

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

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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
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SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
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SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
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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

Monday, March 20, 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. Amen.

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Journée internationale de la Francophonie

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Families, 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 her statement.

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs):** J'ai le plaisir de prendre la parole aujourd'hui dans la Chambre pour souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Aujourd'hui, nous nous joignons à plus de 320 millions de francophones sur tous les continents qui célèbrent leur langue et partagent leur culture.

Au Manitoba, près de 35 000 personnes ont le français comme langue maternelle, et plus de 110 000 personnes sont bilingues dans les deux langues officielles.

L'immigration francophone au Manitoba joue un rôle important pour la vitalité de la langue française. Ceci est un avantage à la croissance de la communauté francophone et à l'économie de la province.

L'année passée, notre gouvernement a accordé 350 000 dollars de plus à l'Université de Saint-Boniface pour appuyer son programme en éducation. L'augmentation de places au programme aidera à résoudre la pénurie d'enseignants d'expression française.

Dans les années à venir, la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine sera en mesure d'ouvrir de nouvelles écoles pour accueillir des élèves francophones à Brandon, et à Sage Creek à Winnipeg.

En tant que ministre responsable des Affaires francophones, je suis fier de rendre hommage à cette communauté et de célébrer ses contributions à la province.

Madame la Présidente, je demande les membres de l'Assemblée de me joindre pour souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Vive la Francophonie.

### Translation

*It is with pleasure that I rise in Chamber today to mark International Francophonie Day.*

*Today, we join over 320 million Francophones on all continents who celebrate their language and share their culture.*

*In Manitoba, French is the mother tongue of over 35,000 people, and more than 110,000 Manitobans are bilingual in the official languages.*

*Francophone immigration plays an important role in maintaining the vitality of the French language. It helps the growth of the French-speaking community, and benefits the economy of our province.*

*Last year, our government granted over \$350,000 more to the Université de Saint-Boniface to support its education program. The resulting increase in the number of seats in the program will help address the shortage of French-speaking teachers.*

*In the coming years, the Franco-Manitoban School Division will be able to open new schools to welcome Francophone students in Brandon, as well as in the neighborhood of Sage Creek in Winnipeg.*

*As minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, I am proud to honour this community and celebrate its contribution to the province.*

*Madam Speaker, I ask members to join me in marking International Francophonie Day.*

*Long live Francophonie.*

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Merci, Madame la Présidente. Aujourd'hui, on est excités de célébrer la Journée de la francophonie.

#### **Translation**

*Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today, we are excited to celebrate Francophonie Day.*

#### **English**

Francophones across the world take this day to celebrate their shared language alongside the diversity of heritage and cultures that go with it. In Manitoba, around 4 per cent of our population is Francophonie. It is a vibrant community that has had a big impact in our province in many ways.

Manitoba was founded as a bilingual province by Louis Riel. People like author Gabrielle Roy are household names in Manitoba and also around the world. And to this day, we can see—we can still see the impact of Manitoba's Francophone population in communities like St. Norbert and St. Boniface.

A quintessential example of the Francophone committee here—community here in Manitoba is the Festival du Voyageur, bringing together Manitobans from cultures to learn about French culture through food, entertainment and other festivities.

It is absolutely essential that we protect and promote linguistic rights and cultural rights of Francophonies here in Manitoba. Unfortunately, this PC government has shown during their time they're not committed to protecting and promoting these rights.

We know they cut Université de Saint-Boniface's budget by millions of dollars, alongside translation services and BEF just to name a few. And to make matters worse, Madam Speaker, they never even consulted with Francophone community before making these cuts.

If the PC government wants to truly celebrate la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, they should reverse their cuts and commit to supporting and uplifting the Francophone community here in Manitoba.

Bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie à tous. Merci.

#### **Translation**

*Happy International Francophonie Day to all. Thank you.*

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** 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:** Merci, Madame la Présidente. Chaque année, à cette date du 20 mars, on célèbre la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Le fondateur de notre province, Louis Riel, était francophone, et il a fondé le Manitoba sur le principe de la préservation des droits de la langue française.

#### **Translation**

*Thank you, Madam Speaker. Every year on this day, March 20th, we celebrate International Francophonie Day. The founder of our province, Louis Riel, was Francophone and he built Manitoba on the principle of preservation of French language rights.*

#### **English**

Just yesterday, I attended the celebration of life of Lucienne Loiselle. She founded les castors, a French equivalent of beaver scouts, and played an extraordinary role in defending and promoting and encouraging French in Manitoba. Without hesitation, I will put her name a song—alongside legends like Georges Forest, Louis Riel, Gabrielle Roy, Soeur Léonne Dumesnil, Jean Allard and so many others who've fought for French language rights in Manitoba.

Pendant des décennies, le droit de parler et d'apprendre le français au Manitoba a été sévèrement réprimé, et les Franco-manitobains ont été la cible de la haine. En 1922, le Collège Saint-Boniface a été incendié et 10 étudiants meurent.

Dans les années 1980, lorsque la Cour suprême a reconnu que la Constitution du Manitoba exigeait le respect des droits de la langue française, les conservateurs l'ont combattu bec et ongles.

**Translation**

*For decades, the right to speak and learn French in Manitoba was severely repressed, and Franco-Manitobans were the target of hate. In 1922, St. Boniface College was ablaze on fire and 10 students died.*

*When the Supreme Court recognized that Manitoba's constitution required the respect of French language rights, the Conservatives fought tooth and nail against it.*

**English**

Francophones in Manitoba faced hate, suppression and political violence all within living memory. In January, 1983, the offices of the Franco-Manitoban Society were firebombed.

That year, the PC opposition filibustered for months in an effort to deny the expansion of French language rights in the province. As Raymond Hébert wrote, from May 1983 to the end of February 1984, Manitoba was wracked by one of the most intense, divisive debates in its history.

Ces défis n'ont pas cessé.

Aujourd'hui, les organismes comme la Société franco-manitobaine, le Conseil jeunesse provincial, Festival du Voyageur, l'Accueil, la Fédération des aînés francophones du Manitoba et beaucoup d'autres célèbrent et encouragent l'épanouissement de leur culture, qui est aussi la nôtre.

Au Manitoba, parler français n'est pas un accommodement, c'est un droit fondamental. Et tout comme cultiver un jardin, il faut des efforts pour semer et cultiver aujourd'hui, afin que nous puissions avoir une meilleure récolte demain.

**Translation**

*These challenges have never ceased.*

*Today, organizations such as the Société franco-manitobaine, the Conseil jeunesse provincial, the Festival du Voyageur, Accueil, The Fédération des aînés francophones du Manitoba and others celebrate and encourage the thriving of their culture, which also our culture.*

*In Manitoba, speaking French is not an accommodation: it is a fundamental right. And just like with gardening, efforts are needed to seed and grow today, so that we may have a better crop tomorrow.*

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

\* (13:40)

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****Hope Floats**

**Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** Madam Speaker, I rise today in this House to recognize a group that was formed in 2003 called Hope Floats. Three years after Lori Mains [phonetic] was diagnosed with breast cancer at age of 35, Lori come across a poster for Relay for Life event that was going to be held at the International Peace Gardens that summer.

With her supporters and friendships made with people from the neighbouring communities and the people along the way were worth their weight in gold and many found memories were made. Over the years, they have had 27 ladies—actually 28—who are—at one time or another belonged to Hope Floats, with eight of them staying for the entire 20 years.

Relay for Life events continued over time and each year passed, this group decided to come up with a new, fresh idea to raising funds for cancer. This was when the Hope Floats friendship fighting cancer cookbook was published, containing over 1,000 recipes from all over the world being dedicated to someone with—currently battling cancer or someone who has passed away from cancer. The cookbook has been published five times, raising over \$22,000.

The group hosted a gala in Deloraine, Manitoba, inviting everyone to come, to dress up and have fun, which led for their own version of the Relay for Life called a walk in the park for fighting cancer. People from all over joined events, including entertainment, games for all ages, trivia nights, rainbow auctions and barbecues.

After Relay for Life, they focused on raising efforts towards the Deloraine cancer care unit and radiation unit in the Brandon Regional Health Centre and they made quilts and generously gave to—one to every patient who received chemotherapy in the Deloraine centre—cancer care unit.

After 20 years doing their best to assist in fighting against cancer, raising over \$100,000, Hope Floats ladies have hung up their jackets. I would ask each person today who have been directly affected by cancer or someone—form and another to stand and give these ladies a hand for their dedication and hard work.

Madam Speaker, the ladies are here today from Deloraine, Manitoba, in the area from Turtle Mountain. Let's give them a hand.

*Hope Floats members, 2003 to present: Marie Arnold, Shireen Babcock, Melissa Ballantyne (Whiteside), Joann Biehl, Karen Branston, Vicki Caldwell, Karen Clelland, Brittany Coupland (Hainsworth), Melanie Gamache, Bev Goethals, Chelsea Hainsworth, Sandra Hainsworth, Belinda Hobbs, Irene Lanchbery, Rita LeGal, Crystal Lovett, Lori Main, Kathy Mazier, Susan McKinnon, Kate Moir, Nancy Nickel, Tammy Olson, Val Perriman, Bev Tweed, Lorrie Weidenhamer, Judy Wells, Donna Whenham, Pat Whiteside.*

### Lord Roberts School

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I want to welcome the students from room 28 at Lord Roberts school who are here with us today. They're a grade 3 and 4 class. I had the tremendous opportunity to meet them during I Love to Read Month but I was pleasantly surprised when I showed up and they gave a speech saying here are five things you need to know as our voice in the Legislature. So I want to share their words with you now.

(1) We care about the planet and our health.

(2) We care about people in need. You should spend more money on homeless shelters, more beds and more medicines.

(3) We care about kids. You should spend more money on parents, homes, food, clothes and shoes for kids who need them. Also, kids should be happy, so you should help them get toys, cheeseburgers and you should build more indoor and outdoor playgrounds.

(4) We care about everyone's health. We think hospitals should have more nurses, doctors, surgeons and beds. We also think that families should have more places to be near the hospital when they have a family member who is sick.

(5) We care about going to school. We think that schools need more science equipment, more books and more supplies. We think there should be more time for math—and in brackets here, but some of us think we need less time for math, close brackets—more time for gym and more time for art. We think the school should have more teachers, more EAs and a person to work in the library. And one of us thought that all teachers and EAs should get a raise.

We hope you will take the things we care about and talk to your friends about it. Please help us and

know that we care about what happens in our neighbourhood.

I, of course, am going to table their words of the record and let them know that their words will now live here forever in the permanent record of the Manitoba Legislature.

Thank you so much.

### J.H. Bruns Collegiate

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I rise in the House today to congratulate J.H. Bruns Collegiate's guitar students, who recently were awarded first prize in the Senior Vocal category in the 2022 CBC Canadian Music Class Challenge. J.H. Bruns is a high school in the Southdale constituency filled with talented students.

The students sang the Cree lullaby Nikamo by Manitoba husband-and-wife duo Burnstick. The piece was beautifully and artfully arranged, with the students' voices weaving through the sounds of the strumming guitars and mandolin. Their hours of practice and dedication are clear, for the students looked in their element, performing the piece with a natural grace and depth. Watching the final piece was a wonderful, touching experience that I recommend to everyone.

In addition to being nationally recognized, they secured a prize of \$3,000 in new musical instruments, as well as a plaque. The recognition and prizes are well-deserved. I have no doubt that there are some future professional musicians in their mix.

I want to thank J.H. Bruns guitar teacher Randall Haley, who chose the song and encouraged his students. It's not easy to cultivate passion and dedication. I also want to thank the parents and guardians of the students, as they dedicated countless hours driving to practices, performances and providing support and encouragement in the students' musical pursuits.

Madam Speaker, I'm providing a list of names of the students, as well as their guitar teacher, to be included in Hansard, and I ask all members in the Chamber today to join me in congratulating the J.H. Bruns Collegiate guitar students on their accomplishment.

*Aiden Anderson, Jack Baker, Maija Buduhan, Daniela Cervantes Fuentes, Julie Daley, Teagan Fontaine, Randy Haley, Emily Hogg, Reuben Perrott, Ethan Rich, Max Seney, Marysa Stevenson, Scott Turko, Megan Turner, Frances Leona Yasay, Veronica Zinowko*

### Northern Highways

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** The state of northern highways has reached a point far beyond what is acceptable. With The Pas council recently meeting to demand action from the Province, the long-standing issues and concerns regarding the safety of Highway 6 need to be addressed.

Northern highways are the essential arteries of the North, as residents must, on a regular basis, travel far out of their own communities to get medical treatment. The Safer Highway 6 Citizens Action Group, which formed to pressure municipalities to act on making these roads safer for travel, is amazing to see. However, it signifies the straw that broke the camel's back. What is so disappointing is that the Province has repeatedly ignored the calls of communities and citizens, despite the very real consequences.

The work of the citizens' committee is inspiring, and we can only hope that the minister can respond in a meaningful and a timely manner. This work done by community members seeks justice for those who have been injured or lost their lives due to the state of the northern highways.

For many years now, we have proposed establishing standards for clearing snow from provincial roads; however, the 'govers'—government's 'respon't has always been one of inaction. The government denied that there have been cuts and vacancies in northern road maintenance, but we know that this is not true. They cut 60 road maintenance positions over the past four years and failed to fill 40 per cent of long-standing vacancies in the northern region.

Highways should be invested in by this government, but—as they are the essential for northern families' educational, medical and personal needs. Without 'mediat' attention being given to northern roads, we will continue to see families being put in danger, and the inaction of our government shows they continue to leave the North behind.

Ekosi.

### Rossmere Community Organization Grants

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere):** I rise today to acknowledge the numerous community organizations who've successfully worked with my office to obtain over \$1 million of grants to improve our community of Rossmere in North Kildonan.

These grants have helped many organizations help others by upgrading equipment and facilities at local community clubs, partnering with parent advisory

councils for school projects, funding student workers for kids' summer camps, assisting care homes with seniors' programs, helping sports clubs maintain or renew their equipment for area league sports, providing staff and supplies for community gardens, helping moms' groups with needed supplies, upgrading aging buildings in need of repair that serve the community or connecting families who help with families who need help.

These grants have replaces roofs, helped families, strengthened cultural communities, assisted schools and made our community of Rossmere so much better.

\* (13:50)

These grants have helped Indigenous Canadians, Kurdish refugees, Ukrainian kids, Punjabi adults and Jewish youth and more. They have blessed theatrical groups, soccer clubs, hockey players, students, teachers, Lutherans and Mennonites, to name a few.

This year, Manitoba's budget commits \$50 million for the arts, culture in community fund, not to mention an additional \$25 million for the Building Sustainable Communities grant, which has been well received across Winnipeg and throughout the province.

I encourage non-profits and charitable organizations to contact my office to find out how your project can get a boost from Manitoba's government. It is often the small groups, the unnoticed organizations and the people on the ground who are part of the community and collected to—connected to the local needs who know what is needed.

I look forward to another summer helping the good people in my constituency of Rossmere continue to do good work.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** Yes, Madam Speaker, I actually gave a list of names—of the—28 names to the Sergeant-at-Arms when he—when I picked up my speech, but I wouldn't mind putting that underneath the—my private member's statement in Hansard.

**Madam Speaker:** And so be it; it will happen.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Review of CancerCare Services Implementation of Recommendation

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Health care is in a state of crisis right now in Manitoba, and it's in large measure due to the cuts made by this Premier and Brian Pallister.

We know that she helped Brian Pallister close two CancerCare clinics; one of them was at Concordia and the other one was at Seven Oaks hospital. And it's all part of a review that Brian Pallister ordered.

Now, this review also called for more cuts to front-line staffing. I'll share these documents with the Premier by way of tabling them for her.

I'd like to know: Will the Premier tell the House if she plans to continue cutting cancer care here in Manitoba?

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition—the honourable First Minister.

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** It's always a pleasure to get up in the Chamber to put some facts on the record. We know that members opposite like to put false information on the record. We like to make sure that we put the facts on the record. And these are the facts, Madam Speaker.

The fact is that we're spending almost \$8 billion in the budget in health care alone, a \$668-million increase this year alone, 9.2 per cent increase; also, a 22 per cent increase since we took over in 2016. Madam Speaker, those the—are the investments.

We were listening to Manitobans; those are the investments that they wanted us to be making, and that's why we're making those investments.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Those documents that this PC government created say otherwise.

Those documents say that Brian Pallister and this Premier cut cancer care by 2 and a half million dollars and that they ordered the closure of the CancerCare sites at Concordia and Seven Oaks.

Those documents also recommend, and I quote here, the consolidation of CancerCare Manitoba operations and winding down operations at the Seven Oaks and Concordia hospitals. End quote.

But wait, there's more. It also recommended, and I quote, active vacancy management, end quote, to save money.

The review called this a, quote, benefit, which had to be, quote, weighed against the risk of having unfilled positions creating gaps in service delivery and the ability to maximize outcomes. End quote.

We're talking about cancer patients. That is the view of the consultants this government has hired—recommending that they cut services for cancer patients.

Will the Premier tell us today whether she is going to stop cutting cancer care in Manitoba?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** My heart goes out to all of those people across this great province of ours who have lost a loved one or a neighbour or a friend as a result of cancer. I myself, Madam Speaker, lost my own mother to cancer at her young age of 64, and I take these issues very, very seriously.

That's why we are continuing to make record investments in these areas to ensure that those people suffering from cancer and all other forms of illnesses across this province, Madam Speaker—so that those individuals can get the care that they need when they need it.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** We know that cancer has a terrible toll that it exacts on the people of Manitoba, and that's why CancerCare is so important. It's one of the areas in our provincial health-care system that consistently gets high marks and strong reviews, and yet this government has cut it during their time in office.

That is undeniable. There is no more community CancerCare clinic at Seven Oaks. There's no more community CancerCare clinic at the Concordia Hospital. They cut the CancerCare headquarters project. Shovels were supposed to be in the ground; they ended that.

I'll table these documents again. It shows that 56 positions were eliminated at CancerCare. These are real cuts that are affecting real patients.

Will this Premier stop the cuts to CancerCare in Manitoba?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, we take the issue of those suffering from various cancer illnesses in the province of Manitoba and anywhere across our country very, very seriously. And I want to just take



this opportunity to thank all of those who work within our—within CancerCare in the province of Manitoba—those who are helping those individuals and their families get through very, very difficult times.

Madam Speaker, this is not a time for the Leader of the Opposition to be fear mongering. We are making record investments in health care in the province of Manitoba—a 9.2 per cent increase overall to health care in Manitoba.

We will continue to make those investments so those who are suffering from cancer and other illnesses get the health care that they need when they need it.

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

### **Project Nova Implementation Costs Hiring of Out-of-Province Consultant**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Project Nova is nearly \$200 million overbudget. Supposed to cost about \$86 million—today, under this Premier's watch, \$290 million. This project is clearly out of control and it's only getting worse.

Now, this government has already paid millions to high-priced consultants at firms like McKinsey, and we know that they plan to spend more. They're looking to hire a consultant, and I quote here, to give expert advice and coaching that will result in measurable gains to enable MPI's success in delivering the full scope of Nova on time and on budget. End quote.

There's been no evidence that this government is anywhere close to delivering that, but still they're going to spend millions more on this coaching.

Does the Premier believe that more money should be paid to consultants on their Project Nova?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Well, once again, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition likes to put false information on the record in the Chamber. The fact of the matter is that things are moving forward in this area, and the first phase of Project Nova was rolled out recently.

It is our understanding that there are no further cost overruns and it's expected to be on time, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, Madam Speaker, it was the Public Utilities Board that told this government about the chaos going on with Project Nova. They actually had no idea what was happening under their watch.

The Public Utilities Board said the project was, and I quote, lacking in management controls and a lack of control over expenses. That sounds like this Manitoba PC Party, all right.

Instead of reporting back to the PUB with a real plan, the government and MPI are now saying they're going to spend more money on high-priced consultants at big, out-of-province firms like McKinsey, Madam Speaker. That's the last thing Manitobans need: more money going out of province and higher Autopac rates. I don't think so. I'll table the documents that prove this issue.

Does the Premier believe MPI should hire an external consultant to help coach them on how to control costs on Project Nova?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Once again, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to put false information on the record in this Chamber.

I know one thing is apparent, though, Madam Speaker, and a big difference between members opposite and ourselves is that we respect the independence of our Crown corporations. That's why they are responsible for delivering those services to Manitobans, and we will continue to respect that, unlike members opposite, who like to intervene in the process time and time again.

\* (14:00)

We will not listen to—take any lessons from members opposite when it comes to the independence of our Crown corporations.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Project Nova is overbudget and it lacks control. That's what the PUB is saying; that's what the independent experts are saying. And this government had no idea until the PUB brought it to their attention.

And it's actually costing you money. There was supposed to be a rate decrease this year, but, instead, because of their mismanagement, now Autopac rates are going up.

I table the document that shows they're looking to hire more big out-of-province firms like McKinsey.

Will the Premier tell the House how much more money they plan to spend on Project Nova today?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, I believe I already answered that in the first question that the Leader of the Opposition asked, and the answer is zero. We have rolled that—MPI has rolled out first phase. There will be no more cost overruns, and it will be done on time.

And so, Madam Speaker—but I think it's important to also note that we respect the process that takes place with respect to the Public Utilities Board. We know that members opposite—we introduced legislation here in the Chamber to strengthen the powers of the Public Utilities Board to ensure that we're protecting rate-payers in Manitoba. And what did members opposite do? They voted against it.

We will take no lessons from the members opposite.

### **Project Nova Cost Overruns Public Utilities Board Findings**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, the government continues to waste Manitobans' money and they aren't being honest and forthright about the situation with Project Nova.

Public Utilities Board said Project Nova was lacking in—quote—lacking in management control and lacked control over expenses. But internal documents obtained through the freedom of information, which I'll table here today, show MPI claims the \$200-million cost overrun on Project Nova is, quote, not a product of mismanagement.

Why won't the government just come clean and admit that their mismanagement has wasted \$200 million of Manitobans' money?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation):** Madam Speaker, for about 20 years almost, when that member opposite sat at the government table, they refused to upgrade the technology at MPI. They let it languish year after year. They were buying parts off of the Internet. They were trying to find parts at garage sales for these computers because they refused to update the system.

It was left to this government to have to approve an update to the MPI system, otherwise people would have been going in there and doing everything on paper, using an abacus to try to calculate what their rates are, Madam Speaker.

So yes, we're updating the system, and there'll be no further cost overruns.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, when a project goes overbudget by \$200 million, it's a boondoggle with a capital B, and it's all on this government's record. That means it's been—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —poorly managed and it's been badly managed and seen through the process.

But you'd never know it if you just listened to MPI and these PCs. They think everything is fine and they're trying to say there's been no mismanagement. But we know there continues to be big failures on Project Nova and the PCs are only making it worse by throwing good money after bad.

Does the government and the minister agree with the PUB that Project Nova has been mismanaged?

**Mr. Goertzen:** The conversion on the road to Damascus, Madam Speaker.

That's a member who sat just over there, but on the government benches, when there was a \$2-billion cost overrun on Bipole III and he said, oh, it's not a big deal, it's not a problem, there's nothing to see here—\$2 billion here, \$2 billion there, what does it matter?

It was—if it's a boondoggle for \$200 million, of course, there's good rationale for the system going up—it is the 'montisethis' of a boondoggle—the biggest capital B you could imagine—when he sat at the government table and allowed the \$2-billion Hydro boondoggle to go on without a word of opposition.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Heard it here first, Madam Speaker: This minister doesn't think a \$200-million overspending on his budget is a boondoggle. He doesn't care about Manitobans' money.

This—on this side of the House, we will fight to make sure that Manitobans get good value from their public utilities—\$200 million and counting from this minister, and he doesn't seem to care. We know it needs to stop. We need a clear admission from this government that the mismanagement has been on their watch and it is their boondoggle to answer to the people of Manitoba about.

Will the minister simply acknowledge that Project Nova has been an absolute boondoggle for his government and been mismanaged from the beginning?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Even his own caucus wishes this question would go away—they're just sort of drifting out of the Chamber, Madam Speaker.

Clearly, there needed to be upgrades at MPI, because the NDP refused to do it. Clearly, the member opposite didn't—wasn't concerned about a \$2-billion cost overrun when it came to Manitoba Hydro. There needed to be computer upgrades.

When he talks about—and even mentioning it now—things like untendered contracts, we've issued a directive that there should be no further untendered contracts at MPI—*[interjection]*

Well, except I would remind the member opposite that there were 19 untendered contracts in 2014 under MPI, 26 untendered contracts in 2016 and 45 untendered contracts in 2015 under that member's watch at MPI.

**Madam Speaker:** And just a caution to members that presences and absences of members in the House is not to be acknowledged, and I would indicate that no names were given, but just to caution so that we don't go down that road.

#### **Women and Gender-Diverse Manitobans Request for Health-Care Investments**

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Well, seven years of cuts and incompetence by this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her Health Minister and every other failed Health minister before her will not be forgotten by Manitobans—even with their desperate flurry of announcements—whether it's her failure to staff SANE nurses at HSC, chronic underfunding of community health services like the Women's Health Clinic, cuts to lactation services for new parents or the closure of the Mature Women's Centre.

Will this Premier finally put Manitobans first, rather than her own political future, and invest in the health of women and gender-diverse folks in Manitoba?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Our government is indeed very, very concerned about women's health. That is why we have made it a priority, Madam Speaker.

I want to share some of the investments that we've made since 2016: \$257 million for the Women's Hospital redevelopment project, with \$34.3 million in ongoing operating to provide enhanced patient care for women and infants; \$15 million for digital mammography, with \$2.3 million in ongoing operating. In addition, there has been funding in the domain of women's health through the Manitoba—through the

Mental Health and Community Wellness program related to—

\* (14:10)

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

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

#### **Universal Birth Control Coverage**

**MLA Fontaine:** We know citizens from marginalized and financially struggling communities often don't have access to birth control coverage. I'm proud to affirm that an NDP government will support gender equity within our health care.

An NDP government will cover the costs of dozens of commonly used birth control methods, ensuring that women and gender-diverse folks have full control over their reproductive health.

I'm not sure if the minister is still dragging her couch all over the place, but will she get up off of it and start supporting Manitobans who face barriers in accessing the health services that they need?

**Ms. Gordon:** Our government is investing nearly \$2 billion more in health care than the NDP ever did. Our government is also ensuring that 22,000 Manitobans, Madam Speaker, receive surgeries and diagnostics through the surgical and diagnostic task force. The NDP refuse to support these additional surgeries and diagnostics.

Our government has also increased the Pharmacare program to \$443 million, Madam Speaker. The members opposite didn't agree with Manitobans receiving additional Pharmacare supports.

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

**MLA Fontaine:** Madam Speaker, contraceptives are a right and not a luxury. Money should never be a barrier in exercising control over one's body and the decisions that we make on whether or not to have children.

The NDP doesn't believe in forced births. Our plan will save people money every month and increase access to health care. It's progressive and it's simply common sense in 2023.

Will this Premier support Manitobans in this province and provide free birth control today?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** Madam Speaker, on this side

of the House we think that one of the most fundamental things that we can do to support women is to help them keep their children. That is something that, when the NDP were in government, they failed to do.

They failed to provide the supports to women to keep their families together, and that resulted in the apprehension of over 7,000 children when they were in care. They apprehended a newborn baby a day.

Madam Speaker, that is not standing up for women; that is not supporting women. That is tearing families apart. That is something that this government has worked every day to fix the record and fix the tragedy left by the former NDP administration.

#### **Infection Prevention and Control in PCHs Stevenson Review Recommendations**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, the PCs like to make big announcements, but Manitobans know that they cannot trust them to follow through.

After 54 residents died following a serious long—a serious COVID-19 outbreak at the Maples personal-care home, the independent Stevenson review made significant recommendations, and the government said they would hire more staff.

A FIPPA—which I will table—from the department, indicates funding for these positions to enhance infection prevention and control has not been flowed to help authorities.

Nearly a year after their announcement, does the minister know how many staff have even been hired?

**Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I can indicate to the member that this government is working diligently to satisfy the needs of seniors by initiating, certainly, the Stevenson report.

I can indicate to the member that the budget for the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care was increased by 72 per cent, and that 72 per cent—almost \$40 million—is going to ensure that we follow through on initiatives such as recommendations of the Stevenson report.

And our government is committed to continually—'soo' support seniors.

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

#### **Personal-Care-Home Beds Government Construction Promise**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Well, Madam Speaker, since the minister didn't actually provide an answer to my question, I guess I'll ask about another broken PC promise instead.

Brian Pallister and this current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) cut health care together, along with their colleagues on that side of the House. Years of wage freezes and delayed bargaining by this PC government, coupled with a global pandemic, mean that our health-care system and front-line heroes caring for Manitobans are stretched beyond the breaking point.

They promised to build 1,200 long-term-care-home beds, but they did not do that, Madam Speaker.

Does the minister have any regrets that they failed by their own standards—yes or no?

**Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I certainly appreciate that question from the member. It gives me the—an opportunity to indicate to the House that we are proceeding with further development of personal-care homes for the province of Manitoba.

This government has initiated planning and design for a number of different initiatives that we plan to take, as recommended by our regional health authorities, and we will be proceeding to add personal-care-home beds to this province.

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

#### **Staffing Ratio Reporting**

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, make no mistake: if given the chance to cut health care again in Manitoba, this Premier will absolutely take it. The only thing that will stop the cuts is a change in government.

We know that this government cannot be trusted to actually follow through on any of their promises. They won't support our own—our legislation on this side of the House to report on staffing ratios in personal-care homes. That's a very easy step that this government can and should take.

Will this minister apologize to the seniors of Manitoba and their families for this PC government's failures to protect them when they are in the Province's care?

**Mr. Johnston:** I would remind the member that the Stevenson review recommendations—when this government brought forward an expenditure of \$32 million to initiate the Stevenson recommendations and to deal with increased staffing in personal-care homes, who voted against it? The NDP voted against it.

### **New Education Funding Model Request to Release Before Election**

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** Ask anyone in the education system today, and they'll tell you it's time for a new approach to funding public schools in Manitoba. That's because it's clear to everyone that the PC approach clearly hasn't been working.

Years of cuts have left our schools starved of funding, forcing school divisions to make deep cuts to keep the lights on and the buses running. These cuts hurt our kids, families and communities and the quality of education in the classroom.

Will the minister do the right thing and release the new education funding model before—not after—the next election?

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. It gives me an opportunity to stand up in the House today and welcome the students from J.H. Bruns' music department to be here with us today.

And on that note, Madam Speaker, actually, Louis Riel School Division received an 8.4 per cent increase, which totals a—just over an \$8.1-million increase this year alone. That's a \$100-million increase to the K-to-12 system in Manitoba this year alone. That's over a six—that's a 6.1 per cent average.

Madam Speaker, we're funding education where the NDP did not get it done.

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

**Mr. Altomare:** Let me remind the minister that the PC government originally promised a released education funding model this year, yet now they've delayed the release until '24-25, which is after the provincial election.

It's clear the PCs don't want to make education funding an election issue because Manitobans know and have felt the harmful cuts to—these past seven years to our cherished public education system.

\* (14:20)

Will the minister, Madam Speaker, do the right thing, stop trying to dodge accountability and release the new education funding model before, not after, the next provincial election?

**Mr. Ewasko:** When it comes to funding, we all know, and the member knows—my friend from Transcona knows, Madam Speaker—for well over 20 years, school divisions, our education partners, have been screaming for a new funding model review.

We're working hard on this side of the Chamber to make sure that that comes to reality. We know that there is cost pressures for all school divisions, not only in the city of Winnipeg, but also rural and northern Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we were asked to pause, for now, the funding model review. We're doing that; we're going to get that going again. We want to make sure that we're bringing in education partners, having those consultations, making sure we're getting it right.

Madam Speaker, if the funding model review was easy, you know the NDP would've done it.

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

**Mr. Altomare:** The minister knows they weren't asked to pause the election—the education funding review model; they paused the education release of the funding model. It's on them, and they have to own that, and they're delaying the release because it doesn't expedite their political—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altomare:** —fortunes. That's why they delayed, Madam Speaker, releasing the new education funding model.

Manitobans deserve to know what this government's new approach to funding will be.

Will the minister release the education funding model before, not after, the next provincial election?

**Mr. Ewasko:** I actually encourage the member for Transcona get up on more questions, considering I think this is the fifth question in well over 100 questions, Madam Speaker, because it gives me an opportunity to point out the fact that he continues to put misinformation on the record.

Madam Speaker, in this budget alone, \$260 million in capital funding for schools, which are going to help us achieve our 20-plus-schools promise by 2027. This is something that the NDP had no vision for, they had

no plan. They continue to have no plan. They've got no plan for the funding model review. They dislike sitting and collaborating with their education partners.

Where they didn't get it right, we're going to get it right, Madam Speaker.

### **Privatization of Air Ambulance Services Investigation into Patient Death**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Shared Health is investigating a critical incident. A patient from Manitoba tragically died while being flown out of the province.

Now, this government had ample warning from the people who ran Lifeflight, the public air ambulance service, of what it would mean to sell the service to for-profit operators. Lifeflight was like a flying ER, with people and equipment who could stabilize and save the life of a patient who might otherwise die. Its private replacements can't fly as far or as fast.

Is the investigation into this death also going to ask whether the patient might have lived if this government had kept our public air ambulance system intact, and is the airline going to be grounded?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, my deepest condolences and sympathies to the family of the individual who passed away. The loss of life is always very tragic for a family to go through.

Madam Speaker, this incident is under investigation. I'm unable to discuss it as part of The Personal Health Information Act. It cannot and should not be discussed on the floor of this Chamber.

More information will follow after the investigation is concluded.

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

**Mr. Lamont:** This is about more than just a single incident; this is about the whole air ambulance system, which has been sold off and privatized by the PCs and NDP alike.

In 2020, the PCs used an untendered contract to sell off Lifeflight and handed it to STARS, an Alberta-based company with PC connections. I table a document with our warnings from September '20 that flight delays, bottlenecks could lead to a tragedy because it's happened before.

In 2011, the NDP also gave an untendered contract to STARS. And in 2013, STARS was grounded

when three patients were deprived of oxygen. One woman died, and a 2014 review found that STARS air ambulance crews lack adequate training, were not familiar with pediatric patients and they do not understand patient oxygen needs.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) disclose what airline was involved in this flight? If not STARS, who was it?

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I think the Health Minister made it abundant and—clear that an individual case is not to be discussed on the floor of this Legislature, and certainly not one that is before the courts.

But I guess my question back to that member is, does he not recognize the important work that STARS air ambulance has done in our province? Does he not know anyone who has benefited from their care?

I know I certainly do. A son of a friend of mine was dying on the side of a highway when STARS air ambulance picked him up and brought him to Health Sciences Centre and saved his life, and I'm grateful for that.

### **Judicial System Case Concern Request for Meeting with Justice Minister**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'm tabling a story of a 21-year-old Ethan Wildcat who participated in a therapeutic recovery model over the course of two years at Morberg House. Ethan was drug-free, pursuing education and had full-time employment in which he was using to pay for his own recovery.

Ethan completely turned his life around until the justice system took it all away. Ethan was a first-time offender. He has a three-year-old son, and he is now terrified for his life as he serves three years at Stony Mountain.

The government needs to better ensure individuals who are healing are supported through conditional sentencing and restoration.

Will the minister responsible agree to meet immediately with the clinical team at Morberg House?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** The member knows when it comes to the justice system, decisions regarding sentencing, whether it's conditional sentencing or in-custody sentencing, are done by judges in our judicial system.

However, I do take the member's point to heart. It's one of the reasons this government brought in a

therapeutic drug prison within Headingley and is looking at it, and it is also at the Women's Correctional Centre as well, because we understand and we recognize that being able to get treatment within a facility helps an offender and better their outcome when they leave that facility, Madam Speaker.

### **Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund Budget 2023 Investments**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** As our Premier said on Friday, we know that stronger communities start with a foundation of local arts, culture and sporting initiatives that foster a sense of belonging today and for generations to come.

The Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage is working with Manitobans from across our province to showcase and support these sectors. From community arenas to community history projects, the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund is supporting Manitobans.

Can the minister elaborate on this fund and how he is utilizing the additional funds allocated in Budget 2023?

**Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** I want to thank my new best friend, the member from Swan River, for the question.

Madam Speaker, a total of 402 projects, totalling \$50 million, were funded to support the arts, culture and sports in the community, a historic and monumental program for these sectors created under our government.

Some of these amazing projects are: Gordon M. Rupp Curling Rink in Snow Lake; \$5 million for Market Lands in the Exchange District; the Ukrainian cultural and education centre; Rainbow Harmony Project; the Flin Flon Junior Bombers hockey club; Selkirk Friendship Centre; and 396 more projects in this province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, our government is proud to support the arts, sports and culture in this province of Manitoba, and with that, I am tabled—to table all 402 projects—

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

Order.

### **Vital Statistics Backlogs Birth Certificate Wait Times**

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** After years of cuts and backlogged, delayed applications, Vital Statistics continue to have a wait-list. The latest report indicates

government is sitting on a backlog of 5,000 birth certificate applications.

Will the minister commit to a timeline to reverse his cuts and clear this wait-list?

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I'm somewhat disappointed that the member would borrow the narrative that he knows is false from some of his colleagues.

\* (14:30)

The fact of the matter is that Vital Statistics branch is well provisioned, is supported within our government and within our budget, and that much is clear in the book of Estimates, if the member would take some time to look through it.

We're—continue to work on the backlog; it is a significant issue, and it has my attention.

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

**Mr. Sandhu:** They may have claimed they eliminated the wait-list, but the clear—they haven't. It is clear that Manitobans cannot rely on this government to invest in our future.

Madam Speaker, when will this PC government provide Manitoba public servants the tools they need to meet the demands of a growing province?

**Mr. Teitsma:** I can appreciate that the member may have had difficulty pivoting from my initial response, but I will take something from his second question, which is, is this government committed to investing in this province?

It absolutely is, and you see those commitments in Budget 2023. You see the commitment to seniors, with money for hearing aids. You see the commitment to disability support workers with \$19 per hour as a minimum wage. You see these—you see the commitment to Sport, Culture and Heritage as the minister responsible has clearly demonstrated. You see the commitment to all Manitobans by raising the basic personal exemption to \$15,000.

**Mr. Sandhu:** Madam Speaker, the PC government fails Manitobans and their families right from the very beginning of their lives. New parents describe the experience with this government as disappointing, like pulling the teeth.

This government failed with the basics, and the result of their failure is erosion of trust in our public

service. Rather than blaming Manitobans as incomplete information is a concern.

Why are they not prioritizing contacting these applicants?

**Mr. Teitsma:** As I assured the member, we acknowledge that there is a backlog, and that it has my attention as a minister.

Certainly, we understand that Manitobans require—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Teitsma:** —Manitobans require receiving these recertificates in a reasonable time, and I've certainly communicated that within my department. And I have the full support of my government, and you can see that in the budget as well.

And I'll just highlight, once again, what is happening in our budget that will make Manitoba a better place. And members opposite, instead of nattering and chattering, should instead take a good look at what's in this budget and find a way to get it passed. Pass it today, because this budget contains significant—significant—investments in our province and significant tax relief for all Manitobans, all while reducing the deficit.

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

## PETITIONS

### Community Living disABILITY Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Currently, people 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, CLDS, if their IQ is above 80.

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

Recently, it has become widely recognized that access to CLDS should not be based solely on IQ—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —which is only a measure of a person's ability to answer questions verbally or in writing in relation to mathematics, science or material which is read.

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

Executive function is the learned ability to do the normal activities of life, including being organized, being able to plan and to carry out plans and adapt to changing conditions.

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.

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.

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 on 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 said 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.

Signed by Chelsey Lumb, Adam Kercy *[phonetic]*, Caitlynn Keech and many, many other Manitobans.

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



### Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Ekosi.

### Right to Repair

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba consumers believe products should last longer, be repaired when broken and that planned obsolescence has environmental consequences that threaten a sustainable future.

(2) In 2021, the European Union set minimum design requirements for many electronic devices with new right to repair legislation.

(3) The Biden administration in the US has formally backed the right to repair movement in January 2022, following the European Union lead.

(4) Right to repair enables consumers across the—consumers access to the resources needed to fix and modify their products, appliances, including cellphones, washing machines and refrigerators.

(5) Right to repair also allows consumers and electronic repair businesses access to the most recent versions of repair manuals, replacement parts, software and other tools that the manufacturer uses for diagnosing, maintaining or repairing its branded electronic products.

(6) Right to repair further allows consumers to reset an electronic security function of its branded electronic products if the function is disabled during diagnosis, maintenance or repair.

(7) In addition, the right to repair ensures manufacturers replace electronic products at no cost or refund the amount paid by the consumer to purchase the electronic product, where they refuse or are unable to broad—provide manuals or replacement parts.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to adopt right to repair legislation, requiring manufacturers of electronic devices and appliances, including washing machines and fridges and farm machinery, to make information, parts and tools necessary for repairs available to consumers and independent repair shops.

\* (14:40)

And this petition's signed by many, many Manitobans.

### SANE Program

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, SANE, program is run out of the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg and provides critical support to sexual assault survivors. The program also helps collect evidence for potential prosecution.

(2) Demand for the SANE program in the province is rising, with six—764, rather, sexual assault survivors receiving treatment from April 2022 to January 2023, a nearly 50 per cent increase since 2017-18.

(3) The SANE program has only one full-time nurse and just over a dozen others who are on call to conduct sexual assault examinations in their off hours.

(4) The provincial government has failed to increase funding or hire additional staff to support the SANE program, breaking its April 2022 promise to spend \$640,000 annually and hire five additional nurses and a provincial co-ordinator.

(5) The provincial government's refusal to support the SANE program has resulted in severe staffing shortages, leading to at least 14 sexual assault survivors being sent home with the instruction to not shower or wipe themselves until they return and staff are eventually available to treat them. It has been reported that survivors often do not return, and the number of people being turned away could be significantly higher.

(6) The provincial government has compounded its failure to provide supports for victims of sexual and gender-based violence by refusing to proclaim a bill passed in 2021 that would hold the provincial government accountable for providing resources available to children survivors of sexual assault. The bill, sponsored by the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, is entitled The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act.

(7) The SANE program's staffing shortage is just one example of how the provincial government's cuts to the health-care system and front-line health-care workers, including nurses, is causing Manitobans harm.

(8) Urgent action is needed to immediately fix the SANE program staffing shortage and to ensure that sexual assault survivors are supported with timely access to care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to stop breaking its promises to Manitobans and to provide basic and respectful health care for sexual assault survivors through the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, SANE, program by ensuring it is properly staffed so that no prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence is compromised by the failure to collect evidence.

This has been signed by Miranda Lawrence, Heaven-Lee Lundberg, Chris Scott and many Manitobans.

Thank you.

### Foot-Care Services

**Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further petitions?

### Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as a student and as an immigrant, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to this—to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at college and university levels could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction would help cross-culture friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in the—public schools similar to existing bilingual programming and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Home-Care Services**

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* (14:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care to immediately increase investment in home-care services so that home-care workers can be paid a fair wage and clients can receive the level of service they require.

This has been signed by Marlynn Pajarillo, Czar Timothy-Delacruz and Maria Barrion and many other Manitobans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium

that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition is signed by Rachel Fuchs, Gerald Fuchs and Erik Hebert and many other Manitobans.

### Health-Care Coverage

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

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

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

(2) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba, regardless

of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependant children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

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

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

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

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Further petitions? Orders of the day.

The honourable—[*interjection*] Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Could you please call Bill 14, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, which is currently at second reading, and, if it concludes second reading, could you please call Bill 14 to the Committee of the Whole. If it completes the Committee of the Whole stage, could you please call Bill 14 for a third reading.

**Madam Speaker:** Resuming debate then on second reading of Bill 14, to be followed by Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 14, to then be followed by concurrence and third reading of Bill 14.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 14—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**Madam Speaker:** So, I will now call debate on second reading of Bill 14, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. Standing in the name of the honourable member for River Heights, who has 10 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I want—have a few more issues that I would like to comment on, and the first one being the issue of homelessness. The government has said they have a good plan to end homelessness, but we haven't really seen the evidence that it's working.

I give you an example: I received an email this morning about a gentleman who was in a—staying overnight in a bus shelter in River Heights. Now, this is not exclusive to River Heights; it is happening all over the city, whether it is out on the west end of Portage Avenue or in the south end of Pembina, or downtown in the inner city, or north, it is a fact of life in Winnipeg.

And the question is, you know, why should that individual not be helped? He was crying for help. He made it very clear in an unusual way that he needed help.

\* (15:00)

And—but, think about it in this perspective: the Transit operators have a mandate to come, to ask an individual like this to leave the bus shelter, to clean up the walls of the bus 'shelter' and make sure it's looking good. But what they should be doing in addition for a man who needs help is calling up a helpline. But there doesn't seem to be a helpline for people who are in bus shelters who need help.

There is one in St. Boniface with the St. Boniface Street Links. There may occasionally be one under some circumstances with Ma Mawi and with Main Street Project, but if you go beyond the inner city or the north part of Main Street, then there's no place to call for help and get somebody to come and help this gentleman.

It's not a job for the police. It is a job for individuals who work with those who are homeless, like those in the mobile team at the St. Boniface Street Links, as an example. So there is no dashboard, there is no clear mobile number. This government's homeless strategy is empty. It's not working, and this is another example.

And there's another reason why it's not working. If this were in a place like Medicine Hat, they would call, there would be somebody who'd come to help them and they would find somewhere for them to be housed.

But, in Winnipeg, the government's strategy is not to find housing for people unless they've been chronically homeless, that is, for six months. And it's

not really appropriate for—have somebody live in a bus shelter for six months or even in another shelter for six months while you're waiting to be able to find somewhere to stay.

So, this government's supposed homeless plan—it says A Place for Everyone—well, the fact is that the place for a lot of people is a bus shelter, and that's not a satisfactory answer for people in Winnipeg and in Manitoba.

So this government has failed dismally when it comes to their homelessness plan. They need to go back to the drawing board and start again. But, of course, they've had many years in government to do something and have not.

So, it's a sad situation, the government, which really doesn't know what to do for those experiencing homelessness, who have failed to put in place an adequate plan and are leaving people living in bus shelters when they could, in fact, be finding homes for them.

The second part of addressing homelessness: a number of years ago, a psychologist by the name of Linda Siegal studied people who are homeless in Toronto, and what she found was that 83 per cent of them had an undiagnosed and untreated learning disability.

And she said this—these were people who were not there and homeless because of poverty and various other potential normally ascribed risk factors. They were there because they had an undiagnosed and untreated learning disability. They had, in most cases, tried to be in school but ended up not doing very well because their learning disability was undiagnosed and untreated, ended up struggling, ended up, as a result of their condition, then having mental illness problems or addictions problems and going on to being homeless.

So this government's homelessness strategy doesn't mention individuals with learning disability. And we don't even know what proportion of those who are homeless in Winnipeg have a learning disability because the government hasn't done the work to find this out, even though in Toronto they made up a large proportion—83 per cent—of those who are homeless.

Second aspect I want to talk about is reconciliation. It is a sad day when we should have and be moving forward on reconciliation, but there is no plan by this government to return the money which was stolen by NDP and PC governments from children in the care of Child and Family Services. That should have been No. 1 on the agenda.

But more recently, we have a really good example of the government's plans failing and not addressing adequately reconciliation.

A young man by the name of Ethan Wildcat was struggling, having difficulties, got involved with the law and was—ended up being helped by St. Boniface Street Links and Morberg House. They were very successful and they managed to turn the life of this individual around.

Ethan Wildcat was doing extraordinarily well. He was showing that he—his mindset was completely different. He was ready to start a new life in a new way and be a productive citizen in Manitoba. But he was still fragile because of what he'd been through.

And recently, in contrast to another man in a similar situation, who was not Indigenous, who was treated better and who was allowed to serve his sentence in the community, Ethan Wildcat was sentenced to several years in prison.

This has immediately provided a terrible, terrible negative impact to Ethan Wildcat's view of life, that nobody will give him a chance and, certainly, the justice system in Manitoba has not given him the chance to have a restorative justice that he should have had, given the progress that he was—made.

Why is reconciliation not happening in Manitoba? We don't know, but we know that there's a PC government and it sure isn't doing what it should be doing to enable reconciliation to happen in our province.

The last thing I want to talk about very briefly is lead contamination. There's a very big report written by Alexandra Corporali and Heather Fast, called the burden of concern, about lead contamination. And one of the things that it talks about is the need for more information on blood lead levels, particularly blood lead levels in children so that we—these children can be helped and so that the potential, as a result of the lead contamination, for these individuals to have learning disability, to have behavioural problems can be mitigated, can be reversed so that they can do well.

What we know is that there should be much more done and what we know is that NDP and PC governments over the last many years have done all too little when it comes to lead contamination in Winnipeg and the devastating effects that it can have on so many individuals, particularly children. But also, it has effects on adults, in terms of increasing mental illness and dementia.

And so, we need to be doing much better than we are. We are not, and so the government should be reading this report and it should be acting, but it is not. It's too bad the BITSA is not good enough. We expected much better and we will not support it.

Thank you.

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

If not, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 14, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Mr. Gerrard:** A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have the support of three other members to have a recorded vote?

The member does not have the support of three other members, so there will be no recorded vote.

The motion is accordingly carried.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider Bill 14—oh. The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 14, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act.

\* (15:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

### Bill 14—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield):** Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order. As announced, this committee will now consider the following: Bill 14, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 14 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance):** I just want to make a few comments and thank you to members of the Chamber for allowing us to get to committee on the whole.

This particular bill implements the historic tax relief for Manitobans along with other administrative changes. The fact of the matter is these measures provide the largest tax cut in our province's history. This will continue to make Manitoba more affordable and more competitive.

The crux of this is increasing the basic personal amount to \$15,000 which will save Manitoba taxpayers \$311 million in 2023. This, in addition, will take 47,400 low-income taxpayers right off of the tax rolls altogether. This will, in addition, provide tax savings up to 500—over \$500 for individuals or over \$1,000 for a two-family income.

So, these are significant tax cuts for Manitobans, for Manitoba families, and we certainly look forward to offering those to Manitobans. In fact, we'd like to offer those to Manitobans on their paycheques this July. So, if we could signal to Revenue Canada by the end of April that this legislation will pass, if we can get all parties of the Chamber to agree, we can start saving Manitoba taxpayers—individual taxpayers—approximately \$75 each month, beginning in July.

So again, substantial affordability measures we'd like to put in place, given this time of inflationary pressures that Manitobans are seeing. So, we hope the opposition parties will allow this particular piece of legislation to pass, and more broadly, the Budget 2023 to pass, to benefit all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Just a brief statement to share.

Of course, Manitobans have struggled through affordability challenges for many, many years in this province. We've seen this government fail to take action in response to those affordability crises for years.

We've seen them legislate hydro-rate increases for the first time in our province's history; of course, work to raise hydro rates as quickly as they possibly could. And, of course, we've seen them fail to take action on a number of other affordability-related challenges.

So, bringing this bill forward along with the other promises that have been brought forward in their budget seven months from an election gives Manitobans clear reason not to trust this government. It's further evidence of their inability to trust this government.

And building on trust-related concerns, we know that the proposed changes in this BITSA bill do have a lot of important fairness-related questions that do need to be asked. We do know, as has been well established in terms of analysis on this bill, that the very highest income earners in the province stand to benefit a lot more than middle-income Manitobans and, of course, low-income Manitobans, and that's a serious concern.

So, we look forward to further questioning around this bill and moving forward with today's committee.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clauses 4 through 7—pass.

Shall clauses—we may need to go—[*interjection*]  
Just a moment.

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Sala:** I'd like to ask for leave to go back to review the first clause; to begin at the start.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) is requesting we restart clause by clause back to No. 1. He has indicated there are some questions he wishes to ask as we go through clause by clause. He is requesting leave for that.

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

Okay, we're going to start from the top there and I will ask again: Shall clauses 1 and 2 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no.

Shall clause 1 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mr. Sala:** I just would like to ask some questions relating to clause 1, this tied to The Health and Post Secondary Education Tax Levy Act changes.

Just briefly, we know that this bill proposes an increase in the exemption from \$2 million to \$2.25 million. We know that these changes will affect businesses that are somewhat larger; 30-, 40-, 50-employee businesses.

I think an important question that we'd like to hear the minister provide some commentary on here is: why are we providing supports to larger businesses here with this bill, but we are leaving small businesses without support?

We know that throughout the pandemic that small businesses took on a huge amount of debt. We know that they saw—many of them saw their sales drop precipitously. They've been absolutely hammered throughout COVID and, of course, as we continue in our recovery from the pandemic, many of them continue to struggle.

So, my question to the minister is quite simply: why the focus on larger businesses at the expense of smaller businesses in Manitoba?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, the member is actually factually incorrect here. This will benefit small business owners. In fact, we will be taking 150 small—for the most part small businesses right off of paying the payroll tax.

I will preface my comments by saying, in our discussions with tax experts, Manitobans in general



and the business community, everyone was in concurrence and agreement that we should be, first of all, increasing the basic personal amount to save Manitobans money on their taxes. And we've done that in this particular budget to the tune of \$525 for most Manitobans.

And on—the second thing they asked for was to, again, make us more competitive by looking at the thresholds where we pay different rates of tax. And they said—and again, there was agreement across the province—that we should do that second of all before addressing the payroll tax.

This comes in with making us as a province more competitive with other jurisdictions, primarily to our neighbours to the west, where their basic personal amount, or the threshold where they pay tax, is much higher.

We have, on the payroll tax itself, been increasing the thresholds—the lower thresholds—each year since we've come to office. We've also increased the second threshold since we've come to office, as well. So, making incremental savings to the business community over the course of our government, and we will continue to do that in this particular budget.

We've also signalled—and no one has touched the actual amount that we are charging companies when it comes to the payroll tax—we've signalled that if our economy does remain strong, that we will be looking to reduce that figure, the percentage that we charge businesses for the payroll tax.

So, this change and the incremental changes that we have made to the payroll tax over the last six years certainly benefit the small businesses the most, because now we have, I would say, as a result of this year, we will have close to 900 companies that will no longer be paying the payroll tax, and obviously the largest burden would be on the smaller companies.

So, we're certainly—we recognize the challenges the business community has faced over the last number of years, and we've tried to support them through COVID as well with other measures. And certainly part of the \$3,000,000,000 that we have supported Manitobans through COVID were in support of corporations and primarily the small companies that are doing business here in Manitoba.

So, obviously I would say significant assistance for small businesses. This, again, is incremental steps, a step in the right direction, with a view that we can eliminate the payroll tax for businesses altogether.

But I think the point should be made that business community was overwhelmingly in favour of making sure that we adjust the basic personal exemption first and foremost to make sure that we don't lose any other Manitobans to other provinces. This allows Manitoban businesses to be competitive and attract and maintain the labour force because, quite frankly, that is one of the challenges the business community is facing, is labour challenges.

So, we're trying to make business attractive and we're trying to make it attractive for people to stay in Manitoba and hopefully to move to Manitoba.

**Mr. Sala:** Further to that, my last question, and the minister did just refer to it there in his response, we know that the government is alluding to the potential for further changes to the levy should the government's fiscal position permit. I think one important concern here is the lack of transparency around that question, and what Manitobans could expect going forward in regards to that.

And so I would like to ask the minister to provide some greater clarity over what constitutes the type of fiscal position that would have his government further reduce or alter that levy. And I ask him that in the context that his government is currently putting forward a program of tax cuts that are being deficit financed as it is. So they're going to be paying interest in order to pay for the cost of their proposed tax cuts.

So, in that context they are already providing these tax cuts, so I guess what I'm wondering is, what could change, what could possibly become more positive that would result in this government making further changes to that levy.

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, well, first of all our goal here is to lessen the burden on Manitobans and the burden on the business community, recognizing the challenges that we're facing. And I would say this has been a bold move and a bold statement, certainly the largest basic personal amount increase in our history, which will save Manitobans \$311,000,000 this year alone. And the business community said that's what they wanted.

They also said clearly, change the threshold amounts. We'll be doing that beginning January 1st of '24. We're making changes to the payroll tax. As I mentioned before, it's been incremental over the years where we've raised—the both the thresholds. We're now at the low threshold of \$2.25 million.

\* (15:30)

The 'threcond'—the second threshold has been moved to \$4.5 million and I would say that the 2.15 per cent that's charged has not been changed in, I think, decades. And we think it's time that we should continue to provide assistance to Manitobans.

We have got ourselves into a pretty strong financial situation. We're making record investments in health care, education and social services in this year's budget. And were also able to give Manitobans some assistance when it comes to income tax levels, as well.

And we're continuing to make the incremental changes to the payroll tax to help reduce the burden for Manitoba business, as well.

So, in the budget, clearly we've signaled that if the economy continues to grow and maintain a positive trajectory, that would put us on a path to working towards eliminating that particular tax—the 2.15 per cent that I talked about earlier.

So, in terms of the economy, you know, we look at a number of factors when it comes to economic growth. And I will say for the member opposite, over this past year—in the calendar year 2022—our economy is expected to grow at about 3.6 per cent, which is the third highest growth in any economy in the country.

If you take away Saskatchewan and Alberta and their resource-based economy, Manitoba actually had the largest growth in the country. And that has provided us with additional revenue from income tax and corporate tax, because we have more Manitobans working than ever before.

This puts us in a good place to be able to provide hard-working Manitobans to keep more of their hard-earned money and, as well, signal to the business community that we want to do the same for them.

We're optimistic and they told us that once we reduce—as we reduce the payroll tax, they will be making investments here in Manitoba to support business, and in fact, which supports Manitoba business.

So, we will be keeping an eye on growth here, growth in our gross domestic product. We will certainly keep track of how things evolve on a per capita basis and what our productivity is here in Manitoba.

Obviously, we'll be mindful of inflation and what inflation does in terms of potentially higher, or, hopefully, lower interest rates, which also have a bearing on the business community and, quite frankly, at the end of the day, do have a bearing on the government as well.

So, I would say we've turned the corner. I'm optimistic we've turned the corner financially, and I think that's to the point where we can offer hope to Manitobans and hope to Manitoba businesses that we can reduce their tax burden, which will benefit every individual Manitoban and individual businesses as we go forward.

**Mr. Sala:** I thank the minister for the response.

I would like him just to provide clarity because there was a lot of comments were shared there, but not a lot of clarity around the core question, which was: What constitutes the type of fiscal position that would allow this government, or that would encourage them, or that would have them move forward with the change to that levy?

And I guess I'll just put a really fine point on it: If the government continues to be in a 'deficit'—deficit position, would they continue to look at the potential for reducing that levy and further deficit financing, more tax cuts?

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister. The honourable minister, yes, please go right ahead.

**Mr. Cullen:** Me? Thank you, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that.

Obviously, a deficit is something we will take into account; that's why we said we'll make the decision later in the year once we have a better assessment of how this year goes.

Obviously, we'll be monitoring our revenue as well, certainly monitoring our expenses as we go, and that will give us an indication and where we're going to end the year—you know, positive or negative. So, clearly, the deficit side is something that we will be monitoring.

We also will certainly be looking at terms of output and how our economy is performing. I—there hasn't been, up until the last few days, any talk, really, about a recession in the country and certainly not in terms of where Manitoba is. And I guess over the last couple of days, some of the economists are now talking that there may be a recession in some areas of the country. So, that's something that we'll have to monitor as we go forward.

Most economists are bullish on Manitoba and our economy, and I would say that because we have such a diverse economy—we don't rely on one or two sectors to carry the economy. So, not only are they bullish, I would say our government is bullish on that, and those are the types of things that we will be monitoring as

we look to make a decision to reduce taxes to Manitoba corporations and, in fact, Manitobans.

I think the member has to recognize the record investments we're making on the other side in terms of health care and education and social services. We can do this on both fronts because we do have the benefit of additional revenue because we have more Manitobans working than ever before. So, if we can generate economic activity in Manitoba by assisting businesses, that allows more Manitobans to work.

And you can't just look at the deficit component to this. To me, it's about making investments. We would not stop funding health care—because it's the right thing to do—because we're in a deficit position. By making strategic investments—in this case, in payroll tax—this could actually stimulate the economy even more and get more Manitobans into the workforce.

And the more Manitobans we have in the workforce, quite frankly, is what generates extra revenue for government so that we can make those strategic investments in health care, education and social services. So, certainly, one does not go without the other. And it's about making those strategic investments to help the economy.

And that's the one thing we do not do, as government, is talk about the benefits of economic development and what economic development actually means. The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has been talking about economic development; she—since she's taken office. She recognizes the fact that we want people to work here in Manitoba. We have to create the environment, we have to create the framework, we have to provide those incentives to make sure—that allows Manitobans to go to work.

That is what generates income for governments. And those added benefits of having more people working in Manitoba today than ever before is what allows us to make those strategic investments in health care, education and social services. It also allows us to—allows Manitobans to keep more of their hard-earned money. So this, to me, anytime we reduce taxes at any—whatever level it is, whether it be on the personal side or the corporate side—this makes Manitoba more competitive. And that's where we want a—people to invest in Manitoba.

And this is really all part of making sure that we're competitive. Because if we look at the payroll tax, in a lot of cases we are not competitive with other jurisdictions. That's why the Premier has put together a tax

force on competitiveness. That's why she's put together a Premier's economic advisory group on competitiveness as well.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We will now return to clause by clause.

Clauses 1 and 2—pass.

\* (15:40)

Shall clause 3 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no. Is there a question? There is no question.

Clause 3—pass.

Shall clauses 4 through 7 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no. Is there a question?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for—*[interjection]*—shall clause 4 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no. Is there a question about clause 4?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala), on a question about clause 4.

**Mr. Sala:** I would like to ask—I appreciate that. I would like to ask the minister about the bracket changes which are outlined in these sections.

And, just specifically, I'd like to ask the minister how his government came to land on the proposed brackets: Why these three brackets, and why are they being recommended?

**Mr. Cullen:** I think, first of all, I should maybe go back and look at the basic personal amount exemption there and why we landed on the \$15,000, up from the, you know, \$10,000 threshold.

Clearly, we were not competitive with other jurisdictions. If the member has a chance to have a look at what other jurisdictions are doing, we were falling behind and not competitive. That's why we went to the \$15,000 mark.

The \$15,000 level is actually the same threshold the federal government uses in terms of when they start charging income tax to Canadians, so we're getting in line with what the federal government does. We're certainly more in line with what other jurisdictions are doing. It takes us from second lowest in the country to the fourth highest. So, it gets us more in line with other jurisdictions and more competitive with other jurisdictions as well.

So, the second measure that was recommended to us referenced the two committees I talked to previously. Both the Premier's economic advisory group and the tax competitive group said that the second component is the threshold levels.

So, what we did, we had a look at what other jurisdictions around the country were doing in terms of their thresholds, both in terms of the level, the dollar amount, and in terms of the actual rate that they were charging on those respective thresholds.

Now, if you have a look at what other jurisdictions are doing, it's certainly all over the map. We're one of the few that only have three tax brackets, I think Saskatchewan being the other one, and it certainly goes up from there in other jurisdictions.

For simplicity's sake, we thought we would keep the number of tax brackets the same, so then the decision became what should the threshold be to make us competitive with other jurisdictions. And, again, if you have a chance to look at the entire chart across the province, they're certainly all over the map.

We've felt to go to the 47 at \$100,000 threshold would allow us to be competitive with other jurisdictions, not top or bottom, but move us from third lowest to—up to the fifth highest.

So, certainly a step in the right direction. Again, these thresholds will benefit the lower income earners the most and then sort of the—I will call them the middle class earners at the next level.

And to give the member some idea of that, and I would appreciate, when he talked about his analysis on a basic personal exemption and the thresholds, I would love to see what his analysis is telling him, because I think somehow he's come to different conclusions than what we have and the tax experts that we've listened to have come to.

Clearly, we've designed a tax strategy here that will help low-income Manitobans the most. In fact, when you look at tax savings by category, and if we

pick a—say, a \$30,000-wage earner, we will actually be reducing the amount of tax they pay by 32 per cent.

So, a substantial savings there on their tax level. As you go up to a \$40,000-income earner, we'll actually be reducing their tax level by 25 per cent. If you get to a \$60,000-wage earner, we'll be reducing their tax amount they pay by 17 per cent. So—and 100 per cent—or, sorry, \$100,000 income, reducing their taxable income level by 16 per cent.

So, you can see the dramatic increase in savings, those making the lower salary amount. And, certainly, that bodes well, I would say, and also would take—the added advantage of taking 47,000 low-income Manitobans right off the tax roll.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are there any further questions on clause 4?

Seeing none, clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass.

Shall clause 7 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no. Is there a question about clause 7?

The honourable member for St. James, with a question about clause 7.

**Mr. Sala:** I do just want to, you know, provide follow-up to one aspect of the minister's response. He was commenting on my analysis.

Just to clarify, the analysis that I referenced is not my analysis; it's analysis that was done by the economist David Macdonald with the CCPA that was made public last week in the media. And we did see some news stories report on the findings of that analysis, which did show two questions—concerns about fairness, that the bottom two deciles stand to receive approximately \$32 a year.

So, the minister's claims about this bill helping the lowest income Manitobans the most could certainly be put into question, and we know that that analysis also showed that the top 10 per cent of income earners will receive more than the bottom 50 per cent combined. So, certainly, some fairness concerns there that I know Manitobans share.

Relating to clause 7, there is a change here that's outlined regarding the basic tax payable by trusts. And I would just like to ask the minister if he could provide clarity as to why that particular change or why that

section has been included in the bill and what it is that his government is seeking to achieve with it?

**Mr. Cullen:** Sorry, I missed that question.

Could the member repeat the question, and could you point to which article that he is referencing?

**Mr. Sala:** At the very end of clause 7, there's a section 4.1(4) under the title Basic tax payable by trust.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Cullen:** So, just conferring with my officials here. Might as well get—bring in the experts, right?

So, there's no change in the amount being paid in a trust. Those amounts will remain in place. The trust allows a tax rate remains similar to the basic amount of tax paid as well. So, more just a housekeeping item than anything else. No changes to the rates in terms of being paid by a trust versus the personal amount.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are there any further questions about clause 7?

I see a question.

**Mr. Sala:** Yes, I would like to ask some more questions.

We know that the proposed changes outlined in this section do ultimately result in significant additional spending and that those are contributing to the creation of the deficit, which the government has claimed will be, I believe, \$363 million for next fiscal.

I'd like to just ask the government why they chose not to balance the budget this year, considering that, of course, there's certainly some impacts from these proposed changes on the deficit, but more broadly speaking, why did the government choose not to balance the budget this year?

**Mr. Cullen:** I would say, first of all, we recognize the challenges that Manitoba—Manitobans are facing, you know, given the high inflation that we've seen over the last year or so. That's why we've been able to provide Manitobans with some support. We've supported them through the pandemic, and now, we're supporting them through the economic situation we find ourselves in.

To that point, we—just in the process of finalizing cheques to Manitobans to the tune of \$200 million to support Manitoba individuals and families and seniors. I think the last of those cheques will be going out in the course of the next week. Approximately 700,000 cheques have gone out to support Manitobans.

So we've been supporting Manitobans in the short term. This legislation and our Budget 2023 signals a support for Manitobans for this year and for years to come.

Members opposite look at this as government spending. We look at it the other way. We look at this as saving Manitobans money, saving their own hard-earned money and allowing them to pay less tax to support government operations. We think this is a time that Manitobans need assistance the most.

So, on one hand, we have opposition parties may accuse us of supporting Manitobans by sending cheques, but we're happy to send cheques to support Manitobans, especially to the tune of \$200 million in our Carbon Tax Relief Fund. More than happy to support Manitobans; 700,000 cheques going out, as I say.

We want to support Manitobans well into the future, and if we can get the opposition members to support Budget 2023, we can provide additional support to each Manitoban at \$75 a month beginning on their July paycheques.

But to do that, we have to signal to the federal government by the end of April that we're going to bring forward these changes, and then the federal government will send the message to employers who can make those at-source reductions and we can put money—\$75 a month—in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. This is about allowing Manitobans to keep more of their money.

I would suggest we're in a pretty good place financially here. I think we've turned the corner. We've got some great numbers on economic growth, economic activity. We have more people working than ever before. Obviously, with some support from the federal government as well, we're in a strong place to provide Manitobans a break, and I would say Manitobans are looking for a break.

And that break makes us more competitive with other jurisdictions, and we want to keep Manitobans here. We want to keep Manitoba families here. We want to keep the next generation of Manitobans here, as well. You know, we're facing challenges with outmigration, and unless we do something to try to curb that outmigration, we're not going to be in a very good position. Because we need more people here to continue on the great work on the economic development front.

And the business community, the taxpayers association, Chambers of Commerce have said, listen, you have to deal with this basic personal amount

exemption. And I recognize it's \$311 million of cost savings for Manitobans. But we think it's a great investment for Manitobans; we think it's a great investment for Manitoba when we look at the big picture and that's the decision we've made.

**Mr. Sala:** I appreciate what the minister shared there. I mean, it certainly—I think the minister should appreciate that this move comes across as being cynical. That they're bringing forward this, along with a number of other big promises, seven months out from an election after years and years of failing to take action to actually improve affordability for Manitobans.

And we know, of course, this minister and his colleagues are responsible for bringing forward some huge cost increases for Manitobans with their legislation of hydro rate increases and bringing forward legislation, frankly, that focused on creating unachievably high financial targets for Hydro, specifically for the purpose of trying to make those rates go up as quickly as they possibly could.

So, you know, what the minister just shared there about wanting to make life easier and more affordable for Manitobans certainly doesn't jive with the behaviour that we've seen from this government or some of the policies that they've brought forward.

You know, I can talk about Hydro. We can talk about their failure to improve rental costs in this province for Manitobans. So, over and over again, Manitobans know that this government does not have their best interests in mind when it comes to affordability and are very skeptical about the changes being proposed, given they're seven months out from an election.

Just back to the question about deficit and just reflecting on the changes proposed in these clauses here and their impacts, there's a \$200-million planning contingency included as part of the deficit projection for this year, and I'd like to ask the minister where that number came from.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Before acknowledging the minister, just want to remind everyone this is a committee room, and if we could keep the chatter to committee room level, that would be much appreciated.

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Cullen:** Could I have the member just repeat the very last part of his question.

**Mr. Sala:** So, there's a \$200-million planning contingency that is included as part of the deficit projection for this year. Where did that number come from?

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, just again conferring with the experts.

Where is the member finding the \$200-million number in BITSA?

**Mr. Sala:** The number is not listed in BITSA. We do know, though, that the government has identified a \$200-million contingency—I believe it's a COVID contingency fund and—hoping that the minister can clarify how they arrived at that number.

**Mr. Chairperson:** So, I'm just obligated to clarify the nature of what we're doing right now. And, Minister, you'll have a moment to respond if you would like.

Because we're reviewing clause by clause of this bill, the questions do need to be aimed at an element or an aspect of said clause at the moment. So, if members with questions could tie those questions to the clause, that's what's required at this stage in the process.

Member for—the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) on—I'm going to acknowledge the minister, as the honourable member did just speak, and then I'll come back and acknowledge the member for St. James if he would like that.

**Mr. Cullen:** I—to clarify, the \$200 million that the member's referencing is not in BITSA. I think he's pulling a line from the Estimates. He did mention COVID.

I do know we have some contingencies established in the budget, certainly one being a COVID line, and that could be the line that he is referencing. Again, that's not in—part of BITSA. We could probably get into that discussion once we get to the actual Estimates process.

I do want to go back and reference what we are doing for Manitobans on the affordability line. I would take exception to the undertaking that we have made with Manitoba Hydro versus the NDP approach. We know the—under the NDP, they doubled the water-rental rates for Manitoba Hydro—the amount that the government charges Manitoba Hydro. They also doubled the debt-guarantee fee that they charge Manitoba Hydro with no consideration for ratepayers and Manitoba Hydro.

We have taken a different approach, Mr. Chair. We are now—have reduced those rates in half, saving, this year alone, Manitoba ratepayers \$190 million—\$190 million—that is tremendous tax savings for Manitoba Hydro ratepayers.

Clearly, that comes at a cost to the provincial coffers. It doesn't necessarily affect summary budget, but certainly will impact—have a very positive impact—on Manitoba Hydro ratepayers. So we are making substantial investments and policy decisions to save Manitoba Hydro ratepayers.

And I would be remiss if I didn't mention the other affordability measures we've taken since coming into office. In fact, since—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.

I must—I'm loath to interrupt the minister, but I do want to refer to my earlier remark about not only the question tying into the said clause, but the answer does need to really be about the question in the clause and the answer then responding to it. So, if we can proceed with relevance in mind.

This is not Estimates; Estimates, I think there's a lot more leeway. But, right now, we are actually considering clause by clause and so I want to keep it to those clauses. If there are honest questions, then if the answers can address those questions, I'd like to move forward in that manner.

The honourable minister does have two and a half minutes—two thirty-one remaining, so I will resume the clock and hand over to the honourable Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you for the guidance there.

And, certainly, when it comes to the basic personal amount and affordability, since taking office we have taken over 74,000 low-income Manitobans off paying tax altogether. So, substantial reductions there.

The basic personal amount in the last three years amounts to savings, I would say, and this includes going into next year's budget—\$637 million. And as we increase the thresholds as well, additional savings of—for Manitobans next calendar year of \$160 million. We've also sent affordability cheques to Manitobans to the tune of \$87 million.

And I did reference, too, the Carbon Tax Relief Fund of \$200 million, notwithstanding that in three years we will also be rebating Manitobans 500—over \$500 million for their education property tax rebates.

So, certainly, when it comes to affordability, we'll—certainly not taking any lessons from members opposite. They know that—we know that they never met a tax they did not like and we think it's time that Manitobans see a reversal in that.

And, certainly, Budget 2023 and BITSA make huge strides in offering affordability measures for Manitobans that Manitobans will enjoy not just this year, but for years to come. If, of course, they elect the right government.

**Mr. Sala:** Just in terms of the questions and looking at questions around the deficit, I do think that—given the clauses being referenced here in this—proposed changes to The Income Tax Act will have significant impacts on government revenue and, by extension, questions about the deficit—which I'm sure concern all Manitobans—seem fair game, given this particular area of the bill.

So, I would like to ask the minister, just building on my last question, in his view—or, in the government's view—is the deficit actually \$163 million or is it \$363 million, given this \$200-million contingency that we just asked about?

And, again, I ask these questions in the context of the way that the proposed changes in these clauses will impact government revenue and, ultimately, lead to this deficit position we're in.

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, again, maybe a little out of scope for this, but certainly our budget document shows a \$363-million deficit here.

And I think we should keep the deficit numbers in context. Going back to 2016, we made a promise to Manitobans that we would balance the budget. We came into office with a \$789-million deficit, reduced in '17-18 to 94, and 2018-19 to a deficit of 149. In '19-20, a positive outcome of \$5 million.

And then, of course, along came the pandemic. So, in fiscal 2021, we had a deficit of \$2.1 billion, again aimed at supporting Manitobans; '21-22, \$700 million, and we're forecasting this current year, '22-23, a \$378-million deficit.

And this budget does indicate a \$363-million deficit. Obviously, a lot of things come into play over the next 12 months, and a budget is a budget. I mean, that's really what it's about. It's a forecast. So that's where we're at.

Obviously, we've indicated, again, we'd like to get back to a balanced budget, and, at the same time, we want to continue to make sure that we are making those strategic investments in health care, in education, and social services, as well.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** During the bill brief on BITSA, we were told that the advice on how the tax recommendations would proceed were provided by an advisory committee, but the deputy minister was unable to explain who they were.

So I was just wondering if the minister could identify the individuals who provide advice to government who are a part of this—of the tax review committee that suggested that these are the measures the government take.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the question.

Well, certainly, we had advice from more than one committee, but I will say, a number of months ago, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) did put together a Premier's economic advisory committee on competitiveness.

And in terms of that—I'll call it an umbrella group—I will provide the list who was on that group to the member. I think there was a news release that went out but I will endeavour to get that for the member. That particular group did look at, certainly—didn't make recommendations on tax policy, but more in terms of more general policy and how Manitoba could be more competitive.

There was a subgroup formed of that committee that just dealt with the tax side and how Manitoba would be more competitive with other jurisdictions when it comes to the tax side. I will also endeavour to supply him that list. Certainly, expertise in the field on that. Certainly, a lot of tax expertise on that side of it. We endeavour to bring them in to the table because they are dealing with clients, both individual clients, and also dealing with the corporate clients and business clients as well.

So, a pretty diverse group there that we brought there with some pretty diverse expertise, as well. So, I will certainly provide that information to them.

And I would say both those groups said basic personal exemption was first, tax levels were second, and probably the payroll tax should be addressed third, and then there's a myriad of other tax issues that will be addressed, you know, as we go forward.

But we also consulted with other Manitobans, as well. We've had submissions, I think it was in the tens of thousands who submitted through Engage Manitoba. We had a number of open houses. We had telephone conference calls, and we met Manitobans face to face, as well.

So, a lot of different people with lived experience—not just the business community, but a lot of interest groups such as the chambers, you know, taxpayers association and certainly a lot of health and community organizations as well came and made presentations. So, we did hear from a lot of Manitobans, but I will provide the member a list of the names on those two committees that were established by the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson).

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are there any further questions on clause 7?

Seeing none, clause 7—pass.

Shall clauses 8 and 9 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no.

Is there a question—or, shall clause 8 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no.

Is there a question about clause 8?

The honourable member for St. James, with a question about clause 8.

**Mr. Sala:** I would like to ask some questions about these proposed changes to the basic personal allowance that are outlined in the bill in these clauses.

One question I have for the minister just quite simply is—I did allude earlier to analysis that was done by David Macdonald with the CCPA, which outlined the distribution of the benefits that will come from these proposed tax changes. Specifically, one question that I'm hoping the minister can answer is, does he have any concerns about the huge disparity in terms of the way that the benefits are distributed to those at the top decile and those at the bottom decile?

And just to put a further point on that, we know that the top decile will receive 26 per cent of the total income tax benefit stemming from these changes and we know that those at the bottom stand to receive about \$32 a year.

So just hoping the minister can speak to whether or not he has concerns about that disparity between the benefits flowing to the wealthiest people in the province and the lowest income people in the province from the changes that he's proposing.



*Mr. Dennis Smook, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I look forward to having a look at that report that's been put together and see how it lines up with the numbers that our department has put together and, certainly, the recommendations that have been put forward by almost everyone that we've talked to.

I would say, clearly, this benefits low-income families the most. We—we're going to be taking 47,000 Manitobans right off the tax roll from paying tax altogether. Since 2016, that number is 74,000. So, substantial assistance to low-income Manitobans.

When we look at the percentage of tax reduction at different taxation levels, clearly, the lower income taxation folks are saving the most. A \$30,000 income is saving \$32,000 on their income tax bill. Somebody making \$40,000 is saving 25 per cent on their tax bill. A \$50,000—is saving 21 per cent. Those making \$100,000 are saving 16 per cent.

So, clearly, incrementally, those making lower incomes, you know, stand to gain the most.

**Mr. Sala:** Yes, I do think it's important to correct the record here. And the minister has stated that lowest income Manitobans stand to benefit the most from the changes that this bill proposes. That is patently false and, in fact, it's concerning to hear that the minister is saying those words.

We know that—I did just spell it out for him, and I am happy—we will table the analysis that I've been referencing here, and I'll bring that in in a minute, when it comes in.

But the concern here is that this—these changes do provide—26 per cent of all the benefits are going to the top decile. And, again, the minister has said that the lower income Manitobans benefit more than anyone else. I'll repeat for him: the analysis suggests that the bottom 20 per cent will receive \$74 a year. How on earth is the minister suggesting that \$74 a year—or, the equivalent of about five bucks a month—is providing significant support to the—to those families?

\* (16:20)

We know the answer to that. The answer is that's not providing real support to those families. So any suggestion that these changes are targeted at helping lower income Manitobans are completely and totally false. We know that's just simply not the case, that the bill does provide—the lion's share of the benefits are going to those—the wealthiest people in the province.

And so, again, I would like to ask the minister just to reflect on this, because I think it really is important that he provides Manitobans with some sense of what this government's thinking is on this question, which is: How does the government account for the incredible disparity in terms of the flow of benefits from this bill to the lowest income Manitobans and to the highest income Manitobans? And I'll remind the minister that low-income Manitobans are struggling like never before right now.

How does he suggest that a \$32 benefit—or, sorry, a \$74 benefit over the entire year is in any way really helping low-income Manitobans? So, how does he account for this huge disparity? How does he explain that away?

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, I'm not going to comment on that until I see what numbers have been put together. I mean, clearly, our numbers show that 47,000 low-income Manitobans are not going to pay any tax whatsoever. That's 74,000 since we've come into office. I don't think the NDP made any moves on increasing the basic personal amount. That's why we're catching up.

We're so far out of line with other jurisdictions that we're not competitive, and that's part of the challenge that Manitobans are looking to go to other places to live and to work. We clearly can't afford that to happen. That's why we've made the, you know, substantial, I would say, bold move on increasing the basic personal exemption that will benefit low-income Manitobans.

And, you know, the member may want to have a look at what other jurisdictions are doing in terms of their thresholds—where they start various thresholds in terms of their taxation levels. He may also want to have a look at what other provinces are doing in terms of the percentage of what other jurisdictions are charging at various thresholds as well. I think the member has to keep that in context.

I certainly have an open mind, and I will remind the member that that's why we're supporting Manitobans with our carbon tax fund rebate. We've also done additional affordability measures in the past, and we're going to continue to support low-income and middle-income Manitobans.

**Mr. Lamont:** I think the minister could actually have responded by saying he's doing exactly what the NDP did in 2008 when they boasted that they'd cut a billion dollars in taxes, most of which were regressive.

But I did have a question, which is: Why run a deficit at all this year? Federal transfers are up by a billion dollars. Revenues are up. What is the—you know, if this is a fiscally conservative budget and we are—and the government is saying, we are not mortgaging the future—net debt is up by \$1.6 billion, we've got a \$363-million deficit, interest payments are up by \$263 million a year.

So why not balance the budget this year? Why choose to continue to go into debt in order to pay for tax cuts?

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** I'd just like to remind members, we keep drifting off of the clauses that we're discussing here. So, I'd just like to remind everybody that we stick to the job in front of us, which is the clauses that we are passing.

**Mr. Cullen:** Budgets are always a balancing act, right? And it's always about making decisions.

I would say, first and foremost, we recognize that Manitobans are facing challenging times. We supported them through the pandemic. Now we're in this high inflation era, and we think Manitobans need and deserve some support.

We've got more Manitobans working than ever before. That has created additional revenue for us. Transfers from the federal government are up, and we do appreciate that. That's why we thought it was an opportune time to provide tax relief to Manitobans.

Not only that, but Manitoba has to be competitive with other jurisdictions and, quite frankly, we look around and we were not competitive when it came to taxation levels. And I'm afraid that's what was driving some Manitobans out of the province. That's why we took the bold step to increase the basic personal amount to \$15,000 to get us more in line with other jurisdictions, from second last up to fourth place.

And the same thing can be said for the thresholds, too. We were out of line with our income tax thresholds. So that's why we made the increase effective in 2024, and again, continue to provide Manitobans relief.

The other side of the coin is Manitobans have told us they want strategic investments in things like health care, education and social services. So we did that; we responded.

We've increased the health-care budget 9.2 per cent this year. That's a—22 per cent from where we were back in 2016, strategic investments in health care.

As far as education, 6.1 per cent for K to 12, and I think, overall, when we combine the post-secondary—and it's about a 5.4 per cent increase in the health—or, sorry, the education sector, and to the member's point, that's a 23 per cent increase in education since we came into office.

And social services: clearly, we recognize there's challenges in the social services area. That's why we've increased the Families budget. This year, I think it was close to 12 per cent, 25 per cent since we have come to office back in 2016.

So the bottom line is, it's trying to find a balance. So, strategic investments in government, a strategic investment in allowing Manitobans to keep as much of their hard-earned money as possible, and still keep the deficit in line.

And we've certainly signalled that we're—want to get back to a balanced budget. We did that just prior to the pandemic; we did that incrementally. Our plan is to do that incrementally as we go forward as well. Clearly, we're still recovering from the pandemic. We have set aside some money, a contingency—for contingency plans around COVID. We've set aside money for our health human resource activity that has come about partially as a result of pandemic, and, certainly, the surgical and diagnostic backlog as well—we set aside money for that, as well.

So, we are still in the hangover of pandemic, and we're still making investments because of that; so, I would say the pandemic investments alone are north of \$3 billion. It—you know, it created an over \$2-billion deficit for us back in '20-21, '21-22 a—\$700-million. This year, we're forecasting 363.

So we are trying to move incrementally to get back to balance.

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** The member for St. James, on clause 8.

**Mr. Sala:** Just following up on some of the minister's comments, it was good to hear the greatest hits of the announcements there, that the government has brought forward as of late.

Of course, I—every time I hear the government talk about their announcements and their promises, I just—I have a hard time working through how they expect Manitobans to believe that they're going to follow through on any of them, first of all, but also just the—how ludicrous it is to come forward as a government after absolutely demolishing the budgets across so many departments, now come forward and talk

about—to use the minister's language, using a balanced approach to responding to our challenges in Manitoba. Just really simply does not resonate with most people.

Relating to clause 8—*[interjection]*—we'll bring this into a slightly higher level of relevance for our friend from Brandon—I would like to just talk briefly about—more about this basic personal amount change.

\* (16:30)

One question I would ask the minister is: Did his government explore capping it in any way?

We know that, federally, when they made changes to the basic personal allowance, they did look at creating a two-tier system for ultra-wealthy, high-income earners that would minimize some of the benefits that they would receive. This was, again, at a federal level.

So I would like the minister to help us understand whether or not his government looked at, in some ways, what—limiting the benefits here for the ultra-wealthy in Manitoba that will stem from these proposed changes.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, it's an interesting concept the members opposite are floating; now they appear to be in favour of two-tier. Is this two-tier when it comes to personal income tax, or two-tier when it comes to other services that government might provide? I'm not sure. But the reality is, we never got advice on capping anything at the high end.

I think the member should go and have a look at what other jurisdictions are doing, look at the tax rates, look at the thresholds. We, as a province, have to be competitive with other jurisdictions. And, quite frankly, we weren't.

And, I'll give you—that's a hangover; that's a hangover from what we've had before—previous governments. Now, we've been indexing the basic personal amount as we went; cost of living, as we—gone; that's taken 30-some thousand low-income Manitobans off of the—off the payroll.

This year, we were bold; we had to get in line with what other jurisdictions were doing. That's why we took the—selected the \$15,000 exemption amount. Again, took another 47,000 low-incomes off of the tax roll. Again, indexing, again, put us in line—I think, closer to in line, at least, with what other jurisdictions are doing.

So we didn't have any advice in terms of any capping of, you know, indexing at a higher level.

**Mr. Sala:** I do just want to clarify, on the record, because the minister was having a little bit of fun there. But, of course, we were simply asking whether or not his government did explore any type of caps—look at what the federal government had done, or any other type of other hard cap on ultra-wealthy income earners to prevent them from benefiting disproportionately from the proposed change.

So I am hearing the minister state that the answer to that is no; I think that's what he was saying. But I would like to just ask him, point blank, like, does he believe that our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and our former premier, Brian Pallister, need these tax cuts?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I think we're on a policy discussion here, more than what's intended here in BITSA.

Now, I don't know what he defines as, you know, rich. I mean, we're competing with every other jurisdiction when it comes to doctors, right? Now, if the members opposite are thinking that we should have a surcharge or a surtax on doctors, what is that going to do to us being competitive with other jurisdictions, right?

I mean, we have to be mindful of this. This is—we're catching up, here, on basic personal exemption. We're catching up on the tax brackets to make us more competitive. Now, if he wants—the opposition members want to start surcharging doctors in Manitoba, you know, we're having our challenges with other jurisdictions already—coming to Manitoba, buying out contracts. If that's what they're surmising that we should do, is start taxing doctors and lawyers, if you like, how are we going to keep them here in Manitoba?

This is about being competitive, and this is the advice we've got. How do we keep Manitoba competitive? Well, first thing, basic personal exemption. Next, changing the brackets and the thresholds.

**Mr. Sala:** I do want to just go back.

I referenced, multiple times, analysis by the economist David Macdonald and some of the analysis he did looking at the impacts of these proposed changes. So I did bring in copies of that to be tabled for the minister's review.

Hopefully, he'll take a really close look at that analysis so he can better understand some of the concerns that we outlined regarding the distribution there. Basic questions around fairness, the concern that 26 per cent of all the benefits are going to the top-

income earners in the province. Hopefully, he will look at that document very closely.

So I would like to, again, just, you know, dwelling on these clauses and in regards to the analysis I did just send over for the minister to review, we know that the proposed changes provide more than double the benefits to the highest income earners than they do for middle-income earners in Manitoba.

So I would like to ask the minister why they've chosen measures here that do provide much greater benefits for those at the very top end of the income scale versus those at the—for the middle-income scale, which represent, sort of, more everyday Manitobans.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I'll certainly have a look at the information the members opposite have provided. We may just agree to disagree on this front. I'm willing to take it away and have a look. I know there's a message the opposition members want to get out there. I don't think it's—I'm not sure Manitobans are going to buy it.

So, if we're—to their context in this, that 75 per cent of the benefits are coming to low-income and middle-income earners, I mean, that sounds like a step in the right direction to me.

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** Are there any further questions on clause 8?

**Mr. Sala:** I'm not sure when the minister became an economist or what he knows that we don't know, but if he wants to take a look at the information we sent over, and I did hear him say that he is interested in maybe having a peek at it, and I really do encourage him to do it. The data was done again by an economist working at a national level, using our Statistics Canada tax modelling software, so he can judge this or veracity of that information. Hopefully, he will engage with it.

I will ask him again, because he didn't answer the question, which is, how does the minister feel about the fact that the proposed changes do provide more than double the benefits to the highest income earners more so than middle-income earners in Manitoba?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I think the real question here is, do members of the opposition want to provide any benefit to the taxpayers of Manitoba?

Listen, if the opposition wants to sit here and stall Budget 2023 so Manitobans don't get tax breaks, they don't get hearing aids, they don't get everything else, all the other benefits, the myriad of benefits that are in Budget '23, including a 9.2 per cent increase in health care, I mean, they can stall all they want. I mean, those

are the conversations, then, we'll have with Manitobans. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** Order. The minister has the floor.

**Mr. Cullen:** I can see they're sensitive about this, Mr. Chair.

So, listen, this is about benefits to Manitobans, benefits to low-income Manitobans, sure, benefits to middle-income Manitobans. Hey, if it benefits all Manitobans, even better. I don't know what you have against letting Manitobans keep more of their hard-earned money.

Manitobans will invest that money where they see the need. They will invest it wisely. We think they can do a better job investing their money than—and that us taking their money and investing it for them.

**Mr. Sala:** The concern here is that, of course, the minister isn't answering the questions. He wants to ram this through without having any sort of due diligence or without having real questions asked about the distribution of the tax benefits here.

We know that he wants to, of course, gloss over that information and would love for that stuff to just go away, but these are important questions that Manitobans want answered. This isn't about blocking the bill; it's about ensuring we do our due diligence and we ask important questions at this stage of the bill's progression.

So, again, you know, the minister continues to repeat this falsehood, and this is just patently false. And this isn't—these aren't made-up numbers from us as the NDP. These are numbers that have been calculated by a federal—by an economist working at a national level here, which very clearly state the lowest income deciles will get \$74 a year. Five bucks a month, Mr. Chair, \$5 a month.

And the reason is, is because they're already going to be in receipt of a number of other tax credits that will blunt or limit the impacts of this. But, you know, the minister continues to repeat this falsehood that, somehow, lowest income earners are somehow making away here with the biggest share.

\* (16:40)

The bottom 20 per cent, according to this analysis, will receive 1 per cent—1 per cent of the entire distribution of those benefits, whereas 26 per cent will go to the wealthiest people in the province. That's a concern. It's

important that we ask questions about this government's take on this.

That is it for me for questions relating to this particular section, and I am happy to go on to further clauses.

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** The Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), did you have a response to that, or—*[interjection]* Okay.

Clause 8—pass.

Shall clause 9 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Deputy Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mr. Sala:** Just in relation to this section, this clause, which outlines some of the changes required to issue the 2023 carbon tax relief tax credit, I would just like to ask the minister why his government is choosing to withhold those benefits from individuals who turned 18 during the last fiscal year.

**Mr. Cullen:** So, the program is designed around income. As a result of that, we needed an income basis to go by. And that's why we need people to supply us their income tax, and it's based on the 2021 income tax.

So that's the basis of the calculation.

**Mr. Sala:** The credit requires that an individual's 2021 unadjusted income was less than \$175,000. I just would like the minister to help us understand how they chose that number.

Where did they—what was the analysis, what was the input, why did they choose to ensure that people making \$175,000 a year receive these cheques?

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, that's a threshold that we used in previous support programs, as well. And we thought that was a decent level to support individuals. And, again, we used that support level at a different venue.

The reason we've added this into BITSA, though, the member should be aware, is even though we think we have—we—pretty good background information on the close-to-700,000 individuals that will receive cheques, there may—some may fall through the cracks. So, if individuals have not received their payment through the cheque method, through the mail, this provides the opportunity for them to file on their income tax on 2023 to recover that money.

That's why this provision is included in BITSA.

**Mr. Sala:** I just would like to ask that question in a little bit of a different way.

Does the minister feel that individuals earning \$175,000 in Manitoba are in need of the supports that his govern—is proposing to provide them?

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, let me just say that I think each and every Manitoban is struggling with high inflation rates following the pandemic. We've tried to support individuals through the pandemic; we're trying to support Manitobans now when they're facing tougher economic times.

This is one method for us to support them directly and, you know, we're doing this through cheques. We've done this through—previously through an affordability package where we sent cheques to individuals, and moving on from this, we don't think—this is clearly not the most efficient way to support Manitobans, but in the interim, that was the best option we had.

So what we'd obviously like to do in Budget 2023 is provide the money upfront by actually not charging them taxes on the income they make. So we would, certainly, like to get away from these ad hoc policies where we have to come up with various parameters. We'd like to do it just as simple as possible. Leave the money in Manitobans' pockets and allow them to keep more of their paycheque on a monthly basis or biweekly basis, whatever that would be.

So, clearly, decisions have to be made; there has to be thresholds. We've used this particular threshold in other programs to support Manitobans.

**Mr. Sala:** I don't think Manitobans could imagine a more ad hoc approach to governance than what this government is bringing forward.

In section 9 here, the—just, the name of this section, of course, the 2023 carbon tax relief tax credit—I do just want to ask the minister, because names do matter, what the logic was behind naming these cheques the carbon tax relief cheques when the Parliamentary Budget Office at a federal level has made clear that Manitobans, on the whole, receive back the monies that they spend on carbon taxes.

So, why are we titling this the carbon tax relief tax credit when Manitobans are getting cheques sent to them from the federal government to cover those costs?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, here we have the classic example of the NDP-Liberal coalition standing up for the carbon tax. I'm going to endeavour to get the numbers and prove the member wrong that Manitobans will not be getting their carbon tax money back in their pockets. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Chair.

I can tell you, as well, that the threshold 175 covers 90 per cent of Manitobans, not the super rich, as the members opposite talked about—provided earlier in the afternoon. Saskatchewan took a different approach. They sent cheques to all Manitobans. Alberta uses a 185 threshold, very close to us. Quebec uses a 210 family income threshold. So the 175—obviously, we're trying to capture a lot of middle-income earners, as well.

So the reality is, our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) asked the Prime Minister to put a pause on increasing the carbon tax. He refused to do that. That has an effect on each and every Manitoban and it has an effect on each and every piece of inflation that we see. It's a real cost driver to Manitobans. And it's the last thing that Manitobans and, quite frankly, Canadians need is another tax.

So the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) asked the Prime Minister to pause the increase in the carbon tax. He did not do that.

\* (16:50)

So the Premier and our government decided to take action and support Manitobans. We wanted to make sure that they fully understood that we had asked the Prime Minister to pause the increase in the carbon tax. He refused, but we were here to support them on that front.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I see no further questions on clause 9.

Clause 9—pass; clause 10—pass; clauses 11 and 12—pass; clauses 13 and 14—pass; clause 15—pass; clauses 16 and 17—pass; clause 18—pass; clauses 19 through 21—pass; clause 22—pass; clause 23—pass; clause 24—pass; clause 25—pass; clause 26—pass.

Shall the enacting clause pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The enacting clause is accordingly passed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is there a no?

Enacting clause—pass.

Shall the title pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no.

Is there a question about the title? [*interjection*] Is there a question about the title? [*interjection*] Yes, I hear a question regarding the title of the bill.

**Mr. Sala:** So, Mr. Chair, it was my understanding in previous conversations with one of the members from the table here that there would be opportunities during this section to actually ask broader questions.

So if I'm incorrect about that, you can let me know, but otherwise, it was my understanding that this would be an opportunity to ask a broad question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** You're off by one question. It's the next question.

Title—pass.

Shall the bill be reported?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no.

Is there a question?

**Mr. Sala:** Thank you for the patience of my colleagues throughout the Chamber for that little delay.

I would like to ask the minister—just, again, high level—going back to questions about our overall financial position and the fact that, you know, we know this government is running a deficit and is paying for these proposed changes with interest.

The minister has access to the most up-to-date financial information provided to the government.

Is it correct, in his view, that the deficit for the 2022-23 fiscal year will remain at approximately \$378 million?

**Mr. Cullen:** That is correct.

**Mr. Sala:** And the deficit for the next fiscal is estimated at \$363 million.

Just broadly, why is the government running a deficit given the large increases in federal transfers and own-source revenue?

**Mr. Cullen:** We are providing historic record tax relief to Manitobans. We are providing record, historic increases to health care, 9.2 per cent; education, 5.4 per cent; family services, social services, 11.9 per cent; at the same time, providing a reduced deficit year in our budget.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are there further questions?

Seeing none, shall the bill be reported?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I hear a no.

The honourable—*[interjection]* Oh.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In my opinion—*[interjection]*—order, please.

In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** On division, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** On division. The bill shall be reported on division.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** That concludes the business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

### Committee Report

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered the following: Bill 14, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

#### Bill 14—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 14, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Cullen:** This bill implements historic tax relief for Manitobans, along with other administrative changes. These measure provide the largest tax cut in our province's history and will continue to make Manitoba more affordable and more competitive.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** You know, we know that, of course, this bill is being brought forward seven months out from an election, and Manitobans have countless reasons not to trust this government and the actions that they've been taking recently. We saw them come forward with a budget filled with a lot of really big, big promises, focused on—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 20, 2023

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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>**