesting here is that this government could have taken control of the carbon tax. They could have brought in their own carbon tax, but they chose not to. So, this is very much the federal Liberal-PC carbon tax because they've allowed the one that's in place to exist when they could've switched it over and made a made-in-Manitoba carbon tax tomorrow. But because they don't want to do that, it's very clear that they like it, they support it and that they're going to fight for it, and that's what their legacy is all about.

So I don't know how anybody in their right mind can support this cynical, toxic, disingenuous budget.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** That was quite a lot to listen to.

I will, though, give some credit to the member opposite, I know—pretty sure he has a small business downtown, unlike the—what he seems to indicate is happening downtown. And I think it's actually growing, so I commend him for that.

\* (16:20)

You know, and I—it's actually a pleasure to hear at least an NDP opponent that knows that he should be talking about the budget. And I think, Madam Speaker—and I haven't checked every Hansard ever—but I have a feeling that this might be the very first time ever in the history of this Legislature where, in the first two full days of budget debate, the opposition Finance critic has not gotten up on a question in question period. It boggles the mind how that can happen.

So, you have a—newly minted, granted, but he's not exactly a rookie—Finance critic in the NDP who

has looked at this budget, who has read every page, I would hope—if he's doing his job he would've done that—and has no questions that he wants to put on the floor of this Manitoba Legislature. I wouldn't—I don't want to say that it's shameful, because I actually think it's—it might actually be a good thing. What it suggests is that this is a good budget. That's why there's nothing for them to say against it.

Now, some of them, though, have stood up, and have said things against it. And to that I will say shame on them. For example, we have here in this budget a commitment to provide insulin pumps, a commitment to provide continuous glucose monitors to every—not just type 1 but type 2 diabetes; not just to youth, but to adults—to every single Manitoban that is struggling with diabetes, they will be eligible for an insulin pump and a continuous glucose monitor. This is an impressive commitment.

And what has the NDP said about it? Squat. Diddly-do. What they haven't—they have not praised our government for that; they have not even said a whisper of thank you. Instead, they've complained that this budget is somehow problematic.

I don't think that providing continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps to Manitobans is problematic. And perhaps the members—I see members from the North—we have Indigenous populations where diabetes is a serious, serious issue. The benefit that those communities are going to have from this commitment of our government is significant. I want the members who are going to benefit from this to rise up and acknowledge at least that, that a commitment to do that would be good.

I will mention another thing. I know—I'll get to the, to some of the other comments of the former Finance critic in a moment. But I just want to note, too, for all Manitobans, I was at the prebudget consultations, the one that happened in Winnipeg, and I will commend the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw). He was the Finance critic, I think—apparently not anymore—but he actually showed up. And I got to tell you, I've held budget consultations almost every year that I've been an MLA, COVID permitting, even some virtual ones, and every single time I have invited NDP MLAs to come to prebudget consultations.

So kudos to the member for Fort Garry for being the very first MLA—NDP MLA—in a seven-year period to actually show up to a budget consultation. So, thank you for that.

But—he was there; he was there, and the Winnipeg one specifically. There was a concerted effort—and it was an effort that I really did appreciate—of the disability-support-worker community. They came together to that prebudget consultation. I also should note—and members opposite probably know—I've read every single comment, every single comment that was delivered to our government on EngageMB.ca—280,000 words. That's four Catchers in the Rye, for the English teachers in the room.

And what did I find there? I found Manitobans asking for the very things that are delivered in this budget. This is a responsive budget. And the support for disability support workers was there as well.

But as I was saying, the member for Fort Garry was there; he heard a lineup of presenters come and say that they wanted to see a significant increase to the amount of wages—the minimum amount of wages—that are paid to disability support workers in our province. This budget delivers on that.

When we were at the prebudget consultation, the Minister for Families was there. She heard what they had to say and she made sure that this budget contains a commitment to increase disability-support-worker wages to \$19 an hour or more.

Now, Madam Speaker, I will tell you that that is significant. That is appreciated not just by disability support workers who are going to benefit directly, but also by people with disabilities, also by the loved ones—the parents, the siblings—of those with disabilities, where they will now have a level of assurance that the people who are caring for those with disabilities in our province are valued by our government. And, as a consequence of that, our hope is that they will stay in those positions longer, so that we don't have as much turnover in terms of the people providing care to Manitobans with disabilities. We want to make sure that they're compensated fairly and that they're willing to continue to work in that career for a good long time, develop relationships with the people who have disabilities.

And I'll note that members opposite, even as I'm talking about this, which I think to be a—I would think would be a non-partisan, happy announcement for everybody, I would think that people opposite—that members opposite would actually respect Manitobans with disabilities and those who care for them. Apparently not. Shame.

Now, I do want to get to, you know, one of the most important parts of the—of our budget. This is

something that is impacting every single Manitoban income earner, and that is the increase in the basic personal amount.

Now, the member opposite, I think it was Fort Garry—and I'm sorry I missed the Finance critic's speech or, at least, I wasn't paying as close attention as I might have wanted to, but what I did hear, he didn't really talk too much about the numbers, I'll just say that. So you'd think, for a Finance critic, you'd talk about the numbers. He didn't. But, thankfully, there was a little bit of mention of the numbers from the former Finance critic, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv). And what he said, I believe, was he thought that the historic reduction in taxes, the historic increase to the basic personally amount, the amount of money that a Manitoban can earn without having to pay any provincial income tax, was—what did he call it again—hogwash. Hogwash.

Okay, let me just get this clear. Let's just get this straight for a moment. We have the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. We have low-income advocacy groups. We have charities. We have people who provide support for Manitobans. We have people from every sector of our province across the board asking for an increase in the basic personally amount. Every single one of them thinks it's a good idea. Every single one of them have asked us, could you do something about this?

Manitoba kind of stands alone. We were second to last, frankly, and that's not a good place to be. It's not wise from a competitive perspective, but it's also just—it's just not the way you want to be dealing with low-income Manitobans.

I remember the criticisms that were launched against the previous NDP government when they would, you know, make a big show of an increase to the minimum wage, but then, you know, turn around and collect revenues, collect income tax revenues off of all that increase to the minimum wage. It was a shell game. It was a way to give themselves a raise, a way to get more taxes, more taxes out of the pockets of Manitobans. That's certainly their history, their legacy.

But I just want to make clear to members opposite what these tax proposals will do, including the significant increases to the tax bracket thresholds, as well, up to \$47,000 and then up to \$100,000. So, for someone who's well off, maybe somebody in this Chamber, right; we've got a number of MLAs making roughly \$100,000. For them, this will mean a

12 per cent reduction in the amount of personal income tax they own—they owe. That's a significant amount—that's a significant amount. I think it's more than a hundred bucks a month. So, you know, good for them.

But, really, what we want to do is make sure that the people who are lower income benefit even more. And so, if you only have a family income of \$50,000, well, that amount of decrease in your taxation rises more than 14 per cent. If you make \$30,000, which is roughly what a full-time minimum wage worker might end up earning, what percentage reduction in their income tax bill does this budget provide? It provides a 23 per cent reduction—23 per cent reduction. Never, ever in the history of this province has that kind of tax relief been delivered to low-income Manitobans, but our government got it done.

Now, what I will say—because I didn't mention one more group of folks, folks who are low income, folks—maybe summer students, maybe students who are in university, maybe seniors who are living on a low fixed income, perhaps their income is as low as \$15,000.

\* (16:30)

Now, under the NDP tax regime, where they refused to index tax brackets, where they kept the basic personal exemption very, very low, I could assure you that even making only \$15,000 a year resulted in you owing a significant amount of personal income tax in this province. And the NDP were all too happy to reach into the pockets of these low-income Manitobans and rip out the money that they had just so—worked so hard to earn.

But our government, if you're a low-income earner where you're only getting \$15,000 a year, like—quite frankly, you know, I know students who are studying the university, students who are working for the summer is—in high school. These students often won't get over a \$15,000 amount. You know what percentage of tax—personal income tax reduction this budget will deliver to them? Do you know how much it is? Madam Speaker, 100 per cent—100 per cent. Not a dime of personal income tax will be collected on those individuals.

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

**Mr. Teitsma:** I thank you.

So now, what is the real surprise is we have widespread support. We have support from the business community, we have support from advocates for

low-income Manitobans, we have support from small businesses, from big businesses, from employees who are low income, from high income, they all appreciate that increase of the basic personal exemption. Except, there's one group of people who apparently do not appreciate it, and that is today's NDP caucus.

When asked will he maintain this—the increase to the basic personal amount—it was a very simple question asked, a very simple question that was asked of the Leader of the Opposition—what answer did he give? Oh, I'm not sure. I'm not sure what we'll do. That kind of cagey response, unacceptable. Make the commitment. Make the commitment.

Do you care about low-income Manitobans or not? If you care about low-income Manitobans, you'll increase the basic personal exemption. You'll support the increase to wages for disability-support workers. You will support the delivery of insulin pumps and continuous 'glucose' monitors to people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes of every age in our province. That's what you would do if you actually cared about Manitobans.

But what would you do—what would the members opposite do if all they cared about was themselves and their political futures? Well, you're seeing it on display right now, aren't you? What they will do is not say one good thing about what's in the budget—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. *[interjection]*

Order. Order.

I'm going to ask the member to direct his comments through the Chair, and I would also remind him that comments should be made in the third person so that there isn't an inflaming of debate in the House. So, a reminder to the member, please. It does help to control, then, the temperature in the House.

The honourable minister, to continue.

**Mr. Teitsma:** I'll just mention, for the benefit of the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), you know, when he complained that we're welcoming in too many Ukrainians, I don't think so. I think we are welcoming in lots of Ukrainians. So many, in fact, that we are the leading province—the leading province—per capita of Ukrainian immigration into this province in this past year. Manitoba has a position of leadership here. It's a position we should be proud of.

I'm shamed that the NDP caucus and that the member for Fort Garry does not think that we should be proud of our commitment to support Ukraine and

of our commitment to welcome Ukrainian immigrants into our province. That is truly shameful.

But what I will also say to the member who claims that reductions in taxation are hogwash is that this budget represents the success of an ideology that says economic growth—economic growth—is how you fuel a growing province. Economic growth is how you can fuel both a lowering of taxes, which we see in this budget, an increase in services, which we see in this budget, and a reduction in the deficit, which we also see in this budget.

Madam Speaker, economic growth has fuelled this budget and economic growth will continue to fuel our province. And there's only one party in this Chamber that seems to know that economic growth is important to Manitobans, and it's this party. It's this party that makes sure that we take down roadblocks to development, that we ensure that there's opportunities to explore mining and to open mines in the North, and we've demonstrated that we can do that. We are doing that.

Now, I will also say, just with regards to my own portfolio, one of the greatest accomplishments of our government was the construction of 20 new schools. You see that mentioned again in the budget: 20 new schools, 14 of them already either complete or well under way, more announcements to come. We are getting things done. We are actually well ahead on that commitment. We are ahead of schedule. We are ahead of target. We actually do what we say we're going to do.

And I just want to get to the issue of trust. Just—I'm stunned that the NDP—I should say that I get it. I understand that there's very little for the NDP to complain about in this budget. They are struggling. They're struggling so hard that I think yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition and I believe the Health critic both somehow managed to read from a—from the wrong column in the budget in a desperate attempt to say that somehow funding was being reduced in mental health or in seniors when, clearly, seniors experienced a 70-plus per cent increase in budget. It just boggles the mind. They can't even read financial statements; it's no wonder they don't understand that economic growth drives our province. It's no wonder that they don't understand the importance of sound fiscal policy like we have in our budget today.

But I just want to reflect on the notion of trust because, you know, I got involved in politics when trust was at an all-time low in this province. Back in 2014, 2015, Manitobans were stinging. They were,

quite frankly, so angry, angry in ways that even the pandemic did not get people to.

And what they were angrier was—about was that not only would the NDP government not tell them that they were going to raise the PST; that would be bad enough, and I think that's the level where the current NDP caucus seems to find themselves. They'd just rather not say what increases to taxation they're going to do. They've only hinted that they would eliminate the education property tax rebate. They've only hinted that they would consider raising the PST. They've only hinted that they would introduce an inheritance tax. They've only hinted that they might eliminate the increases in basic personal exemption. They've only hinted that they might change the way the personal income tax system works so that Manitobans pay more. They've only hinted at things, but they haven't gone out and said them. So I can have an appreciation for the secrecy and the cloak that they try to hide under; I hope they get out of there soon.

But that's not what Manitobans were up against when I got into politics. What they were up against was an NDP government, the Selinger government, that would say one thing and do the very, very opposite, say that they were—it would be ridiculous—ridiculous—to increase the PST, and then increase it just months later, expand it, increase it. It was a complete and utter betrayal, and now we see that Cabinet ministers from that era are welcomed back into the NDP caucus. There's really no difference in terms of the standards of the government of Stan Struthers and Greg Selinger and all the other Cabinet ministers at this time and today's.

But what I will say, and I will remind this House, when our government came into power and when our government started campaigning and started talking to Manitobans about what we were going to do, this is what happened. We said we would reduce the PST from 8 per cent to 7 per cent. You know what happened? We reduced the PST from 8 per cent to 7 per cent; it saved Manitobans an average of \$500 a year.

We said we would reduce ambulance fees by 50 per cent. What actually happened? We reduced ambulance fees by 50 per cent.

We said that we would invest a billion dollars in strategic infrastructure: roads, bridges, food protection, hospitals, universities, colleges, unbelievable amounts of infrastructure investment. What is our legacy? We are investing incredible amounts still today, record amounts in infrastructure. I'm so proud

to be minister of a department that has a significant role in getting that done.

Now, when the members opposite speak about cynicism and speak about distrust and toxic, I can only imagine they're reflecting, projecting perhaps, what goes on in their own caucus. I invite those members, you have an opportunity to change your own leadership. You don't have to just sit back there in the second and third bench and put up with the stuff that the front bench comes up with. They don't seem to think that they are responsible or accountable for anything, but I can assure you that they're responsible and accountable to you. So, take action.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, when I come to this Chamber to work, every single day I look at the members opposite. I look at, randomly, any one of them; they are either tired or retired. So, this is a team of tired and retired members—to be specific: to be retired.

So, what can you expect from a team which is tired or to be retired? Let's talk about what they're doing, and what situation they are in. They are not just tired and retired; they are also confused. They are very much confused what they are doing, and what they want to do.

They're not just only confused; they are also desperate. This desperation is visible in this latest—the last budget from this team. It's very much visible. They are making false promises; that's not new for them. They did it in the past, committed a lot, didn't perform, didn't follow up with the commitments that they did. They did not do what they said they will be doing.

Now, let's not forget that this is an election-year budget. That's why they are trying to make commitments with Manitobans. And they are confused, and they are mistaken that Manitobans do not understand their plans. They do, Madam Speaker. Manitobans are smart; they understand. They know their history of performance, what they have done for the last seven years: cuts and closures.

All of a sudden, everything—they think that everything would change. They are pretending to be so nice, and helping, and thinking about Manitobans and making their lives better. They're pretending to be like that, but actually they're trying to buy votes from Manitobans, and they are trying to mislead Manitobans.

They're confused because they still do not know if Brian Pallister's cuts-and-closures plan was right or

wrong. If it was wrong, then why didn't they deviate from that plan in the last year's budget? There is a new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), but nothing is new in the approach. It's the same Brian Pallister's privatization plan, this P3 plan. Because I think they feel that that guy is still in their minds. It's sitting inside them.

And sometimes they say that, no, no, no, we are deviating; at the other time they are following his footsteps. If they want to deviate, why don't they say that he was wrong? If they follow him and his footsteps, why any one of them does not stand strong in the Chamber and say that Brian Pallister's cuts-and-closures plan was right?

So, they are not—neither this way, nor that way. It can't be both ways.

And after this budget, Manitobans—they are responding. And we need to know what Manitobans are saying. I have some quotes, direct quotes from Manitobans, and all of us, we have listened to those quotes and it tells us a lot. It tells us a lot.

A quote from Lisa Gravelines on CBC March 7th, the budget day, it says, and I quote: They made the change because it's an election year. They had how many years before an election to do that? So they're trying to get re-elected. End quote. That's one of the Manitobans saying, not me.

Another Manitoban, Alex Polsky, says, and I quote: As far as my vote goes, it's not going to have an impact. I gotta look at what each group is going to do and not just kind of see the money and look at the dollar signs. They are always talking about money and dollars, money and dollars.

And my friend who just spoke before me, he was talking about insulin pumps. My question here is: last year, when they announced about insulin pumps for people 25 and under, why was there an age limit? Does the disease treat people based upon their age? Why did it change all of a sudden in the election year? That's the question that we need to ask them.

This support for the adult Manitobans that suffer from diabetes, it shouldn't have taken two years, but it took—and a human rights complaint to force this much-needed change. So we need to take into account that delay. People would have appreciated if it happened in the last six years.

Brian MacKenzie, who is a type 1 diabetic, said he's been fighting for the last two years trying to get coverage for people 25 and over. And here's the quote: Quite frankly, I'm not going to drop my human rights

complaint until I'm satisfied that this thing is really and truly going to happen. End quote.

Let's talk about nurses. What the nurses are saying is, and I quote: Well, you know, I find it really difficult to pat this government on the back. They have deliberately and consistently made cuts to health care and have stuck to their austerity budget and their austerity agenda for the past six years. So, you know, adding dollars now and adding investments pre-election is not going to repair the six years of austerity and six years of damage to our system. And, Madam Speaker, who says that? Darlene Jackson, Manitoba Nurses Union.

Let's talk about the doctors. We are short of hundreds of doctors, and let's see what the doctors say. Doctors say that: No. 1 on our mind right now as physicians is our physician shortage. Our analysis shows that back in 2017, \$1.6 million in physician recruitment and retention was cut and it's never recovered. What we can see today shows us that this is continuing to be frozen at that level. Physicians are struggling right now. We need to address the shortage. Who says that? Dr. Candace Bradshaw from Doctors Manitoba.

Allied health professionals, what do they say? Well, we're still missing the biggest part, which is the investment in human resources of allied health professionals. We have 6,500 members. These heroes, as they were called, worked through the pandemic tirelessly, but they haven't had a contract for five years throughout that. It's time for this government to make things right and give them a contract. Who says that? Jason Linklater, Manitoban Association of Health Care Professionals.

\* (16:50)

Let's talk about university faculty members and their representatives. What they say is financing universities should not be about the students; it should come from the government. Compared to the last few years, if the funding would have kept up with inflation since 2016, we would still need an extra \$50 million. And this quote is from Patrick Noel, Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations.

Are the university students happy? Let's see what the fact is. Here is the quote from Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba chapter: Students continue to experience hardship in Manitoba, and the government refuses to acknowledge that many of us are some of the most vulnerable in society. Students are demanding a significant reduction in tuition, the reinstatement of



international student health care, a student-aid program that works for them and more. Budget 2023 is a missed opportunity.

So this is what Manitobans are saying. Now, we are talking about the budget, and they made some big promises in this budget. But let's not forget that these are promises. They haven't done anything yet. They have simply promised that they are going to do this and they have promised in the past, as well.

So we need to take a look at PC's track record in spending. It's bad, and we all know that their track record is bad. They have underspent in health-care infrastructure by \$816 million between 2016 and 2022. That's their track record. And how can Manitobans trust them now that they are going to follow what they said in this budget? They also underspent in transportation and infrastructure by millions of dollars.

And if we ask for this—these big promises—where would the money come from? Do they have an answer?

They promised to build cattle herds in Manitoba. I have Agriculture file with me. When I talk to farmers, they said that PC's Ag Minister, member from Lakeside, after assuming office, they said let's build the cattle herd.

So, what happened to the cattle herd? It's down to just over 400 cows and cattle in Manitoba. It used to be over 700 cows and cattle in Manitoba. That's a broken promise.

Let's talk about what they promised about ICU beds. They said they would add 1,200 ICU beds, but they did not, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I represent the people of Burrows. And the people of Burrows are not rich PC friends. They are regular Manitobans. They are seniors; they are nurses; they are allied health professionals; they are teachers; they are early childhood educators; they are university students; they are civil servants; they are international students; they are internationally educated nurses; they are transit workers; they are front-line workers; they are taxi professionals; they are truckers; they are small business owners. I represent these people.

And there's no good news for small businesses in this budget. What they did to the public service—so, Kyle Ross from Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union says, I would really like to hear a commitment to staffing the civil service and the public service.

We didn't hear that. We heard sectors here and there and it's a baby step and a band-aid for the problem.

There's a whole 11,000 workers in the civil service that are all working short. I myself have been working in Manitoba Agriculture for years. And I have experienced cuts to the services, to the staff. I have seen this government cutting staffing; I have seen this government closing Ag offices. And the farming community and the rural community, they're not happy about it.

What would be the impact of this budget, these false promises and these big promises, on Manitobans? Is it really, really going to help Manitobans who need help, or it's going to disproportionately benefit the wealthy PC friends: that's the question that we need to ask. What would happen to the debt that we have, that our province has.

This government is simply—simply is trying to mislead Manitobans, and they are responding. They are responding, and they are understanding what their plan is. There is another quote that I want to share: People are struggling across Manitoba, who have seen public services cut, slashed for eight years. And, in this pre-election period, Manitobans can't be bought. So they are simply trying to buy votes with people's own money.

Another quote says, largely benefit wealthy Manitobans and corporations, instead of doing what Manitobans have said they want.

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

I would just like to remind the member to be careful with language. To indicate and trying to say in the House that the government is trying to mislead Manitobans is coming very close to the line of saying that they are deliberately misleading, so the member needs to be very careful with using that language, because it is unparliamentary.

**Mr. Brar:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that.

The thing is, I was saying that all of a sudden this government started thinking so good, so nice and trying to be so kind for Manitobans. If that's the case, why didn't it happen before? Why didn't it change with the change of the premier? Why didn't it change with changing of these ministers so often?

Because they want to follow their PPP plan, which I call Pallister's privatization plan. That's their plan, but they want to continue that plan but they won't say it. They're not bold enough to stand with what they

want to do. They want to do something, but they don't want to admit; they don't want to say strongly that this is right, and this is what we are going to do. They want to have it both ways.

Madam Speaker, it cannot be both ways. They have to be clear. As I said, they are confused. They are desperate because this is a budget year. And this is a team of tired and to-be-retired members. They do not have any energy left to lead this province. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Brar:** They do not have any passion left to lead this province. So this is the time when Manitobans need a government that stands with them, that works

for them and that understands what their needs are. And I'm talking about regular Manitobans. I'm talking about regular Manitobans; let's help those who actually need help, rather than pretending to be helping those.

They are simply pretending to be helping those Manitobans who need—actually who need help.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have one minute remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 9, 2023

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>		Prescription Costs for Dialysis Patients	
Bill 24—The Wildfires Amendment Act		Wiebe	673
Nesbitt	663	Gordon	673
Bill 23—The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Amendment Act		Education System	
Squires	663	Altomare	674
Bill 30—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act (2)		Ewasko	674
A. Smith	664	Health-Care System	
<b>Ministerial Statements</b>		Naylor	675
Canada Winter Games—Team Manitoba		Gordon	675
Khan	664	Education in Budget 2023	
Asagwara	665	Lamont	676
Lamoureux	666	Ewasko	676
Canadian Agricultural Safety Week		P3 School Construction Project—KPMG Report	
Johnson	666	Lamont	676
Brar	667	Teitsma	676
Lamont	667	Provincial Nominee Program	
<b>Members' Statements</b>		Lamoureux	677
Hope's Cradle		Reyes	677
Lagassé	667	Seniors Strategy	
Shenika Chornoby		Wowchuk	677
Redhead	668	Johnston	677
Beverley Bragg		Lynn Lake Hospital	
Martin	668	Lindsey	677
Northern Health Care		Gordon	677
Lindsey	669	<b>Petitions</b>	
Health-Care Services		Community Living disABILITY Services	
Gerrard	669	Lamoureux	678
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Security System Incentive Program	
Transport of Critically Ill Patients		Maloway	679
Kinew	670	<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
Stefanson	670	<b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>	
Health-Care System Reform		<b>Budget Debate</b>	
Kinew	672	(Third Day of Debate)	
Stefanson	672	Sala	679
Physician Shortage in Manitoba		Johnston	682
Asagwara	672	Lamoureux	686
Gordon	672	Guenter	689
		Wasyliw	692
		Teitsma	695
		Brar	699

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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