

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AL TOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
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WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 4, 2024

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

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

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 31—The Captured Carbon Storage Act

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, that Bill 31, The Captured Carbon Storage Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Moses:** It gives me great pleasure to introduce Bill 31, The Captured Carbon Storage Act. This bill introduces a licensing framework that allows industry to apply for licences and permits throughout the stage of carbon capture project. These projects will also require an Environment Act licence to ensure that public health and the environment are protected.

Achieving net zero will require a multi-prong approach of policies, programs and legislation to address emissions. Carbon capture and storage projects have the potential to prevent the release of hundreds of thousands of tons of carbon dioxide in

Manitoba, the equivalent of taking over 85,000 gasoline cars off the road.

Carbon capture and storage has been proved as a safe technology. Such projects have operated in Canada since 2014 and around the world since the 1970s.

This new bill aligns with multiple economic and environmental priorities. It will address industry expectations for a regulatory framework, allowing carbon capture and storage projects while supporting the—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. *[interjection]* Order, please. Order, please. I just remind the minister that when the Speaker stands, it's time to quit speaking.

And a reminder to everyone to make sure that you keep your comments within the kind of guideline of time of how long it should be. Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Rescue Siamese and Stray Cats

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Today I rise to speak to the amazing work of Rescue Siamese and Stray Cats. The shelter is very near and dear to my heart, and I've never encountered such dedicated and compassionate volunteers. They're up in the gallery with us today.

Located beside Frontenac School in Windsor Park, Rescue Siamese is a 100 per cent volunteer-run, non-profit, no-kill facility that gives their beloved felines a second chance at life, including my own very best buddy Mo.

The shelter holds a lifetime commitment to their cats, ensuring that all rescues are safely housed or adopted into new homes. Their adoption program ensures adopters are matched with the right cat based on personality and living situations, and their foster program provides an opportunity to learn about the cat's personality first, and later match that cat with a home they can thrive in.

Their feral trap, sterilize and release program cares for strays and places them in new homes, and the funny faces program is designed with the effects of feline immunodeficiency virus in mind. It provides funding to help treat FIV-positive cats and place them in homes that can accommodate their special medical needs.

Rescue Siamese runs on community support through online auctions, wine and cash raffles, Christmas parties and pet expos. On May 26, Rescue Siamese will be hosting a spring event in their parking lot with a bake sale, vendors, silent auctions and adorable adoptable cats. I highly encourage my colleagues to attend this exciting event.

I invite all members to join me in thanking director Krista Krueger, who founded Rescue Siamese in 1996, co-director Tara Mychalyszyn and all of the incredible, passionate volunteers who have made it possible for Rescue Siamese & Stray Cats to home thousands of cats in Manitoba and around the country.

#### Lori Enns

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** Volunteerism is an important part of the success of many organizations and strength in many communities. Many volunteers invest their time and efforts in aid of those less fortunate and support our most vulnerable. I recently met with one individual who is passionate about helping those in need.

Today in the gallery, I would like to welcome Agassiz volunteer Lori Enns, her parents Cornie and Barb, along with volunteer and friend—a friend Carla Hemingway.

Lori volunteers many hours at Austin's MCC thrift store. It is here she and other volunteers spend time receiving, sorting and organizing donated items in preparation for resale, providing a much-needed service in the community.

Although Lori spends time volunteering at the thrift store, she also invests an incredible amount of time making items for shoeboxes to send to those in need. She and her mom make dresses and feminine hygiene products for the boxes.

\* (13:40)

In late November, Lori made her seventh journey to Calgary where she, along with 23 others, packed 120—or, 210 boxes for Operation Christmas Child. These boxes were filled with crafted dresses, hygiene products, small toys and other essential items and

supplies and then transported overseas and given to women and children.

Lori's passion and enthusiasm for preparing and packaging these containers goes all year. I know she's already packed and wrapped many shoe boxes and has them stored in her home and ready for delivery this fall. A special thank you to her family and friends who also support her passion in the gift of time and materials.

On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature, I want to thank you, Lori, for your donation of time and energy for the benefit of those less fortunate. Your efforts and dedication are touching the lives of many and making a difference in our great world.

Thank you.

#### Marlene Stoddart-Phillips and Vanessa Chimuk

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** Honourable Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge the integral role of volunteerism plays in our community. I want to celebrate two amazing women from Kildonan-River East who join us today in the gallery: Marlene and Vanessa. I know that Kildonan-River East would not be what it is today without neighbours who dedicate their time and energy towards serving their community.

I want to uplift Marlene, a dedicated volunteer who I met when I began volunteering at Good Neighbours Active Living Centre in northeast Winnipeg, a fantastic place that helps seniors stay active and connected in their community. Marlene is one of the kindest people you'll meet and she has lasting relationships throughout northeast Winnipeg. Her contagious spirit and smile have welcomed so many people into Good Neighbours and encouraged them to keep coming back.

Marlene is also known for connecting people. She connected my family with her granddaughter, Vanessa, who babysat for our kids for many years. Marlene passed down her love of service to Vanessa, who is now graduating as a nurse who plans to stay and work here in Manitoba, our great province.

I am so thankful to Marlene, as she is one of many folks in our community who exemplify the power of working together, dedicating your time to a cause and spreading kindness wherever you go.

Please join me in thanking Marlene and her granddaughter Vanessa for their continued service to our community and our always great province.

### Headingley Fire Department Run for Wishes

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** It is indeed an honour to rise today to recognize the Headingley Fire Department's Run for Wishes.

The Headingley Fire Department held their first Run for Wishes in May of 2001. From humble beginnings the event has evolved and grown over the last 24 years. They now host hundreds of runners and walkers and are now supported by over 40 sponsors. They are currently raising about \$20,000 a year for a number of great causes in our community. In 2023 the funds raised went to support the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation and the Westgrove Family Resource Centre. Additionally, the run partnered with the Charleswood Youth Soccer Association's mini-soccer program to provide recreational soccer for approximately 36 youth in need, free of charge.

The Headingley Fire Department Run for Wishes is a sanctioned five-kilometre run, part of the Manitoba Runners Association run series that uses professional chip timing and a three-kilometre walk. In the beautiful constituency of Roblin, the scenic route takes you over and along the Assiniboine River and through residential South Headingley. It starts and finishes at the Headingley Fire Department, and the event is followed by an awards ceremony, prizes and activities for the kids. This event is perfect for everyone from the elite runner to the casual walker and everyone in-between. I participated in the run last year with my entire family and I look forward to doing the same this year.

This year's event will take place Saturday, May 25, and proceeds raised will again go toward the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation and the Westgrove Family Resource Centre. Both initiatives work to better the lives of children in our broader community.

I would like to recognize Glenn Reimer and Doug Hansen, founders of the Run for Wishes; as well as Josh Mulvenna, current race director and all those involved at the Headingley Fire Department's Run for Wishes on all of the good work they have done and continue to do in the great constituency of Roblin.

Thank you.

### Kenneth Strath Moore

**MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights):** Honourable Speaker, I rise today in celebration of long-time River Heights resident, Kenneth Strath Moore, who was

recently elected into the North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame.

Born in 1910 and a citizen of the Peepeekisis Cree Nation, Mr. Moore was Canada's first First Nations athlete to win an Olympic gold medal.

A natural athlete, he excelled at every sport he played, but was most passionate about hockey. His athletic and academic abilities enabled him to secure scholarships to Regina College in the late 1920s, at a time when few First Nations students were able to do so. There, he captained the hockey and rugby teams, played baseball and basketball and was described as the most versatile athlete at the college.

Moore became a Canadian Junior Hockey champion in 1930 with the Regina Pats, scoring the Memorial Cup winning goal with 40 seconds remaining in the game. In 1932, he represented Canada at the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, where he won his gold medal. Later in his career, he would add two Allan Cups to his championship resume.

Today, Mr. Moore's achievements would be exceptional. A century ago, in the face of poverty and prejudice, they're nothing short of extraordinary.

On his retirement, a Winnipeg newspaper noted: It is doubtful if any other athlete in Canada has a record that will stand up to that of Moore's.

In his retirement, he gave back to the community, coaching three different teams to championship titles and sat on the board of Manitoba Hockey—of the Manitoba Hockey Association.

Mr. Moore is also a member of the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame, the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame and the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame.

Honourable Speaker, I am pleased—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The member's time has expired.

**An Honourable Member:** Leave.

**The Speaker:** Does the member have leave to finish his statement? [*Agreed*]

Leave has been granted.

**MLA Moroz:** I am very pleased that Mr. Moore's granddaughters, Jennifer and Alexandra Rattray, are with us in the gallery today, as is his gold medal. And I ask the members of the Chamber to rise and celebrate the accomplishments of a great athlete and a great Manitoban.

**ORAL QUESTIONS****Provincial Carbon Tax  
Government Position**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, trying to keep up with this Premier and his position on the carbon tax has Manitobans' heads spinning. It's unclear, but based on recent news reports, the Premier wants out of the federal backstop. But we know the way out is a provincial carbon tax.

The Prime Minister was on CJOB radio this morning, saying he looks forward to working with the NDP leader on a Manitoba carbon tax.

When are the NDP going to share the details of their Manitoba carbon tax?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** The only Manitoba carbon tax that has ever existed is the one that the PCs ran on twice, including the member opposite, who voted for it twice. You know who stopped that from being implemented? It was us, the Manitoba NDP.

We took action on January 1 of this year to save you and your families money each and every time you fill up at the pump. That's 14 cents a litre. As a result, we have the lowest gas price in all of Canada today.

The members on the other side of the Chamber should reflect not only on their flip-flop, but on the pointless fights that they engaged in with every other level of government during their time in office. While they continue trying to right the wrongs of their past administration, we're going to keep saving you money.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, despite all the staff that the Premier has, he still doesn't seem to be able to answer these questions. NDP are increasing costs to Manitobans. Property taxes first, and soon, even the carbon tax.

\* (13:50)

The Premier has options, and I'll list them off for him: He can create a carbon tax higher than the federal carbon tax; institute a cap and trade tax like Quebec; or institute a carbon tax plus output-based pricing like his friends in British Columbia.

All that is to say the costs are going to increase on Manitobans.

Which option will the NDP pursue, and how high will the Manitoba carbon tax be?

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, we're never going to make life as expensive as it became under the member opposite and his failed administration.

We took action on January 1 of this year to save you and your family money. The result? Not only did the fuel tax come down by 14 cents a litre, but we now know according to Statistics Canada that inflation came down too. We've had the lowest inflation rate in the country for two consecutive months because of the actions of our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and the excellent team in our government.

But you don't have to listen to us. You can listen to the experts. The chief economist of Laurentian Bank said, and I quote: The fiscal house in Manitoba was not in order when the NDP took office, but, he said, Budget 2024 paints a reasonable balancing act including plenty of targeted measures to ease the cost-of-living pain for individuals. End quote.

They can continue arguing with the failures that they implemented over their time in office. We're—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** We on this side of the House made permanent tax savings for you, Manitobans.

This Premier stands up and, much like the floater that I spoke about yesterday in my speech, continues to take credit for those tax cuts, but he stands up today and continues to crow about the temporary tax cuts that he's putting forward for Manitobans.

Fact is, taxes are going up, carbon tax is coming soon.

Where—will the Premier be on side with 83 per cent of Manitobans who want to get rid of the carbon tax? What is this NDP leader saying today, and how was his meeting with his Trudeau-Singh coalition today?

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, even as he neglects to point out the fact that he twice voted for a PC carbon tax, even as he ignores the fact that he charged 14 cents a litre every single day in office, he refuses to give credit to our administration for saving you money at the pump, which also brought down the rate of inflation.

Of course I will meet with the Mr. Poilievre. I will meet with the Mr. Trudeau. Yesterday, we met with

the two Green Party leaders. Later on today, we're meeting with Mr. Singh, because on this side of the House, we'll work with anybody who wants to make life better here in Manitoba, whereas all they want to do is divide.

I will say, however, I was very pleased to read a commentary in *The Clipper* this week responding to some of our budget announcements, saying that they were thrilled and that, I quote, it was great news.

You know who said these things in *The Clipper* about our budget? It was the member for Lac du Bonnet.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### **Health-Care Worker Recruitment and Retention Competitive Tax Environment Concerns**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Manitobans have been waiting six months for the NDP to come up with a health-care staffing plan. All this Premier has come up with is a letter writing campaign.

The Premier was on CBC Radio saying all it will take to attract nurses and doctors to Manitoba is the thought of affording a cottage. Meanwhile, his Finance Minister is implementing tax hikes that will increase the cost of housing, renting and cottage ownership.

We are not just competing with Vancouver for health-care workers. We're competing with Alberta and Saskatchewan, where taxes are lower and health-care workers can keep more of their paycheques.

Why is the NDP destroying Manitoba's competitive advantage with higher taxes and more expensive housing?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I recognize that the members opposite have a very difficult job, considering the amazing budget that our Finance Minister brought in this week. The job is made even more difficult given the fact that their leader said he's thrilled and that our budget announcement are, quote, great news.

But even though they have that difficult job to plow ahead within opposition, I would say they don't need to resort to the over-the-top rhetoric about destroying anything. The fact is, we have a great quality of life here in Manitoba. It's amazing that people in Manitoba, whether you're the nurse, the physician, the health-care aide, the health-care professional, that you can still afford to own your own home here and buy a cottage.

These are real competitive advantages that we're advancing with our \$1,500 homeowner's tax credit and cutting the fuel tax. If you want to look at competitive advantage between the provinces, look at the price of gas between us, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, anyone right now; the lowest cost of living, it's right here in Manitoba.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** The cost-of-living crisis is only getting worse with Budget 2024. Higher taxes, increased costs of rent and housing, and now a doctor's tax.

Changes to the basic personal amount leave Manitoba as the least attractive province for an-in-demand physicians in Canada. Thanks to the NDP, doctors' property taxes will shoot up, their income taxes will shoot up and the NDP's offered no incentives to try and keep them here. The Premier is supposed to attract doctors here, not drive them out by taxing them to the hilt.

Why is the NDP bringing in tax changes that will chase physicians out of Manitoba?

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, the No. 1 thing that determines whether a physician is going to work in a jurisdiction is whether there is good-quality health care. By the way, if you have a PC administration that attacks physicians, that chases them away.

We've turned the page. You have a Health Minister and a government that is supporting you on the front lines, whether you're a physician, you're a health-care aide, you're a health-care professional or you're a nurse. By the way, the cost of living in Manitoba is low and it is getting lower thanks to the intrepid steps of our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala).

We're investing 1 billion more dollars to recruit 1,000 more health-care workers. This is only the start of being able to repair the damage caused by the PCs. But the good news to those on the front lines is that help is coming, and more help is arriving each and every day.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Roblin, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Cook:** Alberta is offering up to \$100,000 for in-demand positions. Saskatchewan is offering up to \$50,000 for nurses. Our western neighbours have tangible multi-layered plans to attract, retain and train health-care workers. Manitoba has a letter writing campaign.

Why has the NDP failed to put forward a real plan to staff our health-care system?

**Mr. Kinew:** One of the worst things that the PCs did—one of the worst things the PCs did other than close some of the biggest emergency rooms in our province—was that they cut the rural doctor recruitment program.

Now, what happened as a result of the PCs cutting the rural doctor recruitment fund is that not only did you see the situation of closures in rural Manitoba get exacerbated—made worse and 'werch' each and every day, each and every summer. *[interjection]*

And I recognize the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk) is screaming in his chair, because many of those closures are in his own constituency. But the other impact is that municipalities have had to step up to pick up the slack.

But do you know what our plan is in Budget 2024? We're restoring the cuts that they made to the rural doctor recruitment fund. That's going to bring more physicians to rural Manitoba. That's going to help more local communities, and it's one more tangible—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

### Provincial Parks Capital Budget

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** The budget revealed the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has been unwilling to advocate for Manitoba Parks at the Cabinet table. That is unfortunate, and we all lose.

Our PC government established the \$220-million Manitoba provincial parks infrastructural renewal strategy to expand and revitalize our parks. I table a budget document showing that the Parks capital budget has been cut in half.

Why is this minister cutting capital improvements in our provincial parks?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** Manitoba parks are an essential part of the fabric of life here in Manitoba. They're something that Manitobans and their families love to enjoy. They're something that my own family loves to enjoy. I spent my childhood camping and hiking through Manitoba parks, and it's something that I enjoy doing with my own family.

We are investing in Manitoba parks after years of cuts from the opposition, and I look forward to sharing more about our investments in Manitoba parks.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** It's obvious this government doesn't value parks, the experiences they provide or the tourism dollars they bring to the province. I table a document showing 12 proposed projects for this year, including campsite electrification in Hecla/Grindstone, yurt expansion in Duck Mountain and campsite upgrades in Birds Hill.

Will this minister tell Manitobans today which of these 12 projects will be cut?

**MLA Schmidt:** I thank the member opposite for giving me the opportunity again to talk about a jewel in our province, Manitoba parks, something that absolutely contributes to tourism here in our province. The Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Simard) knows this, and we have worked very closely on a parks plan.

I'm very excited. There are many exciting projects actually in our budget, if the member had taken the time to read it, to expand on Manitoba parks; and unlike the member opposite, we will always keep Manitoba parks public and we will never privatize them.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Honourable Speaker, it seems like the NDP are cutting everything but the grass in our provincial parks. Manitobans love their provincial parks. Short- and long-term investments to infrastructure will increase park capacity, develop more trails and boat launches and enhance climate resiliency and environmental protection with water and wastewater upgrades.

Will this minister commit today to reversing her 50 per cent cut to capital expenditures in Manitoba parks, yes or no?

**MLA Schmidt:** I just have to point out the richness of the question. The member opposite and his government slashed the Parks department. Our Parks department has been left—I am so proud of the people who work in our public service in Parks. They do a fantastic job despite the cuts of seven years of the previous government.

Our government is absolutely—we have actually added new positions, if the member had taken the time

to read our budget; and another thing that I'm really proud of, and I would like to highlight, is the Seal River Watershed Alliance MOU that we signed, that the member opposite failed to do.

### **Property Taxes Increase Concerns**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** Honourable Speaker, all smoke and mirrors with this NDP government. They say one thing, yet their policies in the budget divides Manitobans. Union bosses versus small businesses. Homeowners versus renters, hard-working Manitobans versus this entire NDP government.

I know this minister will not answer this question, so I'm going to table the facts for him from his own budget. On page 122 it says the NDP will increase tax by \$148 million on homeowners.

Why is this NDP government penalizing and punishing hard-working, middle-class homeowners to the tune of \$148 million?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** The member opposite is wrong. Our team is proud to bring tax cuts for Manitobans. *[interjection]* Right.

And you know what? You know what, Honourable Speaker? The reviews are rolling in about our work to make life more affordable for Manitobans. Let me read for the member opposite some of the quotes that are coming in. From the Canadian Taxpayers Federation: This gas tax cut extension means more savings for families when they need it most. It's great to see the government listen to Manitoba taxpayers and help them by making life more affordable.

We got one more from the Manitoba Real Estate Association: We are pleased to see the government introduce the \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit for those who need it most. This credit will make home ownership more affordable—

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

The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Khan:** So, to be clear, Honourable Speaker, another non-answer, and the minister won't deny he increased taxes \$148 million. So we'll take that as a yes, he increased taxes \$148 million for hard-working Manitobans.

Finance officials confirmed homeowners in Winnipeg School Division, that live in the Winnipeg School Division, will see tax increases of \$700. That's \$700 more taxes under this NDP government. That's

far more than any savings they will ever achieve under their temporary fuel stunt. Typical NDP smoke and mirrors.

Why is this NDP hiding the additional information that he is taxing Manitobans an additional \$148 million?

**MLA Sala:** Well, there's more quotes here. I'm just going to clear my throat. Another one from the Manitoba Real Estate Association: I think it's a great thing for the average homeowner in Manitoba, great for first-time buyers. They're going to benefit more under this change. At a time where Manitobans are looking for more affordability, more opportunity to make ends meet, this is a really great initiative that really enshrines the needs of homeowners around the education property tax.

One more, just in case the member wasn't listening. This one is from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business: We appreciate the Manitoba government's efforts in taking an approach to make life more affordable for citizens.

That's the work being done by our government. We're going to keep making life more affordable, and the members opposite are going to keep barking, but they know—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Khan:** I'm going to dial it back a little bit. It's really sad that the Minister of Finance won't even answer a simple question. All the heckling aside, he won't even answer. On page 122, it says he's increasing taxes \$148 million. He'll just read quotes over and over again, and that's really sad.

The professional properties association said that under this budget, renters will pay more money. If the government takes away rebates, we will have to raise rent to cover the significant increase in our operating expenses. I table that today. This is the real question. These are real concerns from renters in Manitoba.

Why is the minister increasing taxes on Manitobans \$148 million and making it harder for renters in Manitoba?

**MLA Sala:** Again, the member opposite is wrong. We're making life more affordable for Manitobans.

And I don't know if he noticed, but I got a long list in my hand I'm about to start reading from. Here we go, I'm going to start after the ones that I stopped

reading yesterday. The next one: increasing the renters tax credit, free prescription birth control, \$10-a-day child care, \$300 security system rebate, \$4,000 rebate for new EVs, \$2,500 rebate for used EVs and much more, Honourable Speaker.

### **Highway and Road Repairs Budget Concerns for 2024**

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** This NDP government made it very clear in their budget this week that they are cutting the roads and highways budget by \$164 million.

Why is this NDP government implementing Justin Trudeau's no-more-roads plan?

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** I'm very happy to once again rise to speak to this question. There is absolutely no cut to funding for roads or any—to anything associated with highway infrastructure in this province.

I think what the member is alluding to is cuts that were previous in their budget—in their budget—over the last few years where they underspent by over \$100 million in this area. And we will spend—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

I would ask all members to kind of tone it down a little. It's getting awfully loud. I realize that debate is important. We can have differing opinions, but let's just keep it somewhat respectful so that everybody can hear the questions and the answers. We don't need to be screaming back and forth across the way.

**Mr. Guenter:** Honourable Speaker, 18th Street in Brandon, Highway 75, Highway 6, Kenaston Boulevard: while Manitobans play dodge the pothole, this NDP government is cutting road construction projects and sidelining repair crews. This NDP government expects Manitobans to believe that less is more.

How can this minister cut the highways budget and expect that somehow more potholes will get fixed?

\* (14:10)

**MLA Naylor:** I'm happy to remind this House that Brandon's 18th Street was in the top 5 of CAA's worst roads for two straight years under the previous government.

I will further remind anyone who drove to the Royal Winter Fair a couple of weeks ago that all the

potholes had been filled on that stretch of our highway going through Brandon.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Borderland, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Guenter:** If this minister thinks that 18th Street in Brandon is fixed, perhaps she can talk to the residents in Brandon. And if this NDP government were serious about fixing potholes and upgrading our roads and highways, they wouldn't be slashing the roads budget by \$164 million.

Clearly, they don't have a plan for improving infrastructure—Manitoba. We know that road construction projects will now have to be delayed or cancelled.

Can the minister share that list with us today?

**The Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Consumer Protection and Government Services.

**MLA Naylor:** Honourable—sorry—thank you, Honourable Speaker. Just to be clear, you asked about—the honourable member on the other side of the House asked about potholes. I said the potholes were fixed.

In terms of a long-term fix for that particular stretch of highway, we are in constant conversation with the municipality of Brandon and they fully understand that when their work is done that has to go under that street, we can commence our work to do the final and the new paving of that stretch of highway.

And that's understood by the municipality. I'm sorry it's not understood by the members across the aisle.

I also want to remind the members across the aisle that in 2022-23, they lapsed their budget by \$164 million. We're going to spend every dime that we commit to this budget.

### **Provincial Nominee Program Priority for Expiring Work Permit Applicants**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I am joined today in the gallery by a group of Manitobans who have been trying to get the Minister of Labour's attention and have been met with only apathy and disregard.

I met with Yatin and others earlier today and committed to bringing their concerns forward because this minister will not get away with ignoring these Manitobans.

Can the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) explain why she refuses to prioritize MPNP nominations from applicants up against the clock of an expiring work permit?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Acting Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Thank you, Honourable Speaker—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

People are trying my patience today. It's probably not a very good idea.

**MLA Cable:** Thank you, again, Honourable Speaker. Immigration is essential to meeting our long-term vision of what we want for our province. We know that it's key for economic growth. We also know that it's essential for building strong communities and strong community ties.

On this side of the House, we are entirely dedicated to building bridges and helping to strengthen our communities.

I thank the honourable member for the question.

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

#### **Labour-Specific Draws**

**Ms. Byram:** Another non-answer. Our PC team won the largest increase in Provincial Nominee allocations ever from the federal government. We left this NDP in a position to welcome in more Manitobans and to give peace of mind to those that have gathered in the gallery here today and the many more who have applications in the queue.

Instead, this minister is playing games with their future.

Will the minister turn to these Manitobans today and commit to specific draws that meet the labour needs of Manitoba? Will she commit?

**MLA Cable:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It's really unfortunate the tone that this member is taking, especially when the previous administration completely gutted the department of immigration.

When we took office, 2,000 applications were left unprocessed because there was insufficient staff. On day one, our minister was working towards processing times and working towards processing more folks.

We value every individual that comes to our province. We have met with them and we will continue to

have discussions. We will not use them as political props. They are humans who deserve compassion.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Agassiz, on a final supplementary question.

#### **Staffing and Application Backlogs**

**Ms. Byram:** These are Manitobans that are already here, growing our province and our economy. They are established here; are contributing members of our communities; many volunteer their time.

The minister has often blamed staffing for the fact the application backlog has only grown under the NDP's watch. There are no meaningful staffing increases in this budget.

With increasing backlog and labour shortfalls, this minister needs to keep up, look in the right place, and explain to these Manitobans why they aren't a priority for her government.

**MLA Cable:** I thank the honourable member for the question. And again, it's unfortunate that we have come to a place where we're using decent humans as a political football here.

I can guarantee that we will see changes in the number of folks who are coming here and are able to call Manitoba home. In our budget we've invested \$1 million in new staffing and resources in order to lift up the capacity in the department and to be able to actually bring people into Manitoba and give them a decent life.

#### **Provincial Nominee Program Budget to Address Application Backlogs**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** In February of 2023 there were 2,363 Manitoba Provincial Nominee applicants waiting in the Expression of Interest pool. The pool has increased by 4,000 applicants since then.

In February of 2024, less than two months ago, there were 6,927 applicants waiting. I table these numbers for the House.

Imagine if we hadn't lost out on 2,000 certificates for all of these applicants, Honourable Speaker, and this is because of this government's negligence.

We know that this high demand of applications is turning into a backlog. How will a 5 per cent increase in the budget to staff funding—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Acting Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I thank the honourable member for the question, and I agree. We agree on a number of things. I agree that having folks wait is really unfortunate. It's not what we want to be doing here. You can thank the folks on the other side of the House for the incredible backlog.

And I'd also invite you to talk to your federal cousins about the challenges that have been created in immigration with the attacks that they have made on folks coming here.

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

#### **Priority for Expiring Work Permit Applicants**

**MLA Lamoureux:** This government has to stop deflecting and blaming. It is their responsibility. They have it in their power right now to keep the thousands of immigrants here in Manitoba, and they are choosing not to.

And we see this when the Yukon—the Yukon seems to understand the issue, Honourable Speaker. They are prioritizing certificates for individuals whose permits are expiring, and I table this for the minister's knowledge.

So let's learn from them, Honourable Speaker. Will our minister take initiative and do the same? Will she commit today to prioritizing Provincial Nominee applicants whose post-grad work permits are expiring?

\* (14:20)

**MLA Cable:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the question. You know, we—it's clear by looking around our caucus that we value diversity. A number of my colleagues have family members who are here or who are interested in coming, who want to come.

There are a number of challenges right now that I can say are largely due to the short funding and under-resourcing of the immigration program here. *[interjection]*

I'm so sorry, I have a hard time talking when multiple people are speaking at me. I'm going to get used to it; I know I'll get used to it.

But I want to give the folks—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

#### **Application Processing Wait Times**

**MLA Lamoureux:** Honourable Speaker, that is not worth an applause. That is 'disapicable.' That is outrageous. It is completely unacceptable. This is at the expense of thousands of people's lives here in the province of Manitoba.

In British Columbia, the Provincial Nominee application processing times is three months. In Ontario, four months. There was a time where here in Manitoba it was under three months. But now it's nine to 12 months, Honourable Speaker.

How long will it take for this government to get the program functioning, where people are not being forced to leave our province?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I have a question for the members opposite, including—

**An Honourable Member:** Are you back in opposition?

**Mr. Kinew:** No, I have a question for the members opposite and for the independent member. And I would like them to answer this question in front of the people who are visiting the Chamber today.

Who cancelled the international student post-graduate work permits? Who took that decision? It was the federal government that cancelled those work permits. Who cut staffing within the Provincial Nominee Program? It was the former Progressive Conservative government.

Our government is stepping up to work with the feds. We're investing \$1 million in new staffing resources in the Provincial Nominee Program, and where messes have been created by other people's decisions, our team is going to work hard with the folks who are coming forward to exercise their democratic rights, and we're going to bring forward real solutions.

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

#### **Early Learning and Child Care Initiatives in Budget 2024**

**MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia):** I am proud to rise today to ask a question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning on child care.

Our government got to work on day one to address and expand affordable and accessible child care. We recognize affordability and access in child care is vital to strengthening and growing our economy. Our government has made great progress in a

short period of time, and Budget 2024 gave an exciting look at what our team is doing.

Can the minister please update the House on how our government is making \$10-per-day child care a reality, and how we are helping families and child-care workers in our great province?

**Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I want to thank the member—the MLA for Assiniboia for that important question. This is important work. We recognize that inflation and rising costs are making it harder for everyday Manitobans to make ends meet.

When Manitobans chose our team, they—we got to work right away to lower costs for them. How are we doing that? Real \$10-a-day child care, especially for times like spring break, summer break and the winter holidays; something that parents need right now. It will happen because of Budget 2024.

Budget 2024 also expanded the availability for parents by supporting the creation of more new child-care spaces. Our budget increases salaries for early childhood educators, something that—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

#### **Skilled Trades—Worker Shortage Apprenticeship—Journeyman Ratios**

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Honourable Speaker, currently in Manitoba we are experiencing a shortage crisis of skilled workers. The previous PC government has listened to businesses and tradespeople and changed the apprenticeship rules to allow for two apprentices for every journeyman.

Why is this government bent on reducing the number of qualified tradespeople in our province?

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** Very happy to rise and speak about the good work that skilled workers are doing right across Manitoba. This government takes their training seriously.

That's why we're taking steps to be proactive, to ensure that they have high-quality training and safety at their workplace, so they can go to work safe and return home safe. That's exactly the step that our government is taking to protect all workers right across Manitoba.

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

#### **Apprenticeship Wait Times**

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Speaker, as an individual that went through the apprenticeship program and then as an employer, I cannot believe we are going back in time. There is a shortage of journeyman workers in all trades.

Why is the NDP government not looking to the future to increase the number of journeyman and have determined to have employees wait for up to five years to begin their apprenticeship?

**Mr. Moses:** The member opposite's assertions are, quite frankly, just wrong. We are investing in more training seats for apprenticeships. Our Budget 2024 allocates an additional \$1.3 million to go to apprentice training seats. That's more skilled workers who are going to be working here in Manitoba.

We want to have high-quality training and safe training for workers right across Manitoba. That's our government priorities and something we'll deliver on every single day.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Selkirk, on a final supplementary question.

#### **Apprenticeship—Journeyman Ratios**

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Speaker, it's clear the NDP have no clue. Safety, COR certification, CSAM, SAFE Work Manitoba, all programs private businesses use to ensure their safety of their workers. Businesses will be forced to remove over 65 per cent of their apprentices if this ratio changes.

Why does this NDP government hate tradespeople and small business? And I table, for the record, the comments by Ron Hambley, the president of the Winnipeg Construction Association.

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I love tradespeople. I love the blue collar. That's why I cut the gas tax on January 1 of this year, to save tradespeople money each and every day they go to work.

I also made a promise to a woman by the name of Cindy Skanderberg. Her son was killed in an accident when he was apprenticing to be an electrician. She is the reason we had one-to-one. She asked me to bring it back, and I said, in order to prevent a tragedy like you lived through again, we will bring it back.

I'm proud of our minister for bringing in that trade. This is not a partisan issue; Doug Ford in Ontario brought in one-to-one.

So, I'd like the member to stand up and show the letter he's sending to Doug Ford to criticize his one-to-one apprenticeship ratio in the province of Ontario.

**The Speaker:** The time for question period has expired.

Petitions?

**An Honourable Member:** On a point of order, Honourable Speaker.

#### Point of Order

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a point of order.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Typically, the way that question period works is the opposition asks the government questions. This is what we have question period for, Honourable Speaker.

Today, in question period, and frankly, this government has been earning itself a pattern, by asking us questions as opposition. And that's not the way—that's not what question period serves for, Honourable Speaker.

Today, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) straightforward asked me, less than 10 minutes ago, a question. And so, I would like to have the opportunity to answer it, Honourable Speaker.

The Premier talks about immigration here in the province of Manitoba. And frankly, this government has a responsibility to immigrants—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

I would point out to the member for Tyndall Park that what she's doing is not a point of order.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Petitions?

\* (14:30)

There are no petitions?

### ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### House Business

**The Speaker:** Oh—the Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business.

**An Honourable Member:** No, I was up first.

**Mr. Johnson:** I've been recognized.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader has the floor.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

I told you, you folks were trying my patience today. When the Speaker says order, I expect you to stop talking, and I don't expect you to sit and argue from your seat.

The Government House Leader has the floor.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, April 15, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

**The Speaker:** It has been announced by the Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—[interjection] Order.

It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, April 15, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

**MLA Fontaine:** I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

The—just like to point out that the incorrect day was announced for the standing committee on the Islamic heritage day—month act.

So, the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, April 15, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

The honourable Government House Leader.

**MLA Fontaine:** Miigwech, Honourable Speaker. [interjection] Okay. Yes.

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed to orders of the day, the honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

**Mr. Johnson:** Pursuant to rule 34(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday at private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize and Protect Children in Care and Commit to a Public Inquiry.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Midland. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize and Protect Children in Care and Commit to a Public Inquiry.

**MLA Fontaine:** I apologize, I just want to make sure, for clarity, that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, April 15, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

**The Speaker:** It has been clarified that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, April 15, 2024, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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**MLA Fontaine:** Could you please call to resume debate on budget?

### BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

**The Speaker:** We will now resume debate on the budget. The debate is standing in the name of the honourable member for Lagimodière, who has 15 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière):** Honourable Speaker, I am delighted to rise a second time to speak to the budget our government has put forward.

It's worth again thanking our Finance Minister, the Premier (Mr. Kinew), Cabinet, members of Treasury Board and the many, many staff that commit their time and energy to produce such an optimistic path forward for our province.

This budget clearly moves forward the priorities Manitobans elected us to tackle, rebuilding health care and making life more affordable for those that need it. Equally, our Finance Minister has balanced those needs while trying—while laying out the path to tackle the fiscal mess we've been inheriting.

Honourable Speaker, I want to take a moment and celebrate the theme of our budget: One Future, One People, One Manitoba. It's about focusing on the important things to move our province forward. We can disagree on smaller things.

Just today, I learned a colleague, who shall remain nameless, hasn't listened to Cowboy Carter. Some people like Beyoncé, some people like The Beatles, some people like Begonia. I think we'll be able to talk this through and rebuild an even stronger relationship.

Ultimately, we can come together and address pressing issues Manitobans elected us to tackle. This budget is the tool to do just that.

Whenever I talk with constituents from Lagimodière, I emphasize my drive to address things upstream. How do we create those systems, make those investments and set the stage for success for people early in life?

Yesterday, I spoke about the investments of two schools in Sage Creek, a K-to-8 for the D-S-M-DSFM, and another for Louis Riel School Division. Ensuring youth have a good, solid learning opportunities is an example of upstream work our government is doing.

When these schools open, child-care centres will open alongside them. The importance of a continuum of learning opportunities is valued by our government and I have to thank our ministers for ensuring this budget reflects that.

I cannot properly express how important expanding access to child care is for families. Just last week, I met with a parent who said she'd bring a couple others to our meeting, and we ended up with a group of 10 discussing how families rely on child care.

Child care needs to be affordable, expanded to ensure accessibility and value the labour and care put in by child-care workers.

A frustration I've heard is how \$10-a-day child care came with a huge asterisk from the previous government. I'm happy to see that our NDP budget is expanding this unfulfilled promise to include in-service days, spring break and summer vacation.

I regularly speak with families who are navigating wait lists and tough decisions. Families are stressed and making plans A, B and C for the many contingencies in their life. Some have even shared they may have to quit their jobs in order to ensure their young ones have a place to be.

Expanding access to quality child care is important for communities and is a vital part of ensuring a stable workforce. Investments in child care is another example of our government committing to upstream work.

Honourable Speaker, I'd like to speak about the prenatal benefit. I'm thrilled to see this included in our budget. A doubling of the benefit will make it the most generous prenatal benefit in the country.

Before I got elected, I worked with high school students and occasionally, we had students who became parents. I saw these young people on a steep learning curve, reprioritizing aspects of their lives and taking on this huge responsibility.

A prenatal benefit removes an element of the stress and uncertainty that comes with pregnancy. An ability to eat healthier during pregnancy leads to a healthier newborn. A little extra income allows people to buy maternity clothes, purchase diapers and other supplies.

\* (14:40)

As a person without children, I hear all of this gets expensive. This is a proven investment that pays off for children, families and communities. Yet another example of upstream investments in Manitobans our government is making.

You might think, can we get more upstream than a prenatal benefit? Well, Honourable Speaker, let me tell you about the fertility treatment tax credit. We're doubling it from \$8,000 to \$16,000.

I know families that are trying so hard to expand their loving home. It's stressful physically and emotionally to pursue IVF, and our government is taking steps to remove that financial stress so that once families are successful, they can focus on caring and nurturing for their child. That's upstream investing our government is doing.

Honourable Speaker, care is important across the age spectrum, and my constituents in Lagimodière are happy to see our government taking action to ensure seniors age with dignity.

Personal-care homes should be a place where elderly relatives find comfort, are cared for and have all the supports they need to enjoy their golden years. Unfortunately, after years of disregard from governments, and despite the hard work of health-care staff in the facilities, some families are hesitant to have family members move into personal-care homes.

I've had constituents share with me the ways they extend themselves, supporting their family members in an effort to allow them to age in place. Constituents are scared, frustrated and tired. Our government investing \$22.3 million towards providing more direct hours of care is an important step to ensuring health-care workers, seniors and family members feel supported in this important piece of our health-care system.

I feel the need to underline the important role caregivers play in supporting elderly and disabled Manitobans. Retirements are taken early. Hobbies are abandoned. Relationships are strained. Sleep is lost and needs are put to the side to ensure family members are cared for.

I am excited that the combination of the return of the Mature Women's Centre at the Victoria Hospital and the implementation of the new safe and healthy at home program will lead to better outcomes for Manitobans. This will undoubtedly relieve caregivers in some ways and empower folks to live with dignity and improve quality of life for vulnerable Manitobans.

**An Honourable Member:** Well said.

**Mr. Blashko:** Thank you.

Honourable Speaker, before I wrap up my comments, I do want to touch on a program I've personally seen make a difference in communities. The Urban and Hometown Green Team program supports the hiring of youth for summer employment. This budget includes an additional \$730,000 for this program.

As I mentioned before, I worked with youth before being elected, and we, along with many other non-profits, relied on the Urban Green Team to hire some of our students throughout the summer. When I was younger, I was fortunate that my dad was able to help me get a warehouse job for my first summer job. Not everyone is born into a family with those levers to help them take those first steps into employment.

This first experience with a summer job can be life changing. The opportunity to work with an organization that you're familiar with in a supported way can lead to new paths for career exploration, increased

confidence and financial stability. Many youth I've worked with through the summers have gone on to be teachers, nurses, architects, youth workers and community leaders. These experiences matter, and I'm so happy our government is making this investment in our youth.

This budget is a roadmap forward, a roadmap that rebuilds our health-care system, that make life more affordable, that addresses the fiscal mess left behind by the previous government and invests in a Manitoba for all of us.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** It is always a pleasure and honour to rise in this House and speak, and I will remind you, I am still fasting, so my mouth will get dry at times. And no, for the members opposite, I can't drink a glass of water. So, I appreciate the gesture, but no.

It is always an honour to stand and rise and speak. But, however, today it is actually kind of embarrassing to rise and speak to this unbalanced, this performative, this smoke-and-mirror-filled budget.

I'm going to have to remind the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the minister that they're no longer in music bands. They're no longer artists. They're no longer performers.

There was a great article about the Minister of Finance's (MLA Sala) band, Jackpine, and maybe after this failed budget, he can go back and join that band, because this budget is on the verge of bankrupting Manitoba. And I'm going to get into the next 19 minutes and 13 seconds instead explaining why this budget is so awful. Manitobans want a plan, not a performance.

It would do them well to remember on that side of the House that they serve all Manitobans. They tried to say that in their budget platform, and yet it's clear that they don't represent all Manitobans. They represent a small group of Manitobans, and those Manitobans are called union bosses—not unions—unions' bosses.

And I want to be clear to the member opposite from Riel—him and I were having a conversation earlier, and he says, what's wrong with unions? And I said, nothing, unions are great. We love unions. We love union workers. The issue we have is when this Minister of Finance and this Premier and other ministers on this side come out and say unions are the only way to go in this province.

And why would they say that? Their union bosses. The union bosses are direct employees of this government. The union bosses are the ones that are making deals with them—the union bosses at the Cabinet table. And I'm going to get into how this reflects to the budget.

Unions are fantastic. Union workers are hard-working Manitobans making a living. No one can argue with that. Every employee deserves rights and protection, safety, security, human resources, guaranteed jobs in a labour dispute. We're not talking about that. That is off the table. We agree that those are important.

But so are the rest of Manitobans. So when they come forward with a budget for all Manitobans, it should be in asterisks and say, only union leaders and members opposite this side of the House. It's made abundantly clear that the NDP do not care about the economy, small businesses, safer communities or middle-class families.

In this budget, the NDP want hard-working Manitobans—you at home having dinner with your family, going to work every day, coming home—they want you to pay more money; \$148 million more. Page 122 of the budget, the very top line will say, this government is taking home \$148 million of your taxpayer dollars. Why? Because they want to make life harder for middle-class Manitobans. That is a fact; page 122 of the budget.

Manitobans aren't going to be fooled by this. The media might report what they want; we know which way the media leans. Their stakeholders will say what they want, because they are in bed with the union leaders. But over time Manitobans will see. When they open up that first—when they open up that letter that shows their education tax has gone up—and they can't argue the education tax has—it has gone up under this government. They said they won't raise taxes. They raised education taxes up to 17 per cent in some ridings.

Who's going to pay for that, Honourable Speaker? Manitobans. Manitobans are going to pay for the tax raises under this government. Already six months, two tax raises—two major tax raises. They should be ashamed of that. They are making life more unaffordable. You can't argue with that. They—education tax they raised, and now this home rebate of 1,500 bucks.

This Premier talks ad nauseam—ad nauseam—at how the economic horse will pull the social cart, while under this NDP government, they have overloaded the

social cart. And instead of a fleet of Budweiser Clydesdales needing to pull this social cart, they have downgraded to Eeyore, the donkey from Winnie the Pooh. And Eeyore—and I love Eeyore, but that poor guy's still looking for his tail and how to attach that to the social cart that this government did.

And you know what Eeyore says really well? Nothing to do. No hope of things getting better, not under this NDP. Quote, Eeyore. I added in under the NDP, facts. No economic horse pulling this overloaded social cart. Eeyore the donkey with no tail, poor guy.

Manitobans were sold a bill of goods, and now they're stuck with that for the next three and a half years. I mean, maybe they'll call it early and we can get them out in three years. That'd be fantastic, Manitobans'd be appreciative of that.

\* (14:50)

Since the members opposite, you know, they don't care about small businesses, they have no idea how to grow the economy. A bill of goods is not a good thing. It means you were sold something that has no value. That's what Manitobans were sold in this NDP government, and it's clear as day in this budget. They have overloaded the social cart and they have no way of growing this economy.

And you might say, well, hold on, some of those social programs—and, yes, social programs are always needed; there always need to be continued investment in that. How are you going to pay for that is the question, Honourable Speaker. You have to grow the economy. This budget has no balance, no impartiality, no discretion on needs and demands. It shows that this NDP government does not understand the real hardships of Manitobans, that they're only going to bend to the will of their union leaders.

Families and small businesses are facing a time of crisis and need, and there is nothing in this budget that helps families or small businesses, period. It simply loads up the cart and it says, along with Eeyore, Manitobans, now it's your time to pull the cart; we're raising your education taxes; we're taking more money out of your pocket, \$148 million out of your pocket.

Now, Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) is sitting here, so it's fantastic that—oh, am I allowed to comment on his absence? I apologize, Honourable Speaker. I was in reference—the Minister of Finance earlier today made a comment about a CFIB quote, and it's great that he made that in question period. So I'm going to finish that quote off for him. Smoke and mirrors: they like to read you half of quotes, a portion

of a quote, maybe one or two words of a quote. We know they've done that over time and time again.

So let's read the quote. And what is CFIB? Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 97,000 members. And I'll quote. I'll finish off the rest of that sentence since the Minister of Finance didn't want to finish it: The provincial budget was a missed opportunity to provide additional, meaningful cost relief for Manitoba's small businesses. We would've liked to see the Province address more issues that continue to impact small businesses, such as red tape reduction, utility costs and small-business support. End quote.

And, Honourable Speaker, who said that? CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business. That's the rest of the quote, proof, example from today, this minister is cherry-picking the quotes he wants, just like this Premier; it's just like the NDP government did. Not very transparent at all to Manitobans.

And further to that not very transparent—I'm glad that we're talking about transparency. Well, we want to talk about increases in education tax and housing. And when we look at, you know, where's that calculated from, what is the number based on with this home rebate they're talking about, \$1,500 of a home rebate?

If you look in the budget, Honourable Speaker, what numbers do they use? The low number from 2023 for the mill rate. How can you present a budget for '24-25 literally using numbers from 2023 and the low number of 2023? Why would you do that? You want to mislead Manitobans, say this is the number you're saving. In reality, your mill rate, the taxing rate is going to be way higher and your education's going to go higher because this government has already increased taxes.

Where is the transparency, Honourable Speaker? There is none. There is none. And when they quote these numbers of \$1,500 rebate, who pays for that? Who's going to pay above that? The average middle-class Manitoban. The average price in Manitoba varies from 345 to about 400, depending on what number you look at. But if you go \$375,000 for an average house in Manitoba, how much are they going to get back? Zero. They are actually going to pay money under this program.

Now, there is benefit to certain people, yes, there is, and we have to support, but we have to support everyone. Why is this government content on picking winners and losers, just like they're doing with union

leaders? They are not representing all Manitoba. They—it's clear as day that they are not doing what's best for the best interests of Manitobans. Middle-class Manitobans, the hard work you're doing is going to go to pay for this irresponsible spending by this NDP government.

Now, what else is missing from this budget? We heard again ad nauseam—ad nauseam, we're going to freeze hydro. No mention of it. Poof, it's gone with their magical wand. What happened? Not one mention.

CFIB also mentioned that we would've liked to see—we were, quote, disappointed that there was no mention of the hydro freeze in the budget. Again, another bill of goods sold by the showmanship Premier (Mr. Kinew) and his Minister of Finance (MLA Sala).

Small businesses are dealing with insufficient—but with high demands on wages, on labour force, on cost of goods, higher taxes, with almost 20 per cent of them indicating that they're about to close—20 per cent of businesses.

You know how you grow an economy, Honourable Speaker, to pay for these irresponsible promises? You keep businesses around. You don't force 20 per cent of them to close like they are under this NDP. That's what you do to keep them around.

When you want to talk about economy, not one announcement. You have your social cart to programs that are needed—prenatal program, fertility, some homeless strategy—homelessness strategy—important social programming. How are you going to pay for those and all of the other nonsense this NDP proposed?

You have to grow the economy. The Premier said it himself. Social-economic horse pulls the social cart, not a donkey pulling an overloaded cart. Sadly, that's what this government is doing. There is not one—and he'll—it's actually really—this was a, you know, I had a moment, and the Minister of Finance and I had some conversations, surprisingly, and other members.

We all attended the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce—a bunch of us attended the breakfast with—the day after the Minister of Finance spoke about this budget. And I have it on my phone: 8:46 he got up on stage; 9:17 he finished. So, 30 minutes, let's say, about the budget to a crowd, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. Not one mention of how to grow the economy. Not one.

You are talking to a captive audience that are the backbone of this province, who are growing the province, who are paying payroll taxes, paying business taxes, investing in our communities. Not one mention.

You know what he did mention—I'll give you one guess—what type of leaders did he mention? Unions. Thirty minutes. You have an opportunity to grow the economy, a captive audience that wants to grow the economy. Not one mention. These are concerns when you have so much irresponsible spending in this budget.

Now let's go over some numbers just so we get an understanding of what—they have increased a debt to GDP to 38.5 per cent in this province. They have a deficit projection of \$800 million, and their Hydro projections for your information, Honourable Speaker, I don't know where they got—again, it's a magical wand because those numbers, I will guarantee you right now, are going to be way over what Manitoba Hydro's going to do.

We're in a drought right now. We had a very low winter; some droughts are projected for the summer. There's going to be an increase of wildfires, and yet this Minister of Finance has budgeted way more in Hydro's revenue. Irresponsible.

You look at the borrowing—\$3.8 billion for refinancing; \$6.2 billion is planned to be borrowed in the next year; \$2.4 billion for new cash requirements; \$2.7 billion to date borrowed by this government; \$9.25 billion approved in an order-in-council before the budget was even tabled.

Yes, these are all billions, Honourable Speaker. Billions and billions of dollars this government is borrowing with no plan to grow the economy. That is very concerning.

NDP—no darn plan. They're adding another \$1.9 billion to the debt. They've reduced the revenue contingency by \$100 million. They have federal—you know, I could go on—the minister wants to list off 21 points on how he's supposedly, you know, misleading Manitobans or helping them somehow. I mean, I got over four pages here of stuff I can talk about where he is driving this province into a worse state. I won't—I only have five minutes and 41 seconds left, so I won't be able to read all those. But it is concerning that the minister is taking this province in such a debt load with no plan to grow our economy. These are concerns.

Now, with that increase in debt, you have to say we're probably paying for everything, and I would

say, well, okay, you're increasing the debt by that much money, in the tens of billions of dollars. You have the highest income-to-debt ratio in the history of this province. But no; they're cutting schools—\$100 million from schools and daycares—\$163 million for infrastructure spread—spent.

*MLA Robert Loiselle, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

They cut—and this one hurts, this one hurts—they cut—*[interjection]* Yes, and members opposite, actually, as I look around, I believe probably every member on that side of the House benefitted from that.

\* (15:00)

They benefitted from a program that under the PC government, Honourable Deputy Speaker, supported communities—arts, culture and sport in communities.

Over \$100 million went equally across the province. And how do I know it went equally? Well, shockingly, I was the minister of that program, so I made sure it was spread out across the province—\$1 million went to the Thompson pool, and I can't say where that member is, but \$1 million went to the Thompson pool.

We had hundreds of thousands of dollars, millions of dollars, go into the Minister of Finance's (MLA Sala) own back yard—I mean, not literally his back yard, that would be a big jamboree. It went into the riding where the minister resides.

Money went into The Maples and to—into Burrows. It went into McPhillips, it went to—every single riding in this province, Honourable Deputy Speaker, \$100 million dollars went—and Lakeside got some, Lac du Bonnet got some, Gimli got some. I mean, Roblin.

This was what the previous government did, we supported arts, culture and sport in community. We all know it brings Manitobans together. Even across party lines we can maybe get together and play a pickup game of basketball or hockey one day; non-contact of course, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

This is what sports and arts do, they bring—and what do they do, Honourable Speaker—Honourable Deputy Speaker? What did they do? Think you know the answer. I don't know if you're allowed to answer, but I'm going to answer it for you: they cut it. They cut it. They cut Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund, \$100 million. Honourable Deputy Speaker, there's major, major, major concerns when a government is going to cut that.

You know, you want to talk about more quotes? I'm going to fly through here, because we've got three minutes left.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities, what did they say? Missed the mark for investments in public safety. The AMM was hoping to see long-term predictable funding model, but instead were left concerned and discouraged by the public safety basket. Now, according to the AMM, they have major public safety concerns, like all of Manitoba.

So to address public safety concerns, what does this Minister of Finance do for small businesses? Says yes, you've got break-ins; we're going to give you a \$300 rebate.

Well, the reality check, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and to members opposite, is \$300 for a commercial security system is nothing. It is thousands of dollars to have a commercial community—alarm system, a camera system installed, thousands and thousands of dollars.

So let's say it's \$3,000. That's 10 per cent. Well, now you've got to get—what if your window gets broken into, Honourable Deputy Speaker? About \$3,000 to replace your window every single time it gets broken.

A camera is not going to stop somebody. You know what's going to stop someone? Actually doing—with saying what they said they were going to do, and they haven't. Another bill of goods that is worthless.

This government and this Premier (Mr. Kinew) have not done anything they said they were going to do.

Manitobans know when they say it's 1,000 health-care workers, it's smoke and mirrors. Where are they going to come from? Magical wand? They have no plan for this. This is the reality of where this government is going. It is misleading Manitobans.

The fact of the matter, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is their housing rebate that they want to tout as this great champion of this budget is actually costing Manitobans more—\$148 million.

You work hard for your money, you should go home with your money.

Under the previous government, the tax savings were the largest tax savings in the history of this government, and over four—on average \$4,000 went home with Manitobans.

And you know how we know that now is because this NDP government is advertising the great work the previous PC government did. They're advertising the great work that everyone did on this side of the House. That is the reality of what is happening here.

You know, so when you talk about, you know, what's happening with this government, it's embarrassing. It's embarrassing; this budget is embarrassing. It's going to come out in due time that the housing is—their rebate's more money.

But I'll end on this, Honourable Speaker, that they say—this is a great saying, I'm sure they've all heard of this—that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, that mediocrity can play to greatness. I would beg to say that the NDP is imitating what we did with our tax cuts. That is the greatest form of flattery. To whom? Mediocrity—below mediocrity is what I would say on this side, and that is what this government is showing in this budget.

They're showing that they are not here to fulfill the promises they led up to, that Manitoba—life in Manitoba is going to be more expensive under this NDP government.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** It's a true honour and privilege to stand up to speak about our very first budget as the new government. We have so much to be proud of. I want to thank my colleagues for all of the work that they've put into this budget, including the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala).

And I want to take a moment to thank the tireless work of the civil servants and the folks in Treasury Board, who spent literally thousands of hours putting together this budget and navigating really difficult waters. I know that this year was quite difficult for folks in the civil service. There was a lot of unsettled sort of conversations and they went through a lot of transition.

So, I'm also going to take a moment to thank the incredible staff in the—in my own ministry who have navigated international student changes, who have navigated a whole host of issues. And I just want to take this moment to say thank you so much for all that you do for the people of Manitoba. We have your backs and look forward to continuing the relationship.

I want to speak first and foremost to the fantastic news for everybody in the province on a number of fronts, including the fact that this government has

prioritized health care in a really meaningful way in this budget. In nearly every line and from almost every department, you can see how the intersection of education and health care, workforce development and health care, how all of us are working together to support really what Manitobans have brought us here to do, which is to fix the health-care system that was broken under the previous administration.

So I can—I want to speak specifically about what the Advanced Education and Training is doing to help with the impact on our public health-care system. So, throughout the question period and often in sort of side rhetoric, where are these folks going to come from? How are we going to staff up the health-care system?

We're going to do it in a whole host of ways. I can tell you that, on this side of the House, the—me and my colleagues, we work together very well. If there's an issue in one department, we're calling our friends to have conversations about it. We're calling our colleagues who are directly impacted. I'm looking at my colleague from the North. If there is something that is related to his constituents, we have the conversation, because we really are a government that is here to represent all Manitobans.

I want to take a minute to talk about the UGME, Undergraduate Medical Education post-secondary program expansion fund. So, we're putting \$22.8 million towards 15 new seats for the U-M-G-E; 15 new seats for the 'physician' assistant program; 20 new seats for nurse practitioners. If anybody here has ever had the privilege of having care provided by a nurse practitioner, that is an investment well worth its weight in gold. And I have a nurse practitioner that I see, and she provides phenomenal care.

We also have 10 new seats for physical therapy program and 10 new seats for occupational therapy program. That's just through this budget alone.

We know that it's going to take years to repair the damage to our health-care system, and that's why we got to work right away. We need to get people into health-care training and into the—at the bedsides in Manitoba.

I'm so proud that this expansion is happening. Stay tuned for more announcements. We will be laying out the plan. And I heard anybody who—I have a child who is graduating from high school this year. I'm encouraging him to consider a career in health care or in education—looking at the Minister of Education

right now. But I encourage anybody who has an aptitude for care and for science to consider a job in health care in Manitoba.

We're doing what we can to improve the working conditions and to change the conversation about being a health-care worker in Manitoba.

\* (15:10)

This is a job that is—requires so much commitment and so much care and compassion and expertise, and we want to change the conversation so that folks are enticed to join a really rewarding career where they will be respected and honoured for the expertise that they bring, and have a fulfilling career that helps folks in the province.

Exciting news in the Westman region: we're coming forward with our plan to expand medical seats at Brandon University. So, we have allotted \$370,000 to the U-M—to the U of M to start planning for the Brandon medical expansion.

I'm a Brandon girl. I've said it many, many times; go Wheat Kings. And it is an ambitious project, but it is one that we need to do. So, we are looking at how we can ensure that folks are receiving their training closer to home, that if they are from a rural community, from the Brandon area, that we find opportunities for them to receive their training close to home so that they'll stay there.

There's no—there—we know that it's—once people move from their home community somewhere to pursue post-secondary, to pursue higher education, that their opportunities to return home are sometimes diminished. And we want to make sure that we can support folks who are really invested in their home communities, and ensure that people in Brandon East, Brandon West, Souris, Roblin, that folks in the area are well supported by a health-care system that is there for them.

We also have a \$10-million capital investment to the University of Manitoba. And so that will be a new building at the Bannatyne campus. And that will help house our undergraduate-medical-seat expansion, and it's a long-overdue development needed to expand physician training. State-of-the-art equipment. It's a campaign promise that we made, and we are delivering.

Nurses; we're expanding nurses. We are expanding nursing seats at six post-secondary institutions, including University College of the North, for nursing projects in Swan River and Flin Flon. Again, bringing

care close to home is a goal of ours, and enabling folks to receive training close to home.

More and more when we talk to folks about what makes them successful in their post-secondary, and really in any environment, it's that sense of belonging. And for certain, especially with Indigenous students, they need to know that there is a place for them, that they are welcomed, that they are honoured and that they are kept whole as the individuals that they come as. So, this training in places like Swan River and Flin Flon will make a tremendous difference.

Exciting things are happening at RRC Polytech. We have given them a capital investment to expand their nursing program, including a wonderful state-of-the-art nursing simulation centre. I lost the word.

And so, this'll be a fantastic opportunity for nurses to learn on the job, to—I had the opportunity at UCN, at the University College of the North, to interact with their simulation system, and it's incredible. It's incredible what we can do with technology. We have virtual reality where we can interact with patients. We can actually move close to them, we can take their vitals.

And it not only teaches the scientific or physical skills that are necessary to be successful in nursing or any sort of health-care 'practicat'—practicing—that's the word—but it also gives them practice time for those social pieces that are just so incredibly important. What is the appropriate tone to take with somebody when you're communicating about the illness that they have, or the physical symptoms they're experiencing.

And being able to practise words of compassion, being able to practise empathy in real time and receiving feedback from colleagues who are as interested as they are in them being successful in the workplace. The nurses that I spoke with said that this is a game-changer, to be able to be a part of a simulation that allows them, without having the additional stress of being in the—in a real-world scenario yet, to be able to practise and strengthen those muscles.

So much of what we do every day is based on muscle memory; whether it's remembering facts, whether it's responding in an appropriate way, and it gives folks the opportunity to have those skills and also to, especially in remote communities, if they don't have a local facility that they could otherwise be training at, to give them those skills.

We are looking at good news for students as well. But the main part of this job here, in my opinion, is to ensure that every student has every opportunity possible to be successful. You know, I think a lot about equity

and equality and what that means, and the formula for success is not the same for everyone. The formula for success, in fact, is different for every individual.

So, what we have done with this budget is not only made life more affordable at home, with the changes to income taxes and the fuel tax holiday, but in post-advanced education and training, we have added additional funds to Student Aid. We have added additional resources to Student Aid, in the form of staff, to help ensure that folks receive the supports they need quicker and that they—life is getting more complicated for everybody.

So in order to navigate the complexities of different accommodations, ensuring that students with additional needs have their needs met in a timely way and that we can set people up for success is the thing that I'm probably most proud of in this budget. The investments that we're making in those student support services will help ensure that students, regardless of their postal code, regardless of their family status, regardless of whether or not their parents ever attended post-secondary, will be able to attend and be successful.

My goal here is to ensure that as many—that we get as many students successfully through post-secondary as possible. We know that it means better outcomes, not only for them and for their immediate family members but the generations that come after them.

When I think about the impact that advanced education has on families, it's incredible. I'm so privileged to sit with so many people who are either the first in their family to have ever attended university or college, who are newcomers, who have—their own children will be the first in their family to attend a post-secondary here in Manitoba. It is a tremendous privilege to sit with the folks that I do and to consider the experiences of all folks in their path through post-secondary.

I see my colleague, the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) sitting in front of me and I think about what an incredible impact post-secondary has had on her life and the life that her children have. My dear friend behind me, who is an educator and whose own path through advanced education has completely changed the trajectory of her family. And her family—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

### Point of Order

**The Acting Speaker (Robert Loiselle):** Sorry, the member for Fort Whyte—point of order, the member for Fort Whyte.

**Mr. Khan:** It might not seem like a big deal, Honourable Deputy Speaker, but I've been called myself to numerous point of orders on recognizing whether a member is in the House or is not in the House and I believe the minister across the way did that numerous times in the last few minutes here of recognizing when her colleagues were sitting in their chairs in front of her.

In the Legislature and in this Chamber, I believe that is a violation, as I myself have been called on that. So I would just like to, you know, bring that up as a point of order that all the rules should be reflected equally on both sides, Honourable Deputy Speaker. Just asking for some fair rules and some fair—if one side is going to be accountable to one set of rules, I believe the other side should also be accountable to those same set of rules.

The member opposite from the NDP does not operate a different set of rules. We in this Chamber and this province all operate on the same set of rules.

Thank you.

\* (15:20)

**The Acting Speaker (Robert Loiselle):** The honourable member of St. Vital and minister responsible for the economy, on the same point of order.

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** Just to respond on the same point of order, I think that all members in the House are understanding how we speak here in the right proper language, and I think all members are going to do their best in—currently and in the future to uphold those rules. I think that's the type of tone that we need in this House.

And as—you know, in your responsibility, Honourable Speaker, I think it's your job to make sure that we uphold the rules, and I think we'll all follow them. And I think as the Speaker rightly did not call the last speaker out, I think the Speaker was doing a good job of recognizing that people are following the rules in the appropriate manner.

And so I am glad and I applaud the Speaker for doing his job so well, and I also make sure to point out to the Speaker and highlight that the member opposite's point of order is not a true point of order,

Honourable Speaker. And I'd like us to get on to continuing debate on this amazing budget brought forward by our amazing Finance Minister.

**The Acting Speaker (Robert Loiselle):** In regards to the point of order, the member is correct that those are the rules. However, I did not hear those references. But I would like to remind every member in the House that we should not be referencing the absence or presence of members that are in the House.

Thank you.

\* \* \*

**MLA Cable:** I thank the—thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I thank you for your ruling. And I will assure all members that I am somebody who honours the rules and I appreciate the feedback. I will not make that mistake again.

You know, I actually pride myself on being somebody that listens to the feedback of others. I like to work collaboratively. I like to build bridges with folks who share my vision or who don't.

You know, I'm going to take a second to tell you what I've told my children about why I decided to run to be a member of this Legislative Assembly. And there's something quite troubling about what's happening in terms of division in our world, and the polarization of ideas, and the inability for people to have conversations in a civilized way. And one of the things that I promised my children and that I promised myself that I would bring to this Assembly is respect for other people's opinions and respectful conversation and a real desire to build bridges between communities.

It's something that I take incredibly seriously. I believe wholeheartedly that this is a job that requires heart and that it is a sacred duty. And I am honoured to stand here. I will not become somebody that I am not in this space. And I implore everybody to really think about the impact that we have on the lives of Manitobans and how we can be the example setters in our communities as to how to have respectful discourse and how to build community.

I thank the Honourable Speaker for the time, and I thank all honourable members for their attention.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Honourable Speaker, it gives me great pride to rise today and speak to this budget. My budget discussion today will be more of a eulogy. And I'm actually dressed for it today, all in black, to mourn the losses of this budget. I really want to bring that forward, that, you know,

there has to be some compassion, as was spoke about by the member opposite, and compassion from all of us for this budget and the loss that not only us but all Manitobans suffered.

So, I wanted to take this opportunity to talk about this budget and look at what has happened to all of the numbers in here and the losses of all of the opportunities for Manitoba. It's, you know, it's very sad that we have to look at this this way. And the death happened in many ways here, and I think it's a death by a thousand cuts. And we've all heard that before, that we can die by a thousand cuts. They're slow, they're purposeful, but eventually it bleeds out. And with that, I would expect that there would be some lifesaving measures taken when that happens. And I didn't see that in this budget. I see nothing but cuts, more cuts and more cuts that have caused a lot of pain and a lot of suffering, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

So, I know my friend from Waverley has experienced this same trauma dealing with death and dealing with first aid. And I would fully expect that when this document was on the table that he was performing CPR to try and bring it back to life. And that CPR in this case was a critical page review, looking at it page by page. And I can envision him doing compressions on this document. And he actually did well. He compressed so much that many of these lines went flat.

As a matter of fact, as he kept pressing, I'm sure these lines went into the negatives. And I can show that from this budget—many of these lines that went into the negatives. And I'll get to those as we go and, particularly, Honourable Deputy Speaker, as it relates to justice or the lack thereof in this document.

So, I also wonder—I know that there's a staffing directory, and I've looked, and I did not see Johnny Depp as a member of staff. Edward Scissorhands is alive and well, and this was cut so much that I don't know how we could even look Manitobans in the face with the number of cuts that have happened in this document.

So, I would like to start out a little bit about some of the expenses that we've done here. And, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it was an excellent segue that the member from Fort Whyte had brought forward when he talked about Eeyore because it's all about sadness. It's all about depression. And, you know what, that poor donkey, I hope he has a chance to recover, and I know that he will in three and a half years.

So thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker. If I could go on, one thing I would be remiss if I did not add—and again, it was a good segue from the member from Fort Whyte when he talked about inaccurate quotes or taking just snippets of a quote.

\* (15:30)

So, as this directly relates to this budget and the suffering that all Manitobans are going to go through, I want to clear up a quote that the First Minister brought forward today. And he was talking about the member from Lac du Bonnet, and the member from Lac du Bonnet and his quote in the Lac du Bonnet Clipper. And so the actual quote was: I'm thrilled that the pause has been lifted, because it is something that has been needed.

If you read further in the article, he further quotes—it says the name, but I won't mention the name—it says the member from Lac du Bonnet claims the pause in construction could add as much as \$10 million to this final bill. Is that fiscally responsible, Honourable Deputy Speaker? That is not fiscally responsible.

One other area that I have to bring forward. When I heard this side of the House talk about—I believe it was something to the effect of 21 ways of savings, something to that effect. And it reminds me, again, as I talk about my eulogy, of a 21-gun salute. And that's used at the death of some—one thing important and something prominent. And I think that that is something—a budget is very important. It's very prominent, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and it's something that deserved this 21-gun salute, because it has unfortunately died on the floor in front of us.

So, let's talk a little bit about this budget and some of the cuts that have come. And I actually want to talk about Justice initiatives specifically.

I have heard ad nauseam, as well, that the NDP government is tough on crime but also tough on the causes of crime. I was hoping that this was true. As a former police chief, as a former police officer, as somebody who served this province, I actually was hoping that that would come to fruition.

But you know what happened instead? Edward Scissorhands. Cuts.

Legal aid. Tough on causes of crime? Legal aid protects our most vulnerable citizens. These are the ones that need help. My understanding is the NDP is supposed to look after the people on that and that need

the help. And legal aid? The ones that help those individuals? Cut.

Prosecution services. We talk about bail reform. We talk about all of this plan of bail reform. Guess what happened to prosecution services? Cut, that's what happened.

Legal services: the ones that help us out in this Chamber; the ones that help all of Manitobans when we look at some of our legislation. Can any of my colleagues or anybody else in this House help me out, what happened there? Cut.

Correctional services, cut. Court operations, cut. The provincial policing, cut. The police commission, cut. LERA, cut. And on top of that, victim services, cut—victim services. They are the final line, the final frontier, the ones that look after the victims of crime and the ones that will talk about where this court case is going. The one that gives support, whether it helps them with some financial support, whether it helps them with moral support, whether it helps them with emotional support. Cut.

And so again, I talk about the death of this document and what has happened. I'm just wondering, when is the funeral? When is the funeral for this?

I talked before about defunding the police. And you know what? That sits heavy with me because I lived through that many times during different protests and gatherings where people wanted to defund the police. Well, I think what this document has done is defunded justice. And justice defunded is justice denied. When we look at this, how are Manitobans supposed to feel safe in their homes? How are they supposed to feel safe when they are walking the streets, whether it be Brandon, Winnipeg, or any of the other surrounding communities? How are they going to be safe?

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I don't have the exact words here with me, but the—I believe it's the president of AMM, Mr. Blight, talked about this budget specifically, and I wish I would have printed out the document before I came here. I apologize for that, so I'll summarize in that this document is lacking in public safety for rural communities. Rural crime is alive and well, and they needed help. They needed support. No mention—no mention—of those areas that could really help rural areas, such as community cadets and those areas that will put in additional supports for rural residents that are suffering and having to wait hours and hours for a response.

Now, I don't blame my colleagues from the RCMP, from the First Nations police services or any of the other regional or rural police services because they are overburdened with stuff that they need to do. However, what I have to say is that not providing any additional support for them is a crime in itself. Give them the support and the help that they need to make sure that they can keep Manitobans safe.

So, if I can, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'll just go back because I did find the quote here. The Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the AMM, also says the NDP missed the mark on investments in public safety. The AMM was hoping to see a long-term and predictable funding model, but we were instead left concerned about and discouraged by the public safety basket. Now, according to AMM, public safety concerns are only going to escalate—escalate—for municipalities. The AMM says we have heard them make promises and they would—that they would be tough on crime and on offenders, and we feel they missed the mark on that issue, especially for rural Manitobans.

Clearly, municipalities are in the same cart as the rest of Manitobans who were sold promises of no value by the NDP. That's scathing. That is scathing, and you know what? I'm embarrassed, quite frankly. It's difficult, hard work for people in the criminal justice work system. And then to add insult to injury by not providing proper funding? Just—it actually burns me to the core.

So, one other area that I would like to talk about—because I would be remiss if I didn't talk about what's happening in my own constituency—\$163 million out of infrastructure budgets. That's what's missing and that's part of this death that I talked about earlier on this budget.

Many of you in this Chamber, on both sides of this House, visited Brandon last week for the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, and I told you that I would—you would be treated like royalty because of that patronage designation for the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair.

\* (15:40)

And I'm sure many were treated like royalty, but they were treated like a third-class citizen when they drove down some of our roads; 18th Street, particularly. I've had colleagues that have been back on that road since apparently it was fixed, and they were playing dodge the pothole.

So, \$163-million cut could have been used on these roads. Or I'm wondering if part of the fiscal sustainability is making sure that the roads are bad enough that we have to attend to all of our shops in the area to get fixed and support the economy that way. I prefer not to do that.

Let's look a little bit further at some of these areas that I'm concerned about, and again, bringing this back to the justice side. It should be noted that, in this budget, after health and education, debt servicing is now the third largest spending item line at 9 per cent of the provincial budget and \$2.264 billion. That's bigger than the Department of Families, the Department of Justice, Housing, Addictions and Homelessness all see.

Could you imagine if we could take \$2.264 billion—with a B—and put that into our economy? Put that into public safety? Put that into first responders? Just imagine how safe Manitoba would be. Matter of fact, we could probably wave the flag that we are the safest province in all of Canada; 2.6—\$2.264 billion. I can't even fathom that, but that's what we pay for debt servicing, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Spending has increased by almost \$1.4 billion. These are big numbers, and ordinary Manitobans that we represent don't understand or don't talk this language of billions of dollars. Again, if we could take these billions of dollars and invest it, we wouldn't have to be having a funeral. We wouldn't have to be looking at the death of a document that died on that table.

When we look at what this side of the House did when it came to taxation and the provincial tax, we are looking at property tax, education, being eliminated by 2029. It was sitting at 50 per cent. This government is touting \$1,500, but that's going to stay flat, just like the flat line of this budget. It's going to stay flat. Our plan was to move that incrementally forward to 75 per cent, to 90 per cent and to 100 per cent reduction.

So, saying that this is going to save Manitobans is not true. It's not factual. It will save them \$1,500. Ours would have saved them every last penny of their taxes. And again, that's money, for myself, I think it's close to \$4,000, and if I had that extra money in my pocket, I'm going to boost the economy. I'm going to spend it on areas within Brandon and within our region, and I'm going to boost the economy.

That's going to grow our economy and that's going to help all Manitobans cut down further on taxes,

because there's only a few revenue sources. One is taxes and the other is bringing in government transfer payments or government costs. So you know what? If we can lower these, grow our economy, how much better is that for all of Manitoba?

You know, we look at the spending increase of \$1.4 billion over Budget 2023. That's 6.1 per cent. Ordinary Manitobans do not get raises in that area; 6.1 per cent is unheard of, but yet we're okay with saying, let's just throw 6.1 per cent more on there? I think that's quite shameful.

So, again, if we come back to this, how can we as Manitobans accept this budget and feel good about it? Know what? Again, I would like to end this budget discussion or my eulogy, if you would, saying Budget 2024, may you rest in peace and may you come back to life in three years.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** I'm really happy to be able to stand up and put some words on the record in regards to our budget. And you'll notice I wore white today to demonstrate the hope and light that our government is bringing to you, Manitoba.

I guess I want to start by saying that our government sees the value in unity. We demonstrated that through this budget. This is a budget for one future, for one Manitoba. We're not interested in picking fights with other levels of government. We're not interested in picking fights between citizens. What we're interested in is bringing everyone together so Manitoba can be the amazing place that it is and will continue to be.

I don't understand—actually, maybe I do understand—I feel like there's a black cloud kind of hanging over the members opposite because all we hear from them is negativity. Manitobans need to know you have a government that will give you straight talk. We're not interested in rhymes, alliterations, metaphors, similes, like the members opposite. All they know is double-talk, doublespeak, and we know that when people do that, they're insincere. Don't believe the hype. Don't believe their hype. This is a good-news budget for Manitobans.

I want to talk about a few areas of the budget that really impact citizens in Seine River. Number one, let's talk about the fuel tax, which we extended for another three months. My constituency is home to a large number of landscaping businesses and greenhouses. They have told me directly in conversations recently how important that tax cut is for them. It

saves them a tremendous amount of money, and they appreciate the support to their small businesses.

I heard the members opposite use words today like hate: we hate small business. Well, sorry, folks, I'm a small-business owner, and nobody on this side hates small businesses. I've also heard the members opposite recently talk about how we feel about police officers. Well, I'd like to inform you we love them on this side. My son-in-law is a Winnipeg police officer, and I have a deep amount of respect for the work that he does.

I want to—

**Some Honourable Members:** Hear, hear.

**MLA Cross:** Thank you.

I think it's important for Manitobans to know we walk the talk. When we say we're going to do something, we do it. We don't just talk about it, talk about it, talk about it, and then just stop doing it. We make things happen, and we're going to continue to make things happen to make your lives easier.

This budget helps people in so many ways. Folks in Seine River, particularly folks living in St. Norbert, the seniors that I work with, talk with often, are ecstatic at the news that we are moving ahead with building a new ER at the Victoria hospital. This is huge for so many people. *[interjection]*

Change takes time. Folks across want to heckle that it takes years. Well, sometimes it takes time to undo things you do in a split second. You made choices without really thinking about the consequences and the people it would affect. You never once thought about the people on the other side of it. People are not just dollar signs; they are human beings and they deserve our respect, our attention, and we will always listen to you. Seven years, folks on the other side had a chance to make a difference in everyone's lives. What did they do? They made life harder.

I'm a teacher who cares about schools, who cares about education, who cares about the students, the teachers, everybody who works in that system, the parents, the caregivers.

\* (15:50)

It is not an easy place to work. Schools have such high demands. Members opposite are criticizing we're only building two schools. I look at it like, wow, we're building two schools without using their model, a model that a constituent of mine, who is a developer in this city, told me he is so grateful we are not going

with, because he sees it as a huge detriment to this province.

I want to talk a little bit about the \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit, and I want to talk about it in these terms: we are a government who understands what equality means. We are giving every homeowner \$1,500. We are not picking and choosing who gets more based on the value of their home. Everyone deserves the same tax credit, and you're going to get it from us.

Renters. My children—I have a child who's a renter. This tax credit that we're increasing for renters is going to be huge for him. He's a dad, he's young, he's just starting out in his life. He can't afford to buy a home right now, but getting an extra tax credit like this will help him save some dollars towards the purchase of his first home.

Affordability is important to our government. We care about the citizens in this province. We care about the lives that they lead and the lives they're going to have. I don't think anyone got into the political arena without thinking about people, and if they did, they're here for the wrong reasons. Human beings deserve our respect and our help, and that is our duty as legislators, to make sure that we do the best job possible.

I have citizens in Seine River who are thrilled with the rebate for new electric vehicles and the rebate for used vehicles, because not all of them can afford a brand-new electric vehicle. I've been inundated with emails and calls up until budget day regarding the \$10-a-day child care. Folks have now reissued me emails and phone calls to thank us. They're saving money by not having to pay more than \$10 a day on in-service and school holidays. That is huge for folks.

I want to talk now a little bit about fertility treatment tax credit. This, you know, is an important tax credit that I feel personally connected to. My sister had to go through IVF to have her children. Her first child, after spending nearly \$40,000 in treatments, unfortunately didn't survive, and so she had to go through treatments again a second time to have the son that she has now. And I know how important tax credits are to folks so that they can create these families that they desperately want. We have to do something to help them, and we are.

Free prescription birth control is huge. Women in this province need access to birth control. Not everybody can afford it. They shouldn't have to choose between birth control and food, birth control and medicine, birth control and something for their child.

They—we now have come forward to make sure that everybody has what they need.

We talked a lot about—I've talked a little bit about education, about building new schools. One of the biggest things as a teacher that I had to deal with were kids that came to school hungry. I could tell you that on a regular basis, at least on a weekly basis, I had students in the community that I worked in—which was a very affluent community—come to me and tell me that they didn't have lunch, they didn't have breakfast.

One student missed a week of school because his family didn't have food to send with him to school to eat. When I phoned to inquire why that student wasn't at school, that's when they explained to me they didn't have food to send for lunch. I told them, send him to school, I will make sure he's fed; and I made sure he had a lunch every day. We are going to make sure children are fed. And we're not going to put that onus on teachers anymore. We are going to do the right thing and make sure kids have what they need. Because, in contrast to what the members opposite used to think, not all parents can feed their children.

Members opposite talked about the \$300 security system rebate. Government can't do everything, but we can do something; \$300 is not a piddly sum of money to put towards home security. People are really concerned about crime and the constant talk about crime. We're taking action to make sure that they have some supports to make themselves feel safer and secure.

We're taking action to end chronic homelessness with this budget and to help those who need it the most. We're providing \$116 million in funding to build and maintain social and affordable housing. We're making it easier to build rental housing in Manitoba. My son is looking for a place to rent—a new place to rent. It is impossible to find the right fit. You can't have pets, you can't have this. It is so difficult. We need more choice and we need more competition.

We've committed \$3.9 million to establish a supervised consumption site, addiction treatment beds and to support harm reduction services. We need to be there when people are ready to take the first step on their road to recovery. We should be for them—be there for them. That is our duty.

I think one of the most touching parts of our budget that means a lot to me—and I know it means a lot to people that are close to me and to students I formerly taught—we are investing \$20 million for MMIWG2S+ protection strategies to make Manitoba

safer for Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. That is huge.

As a teacher in south Winnipeg, in a span of one year, I taught two students who were affected by losing—one lost a mother who was murdered and another lost a sister who was murdered. This investment will help us move the needle on that problem. Women deserve to feel safe, and we're going to make sure that they do.

I also, as the MLA for Seine River, during the campaign—my constituency consists of the community of St. Norbert, which is very close to the Brady landfill. Every day on the campaign trail, I heard people talk to me about the landfill. And I heard lots of different things.

But one of the things I heard often was, \$160 million to search for three people. We know that number was never accurate. We know that was more rhetoric spewed by the opposition. We know that we can safely search this landfill and invest \$20 million towards doing so. No Manitoban should be left behind, and our budget is not leaving anyone behind in this province. Thank you.

I think our investment in health care and post-secondary education is huge. The work done by our ministers and our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our Finance Minister is nothing short of miraculous. The situation we were left with, the budget we were left to deal with, the deficit, is no easy thing to tackle. And yet, we were able to find balance. We were able to find a way forward while we're still keeping our campaign promises.

Health care should be our No. 1 priority because without healthy people, without citizens, why are we here? What are we doing? People can't thrive, our economy can't thrive, if we don't focus on the needs of human beings and their bodies and their health, then we're really missing the point of why we exist. And so investing in health care, investing in more workers and doing that through post-secondary education is the key to moving forward so that we have a stable health-care system that is there when people need it.

We are not going to privatize the health-care system. We are not going to make attempts to privatize the health-care system. That is one of our—one of the points of pride as a Canadian citizen is that we have health care when we need it. We aren't turned away. People aren't making choices not to get the care they need and then suffering for it later.

Our government is one that listens to people. Our government is one that prioritizes citizens. I'm really proud of the work that was done to create this budget, and I know Manitobans will be really happy for what it's going to do for them in the future.

Thank you.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** My colleagues are too kind. Thank you, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, and very, very pleased to rise today to speak to this budget, Budget 2024, the first from this new NDP government.

\* (16:00)

I wish, you know, I wish there was better news, I suppose, for Manitobans. But, alas, we are where we are and I'll do my best to highlight where some of my concerns with this budget come from with respect to my constituency and the—or should I say, lack of mention of my constituency or western Manitoba at all, generally, really, in this budget indeed. *[interjection]* Yes, very little for rural Manitoba at all.

Not that that's a huge surprise, I suppose, given the folks opposite. But nonetheless, here to put some words on the record on behalf of the good people of Spruce Woods constituency when it comes to Budget 2024.

And I know members opposite probably aren't going to like a whole lot of what I have to say, and that's okay. We come from different parties here and so we're here to agree and here to disagree and to challenge each other and that's the rule that we on this side play as the official opposition and—for now, anyway.

And so, you know, we've heard lots of commentary about horses and carts and who's in the cart and who's out and where it's going and what it's got to be fed and, you know, I just was a little bit surprised, and I think most Manitobans would be, that the speech that was delivered by the Finance Minister didn't have much to say about the horse. And I don't know why.

I thought they got it. They were delivering this clearly consistent message previously before the budget was delivered about horses. We've got to feed the horse. It's pulling the cart. It's going to get the job done. Manitoba's going to grow and grow and grow. And then we get to the meat on the bone and there's nothing—there's nothing there for the horse.

I don't know. Very sad. Maybe there'll be more to come. Maybe members opposite, when they get into their speeches—haven't heard much yet, but, you know, there's lots of days left to budget debate. They'll

illuminate us on where the food is for the economic horse in this budget. We'll see. We'll see.

Manitobans, on the other hand, who are concerned, rightly so, about the rising cost of living, will not, sadly, see a lot of relief in this budget. With debt servicing—I just can't get past this figure—with debt servicing now consuming 10 cents of every dollar in this budget—10 cents of every dollar, debt servicing, 10 cents. Unbelievable.

You know, this government, when they were not in government, talked a lot about cheques to billionaires and people out of the country and all this money flowing out of Manitoba into Texas and Lord knows where else they were making it up that this money was going to, where do they think that money is going?

Are any of those debt-servicing professionals here in Manitoba? Is that money staying local? No, I don't think so. And yet, this budget jacks up debt servicing to 10 cents of every dollar, gone straight out of here, straight out of Manitobans' pockets and off to Bay Street or Wall Street in New York, or who knows where else they'll convince to lend them some money.

And so, that's concerning for Manitoba. Because that's 10 cents less on every dollar that could be spent in roads, bridges, wastewater and potable water improvements, health care, education, social services. Very unfortunate. Very, very unfortunate.

In addition to that, the one member from that side who was here last time when they racked up more debt is—wants to comment on this, my good friend from Dauphin. That's fine. That's fine. Doubled Hydro's deficit debt, tripled the provincial debt and now he's just back at it again. Well, you get what you get with this crew. There's nothing new with this crew.

Increased the debt to GDP to 38 and a half per cent: 38 and a half per cent debt to GDP, the deficit projected to be 700, almost \$800 million and the summary net debt, which is the big number that Manitobans really need to focus on, is increasing to \$33.5 billion—\$33.5 billion. That's more than \$3 billion higher than forecasted just last year.

And yet the Premier (Mr. Kinew) comes in every day for question period and says, oh my goodness, our economic outlook has never been better. It's never been stronger. In this four, five, six months we've been in office, things have rebounded so dramatically that the future is bright.

So, why is the debt increasing by more than \$3 billion if our revenues are going to be so much higher? Where is that money going? Not sure.

Again, maybe we will see when successive members from the opposite side continue to get up and put some words on the record. I don't know. Hope springs eternal, as they say, and so we will see.

Municipalities, an area near and dear to my heart as a child of a long-time municipal official, were left disappointed by this budget. After a significant increase in the 2023 budget to their annual operating grants it's a meagrely—meagre increase.

But more concerning than that, even, is not the small increase. Perhaps the minister of municipal relations got it right and, you know, tried to reign this—the spending in and his rest of his colleagues didn't follow along, I don't know.

But, despite this meagre increase, you know, we've lost the Building Sustainable Communities program. Amazing—can't count the number of projects in my constituency alone that were funded through that program, great community initiatives that are providing excellent recreation and social activities for rural Manitobans and city Manitobans alike. Gone—completely erased from this budget.

Not sure, there's some mystery numbers in the municipal relations line that we don't really know what they're allocated for. Maybe some magical program will come out of the woodwork when this government gets tired of hearing from municipalities, and instead of, you know, calling them howling coyotes like the member for Dauphin (Mr. Kostyshyn) and his cohorts did in the last time the NDP were in power, you know, keeping that listening ear open we've heard so much about and, you know, maybe they'll come around. I guess we'll see.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, \$64 million cut to their municipal roads budget. Well, again, we heard just from the minister of Infrastructure earlier today that there was zero cuts to infrastructure funding in this year's budget. I don't know whether she missed the budget or what happened, but there are cuts both to the municipal infrastructure roads budget and her own department's budget for provincial roads and highways. So, very, very confusing rhetoric coming from across the road.

We had a massive sewage spill into the Red River, which carries on up to Lake Winnipeg and into the Hudson Bay. A cut to the water infrastructure capital budget, as well. So not only are we going to—we're not

going to invest in more to keep our previous track record of investing more in infrastructure—\$500 million a year for five years—we're going to cut the water infrastructure budget. Wow. We will see where that gets us, I suppose.

And as for my own critic role of Education, it is sad, sad news for education today. As we know, and as we released after a Fort La Bosse School Division budget meeting, the deputy minister made it clear to all school divisions that education did not hit the top five in this government's priorities for their first budget.

Second largest government department, student enrollment skyrocketing across the province and it didn't make the top five. Thirteen members on that side of the aisle alone have a history of involvement in working in the education sector in this province, and yet, it couldn't make the top five—not the top three—I don't think we were outrageous in asking for it to be in the top five.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

Not the top three, not the top five. We're not sure; is it six? Is it eight? Is it 12? We don't know. We don't know, so perhaps somebody will enlighten us. Maybe the Minister of Education, when he gets up and delivers his remarks, will tell us where exactly it did fall on the priority list if it wasn't the top five priorities.

\* (16:10)

But let's get into that a little bit. What does that mean if it's not in the top five priorities? Well, we've cut the student outcomes fund. I'm sorry, the student outcomes fund. That fund where it, you know, it's there to help students have better outcomes. That's not really important, apparently, to the friends across the way. So we cut that, we don't need student outcomes. Who needs that, really?

We cut systems performance and accessibility. Okay. And they cut the Corporate Services Division, which supports strategic planning. So let's just walk through some of those divisions of the Education Department, just so everybody's clear on what they actually do for Manitoba students.

Okay so, the Student Achievement & Inclusion Division, cut. Okay, this division is responsible for leadership of the English and Senior Years Technology Education school programs in Manitoba's K-to-12 education system. It is also—leads continue of—its improvement of research, development, 'moterning' and evaluation of provincial curriculum. Oh, well, we

sure don't need to modernize our curriculum here to keep up with Canada and, you know, the world, so let's cut that budget.

And it also is in charge of standards to ensure excellence in teaching and leadership and responsible for system accountability by monitoring and reporting on student achievement. Cut, cut, cut, cut. Okay.

I don't understand why that would be a priority for this government, but as I say, perhaps Honourable Speaker, we will hear some more about that when the Education Minister gets up to deliver his remarks.

The Learning and Outcomes section, also cut, because, you know, I guess we're not worried about learning and outcomes. The—this will be, you know, particular interest, I suppose, to the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle). The funding for the French education bureau is stagnant. Nothing new from you-know-who for French language education in this province.

We also have a cut to the System, Performance and Accountability Division. Now, Honourable Speaker, many people may listen to this speech. I'm sure tens of thousands of Manitobans will, and they will wonder what does that division mean? It's kind of a lofty, broad title.

Well, let me tell you, just so it's on the record. That division, the system and performance accountability division is responsible for governance, structures, policies and planning of the K-to-12 education system and for the stewardship of education funding and resources, including the design of sustainable funding structures.

So, we heard a lot about, you know, we've paused the education tax rebate for small businesses. They're out that rebate, too bad for them. They've got to find that money in their pocket now with this new direction from the NDP government. They're asking small businesses and landlords to just wait. Wait a year, just eat that cost for the year, and the new funding model will help you guys out a year from now. Or longer, whenever the next budget is determined to be introduced.

But in the meantime, this government is cutting the division that's designing that new funding model. Can anybody explain to me how they plan to get that done if they're cutting the division that's reworking the funding model itself. I guess they're taking a page out of, you know, the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) new friend Mr. Poilievre's book and they're going to try to do

more with less in education after campaigning on it. I'm not sure.

But I'm very concerned, Honourable Speaker, for small businesses and landlords whose—the costs are going to go up for small businesses, and they're already waiting on more money from Ottawa. They've not got their money back from the carbon tax rebate from Justin Trudeau that they're supposed to get.

Many of them are still struggling to recover their financials from the COVID-19 pandemic, and now they're going to take away this rebate and say, well, just trust us. Help is coming a year or a year and a half or two years from now, but don't worry. Don't worry, we're narrowing down the division that's going to write the funding model, but it's still going to get done.

I guess all we can do, Honourable Speaker, is point this out to Manitobans and wait and see whether they can deliver on these commitments or not.

The last division to get a cut in the Education Department is Corporate Services, which many Manitobans say, well, what do they do? Oh well, let me shed some light. They support executive strategic planning for the education sector, project management, business analysis, information technology, emergency preparedness, and are continually planning for the website maintenance of many of our education sector, including the Department of Education.

So we've got cuts to project management. No wonder the biggest cut—which I haven't even got to yet and I'm already running out of time—is a cut to schools. A cut to schools. Well, if you're cutting the project managers, you're probably not going to get many new projects finished, and so let's just take them off the board so that we don't have to worry about not completing them because they're never going to get started in the first place. And so we see that we have—oh, and an additional cut to policy and planning, which I almost forgot because who needs to go do more policy work? Really, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that's just silly.

And so, in addition to all of that, we have now cut—*[interjection]*—what? Oh, Honourable Speaker, instead of—I apologize, Honourable Speaker.

And so we have cut the nine new schools committed to by the previous government. They've recycled two schools that are already under way, and they found two new schools that are totally different than the priorities that were identified by school divisions to the previous government because, you know, who knows best? Well, you know, I guess the NDP.

And so, the nine new schools, we are left wondering where are these lower class sizes that the NDP campaigned on going to go if they're not going in the new schools? You know, education—student population is growing across the province, many areas exponentially, and they need new schools fast. They need them fast. We knew that when we were on the other side of the House. It's very confusing why this government doesn't understand that.

And so, the Education Minister gets up and he says, well, you know, we're only doing two schools because that's all that's budgeted for. Well, we know that's how that works. You wrote the budget. You could've prioritized more than two schools when you wrote it. You didn't, so that is all that's going to get done. When you only budget for two, you're only going to get two. Perhaps you should've budgeted for four or five or six.

But, alas, they did not, Honourable Speaker. They did not, and so it's two new schools in Winnipeg and the rest of the Manitoba can just wait and see, which is trouble for folks in Neepawa, which is trouble for folks in Brandon and many, many other areas where student populations are bursting at the seams and there's no plan from this NDP government to build them schools anytime soon.

So, again, I'll ask—hope that the Minister of Education can clarify that when he gets up to deliver what I'm sure will be a riveting speech to this budget.

A couple other priority areas outside of my critic role that I have to comment on because I'm very, very passionate about them. My constituency is named after the beautiful Spruce Woods Provincial Park, which sits just on the eastern half of my constituency. I was very much looking forward to the parks revitalization plan to take Spruce Woods Provincial Park to the next level of attraction for this province.

Unfortunately, the parks capital budget, sliced and diced by this government, cut right in half—*[interjection]*—I know. It is shocking to me, and I know many colleagues on this side of the park. I guess we'll be waiting for yurts for years to come and renovations to the bathroom and the roads to get in and expansions for campers all has to wait because the NDP has cut the parks capital budget. Shocking, shocking.

Infrastructure: One of the top three issues I heard about from constituents on the campaign trail was infrastructure. This previous government had prioritized infrastructure by funding \$500 million a year for

five years for roads and bridges to get Manitoba goods and services and Manitobans where they need to be safely.

They've hacked that budget by \$160 million. I have no idea how they plan to get these things done, but, alas, they've cut it. That's the facts. The heavy construction industry will be disappointed. We hope that there's more good news for them this year, and if not, there will be three and a half years from now when we are delivering the 2027 budgets in this—

\* (16:20)

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Riel.

**MLA Mike Moyes (Riel):** On April 2, our honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) tabled our government's first budget. I'd like to thank him, our Premier (Mr. Kinew), our whole team, for delivering a good-news budget.

It's my absolute pleasure to rise today to provide a response and to briefly describe how I see the budget impacting both my constituents of Riel and Manitobans across our province.

Honourable Speaker, for the past seven and a half long years, Manitobans had a government that suggested every Manitoban was there for themselves, that the only way forward was at the expense of other Manitobans. Instead of working to bring us together, the members opposite looked to slice and dice us with division and fear.

They campaigned on pitting different groups against each other. They campaigned and took out billboards and launched entire advertising campaigns with dog-whistle messages and called on people's cynical side.

I'm proud to say that our government took a different approach. Instead, we decided to call on people's better angels, to put forward a message that we as a province, we as a people, are better than that: that the new Canadian is as much a Manitoban as the one whose family lineage goes back generations or further; that Indigenous peoples deserve to have justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls rather than having the government turn their back on them; that the 2SLGBTQ+ community deserves to have their rights respected, just like we need to ensure the safety and religious accommodations for people of different faiths, whether it be Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or any other.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans across our province rejected the division from the PC party and

instead put their trust in our government on the offer of bringing people together, on a message of hope. This hope was that we have one future, regardless of your background or where you came from, we are one people, and that we are, in fact, one Manitoba.

Yesterday's budget delivers on this hope and this mandate. It's a document that ensures we're following through with our election commitments and takes into account the voices of Manitobans. This is critically important to our government because we're a listening government, whether it is in the prebudget consultations that tens of thousands of Manitobans took part in, ministers and MLAs listening to constituents and stakeholders, or the Premier and Minister of Health taking the time to listen to health-care workers on the front lines to hear their perspectives and to take heed of what they see are solutions. We want to hear from Manitobans.

Our budget reflects the values and priorities of everyday Manitobans and families. We have heard clearly that Manitobans want and need better health care and that is why I am so pleased to be part of a government that is going to be investing in the staffing up of our health-care system with the hiring of a thousand new health-care workers.

These added doctors, nurses, paramedics and health-care aides will make a real difference for the people of Riel and for all Manitobans. We will accomplish this with new graduates, with better attention by changing the culture within health care and by ensuring Manitobans with international accreditation are recognized and ready to work.

This, Honourable Speaker, is the first step in the immense task of staffing up our health-care system after the devastating impact the failed PC government had on our health care.

Honourable Speaker, I also heard countless stories on the doorstep in the time leading up to the election of the unacceptable situation where people could not receive health care in a timely manner or in their home community. Instead, for those people that could travel, they were asked to go to other provinces or even out of country to get the care that they should have been receiving right here in Manitoba.

These conversations on the doorstep influenced our government to instead make record investments in health care here in Manitoba so people can receive the health care they deserve close to home. The health-care increases are going to smart, targeted investments that action many of the solutions we're hearing from

front-line staff and through our health-care listening tour. We're going to be training up more physicians, nurses, lab techs, physician assistants, physical therapists and occupational therapists. This increase in staffing will help further open up more hospital beds and decrease the wait times that we saw grow exponentially under the former PC government.

Another aspect of health care that I often heard from constituents in Riel is how difficult it was for families to receive medical attention if it was in the evening or on the weekend, and how this often led to seniors or parents having to take their children to the emergency room for care that could've been handled elsewhere. Well, our government is listening, and that is why in this budget we are connecting Manitobans with a doctor when they need one by investing over \$17 million to expand the hours at the existing minor injury and illness clinic, open two new minor injury and illness clinics in Winnipeg and Brandon—I'll emphasize the Brandon for the members opposite—and the first of five new primary-care clinics here in Winnipeg

The impact of this investment should not be understated. By having a place where families can receive care outside of an emergency room or even an urgent-care facility will mean the world to those families. Imagine having a child that needs stitches, or perhaps a senior who's concerned about a medical symptom, and having to wait in an ER for a long period of time because your situation is just not dire but you still need care. Rather than just complaining about this and sitting on our hands like the previous government did, our government is putting the measures in place based on what we heard from Manitobans to improve the health care that they receive, whether that is a minor injury or an emergency.

All of this is in addition to the \$65 million allocated in this budget to reduce emergency-room wait times and to provide better patient care faster. This'll be done through an expansion of acute-care beds, with a staffing of 151 new beds, which'll thereby allow people to be transferred from the emergency room to the appropriate care unit, increasing weekend patient discharges and investing in alternate care—levels of care to create space for the sickest patients while moving less-sick patients out of busy wards.

Another topic that I often heard about from folks is why governments don't invest more in prevention. Well, Honourable Speaker, our government is doing just that. One of the things I'm so proud of as a parent

and as a former teacher is our government's introduction of a universal nutrition program in all schools across our province. This \$30-million investment is going to help every child get a little closer to reaching their full potential, because we all know that a hungry child cannot learn, despite what some members of the opposition benches will tell you.

By providing breakfast, lunch or snack programs—depending on the needs of the school—we are going to be actively preventing many of the issues that teachers, principals and educational assistants are dealing with every single day. It is the programs like these that will help bring along the kids and young people that face additional challenges to be successful and will ultimately help raise the learning of those kids. And I'm not just talking about some arbitrary number or a score on a PISA test that the members of the PC Party love to howl about.

Another preventative program that our government is investing in is the doubling of the prenatal benefit from \$81 per month to \$162 per month to help less fortunate mothers have access to good nutrition and to help ensure that the youngest Manitobans start life in a good way. This is empirically proven to make a significant difference on young people's lives.

In the budget document, on page 28, for your reference, there's a quote from a study from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy that was looking at the effectiveness of this public policy even before it was raised in this budget, and it provides the rationale for our increase. I'll quote: Women who received the prenatal benefit had fewer lower birth weight babies and fewer preterm births. Given what we know about the importance of healthy outcomes at birth on later life, that such dramatic results can be observed from a relatively straightforward program is remarkable: a little boost, and some proper support at the right time, can make all the difference in the world.

\* (16:30)

It's clear the government that is working for the people of Manitoba can make a difference in the lives of its citizens, and that is exactly what this budget accomplishes.

All of this is on top of things like more ICU beds with a \$25.2-million investment; a \$50-million investment to increase surgical capacity; ensuring better care for seniors with supports to help Manitobans remain in their homes as long as they wish to choose so, and providing more direct care for seniors who need more support in long-term-care homes.

The list goes on and on. This is, indeed, a good-news budget.

In addition to health care, which is the No. 1 concern of Manitobans, we have often heard about issues of affordability. That is why we're bringing in 21 different initiatives that will save Manitobans money. I'm not going to go through all the different ways that our NDP government is making life more affordable, but I will highlight a couple of great initiatives and ones that correspond with what I've been hearing from my constituents of Riel, the first being the electric and plug-in hybrid vehicle rebate.

People in Riel care about the environment and want to make choices that ensure we're addressing climate change. That is why our government is making it more affordable to shift into a vehicle that'll either produce no emissions or will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As part of this initiative, any Manitoban that purchases an EV or a plug-in hybrid will be eligible for \$4,000 for a new vehicle or \$2,500 for a used vehicle. This is a concrete and tangible way that governments can help people make better choices for the environment. Combine this with the fact that charging of the vehicles will be using clean, low-carbon Manitoba hydro, and you have a winning combination.

Another way that we're making life more affordable for Manitobans is by following through on our election commitment of implementing true \$10-a-day daycare. This means families with school-age children will only be charged \$10 per day throughout the summer months, spring and winter break, and during professional development days for teachers and educational assistants. Affordable and accessible child care is the backbone of a strong economy where everyone can participate.

I'll also note that our One Manitoba budget—in our One Manitoba budget, we're investing in new child-care spaces that are costed out, not just making random announcements without the proper funding being allocated, as the previous government was so keen to do. We'll also be increasing funding support for child-care centres so they can focus less on fundraisers and more on caring for our kids.

Additionally, we are increasing salaries for childhood educators so we can retain more ECEs and child-care workers over the long term as they stay in this critical career.

The 2024 budget is a good-news budget. It delivers on our electoral commitments and begins the process

of rebuilding our health-care system after seven and a half years of devastating decisions by the failed PC government.

It also puts in place 21 different ways that makes Manitoba a more affordable place to live. The 2024 budget is Manitoba's budget. We have one future. We have one people, and we are, in fact, one Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** What an opportunity it is to speak to 21st budget, maybe the opportunity that I've had in this House.

As I often do, and I hope you'll give me some latitude, members of this House, I want to begin by thanking my family for the support that they continue to give me in elected life and that they've always given me. My very gracious wife Kim, who continues to be my strongest supporter and of course my lifelong partner. And I want to thank my son Malachi, who this year is graduating from high school in just a couple of months, and that's an exciting time and also a little bit of a nervous time for parents as we watch as he tries to figure out exactly what his next stage in life is going to be.

So I want to begin, as I always do, by thanking both of them in particular, and of course my more extended family, who has always been strong supporters of me in the constituency. And, of course, speaking of the constituency, the Steinbach constituents, I am always grateful and honoured by the support they continue to provide, whether that's not just at the ballot box, but through their comments, through their thoughts, through their prayers, which they often express to me in a variety of different events and a variety of different ways, and I'm grateful for that.

There are many good things happening in the Steinbach constituency and I'll highlight a couple of them and then turn—transition into specific comments about the budget.

The Southeast Event Centre in the Steinbach constituency is well under way. It began construction last year with funding from our Progressive Conservative government together with—I'm glad to say that it was far enough along that the current government couldn't cancel it. It is well out of the ground and we expect that there'll be hockey and other events played there probably early next year and I hope that all members have an opportunity to come and see it.

Very pleased to see the new hospital expansion at Bethesda hospital is well under way, which will include a new operating room as well. I imagine that the new Health Minister, her first order of business will probably to see if it was not too late to cancel—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Once again, pronouns are important. The member's been around long enough that he should know that, so I'd expect him to follow the rules.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I've been around a long time and still make mistakes, and so I apologize for that mistake, Honourable Speaker. The Health Minister, they probably, in their first opportunity had tried to see if they could cancel that particular project, and I'm glad that they were unable to cancel it. And the hospital continues now in its development. I know that all residents of the region will benefit from the expanded hospital and the operating room.

Of course, dialysis began in the city of Steinbach just a few months ago. It hadn't been there ever before, so many residents in Southeast Manitoba were driving into Winnipeg for dialysis. So, very, very pleased to see the new dialysis unit open.

And also the new elementary school, which is now well under construction. Again, fortunately it didn't fall under the axe of the seven different—at least seven different schools that the NDP have chosen to cut out of the budget. So we're glad to see that that elementary school is going to be completed, I think, in a few months.

Now, turning more specifically to comments on this year's budget, I want to begin on the file of Justice. And my friend from Concordia—and I've said this before, even when he was in opposition and I held the position that he holds now—I think we have a reasonable friendship and relationship and none of these things are personal; they're professional. But they're important issues to discuss here from a policy perspective, beginning with the issue of violent crime.

So, this is a government who committed during the election to be tough on crime. What we saw in the budget was anything but. We probably saw the warning signs coming because the NDP quickly stopped any real meaningful bail reform, even though Manitoba was recognized as a leader when it came to leading bail reform in the country prior to the last provincial election.

In fact, the federal government, as a result of a push by Manitoba and a few other provinces, chose to

have a special meeting in Ottawa to look at bail reform. And there were some changes, not enough changes when it comes to repeat offenders, but some changes were implemented.

But there was more commitment to do more when it came to bail reform. In fact, there was discussion about having an overall review of the Criminal Code and sentences that those who are charged with offences would face. That seems to have all stopped. Certainly, we know under the current NDP government, none of that is being pushed in any real or meaningful way.

Instead, what this current Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and his Cabinet and caucus colleagues have decided to do was do what was already being done. They've instructed prosecutors to look whether or not the release of somebody on bail would result in unsafety in the community, whether or not the release of somebody on bail would cause the community to be less safe.

Well, that was already being done. It was always part of a prosecutor's job to make the determination about the request for bail, whether or not the release of that individual on bail would result in them not appearing for a court case, as an example, or whether that would result in the community being less safe, or whether it would recall the justice system into disrepute.

Those are all things that are already being done, and yet the minister tried to make a significant, in his mind, announcement about something that was already being done.

\* (16:40)

And there was a number of people, including prosecutors, who anonymously came out and said that this is already something we are doing and it won't make a difference.

What would've made a difference—what would've made a difference, Honourable Speaker—is ensuring that meaningful bail reform was happening at the federal level. And that requires—that requires—a significant push.

Instead what we saw in this budget was a rebate program. A rebate program on home alarms and other sort of things like business alarms.

Now that in and of itself isn't a bad thing. I'm sure that homeowners or business owners who are going to avail themselves of this particular program will be

happy for the \$300, but that doesn't stop violent crime specifically.

Because ultimately, what residents want aren't necessarily alarms, they don't want the criminal showing up at their door. Having a picture of the individual who showed up at the door to commit a crime is great from an evidentiary perspective, I suppose. But what individuals want is to know that when they lock their door and they're ready to go to sleep at night, that there's not going to be a home invasion, or if they go out, that they're not going to be faced with somebody who is looking to commit a violent crime.

And nothing in this budget deals with that. It's all reactive. And it reminds me of the former Greg Selinger government who brought in a program to provide funding for those who wanted to put deadbolts on their yard—or, sorry, on their doors, Honourable Speaker. Deadbolts: that was the plan. So, basically, you lock yourself in your home and pray that nothing happens until morning.

That is not a crime-reduction strategy. That is providing funding for people to bolt themselves into their home, or in this case, have a camera on their door. It doesn't do anything to actually reduce violent crime. And that is the commitment that was made.

Quite apart from that, we see in the budget—and it was mentioned by my friend from Brandon West—that there is also a reduction in the funding for Victim Services. Now, I remember the now-Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), when she was on this side of the House, talking about how there needed to be more funding for Victim Services, that more money had to go into Victim Services for those who might've been victims of sexual assaults, as a specific example, but other things as well.

And far from either her advocacy or others in the Cabinet resulting in more money for Victim Services, this actually resulted in less money for Victim Services. But that is the difference between saying something is going to be a priority and actually making it a priority.

In fact, we see that when it comes to education. As a result of the changes when it comes to the rebate program on property taxes or school taxes in particular, every Manitoban in the province is going to see an increase on their property tax bill. Some of them will have already seen it because they would've received their property tax bill, many other Manitobans are going to get their property tax bill in the next few months. And they're going to see, when they compare to what they paid last year to what they're paying this

year, that it's going to have increased. It's going to have gone up, Honourable Speaker.

And, ultimately, when Manitobans see this, they'll know it's because the provincial government has changed the tax rebate program and also are allowing school divisions in many cases to increase the school taxes by—somewhere it's between 6 and 17 per cent on the high end in certain areas.

Every province, every—or, every homeowner in this province is going to be paying more. That is not what they were told they were going to get under the NDP. But it's what they could've expected under the NDP, because this happened before. We don't have to look that far back in history when the former NDP government was running deficits of 400, 500, 600 million dollars.

Now, one year they raised—rose a—incur a deficit of over \$1 billion, but I think that that was during the flood year of 2011, so that was maybe a little bit more understandable. This particular deficit that this government is running of \$800 million is essentially a natural disaster deficit. It's the kind of deficit that we don't see unless there are significant forest fires or flooding in the province of Manitoba, or, of course, a once-in-a-hundred-year pandemic.

So to be running an \$800 million deficit at a time when none of those things, at this point, have occurred should certainly be concerning for Manitobans, because what we saw under the former NDP government when they were last in power is that when you continue to run those deficits of four, five, six, seven, eight hundred million dollars, ultimately somebody has to pay. They have to pay if there's not economic growth. And in this particular budget, there is no plan for economic growth.

So if economic growth is flat and the deficit continues to go up, and the debt continues to go up, somebody has to make up the difference. And the difference ultimately are taxpayers. They have to go back to taxpayers and say, we don't have enough money because we're not growing the economy and we're continuing to run these very, very significant deficits.

Now, they've started that by going to the homeowners who are going to be getting their bills. And I know this to be true because when my friend from Fort Whyte asked questions about this particular issue in question period, it gets very quiet on the other side.

And this is what happens with elected officials: when they know something to be true, they get very

quiet. Elected members on the other side, like elected members on this side, are getting emails from their constituents, their constituents who are saying, I just got my property tax bill. I'm not entirely sure why it's gone up so significantly, because it's really been similar in the last few years. But now it's gone up a lot and I'd like to know why.

Now of course members on this side are informing them why it's gone up; it's because an NDP government is back in power. And I'm sure that new MLAs and senior MLAs on the NDP side are getting those same emails, and those are awkward conversations. What they need to be telling their constituents is that's going to happen year after year, every year they're going to continue to see increases as a result of the actions of this particular budget.

Now they might say, well, it's only one year and we're in difficult times when it comes to inflation. There is nothing in this budget that indicates that there's any plan for economic growth. There's nothing that indicates that the deficit is truly going to go down, and I know members opposite might say, oh, but we've got this plan and you can see the gliding scale.

Looking back at the former NDP government, there was never a budget in the last six years under Greg Selinger that they ever met a deficit target, ever. Not one time. In fact, it became a little bit of a joke even in the media when they would see the budget come down, or they'd see a projected deficit, because they know—or they knew that they were going to miss it by two, sometimes three, sometimes four hundred million dollars. It was never close.

So what was the result of that? I mean, they broadened the PST across a number of different things, so they applied the PST to a number of different items, and then ultimately, Honourable Speaker, they raised the PST by a percentage point despite saying that they would never do such a thing. But what else were they going to do? If they were going to continue to increase the deficit and increase the debt, and not grow the economy, somebody had to make up that difference, and the only somebodies that could make up that difference were Manitobans.

So, early on in this government's mandate, they are already getting those emails. They're getting those emails from their constituents, and if they haven't got them yet they'll get them in the next couple of months when those property taxes show up at the mailboxes of their constituents, and they open them up and they look at what they paid last year and they look at what they're paying this year and they go, why is there a

difference? Why is there a delta? Why is there an increase of one, two, three, four, whatever hundreds of dollars it is.

And they might contact their MLAs. And I can see some long faces on the other side already, so I'm sure they're already getting their emails and saying why is it going up? And I hope that they're honest with their constituents. And I hope they go one step further and are truly honest with their constituents and say this isn't the last year this is going to happen. Your property taxes are going to increase every year that we're in government, and you and your family are going to pay more every year that we're in government, and they can explain that to their constituents.

And I think in this time of inflation, and I think in this time when Manitobans have—having a hard time making ends meet, it's going to be—very, very difficult explanation, and it's going to be three years of very difficult discussions with constituents on that side of the House, and their constituents, and we'll tell them the good news, that there is a better way in the next election.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park):** I'm so excited to stand up and talk about this wonderful budget. Budget 2024 is here to offer more support and assistance to each and every Manitoban, especially those that need it the most.

This budget embodies the spirit of one future for one Manitoba, uniting people with a plan to uplift Manitobans from all walks of life. I think of the good people of Kirkfield Park, who opened their doors to me during the by-election and also this past general election, and I feel so honoured to represent such a diverse community that really looks out for each other.

\* (16:50)

I've lived in Kirkfield Park for over a decade, and I'm so proud to call it home. Raising my family in Kirkfield Park, I love it.

What my neighbours told me on the doorstep was how important it was to know that they have confidence in our health-care system. Many of the residents of Kirkfield Park work at our beloved Grace Hospital. I recall touring the Grace Hospital with the Health Minister back in November, and just how moved folks were who worked there, and—as they saw a compassionate and caring minister who actually took the time to listen to them and ask them questions.

We are so proud to report significant progress on our promises: lowering costs for individuals, initiating the restoration of health care with additional staff, and establishing a responsible path towards financial balance.

I want to talk a little bit about one of the offerings in the budget here that really warmed my heart, and I think it will help a lot of families, and that is the fertility tax credit increase. My partner and I, we went on the fertility journey ourselves, and it was quite a journey and quite an expense for us to have a family, and we're very privileged to be on that journey.

And I think that this doubling from \$8,000 to \$16,000, what that's really going to do is it's going to lift people into parenthood. It's going to make more parents in Manitoba. And my daughter likes to call us a rainbow family, and it's going to create more rainbow families in this province. It's going to help.

And, you know, we went on this fertility journey and I know we had to save and we came out on top, which was really great news. And I look forward to hearing from folks who take advantage of this fertility tax credit.

Our main goals are to fulfil our commitments to enhance health care and reduce expenses for families. After enduring seven years of cuts, we are now making substantial investments to rebuild health care, starting with the recruitment of new staff.

Budget 2024 is all about making strategic investments to rectify the repercussions of past cuts, with a focus on rebuilding health care. We are investing in various areas such as health capital, ER services and rural health-care facilities to ensure accessibility for all Manitobans. Under our NDP government, we are dedicated to enhancing health-care services and addressing the damage caused by the previous PC administration.

Budget 2024 is a step in the right direction, laying the groundwork for a brighter and healthier future for all Manitobans. We are committed to making life more affordable for Manitobans by implementing measures to reduce costs and provide essential support where it is needed most. Our focus is on empowering individuals and families to thrive and prosper in our beautiful province.

I really feel that, together, we can overcome these challenges and seize the opportunities and create a better future for all Manitobans. I think we could work hand in hand to rebuild what needs mending and ensure a prosperous and healthy Manitoba for generations to

come. This is about our families and our families' future.

Manitobans deserve the best for their families and communities. After facing cuts and freezes for seven years, we are taking action to address rising crime and inequality. Our NDP budget is investing in children, new parents, recreation and cultural programs, public safety measures and supporting the most vulnerable members of our community.

We are dedicated to protecting communities and making Manitoba a better place to live and grow, starting with a \$104.2-million investment in education funding to help every child reach their full potential, including \$30 million for a universal school nutrition program. We're putting the end to the freeze on municipalities, providing new funding for recreation, roads and essential services to help our communities thrive. This includes significant capital investments in school properties and increased grants for municipalities.

While the previous administration allowed crime to rise, we are implementing practical solutions to keep families and businesses safe. Initiatives such as a \$300 security system rebate will make a tangible difference in the safety of our communities.

We are committed to ending chronic homelessness with a budget in 2024 providing \$116 million in funding for social and affordable housing. Additionally, we are making it easier to build rental housing to keep rents low and removing the PST on all new housing builds.

Budget 2024 is focused on investing in Manitobans to promote healthier families and ensure more children reach their 18th birthday. Initiatives include doubling the per-prenatal benefit, increasing funding for disability services and investing in protection strategy for Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

Our NDP government is dedicated to growing Manitoba's economy by leveraging our low carbon, leadership and skilled workforce. Budget 2024 invests in employment skills training, economic reconciliation and creating good jobs for Manitobans.

And I was—I had a great job before I did—I had the privilege of serving my constituency. I worked as a correctional officer and a lot of folks don't really quite understand what the job entails because a lot of—we work behind the walls. We're not seen. And I was a proud union member, as well, and I had my brothers and sisters and colleagues really come together to make sure that we all worked in a safe space.

And we—you know, during my time as a correctional officer and I'm just thinking of this Budget 2024 and, you know, I was injured on the job while working as a correctional staff. It was a serious trauma injury and I had to go off work. I had to go on a sick benefit. And there was only a maximum amount of time that I could be off work and be sick and I had to make the choice of, do I actually get better or do I, you know, go back to work and risk re-injury.

And thankfully, you know, we're bringing in legislation that ups the weeks to match the federal program of 27 weeks. And so, I think of those things, you know, folks worried if they can afford to get better, for—folks worried if they can afford to go to school and to do things such as that.

We're building—we're supporting farmers and producers and it is a priority for us in Budget 2024. My father-in-law was a farmer. He had a hog farm in Rivers, Manitoba, and he worked really hard. Unfortunately, he passed away suddenly from a farming accident but I know that he would be very proud of what Budget 2024 is—what it means to farmers.

We're supporting farmers with investments in business, risk management programs and agricultural services to ensure the industry thrives. We're also investing in infrastructure, creating jobs and supporting child-care spaces to grow our economy.

Manitobans deserve a government that works hard to deliver essential services and programs.

Budget 2024 focusses on improving government services, including implementing plastic health cards, decreasing wait times and hiring more staff for vital programs.

We are committed to transparency and accountability, launching an inquiry into the Winnipeg Police headquarters to address white-collar crime.

Budget 2024 sets a course for fiscal balance while rebuilding health care and lowering costs for Manitobans. Budget 2024 is bringing health care closer to home for First Nations and northern communities. We're investing in health-care centres, ambulance services and resources to support those in need.

Additionally, we are enhancing safety and connectivity in the North with new services and infrastructure investments. Budget 2024 is improving health care in the Westman region—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 10 minutes.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is now adjourned and—my mistake. The honourable member will only have nine minutes.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 4, 2024

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		Oxenham	1036

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