

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

Vol. LXXVIII No. 4 - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, November 23, 2023

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff,	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 23, 2023

The House met at 1:30 pm

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 our people. Amen.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are 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, and Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Louis Riel Act

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), that Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act; Loi sur Louis Riel, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: Cette loi reconnaît ce que les Métis ont connu et ont honoré depuis longtemps : que Louis Riel est le premier Premier ministre du Manitoba.

Translation

This act recognizes what the Métis have long known and honoured: that Louis Riel is the first Premier of Manitoba.

English

This act will make things as they always should have been, which is to recognize that Louis Riel is the first Premier of Manitoba.

I look forward to working with all parties to ensure that bill—this bill receives royal assent before the winter break.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to—sorry.

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

Bill 3—The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday)

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the honourable First Minister, that Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday); Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants (période d'exonération de la taxe sur les carburants), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sala: I'm very pleased to introduce Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act. This bill will provide much-needed relief to Manitobans during these unprecedented times of high inflation. The bill implements a six-month fuel-tax holiday commencing January 1st, 2024. During the fuel-tax holiday, the fuel-tax rates on gasoline, diesel and natural gas used to operate motor vehicles will be reduced from 14 cents to zero.

This will provide direct relief to Manitoba families struggling with rising costs and is a crucial step in our government's plan to make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: And I have a report to table.

I am pleased to table the Report of the Amounts Paid or Payable to Members of the Assembly for the Year Ended March 31st, 2023.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I am pleased to table the following reports: The Accessibility for Manitobans Act annual report for 2022-2023; the Social Services Appeal Board Annual Report for 2022-2023; Manitoba's poverty reduction

annual report for 2022-2023; and the Department of Families annual report for 2022-2023.

Miigwech.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports: the annual report for the Department of Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, for the year ending March 2023; the annual report for Consumer Protection and Government Services, for the year ending March 2023; the annual report for Entrepreneurship Manitoba for the year ending March 2023; the annual report for the Materials Distribution Agency, for the year ending March 2023; the annual report for Manitoba Education Research and Learning Information Networks, for the year ending March 2023; the annual report for the Public Guardian and Trustee, for the year ending March 2023; the annual report for the Vehicle and Equipment Management Agency, for the year ending March 2023; the annual report for the Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission, for the year ending March 2023; and the annual report for the Residential Tenancies Commission, for the year ending March 2023.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the annual report for Manitoba Labour and Immigration, for the year ended March 31, 2023.

The Speaker: Are there any other reports?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to table the following 2023 annual reports by the Department of Finance: Department of Finance annual report; Employee Pension and Other Costs annual report; the Public Service Commission annual report; tax credits enabling appropriations, public debt annual report; manual—or, Manitoba Financial Services Agency Annual Report; the Manitoba Hydro annual report; the PUB annual report; and the Manitoba Public Accounts annual report.

* (13:40)

Thank you.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and table the annual reports for '22-23: Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation; Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries; Manitoba Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism report; the Travel Manitoba Annual Report; the Centre culturel franco-manitobain rapport annuel [*annual report*];

the annual report for the Manitoba Arts Council; and the annual report for the Manitoba Film and Music.

The Speaker: No other reports? We'll move on to ministerial statements.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: The honourable minister—sorry, the honourable Justice and Attorney General.

Restorative Justice Week

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to rise in the House to recognize this year's Restorative Justice Week in Manitoba.

Restorative justice is a system that supports healing, accountability and the prevention of future harm. It was a Manitoba NDP government that first introduced The Restorative Justice Act in 2015 to begin to seek true accountability of offenders while also offering meaningful reconciliation with victims and the community at large.

Through these effective restorative justice approaches, we are building a more robust justice system. This approach holds offenders accountable, offers swift programming to address the root causes of crime, while also supporting victims and beginning to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the justice system.

Manitoba's restorative justice program diverts over 3,400 cases each year from the traditional court process to address the needs of victims and offenders more holistically.

In recent weeks, I've had the opportunity to meet with several leaders in Manitoba Justice who have done great things to advance the work—this work, and I commend their efforts.

I particularly want to recognize the community justice committees, Indigenous restorative justice practitioners at MKO, SCO and the MMF—many of whom are with us today, including MMF Justice Minister Julyda Lagimodiere—and others throughout our province doing this important work.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member from—just a minute—the honourable member from Brandon West.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, it's an honour to rise today and address Restorative Justice Week in Manitoba.

Restorative justice has become a major influence on our innovation in the criminal justice system and an influence on those across Manitoba.

Restorative justice offers an approach that involves bringing together communities and victims, to hold offenders accountable for their actions, understanding the harm that was caused through mediation—or, sorry, the harm that was caused, and through mediation finding ways to rebuild that trust.

Restorative justice allows all those involved to be acknowledged and to have an opportunity to talk directly to all stakeholders and address the best way to provide restitution rather than taking the traditional route in our criminal justice process through incarceration or statutory punishment.

I would like to acknowledge two organizations in Brandon and the Westman area that have been an incredible resource and that we can uplift restorative justice in our community.

First, the John Howard Society of Brandon, who work tirelessly to the community to provide supports and resources for individuals and their families by empowering restorative justice. They offer many programs through the Men's Resource Centre, traditional housing, anger management programming and reintegration support.

We are also very lucky to have the Westman community mobilization hub, covering over 21,000 square kilometres—

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

Is there leave for the member to finish his statement?
[Agreed]

The honourable member from Brandon East.

An Honourable Member: They have allowed Brandon to become the first community in Manitoba to create a risk-driven community safety and well-being initiative within our province. They represent multiple social service agencies in the area who provide at-risk individuals and provide them with appropriate services.

As the previous chief of Brandon Police Service, we are thrilled to champion this initiative and receive funding from our PC government.

Honourable Speaker, I am happy to tell you, on this side of the House, we welcome those who look to champion initiative and ideas for our criminal justice system that keep our communities safe and provide

pathways for both victims and offenders to excess—to access support in Manitoba.

The Speaker: And for the purposes of Hansard, I will correct: it was the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen).

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

The Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward today's statement on Restorative Justice Week.

You know, during the election, when we were out door-knocking, all of us heard many stories from our constituents about crime and safety issues. We were hearing a-lots about break-ins, graffiti. I've heard bricks through windows, speeding, harassment at bus stops. This is just to name a few, Honourable Speaker.

The idea of restorative justice is about bringing together those most affected by criminal acts in a safe place, to encourage offender accountability and to meet the needs of victims in order to best heal.

The spike in youth crimes show the dire need to divert vulnerable youth away from problematic influences and into positive ones. I think it's extremely important that the new government revisit the idea of youth justice committees. This is something that I have been advocating for since 2016. We used to have them here in Manitoba, and they were an opportunity for youth to demonstrate remorse and practise their restorative approach.

I hope that this government will do the right thing and restore youth justice committees here in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, the issue of crime in our province continues to get worse, and people deserve to feel safe in their homes and in their communities. I look forward to seeing what the government and the new Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), who has many years of experience here in this House, will bring forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of—

An Honourable Member: Something.

The Speaker: Something. The Honourable Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness. Sorry.

Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I rise in the House as minister of Housing, Addictions, Homelessness and Minister responsible for Mental Health to proclaim the week of November 19th to 25th, 2023, as Manitoba Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week.

This week provides an opportunity for Manitobans to learn about the harms caused by substance and addictions and the important work folks are doing on the front lines in health care and non-profit organizations. I encourage all Manitobans to a—participate in Manitoba Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week and its events to learn more about the solutions and its growing issue.

The theme chosen for this awareness campaign this year is Inspiration, Innovation and Inclusion.

We are inspired by the courage of Manitobans in the face of addictions and that of professionals working on the front lines to support them.

We commit to creating innovative and compassion and supportive systems for Manitobans living with addictions. And we commit to an inclusive harm reduction model so Manitobans can access the addiction supports that they so need, when they need them and where they need them.

I want to uplift the non-profit-sector workers, nurses, doctors, allied health-care worker professionals who provide the expertise and essential supports to our relatives. Your expertise, knowledge and contributions are invaluable and make a difference in the lives of Manitobans.

I also want to acknowledge the families who are supporting their loved ones. We see you, we acknowledge you and we uplift you for your heart work.

* (13:50)

We acknowledge also the public service workers and your work and your contributions and your commitment to supporting Manitobans and their families who are facing these addictions.

Our government will work collaboratively with you and all Manitobans in the years ahead to help save lives and promote healing for individuals, families and communities across this beautiful province that we call Manitoba.

Miigwech.

The Speaker: Before I recognize any other speakers, I would just indicate that the 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27-2.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise today in response to the ministerial statement delivered by the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

Every year, Manitoba Substance Use and Addictions Awareness Week draws attention to the ongoing impact of addictions and substance use in our communities.

Addictions and substance use has an impact on my life in a very personal way. A close family member of mine has struggled in the past with a substance-use addiction, and it was the ability for them to access treatment that saved their life. I cannot stress enough how important it is that—that it was that they were able to access the treatment and the path to recovery. I will always advocate for supports and wraparound services as well as engage in meaningful discussions on how we can support those struggling with addictions and their families, such as mine.

Under the leadership of the PC government, I am proud to highlight an investment of nearly \$9 million that created over 1,600 publicly funded life-saving addictions treatment spaces this year. These spaces included home and mobile withdrawal-management services, medical withdrawal-management services, both men and women bed-based treatment spaces, community intensive treatment spaces and supportive recovery housing spaces. Increasing capacity in addictions treatment services has and will always save lives.

And another investment under the PC government was the investment in seven rapid-access addictions medical clinics. These clinics offered a variety of wraparound supports including assessments, counselling, prescriptions for opiate agonist treatments, referrals to withdrawal-management services, community treatment programs and primary caregivers. Thousands of individuals have accessed these clinics and have made a difference in their families, communities and the province.

Addictions impacts families and communities in a very significant way. So I want to conclude by recognizing all of those who are struggling with their—and their families and their loved ones. I want to thank the dedicated addictions service providers across the province for the work that they do and the individuals

that play an important role in Manitoba's health-care system and non-profit organizations.

Together, we must continue to create awareness around substance use and addictions, and find a path to recovery for all individuals.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions—*[interjection]* Prior to members' statements, sorry, there were some guests in the gallery that I'd like to introduce.

There were, seated in the public gallery from St. Maurice School, 53 grade 9 students under the direction of Rebecca Stajkowski, and the group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw).

There's also seated in the public gallery, we have the president of the MMF, President David Chartrand, and the president's wife, Glorian; the MMF Cabinet Infinity Women Secretariat spokeswoman, Anita Campbell; MMF Cabinet Winnipeg Region, Andrew Carrier; MMF Cabinet Winnipeg Region, David Beaudin; MMF Cabinet Interlake Region, Alfred Anderson; MMF Cabinet Interlake Region, Mona Buors; MMF Cabinet Thompson Region, Juldaya *[phonetic]* Lagimodiere; MMF Thompson Region, Mark Parenteau; MMF Thompson Region, Mildred Dorian; MMF Cabinet, Southeast Region, Denise Thomas; MMF Cabinet, Southeast Region, Shawn Nault; the MMF Northwest Region, Frances Chartrand; MMF Cabinet, Northwest Region, Richard Genaille; MMF Northwest Region, Peter Fleming; MMF Cabinet, Southwest Region, Will Goodman *[phonetic]*—Goodon, sorry; MMF The Pas Region, Joan Ledoux.

Also joining us are several other staff members from the Manitoba Métis Federation, and we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Parc La Salle School

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Honourable Speaker, today I want to recognize Parc La Salle School for its community-based supports and programming. It is a K-to-4 school in St. Norbert that serves a diverse student population that are primarily from a low-income and multicultural community. As the school faces a neighbourhood with significant diversity, they accommodate students for various needs. Joining us today in the gallery are Parc La Salle's principal, Derek Marvin, and resource teacher, Natalie Moore.

Initially, I heard rumours of Parc La Salle's incredible Parc's Pantry program that originally served food hampers to nine families monthly. Since it began in 2021, the program now offers services to the surrounding community for a pantry pickup event held once a month, providing essential support to over 40 families. This pantry is available to families on an emergency basis at any time, and some rely on weekly access to meet ongoing needs. Alongside the pantry program, Parc La Salle also offers a breakfast and snack program. They partner with local organizations and condominium complexes to ensure consistent food supply.

An instrumental person in this work is Natalie Moore, the primary organizer of Parc's Pantry. The majority of her contributions have been voluntary, highlighting her immense dedication to the work of supporting her community.

Beyond addressing food insecurity, the school also works hard to address both socioeconomic challenges and supporting families with access to community services. This includes clothing drives, toy collections for the winter break, vision and hearing screenings and transportation to medical appointments.

Parc La Salle school does amazing work to address community needs through their programming. It takes a lot of time, energy and participation to serve a community the way they serve students and families. I want to take a moment to thank the organizers of these programs at Parc La Salle and hope that their work inspires everyone here to consider how much is required to help children succeed. It is no small feat.

Thank you.

Vanessa Borovich

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, it is a great honour to return to the Legislature and continue to represent the riding of Fort Whyte. Many amazing things have happened in Fort Whyte since last session, but today I am excited to share an initiative started by Vanessa Borovich, a young constituent living in Whyte Ridge.

Vanessa's parents, along with her older sister, immigrated to Winnipeg from Uruguay in 2002 and moved into Whyte Ridge in 2003. Vanessa has lived in Whyte Ridge all her life and shared with me the positive impacts of the neighbourhood that her family felt as arriving as newcomers. A sense of welcoming, community and even celebration of their cultural diversity from neighbours solidified their decision to stay in Whyte Ridge. The same neighbours who

welcomed them back in 2003 are still part of their lives today.

This urged Vanessa to think about ways she could pass the torch and make other new families feel welcome. So in November 2022, Vanessa reached out to the Whyte Ridge Community Centre, and with the help of President Kim O'Hara, the director of diversity, Shahin Shoostari, she created a welcome basket project.

Vanessa got to work connecting local businesses to gain support, advertising in local newsletters and even set up a table at the Celebration of Cultural Diversity hosted in partnership with the Henry G. Izatt Middle School and the Whyte Ridge Community Centre.

* (14:00)

Soon enough, Vanessa was receiving emails from new families requesting these welcome baskets. To date, Vanessa has delivered 27 welcome baskets and has the support of 10 local businesses helping fill these welcome baskets.

Vanessa's willingness to go above and beyond for our community, and especially to new Canadians, is an inspiration to all of us. I would like now to ask my colleagues in the Legislature to please rise and recognize Vanessa Borovich and her mother, Dalia, for her amazing contribution to Fort Whyte and making a better place for everyone to live.

Equal Opportunities West

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): It is truly an honour to rise in this House for the first time as the NDP MLA for Assiniboia.

Today, I would like to speak on the incredible work being done at Equal Opportunities West. Established in 1979, Equal Opportunities West is a non-profit organization that provides employment support services for people living with disabilities. Their goal is to empower potential job seekers by teaching them the skills they need for competitive employment.

One of the organization's initiatives is the Supported Employment Services program. This program gives its participants the practical and necessary skills required to find employment. Supporting up to 40 people annually, the program assists its participants in résumé writing, job applications and interview preparation.

Equal Opportunities West also hosts the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program, which supports their participants in starting new businesses in Winnipeg. This resource assists entrepreneurs in creating business plans, marketing their business and networking with business owners and customers.

One of the Equal Opportunities West's most recognizable programs is their e-waste and recycling program. The donations of old electronic devices are broken down into parts by participants before being sent to Urbanmine. The metal scrap facility pays for the electronic parts, and that money is distributed to each of the individuals who works in the program. This program not only provides income for its workers, but also helps refine their motor skills and encourage an interest in technology. I encourage all of you to participate by donating your old and used devices.

While the program's mandate initially focused on employment services, Equal Opportunities West's initiatives now include changing the societal culture and perceived value of individuals with disabilities. Their work is a true testament to the strength of empowerment and choice. Please join me in thanking Susan Morgan, the executive director of Equal Opportunities West, and all of her staff, Tawnya, Joey and Amanuel, for all their—

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

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Speaker: Is there leave? Leave has been granted.

MLA Kennedy: —and all of their hard work and commitment to providing tools and services for people living with disabilities.

Charleswood Curling Club—Team Manitoba

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): What a pleasure to rise today to deliver my first private member's statement as a newly elected MLA.

It is my honour today to congratulate the Joelle Brown rink that hails from the Charleswood Curling Club in the great constituency of Roblin. Joelle and her teammates recently won the 2023 senior women's provincial championship held earlier this year in Dauphin.

Now, as Team Manitoba, these athletes are preparing for their trip to British Columbia, where they will compete in the 2023 Everest Canadian

Senior Curling Championships, presented by Curling Canada.

The national championship takes place from December 3rd to 9th, 2023, at the Vernon Curling Club in Vernon, BC.

The Charleswood Curling Club has not had a provincial champion represent their club since 2011 when Jeff Stoughton represented Manitoba. We are very proud to have a provincial champion coming from the Charleswood Curling Club once again.

It is my honour to congratulate skip Joelle Brown; third, Maureen Bonar; second, Allyson Bell; lead, Natalie Claude; fifth, Deb McCreanor on winning the honour to represent Manitoba at the Canadian championship.

This weekend, the team will celebrate with their send-off at the Charleswood Curling Club, where they'll receive their official Manitoba jackets from CurlManitoba.

I know all of Manitoba will be cheering them on as they compete next month, especially all of their friends at the Charleswood Curling Club.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Loretta Dykun

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): Today, I'd like to recognize Loretta Dykun, an educator and advocate from the Mystery Lake School Division in Thompson. Loretta received the 2023 Guiding the Journey award from Indspire, including Partner in Indigenous Education award, which recognizes non-Indigenous educators who strongly advocate for Indigenous students and education.

Loretta achieved a great deal as an educator. She was a cultural proficiency consultant at the Mystery Lake school district. She was involved in Wicihitowin, government-led initiative for education. She also introduced cultural proficiency training to the school district, University College of the North, the Northern Health Region and the RCMP.

Loretta is a strong promoter of the Cree language. As a speaker, she developed and created high school-level Cree courses. Her work didn't stop there. Loretta also organized and delivered Indigenous-based Mini-Winterfests in her school district at six elementary schools that have happened every year since the early '90s.

Loretta recently retired but is still passionate about ensuring Indigenous students have access to culturally

appropriate activities, teachings while non-Indigenous students learn about Indigenous culture.

Loretta's life work is a testament to what reconciliation efforts mean. Knowledge sharing, truth-telling and supporting our kids are essential to reconciling with Indigenous communities.

Loretta exemplifies the work all of us can learn from: collaborating, learning from those who are different from us and advocating for change as all of our lives are connected. We must develop empathy, compassion for one another. So please join me in celebrating the amazing achievements and acknowledging her incredible work and career in retirement.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions I'd like to introduce some guests in the—or in the loge to my left.

First, I would like to draw attention of all honourable members where we have with us today Jim Rondeau, the former member for Assiniboia. On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

Next, also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's loge where we have with us today Doreen Dodick, the former member for Riel.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Finances Spending Plans

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): In the recent election, the NDP made \$3 billion worth of promises to Manitobans with absolutely no plan on how to pay for those promises. Now, the government has three choices in how to pay for those commitments. They can either cut programs, they can raise taxes or they can grow our economy.

Now, option No. 3 they have already squandered by shutting down the economic development secretariat, squandering more than hundreds of billions of dollars of investment in our province and effectively shutting down Manitoba for business.

So how does the Premier plan to pay for his election promises? Is he going to cut programs or is he going to raise taxes? Which is it?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, so much negativity from the opposition benches these days. Negativity and inaccuracy, I would add to that.

* (14:10)

It's a new day in Manitoba, and we articulated that in our Throne Speech this week, which we had the great honour of having read to us by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Our plan in the Throne Speech articulates a path towards fixing health care, towards lowering costs and to do something the PC members opposite never did: balancing the provincial budget.

Now, will they support our Throne Speech, yes or no?

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

Ms. Stefanson: Perhaps, I know the Premier has been busy, and maybe he hasn't had a chance to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Stefanson: Perhaps he hasn't had a chance to read the Public Accounts, the Province of Manitoba annual report Public Accounts 2023, where it states that there was a \$270-million surplus, so I'll table that for him today.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, \$3 billion worth of commitments to Manitobans, no plan on how to pay for it.

Which is he going to do? Is he going to raise taxes on Manitobans, or is he going to cut social programs for those Manitobans who need it? Or are they going to do both?

Mr. Kinew: The Leader of the Official Opposition is only right about one thing: that we've been very busy. In just one month, we've unlocked half a billion dollars in new investment, along with the federal government, into Manitoba Hydro to create 5,000 jobs for Manitobans.

In just one month, we've brought a new program to do retrofits of homes to bring in geothermal heat pumps. That benefits people in rural Manitoba. And now today we've brought in a bill to cut the provincial fuel tax. Another great move to help people who are struggling right now.

I'm very concerned, however, at what we haven't heard from the opposition benches, which is their commitment to ensure that this bill passes before the winter break.

Do they intend to support our legislation, yes or no?

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

Ms. Stefanson: Honourable Speaker, and \$3 billion worth of commitments to Manitobans with no plan or vision on how to pay for that.

I will ask the Premier again, because he refuses to answer the question, and Manitobans deserve to know: Which is he going to do? Is he going to raise taxes? Is he going to cut programs? Or is he going to do both?

Mr. Kinew: The members opposite did one of the most damaging things that any government has ever done to the provincial health-care system, which was to close three of the biggest emergency rooms in the province. We're still trying to repair the damage of that, and we witness it each and every day at sites like the Grace Hospital.

We will never make cuts that damage Manitobans the way the PCs did during their two terms in office. But when it comes to fiscal responsibility, I would note that the Leader of the Opposition is glossing over a six-month period during which she led the province.

And I can tell Manitobans this: when they see what they did during that six-month run-up to the election, there are going to be many difficult questions for her to answer.

Provincial Finances Spending Plans

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, speaking of a financial mess, I suggest the members opposite look at the 2015-16 Public Accounts, where the NDP mismanaged, in a deficit of \$846 million.

Everyone can see through the empty promises of the NDP and the fact they're making major cuts already—\$1.5 billion to the expansion of HSC, cutting nine schools, cutting food banks, cutting 24,000 daycare spots, cutting the surgical and diagnostic task force. And it's only day 2.

Now, I'm going to ask a very simple question for math comprehension from the Finance Minister: What's better—\$846-million deficit or \$270-million surplus? It's that easy.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, there's an interesting question that I would invite the critic for Finance to re-ask when the second quarter Public Accounts are released for their last six months in government.

I guess the point that I'm getting at here is that it seems that not only did the Leader of the Opposition conceal things from the people of Manitoba about their reckless fiscal mismanagement, but it seems as though she concealed it from her own caucus.

So, again, I can't account for the division or the poor decisions being made on that side of the House. But I'll tell you one thing: it's a good thing Manitobans elected our team because we're going to repair their mess, invest in health care and lower costs.

The Speaker: The member from Fort Whyte, on a supplementary question.

MLA Khan: Honourable Speaker, it's really embarrassing for the members opposite. I asked the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), but the Premier wants to stand up because I guess he doesn't trust the Minister of Finance to answer the question.

Now, day 2, not one answer from the other side. No plan, no plan of how they're going to get it done, and no answers even in question period where they're supposed to answer questions for the public.

This minister—and now, I guess, the Premier, because the minister doesn't want to answer—is just tempering expectations because he knows there is no way they can play for the \$3 billion in overspending promises like they have done. They have no plan. They're not going to get it done unless they raise taxes or cut programs.

So, again, which one is it? Are they going to cut schools—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: You know, I'm going to keep rising to answer the first two sets of questions because there's a long-standing tradition where there's supposed to be a back-and-forth between the Leader of the Opposition and the First Minister when they take the first two sets of questions.

Now, the leader opposite may be willing to mail it in, but I am not. I am showing up each and every day to work hard for the people of Manitoba.

And if the Finance critic is concerned with taxes, he should stand in his place right now and commit to ensuring that our bill to cut the fuel tax is passed to royal assent before the winter break.

The Speaker: The member from Fort Whyte, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Khan: I guess I'll ask the Minister of Finance again if he can stand up and answer a question for today.

All Manitobans can see for themselves a PC government left this current government with a

\$270-million surplus. That is more money. NDP—\$846-million deficit.

Now, let's go back to that time and see who was sitting on that side when they ran a deficit of \$246 million—or two hundred—\$846 million—Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) were all there when they ran this province into \$846 million in deficit.

So my question, again, is: Are they going to cut programs or they going to raise taxes? Can we please get an answer on question period?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister. *[interjection]* Order.

Mr. Kinew: These words are going to come back to haunt the PC caucus in the next few weeks, the ones that he's just shared. I can assure you that.

Manitobans are going to learn in the coming days that the previous government left us with a tremendous fiscal mess. The good thing, though, is that we have an excellent Minister of Finance, an amazing Cabinet and wonderful team of MLAs who are going to repair the damage that they caused.

We're going to repair the damage that they caused by investing in health care, by balancing the budget and by lowering costs for families.

* (14:20)

I do have to say I'm very concerned that, for all the chatter from the PC benches, I'm not hearing a commitment to cut the provincial fuel tax.

So, are they going to guarantee passes to royal assent of our cut to the fuel tax before the winter break, yes or no?

Health Sciences Centre Adult Bed Tower Project

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Earlier this week, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) publicly suggested that his government may cut much-needed upgrades to HSC's adult bed tower.

Perhaps the Minister of Health can provide clarity to Manitobans: Is their government going to cut this project, yes or no?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member opposite for that question.

Our government is proud to be able to take some steps in a new direction on behalf of Manitobans and invest in strengthening health care in our province.

Since being sworn in, I've had the privilege and opportunity to meet with health-care leaders across the province. They've made it very clear to me that the previous government didn't bother to even sit down and have those conversations.

It's a big shift, Honourable Speaker. It's a big shift that is welcomed from Manitobans and the experts who are guiding our health-care system.

I look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen health care in our province.

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

Mrs. Cook: The Health Sciences Centre is Manitoba's hospital. With 40 per cent of its patient population coming from rural and northern Manitoba or First Nations communities, the entire province relies on HSC's buildings, services and the future doctors graduating from the Bannatyne campus.

The planned upgrades to HSC are more than just renovations. They are about the future of health care for all Manitobans.

I'll ask the minister again: Is the NDP planning to cut this project?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the member opposite is correct about one thing: HSC is an incredibly important part of our health-care system, which is why the member opposite and her caucus should answer the question of why they chose to cut health care, specifically at that site, for years.

Why is it that they disrespected the health-care workers at HSC for years? Why is it that they refused to visit, listen to, talk to, work with any of the health-care workers or leaders at that site for years?

Our government is taking a new approach; not theirs. It's failed, it's hurt Manitobans and we're going to do things different to strengthen health care at that site moving forward.

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

Mrs. Cook: I'll try this one more time. The project that the NDP have said they may cut, that the previous PC government committed to, would have created 240 new patient rooms built to current infection control standards, allowed for the expansion of

the ER, improved bed flow and helped Manitoba attract and retain doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals.

For a final time: Will the minister commit to Manitobans that this project will not be delayed or cut due to the NDP's mismanagement?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I want to point something out that builds on something our Premier (Mr. Kinew) has already talked about in this question period.

Members opposite, the previous PC government, didn't bother to actually have a plan in place for the announcements they made during the campaign, that they only made to try to save their own jobs. They didn't make those announcements because they cared about the health care of Manitobans at all.

Honourable Speaker, we are taking a different approach. We have already met with leadership at HSC. We've already met with health-care workers across the system.

We are going to continue to work together to make sure that not only that campus, but sites across the province, are treated with respect and strengthened under our government.

Policing Services Funding Inquiry

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, with no Justice funding announcements in the Throne Speech, can the Attorney General of Manitoba let Manitobans know: Is this your first steps in defunding the police?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Manitobans made it very clear that they're—were ready—they were ready for a new approach when it comes to making our community safer.

Everyone in Manitoba has been affected by the rise in crime, a rise in crime that happened under this PC government's watch. That's why our government will pursue a different path on criminal justice; one that's tough on crime but also tough on the causes of crime.

My priority as Justice Minister and Attorney General is to make sure that every Manitoban is safe, and that there's confidence in our justice system.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, police services in all jurisdictions across this great province rely on government investments to continue the professional service delivery that is incumbent upon them to keep our communities safe and secure.

The Throne Speech mentioned no new justice initiatives, no new justice programming and certainly no new investment.

Can the Minister of Justice guarantee Manitobans that they will not defund the police?

Mr. Wiebe: While the member opposite continues to use divisive language, you know, that his leader and others have used throughout the campaign, our approach to justice will work to break those cycles of violence, work upstream within the justice system, address the issues of mental health, addictions and housing and prevent crime and help people who are victims of crime.

Mr. Honourable Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear here. We're going to take a serious approach to this issue and we're not going to use divisive language like the members opposite.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Brandon West, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, this NDP government has promised \$3 billion of spending in their campaign. As we've stated, they have two options: they can raise taxes or they can cut their services.

Knowing there will be cost savings needed by this government, will the Minister of Justice confirm that this government will not cut funding to police services and ultimately defund the police?

Mr. Wiebe: I can imagine it's uncomfortable for the member opposite to be sitting in a caucus full of members who are responsible for year-over-year cuts to municipal policing across our province, and he knows this.

Honourable Speaker, he knows this because he comes from the world of law enforcement. He knows the cuts and the impact that it's had to our brave men and women who are in law enforcement.

I think it is beholden to him to talk to his caucus, to sit down with those members who were responsible for their cuts and ask them if they're proud of their record of cuts and division over seven years.

Highway and Road Investments Government Funding Intention

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure on her new role and I welcome any opportunities to work together.

I want to say that there was no mention of roads and highways in Tuesday's NDP Throne Speech, and that's hugely concerning to Manitobans.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation commit to a five-year capital plan of \$500 million annually for our roads and highways?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): And I, too, want to congratulate my critic and welcome him to this role. We've had the opportunity to exchange a few nice words along the way, and I look forward to the questions to come.

* (14:30)

I can say, as you know, we are reviewing the budget given what we've heard, but we are absolutely holding the budget line of over \$500 million in highway capital investments, from—up by \$26 million from 2022-2023, for this year.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Borderland, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Guenter: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Speaker, the NDP underspent on infrastructure for two decades, and today our province has a \$9-billion infrastructure deficit.

There was no mention of roads and highways in the Throne Speech, so I will ask again: Is this NDP government committed to spending \$500 million annually on a five-year capital plan?

MLA Naylor: My critic on the other side of the House has glossed over the last seven years. I know that he was here for the last four, just as I was. And I know that we both are deeply aware of the deep cuts and aggressive austerity policy of the previous government.

It resulted in a vacancy rate of over 30 per cent in the department of Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, something I've been working on since day one. And these cuts were believed by over half of MTI staff surveyed in 2022 to jeopardize the safety of Manitobans.

That's on this past government.

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

Mr. Guenter: Honourable Speaker, it's clear that this NDP government is going to allow our province to decay once again. No mention of roads or highways in the Throne Speech, and in their nearly two decades in power, they allowed a \$9-billion infrastructure deficit in our province.

What road projects will be cut when this NDP government once again underspends the infrastructure budget?

MLA Naylor: The infrastructure deficit left behind by the PCs over the last seven years will take a long time to fix. The budgetary cuts and freezes, in addition to drastically reducing staffing levels in the department, have left a lot of challenges, but we are up to the task.

I think that the critic has failed to recognize that, in the Throne Speech, we recognized the workers, and the workers in this department were also greatly neglected and not treated well over the last seven years.

So, they have been recognized in the Throne Speech, and going forward, we will continue to appreciate their work, staff up this department and build the infrastructure this province requires.

Child-Care Spaces Government Intention

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Yesterday, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning had confirmed that he is going to continue moving forward with the Progressive Conservative government plan for ready-to-move child-care spaces.

Unfortunately, he didn't answer the question yesterday, Mr. Honourable Speaker, on the fact that he is, in fact, cutting over 2,400 child-care spaces in Manitoba. I know this is the direction from his leader, the Leader of the NDP.

Can this minister confirm today: Is he cutting those 2,400 additional child-care spaces, yes or no?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I want to remind the member for Lac du Bonnet that these ready-to-move pieces are indeed ready to move and ready to go to many of the child-care centres that are outside the Perimeter Highway.

As a matter of fact, Honourable Speaker, we were elected to ensure that our kids and our families have reliable \$10-a-day child care every day, regardless of

if it's summer, whether it's spring break or whether it is after school.

We'll ensure that gets that done, and he knows that we will indeed fulfil the expectations of Manitobans.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Lac du Bonnet, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: The minister obviously is—maybe he needs to put the earpiece in, Mr. Honourable—or, Honourable Speaker.

The fact is, is that the member for Transcona has committed to, by the guidance of his leader—the NDP Leader—to cut over 2,400 spaces.

Why, Mr. Honourable Speaker? Is the fact that they are cutting the 23 schools which has day-child-care spaces attached to them?

Will he commit today to move forward on absolutely everything that our Progressive Conservative government team put in place, yes or no, Mr. Honourable Speaker?

MLA Altomare: I want to remind everybody in this House that, on October 3rd, Manitobans rejected their empty promises. They rejected their plans to not fulfil what they said they were going to do—didn't even take their plans to Treasury Board when it needed to get that level of approval, not even once.

And so what are we left with right now, Honourable Speaker? We're left with the task given to us, this awesome task, by the people of Manitoba, to ensure that families get the child care they need when they need it at \$10 a day.

This team will get it done.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Lac du Bonnet, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Again, just to remind the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, the federal minister had commended the Progressive Conservative government team on being a leader in the country on early childhood education, Honourable Speaker.

It's unfortunate that the member now, the MLA for Transcona, is talking about cutting class sizes but in retrospect, he's cutting schools, Honourable Speaker.

When is he going to make those calls to those school divisions and tell them that him and his leader, and his NDP team, are cutting 23-plus schools that we made a—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Altomare: You know, Honourable Speaker, I think the biggest barrier to public education, to early childhood education in Manitoba, was that PC caucus right over there.

They spent—Honourable Speaker, they spent the last seven years underfunding and undercutting not only early childhood education, but public education. They did not understand the magic of having early childhood centres attached to schools; they didn't understand the magic of people working for public schools for the betterment of kids.

Right now, this side of the House will get to work every day to ensure that our promises are fulfilled.

Emergency Room Wait Times Request for Plan to Address

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): This new government has a lot to live up to with all of their health-care promises.

We have serious issues with our emergency services, and at the end of the day, no Manitoban can afford to wait 33 hours at a hospital to seek care.

When will this government tell us exactly how they plan to fix the chaotic wait times in our emergency rooms?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to thank the member for Tyndall Park for bringing forward, for two days in a row, questions of substance on issues that matter to Manitobans.

We know that health care is a top priority. We know that it's a top priority because our team was elected on a promise of fixing health care for you, the people of Manitoba.

* (14:40)

The current situation in emergency rooms is not acceptable. It's caused by—this PC government of the past have created a years-long challenge that is going to require an extended timeline to fix.

But as to the member's—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: But as to the member's question as to when she's going to hear details: starting tomorrow morning.

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

Seniors Advocate Office Timeline to Establish

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Continuing on health care and a plan for action, Honourable Speaker, this past July, the Auditor General reported that the Protection for Persons in Care Office failed miserably to protect vulnerable Manitobans in health-care facilities.

The previous government pledged to create a new, independent oversight body that reports the Legislative Assembly.

Will this government restore the confidence of Manitobans and give us a clear timeline today as to when they will introduce legislation for the independent office of a seniors advocate?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that very important question, and I know that the member for—*from Tyndall Park* has been an advocate on this issue, as we have been on this side of the House for years now.

We are actively working toward that objective. We fully intend to make sure that seniors across the province have an independent seniors advocate. As I extended yesterday, I'd be more than happy to provide that member a brief on the work that the department is doing to make sure that we're totally informed on the best approach in order to achieve that.

There's a lot of listening and learning and working done right now that that PC government of the past, across the way, never bothered to do.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

Vulnerable Persons Receiving Health Care Abuse Investigation Backlog

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): The Auditor General report also found a lengthy backlog of cases, many of which involved severe abuse of seniors and vulnerable Manitobans. People have been forced to wait three to four years for investigations to take place if they're not dismissed or unfounded.

Will this government commit to providing a timeline on when these backlogged investigations will be completed?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I want to take this moment to commend the folks in the department who have been working furiously and tirelessly to address this issue.

I think it's important for Manitobans to know, and for members opposite who maybe aren't aware and are new to this Chamber, that the previous government was made aware back in 2019 that there were serious allegations of abuse that were not being investigated. And the previous government did nothing to address that.

Our government is listening to those who are doing the work of addressing that backlog, which has, in its majority, been clear, Honourable Speaker, due to the hard-working efforts of those in the department. We're going to ensure that not only do we address the issues of the past under the failed PC government, we're going to make sure we strengthen this area of the system moving forward.

Provincial Fuel Tax Rates Introduction of Legislation

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): I'm pleased to rise to ask my first question as an MLA in this House.

Manitoba families are struggling to make ends meet, but the former PC government made life more expensive while giving away big cheques to their billionaire friends.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Schott: Our government is making life more affordable by pausing the provincial gas tax. For all of their blustering about the carbon tax, members opposite were 'chattering'—[interjection]—yes, chirp, chirp—were charging Manitobans 14 cents a litre at the pumps.

Will they stand in the way of our bill now? Will the Minister of Finance please explain how Manitobans will lose out if the PCs block the bill—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Thanking my fantastic colleague from Kildonan-River East for the question.

Pausing the gas tax will save the average family \$250 over six months; that's immediate financial relief, Honourable Speaker.

We know members opposite made life more expensive, Honourable Speaker, so I wouldn't be surprised if they try to block this bill. They raised hydro rates over 20 per cent, they sent cheques to out-of-province billionaires and they picked fights with the feds while all along charging Manitobans 14 cents a litre at the pump.

Our government is putting hundreds of dollars back in the pockets of families. Will the members opposite get on board, or will they stand in the way?

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Shelters and Social Housing Units

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness and the minister responsible for Health on her appointment to her new role—Mental Health, sorry.

Earlier this month, the minister was out re-announcing our funding for 24-7 shelter spaces.

Will the minister continue to endorse PC initiatives from the homeless strategy, or will we be cutting—they be cutting these commitments?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Well, I want to congratulate my critic on their new role, and I'll work—I want to just say I look forward to working collaboratively together.

And that \$2.6 million has made such a difference to so many people in their lives in our Manitoba province. It's meant that people have not had to live in bus shacks. It's meant that folks have not had to live in tents. And it's made such a difference in lives in terms of getting people connected with housing, in terms of addiction services, in terms of getting people connected in long-term sustainable housing.

And that's something that this government never did.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Morden-Winkler, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are disappointed that there was no comment or plan to create—sorry, create social housing units in Tuesday's Throne Speech.

In March, the PC government committed \$58 million to create 700 social housing spaces this year as part of our homeless strategy.

Can the minister tell Manitobans if they plan to cut 700 social housing spaces?

Ms. Smith: Well, this government signed on to the 2016 National Housing Strategy and did not build one single housing, social housing.

So this government can—this former government can talk about housing, but they would go out of this building every single day and see people in bus shacks

outside of this building. They were okay with folks living in tents. They were okay with opening more shelters, but they weren't okay with building more social housing.

This side of the House, we're going to build more social housing. We're going to make sure that people get housed in sustainable ways, and not, like this member opposite, in their—the way that they—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member from Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, the homelessness strategy was a whole-of-government approach to ensure no one was left behind, and to guarantee a place for everyone.

The PC government committed to creating 700 new social housing units this year.

So I ask the minister again: Will the new government put Manitobans first, or will they cut the 700 new social housing units?

Ms. Smith: Madam Speaker—sorry, your Honourable Speaker, we have a plan on this side. Our plan is to actually support people. Their plan was no plan.

We actually are listening to the folks on the front lines. This government, had they listened to actual Manitobans, they wouldn't be sitting on that side. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

* (14:50)

The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: The honourable member from Tyndall Park. *[interjection]* Order.

Hearing Aids

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to

perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

(2) People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

(3) Hearing loss can also impact the safety of individuals with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

(4) A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor was indicated—that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total 'numble'—number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

(5) Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia and Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

(6) Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

(7) The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health or a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent

of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

(9) Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of hearing aids, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

(10) The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assisted living devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

(11) Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and older and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

(12) New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health plans, as well as assistance for those whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

(13) Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support of hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health. And,

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitoba's cognitive, mental and social health and well-being.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

The Speaker: No further petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Whyte (MLA Khan). The title of the resolution is: Calling on the Provincial

Government to Remove the Federal Carbon Tax on Home Heating Bills for Manitobans. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

It's been moved by the—I'm announcing that the—pursuant to rule 34(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Whyte.

Let me just redo that. Pursuant to rule 34(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Whyte. The title of the resolution is: Calling on the Provincial Government to Remove the Federal Carbon Tax on Home Heating Bills for Manitobans.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call for debate on the government resolution regarding the appointment of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and then resume the debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will first debate the government resolution regarding the appointment of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and then resuming the debate on the address in reply from the Speech from the Throne.

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations,

WHEREAS in accordance with section 33-1(3) of The Legislative Assembly Act, the Legislative Assembly Management Commission met on July 31st, 2023, and November 14th, 2023, to discuss the appointment process for the position of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; and

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly Management Commission agreed to recommend—the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Rick Yarish be appointed as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, effective upon passage of the House of a resolution affirming this recommendation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to section 33-1 of The Legislative Assembly Act, Rick Yarish be appointed as the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, effective upon passage of—by the House of this resolution.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), seconded by the honourable Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations (Mr. Bushie),

WHEREAS in accordance with section 33.1(3) of The Legislative Assembly Act, the Legislative Assembly Management Commission met on July 31st, 2023, and November 14th, 2023 to discuss the appointment process for the position of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; and

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly Management Commission agreed to recommend to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Rick Yarish be appointed as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, effective on passage by the House of a resolution affirming this recommendation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to section 33.1 of The Legislative Assembly Act, Rick Yarish be appointed as the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, effective upon passage of the House of this resolution.

MLA Fontaine: I just wanted to put a couple of words on the record, and I'm sure my colleague across the way would like to do so as well, in respect of the appointment of Rick Yarish as our new legislative Clerk.

* (15:00)

I first and foremost want to congratulate him. It was a very easy decision when we met in July and in November. It was an easy decision because Rick has proven himself to be beyond capable and have the skills and the knowledge and the institutional knowledge to help run this Assembly.

As I have said many, many times—and, of course, my colleague along the way—we as House Leaders, no matter where we sit on this side of—in this Chamber, are only able to do our job because we have good, knowledgeable clerks.

And we were—we just spoke about Patricia yesterday, and the same holds true for Rick. I have said it many, many times in this House: I would be lost without him, as the former Opposition House Leader, and certainly now, as the Government House Leader, because there is simply so many rules to know and to understand and to also see how they play out in the Assembly.

And so I want to say miigwech to Rick. I look forward to watching his tenure as the Clerk for the Legislative Assembly.

And more importantly, I also want to just acknowledge as well the role that Rick played in guiding this House in partnership with the former Clerk, Patricia, during the pandemic. As we said yesterday, during—working in this Legislative Assembly was very difficult; it was something that we weren't used to.

And Rick also worked in concert with Patricia and allowed us to do the work of the House, including took a very significant role in allowing all the technological abilities that we have now that allows members to sit virtually.

And again, every legislature and parliament across Canada enacted these things. We were all forced to so that we could get on with the business of the day, but Rick had such a senior role and really guided that vision as well. So I want to acknowledge him for that.

And then, finally, I look forward to working with the new Clerk in making and ensuring that the Legislative Assembly is representative of all Manitobans, and he has committed that to myself and to LAMC, that he's going to work to make sure that the Legislative Assembly is representative of all Manitobans and of all the Manitobans that we represent in this Chamber.

So congratulations Rick, on behalf of our NDP team. We are looking forward to working with you. Miigwech.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Just briefly, I know that Rick felt that he should leave the Chamber during this process, and I don't want to take too long and have him think that his appointment is in any way in jeopardy if he's not watching these proceedings, because it never was in jeopardy.

But this is very much a historic moment in the Legislature. I think that the previous, previous Clerk, Binx Remnant, who a couple of members served when he was the Clerk, served for at least two decades, I believe. And, of course, Patricia Chaychuk, who we honoured yesterday, served for two decades, and I won't presume to know how long Rick will serve, but this doesn't happen very often.

Nor are there many Clerks, of course, in Canada overall. There's less than 20, if you include the Territories, and some which might have two. So it's a very unique time, and it's a very prestigious position, and Rick is absolutely the right person for this job, and it's a testament to the fact—and we don't talk about what happens in LAMC publically, we're confined by confidence, but I think I could probably get away with

saying it was an easy decision and a unanimous decision.

And that speaks well, because, as you know, in a partisan House such as this is, political operatives from different parties don't always agree on everything easily. And we easily agreed that Rick Yarish was the the right person to guide the Legislature—and it really is guiding in many ways—guide the Legislature through the times that we have and the times that will come.

And I've appreciated over my time here seeing him grow into the role as the Deputy Clerk and now the Clerk. I've certainly seen the advancement that he has, both in terms of his knowledge and his tenure and his ability to navigate difficult and sometimes emotional circumstances that happen in this House.

So we all have great faith in Rick. We all unanimously approve his appointment, and we wish him Godspeed in this new journey in his life.

The Speaker: If there are no other members wishing to speak, as Speaker then, I will say a few words welcoming Rick to his new role. And, certainly as a new Speaker, Rick's wealth of knowledge in the rules, procedures, is going to be—and has so far already proven to be—invaluable to me as the new Speaker.

Rick and I have had many conversations already about things that we'd like to see done in this Chamber with this Legislature, to modernize it, to make sure that it's inclusive in every way. We want to be respectful; Rick wants to be very respectful of traditions, but make sure that those traditions can be modernized.

So I look forward to working with Rick on normal day-to-day business, but maybe even more so on some of the things that I hope will be exciting for all members in this Chamber, so that we can be who we really should be—all on the same page, all working together for a better Manitoba. And I certainly know that that is Rick's ambition, is to make us the shining example of democracy in this country.

So without further ado, let's welcome Rick to the Chamber.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Oh, I guess we'd better put it to the question first.

So, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

I declare the resolution carried.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Can you canvass the House to see if there's will to call it unanimous?

The Speaker: Is there will to call the resolution passed unanimously? *[Agreed]*

The resolution is accordingly passed unanimously.

THRONE SPEECH (Second Day of Debate)

The Speaker: As announced, we will now—*[interjection]*—as announced, we will now resume debate on the motion moved by the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loisel) for an address and reply to the Speech from the Throne and the amendments thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Tyndall Park, who has five minutes remaining.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): And I just want to take a very quick moment here to congratulate our new head Clerk on his position. I know all of us are very thrilled to have you here. We've all been learning from you over—in my case, over the last eight years, and I'm looking forward to continuing to learn from you. Thank you so much.

You know, Honourable Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to thank my constituents, to speak a little bit about the volunteers on my campaign, to talk about health care, seniors and the cost of living. And with my remaining time here this afternoon, I want to finish my remarks on the importance of anti-scab legislation and banning replacement workers.

Honourable Speaker, British Columbia and Quebec have already introduced this legislation and putting it into practise. We have the federal government who has introduced the legislation. And frankly, Manitoba should be taking the lead on it. This NDP government needs to introduce anti-scab legislation immediately.

Honourable Speaker, one of the things that I was very, very shocked with that was completely absent from the Throne Speech was immigration, immigration as a whole. And literally, the word immigration didn't show up in the Throne Speech, not once.

Manitoba, our great province, needs immigration. We need immigration more than immigration actually needs us, Honourable Speaker.

* (15:10)

And when we think about it, and how the NDP, when they were in opposition, they stood—I was witness to it—they stood up here on this side and they said that when they are in government, they're going to get rid of the \$500 head tax. They haven't done that, Honourable Speaker. They didn't even mention it in their Throne Speech.

Honourable Speaker, another thing that they loved to shout at the top of their lungs when they were in opposition was free health care for international students. Again, they didn't touch it. This was their opportunity and it was lacking from the Throne Speech.

I am very, very concerned about this. There are thousands and thousands of Manitobans who are very concerned about this, and now we're all anxiously waiting to see what the minister responsible for Immigration is going to bring to the table, because it wasn't in the Throne Speech.

Lastly, Honourable Speaker, just with my last couple of minutes here, I want to talk about community safety. I made reference to this earlier in response to a ministerial statement on restorative justice.

Community safety is a real concern, and I'm sure all of my colleagues can attest to this, because when we were knocking on doors in the election, it was coming up at the doors. People were expressing how more and more, they're hearing stories and they're having their own personal experiences.

I know one woman, she told me about an experience just the other week, actually, that she had where she was harassed at a bus stop—public, it was in the light of day, Honourable Speaker. This should not be happening here in Manitoba.

And the issues of crime and safety are only getting worse. So, you want to talk about restorative justice; bring back youth justice committees. It was actually the NDP who cut youth justice committees.

Youth justice committees were a wonderful opportunity here in Manitoba for youth who were remorseful to be able to come forward and give back to the community. It was a way to heal from maybe discretions that maybe should not have been made, Honourable Speaker.

There are a lot of things that we can be doing to help heal the province of Manitoba.

And, just with my last minute here, Honourable Speaker, in response to the Throne Speech, I do believe that health care has to be the biggest issue. This has been ongoing. It should be the top priority for this government. It certainly was during the election, and the new Premier, (Mr. Kinew) he says that he's going to be releasing some information tomorrow morning.

I'm very excited and curious to hear it. We're going to work as well as we can with the government and what they release. And, Honourable Speaker, moving forward, we're going to continue to work for seniors in this province. We're going to make sure we work for cost of living in this province. We need to pay more attention to the environment. I'm disappointed that it wasn't talked about more in the Throne Speech.

There are so many things that should have been included in the Throne Speech that was not, so of course those of us in opposition, we're going to feel worried.

But there's opportunities. There's three more weeks of session here before the House rises for the new year. I'm hopeful that the ministers along with their wonderful departmental staff—I want the departmental staff to really nag the ministers. Make sure you get the ministers to bring these ideas forward, because I know they exist.

Honourable Speaker, there's so much that needs to be done. There's not a lot of time to do it. We want to see action. We need to see changes happen here in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I'm excited, honoured and humbled to stand before you and deliver my first speech in the Manitoba Legislature as hundreds of members have done before me.

I want to congratulate all members on their election. I'm excited to see the energy, youth and diversity of experiences around this room.

I look forward to learning and growing from each and every one of you as we work to serve our constituents and tackle the opportunities and challenges for the betterment of Manitoba.

It's hard to believe that 107 years ago, I would've not have had the opportunity to stand up here today. There have been women before me who have trail-blazed the way for us young women to be able to enter elected office.

In my lifetime, witnessing Bonnie Mitchelson, Mavis Taillieu and Rochelle Squires, to name a few, and follow in their footsteps is a responsibility I do not take lightly.

I am especially grateful to have in our presence here today a trailblazer herself, our Leader of the Opposition and member for Tuxedo (Ms. Stefanson). She was—*[interjection]*—she was our historic first female premier of Manitoba and she will certainly not be our last.

I want to thank my Midland constituents for electing and putting me—their faith and their trust in me to serve them. It is you who elected me into this building, and it is not something that I will ever forget.

I'm also very proud of the electoral district that I represent. Our families are at the heart of our communities, our farms, churches, businesses, schools, community centres and everything in between.

As I speak today, I draw strength from my family. They have been by my side every step of the way. My parents and brothers, for their encouragement and support, and my brothers for their advice—and often criticism, as siblings go—to get me to where I am today.

My husband and my children—my husband, Matt, and my children, Charlotte and Will. As all members know, political office is a strong and difficult family commitment, so there are not enough words in the dictionary for me to thank them and for them to be part of this journey with me. They would be here today, but my children are learning from the incredible teachers and child-care educators that they have. I look forward to having them by my side as I serve in this Legislature. They represent the present and the future and the very reason that I am here today.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I'm honoured to have been appointed to the role as critic for Families, Accessibility and Gender Equity. Our young people need a good basis to thrive on and to succeed. The fundamentals of education, access to jobs for a good career and affordable housing; these are all important for our children and young people to succeed. I will hold the government to account to advocate on behalf of all our parents, other parents like myself who are raising the next generation of our future leaders.

At a young age, my parents instilled in me the values of family, hard work, community and personal responsibility. They taught me that no matter what

obstacles are thrown my way, it's up to me and me alone in order to chart my own path to success.

My desire to run for elected office is not a lifelong dream, but one that has flourished through my lived experiences. First and foremost, I want my children, who are both under five, to grow up in a world where we foster success and not criticize it. I want our children to get the education that we have all been afforded to get good career paths into the future. I want them to be able to go to the mall with their friends without fear for their safety. And I want our future generations to want to live here and want to stay in Manitoba, because it really is a great place to work and raise a family.

My constituency and I are very similar. We both have urban and rural elements. Midland is home to many small communities, but it's also attracting new people and young families into the bedroom communities just outside the Perimeter. My home community of La Salle is now over 3,500 people, many of which are young families and children going to school, playing at the community centre and playing sports outside.

Many of these individuals and families commute into Winnipeg every day for work, activities and sports. The rural-urban divide has always been a challenging one for all political parties. However, my background offers a unique perspective to not only my constituency and its changing demographic, but also for the growing needs of Manitoba as a whole.

Born and raised in Winnipeg and attending university in Southern Ontario, I would have never thought I would follow in my father's footsteps and go into the agri-food industry. But graduating during the economic crash of 2009, I moved back home to Manitoba and have since dedicated my career to advancing economic development and growth in the agri-food and manufacturing sectors in this province.

Throughout these experiences in my career, I know first hand that the communities and Manitoba economy is reliant on the health and success of our rural communities in Manitoba and in Southern Manitoba. The Throne Speech, although quietly touched on the needs of rural communities, failed to truly recognize the importance of our communities to the economic horse of Manitoba.

Midland is a significant contributor to the economic GDP of Manitoba. When it comes to economic impact, it hits far above its weight class. In Rosenort,

for an example, in a town of 800 people, five manufacturing plants employ over a thousand people. Over 50 per cent of those individuals commute from Winnipeg into the town of Rosenort to keep that economy and to keep the many, many industries and businesses that rely on those plans flourishing for our province.

* (15:20)

Carmen, Morris and Oak Bluff all have established and growing industries, manufacturing and food processing. We know that we, in southern Manitoba and in Midland, have a lot to offer. We have great world-class industries, and I want to see that taken to the next level.

While working in the food industry, I experienced agri-food processing and manufacturing opportunities flock to other provinces. Saskatchewan and Alberta thrived under PC leaderships, while under the previous NDP government our economic growth potential was seemingly stalled.

What I can speak to from my experiences is that governments can make a big difference in creating a pro-investment climate. It comes from the nuances of how Cabinet minister and senior government officials are available and the openness and willingness to listen and engage and act.

For the past seven years the PC's economic growth plan encouraged and engaged and collaborated with our key sectors and, as a result, encouraged people, jobs and entrepreneurialism to come back into Manitoba, a climate where home-grown entrepreneurialism is rewarded and not vilified or bogged down in red tape. This is the type of government that Manitoba needs and this is the type of government that the PC government implemented and stood by.

The work was just beginning. And this progress of opportunity was one of the reasons that I decided to seek elected office, in an effort to keep it going.

However, the Throne Speech identified no plan to encourage investment in our province. We need to ensure we're not losing out to other jurisdictions across Canada and that the system is not created so that entrepreneurs and small local business leaders give up, as was the case under the previous NDP government.

Furthermore, the Throne Speech ignored a key piece of what keeps our economy running: ensuring our roads and bridges are in workable order so that our

goods and services can move in and out as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Our producers and businesses need to be able to move product to consumers. This is a key part of the supply chain and is a key part of what keeps our province in well and good economic order. Without proper road infrastructure for our supply chain the entire economy suffers as a result.

The Throne Speech also failed to mention investments—much needed investments—in water management. Manitoba goes through periods of flooding and drought. This is nothing new. We do have an abundance of water in Manitoba, but the water needs to get to areas where we need it.

Oftentimes, in the Red River Valley, Morris will be flooding, but farmers in the Pembina Valley near Carmen are desperate for that water.

Businesses invest and communities grow when we have an adequate supply of raw and portable water. These are the critical components to developing our region to its fullest potential.

A big part of my career has been advocating to remove these types of barriers that hinder growth and development. However, it takes a willing government to look beyond today and for tomorrow. This is something that the Throne Speech severely lacked in.

Midland is a large and beautiful constituency, spanning south to the Red River of Morris, heading west to Carmen, past Stephenfield Provincial Park, up to St. Claude and back to—within the Perimeter to McGillivray Boulevard.

Midland has many gems. From historical venues like the Miami railway museum, to the expansive areas of wilderness and provincial parks we enjoy, such as Stephenfield Provincial Park.

All these attractions drive ecotourism and tourists alike to our region. Unfortunately, the Throne Speech failed to mention the importance of tourism to not only our local communities, but also to Manitoba's economy as a whole.

We have already seen significant growth in the number of people who come to our province, and the purview of this government to create an economic environment where tourist-based businesses are not just surviving, but thriving, lacked in their forecasts and their outlook that was in the Throne Speech.

I don't have to explain the importance of the economy to this side of the House. Our party understands

that we need the right investments in place to ensure the prosperity and economic sustainability of our communities.

Unfortunately, the Throne Speech fails to have that forward outlook.

My constituency is home to some of Manitoba's most prosperous farmland, and while I was pleased to see the Throne Speech indicate that the NDP respects producers who produce the food we eat, farmers require more than just lip service.

Producers in my constituency are worried, and rightfully so. Having previously worked in the livestock industry, my past experience has shown me that the NDP is talk and no action when it comes to our farmers and our producers.

In my experience right now, sitting in this room, and the very Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) who voted for a hog moratorium, this is the exact reason why our producers have no assurances that their livelihoods will not be attacked.

The Throne Speech did nothing to commit to providing farmers and producers the support they need to ensure that we as Manitobans have access to safe, reliable and affordable food.

The Throne Speech is not advocating on behalf of farmers. There is still no clear directive from the NDP on the carbon tax, and their flip-flop is frustrating to farmers and to Manitoban families.

The NDP-Liberal carbon tax has made it more expensive for farmers who grow the food that we need to eat. This is a basic necessity.

Farmers have no alternative but to use grain dryers to transport their product, process the product, until it reaches our table as a family. This is how the supply chain works.

Over the last 18 months, the price of groceries is one of the leading forces behind inflation, yet the NDP continue to support attacks on our farmers rather than lower food prices for all of Manitobans.

Cost of living and inflation are issues I hear often from my constituents. Approximately 65 per cent of the people in Midland are between the ages of 15 and 64: baby boomers—my parents' generation, who are entering retirement age and young people that are entering their university and post-secondary careers.

They are financially strained. And there's a shrinking hope with our young people of being able to afford a house into the future.

What concerns me about the Throne Speech is the lack of priority placed on one of the biggest issues facing Manitobans today: the rising cost of living and inflation. Yet there are effectively no comprehensive plans to help Manitobans who are struggling to make ends meet and to deal with these high inflationary pressures.

The NDP-Liberal coalition carbon tax is set to go to 55 cents a litre by 2035. Families are already stretched financially, and the armful-harmful carbon tax that is placed on the necessities of life is hurting Manitobans just trying to get to work, feed our families and heat their homes.

We need a government that will make life more affordable, reduce taxes and stand up for all Manitobans. This clearly was not identified in the Throne Speech.

My constituents deserve to be heard and they deserve action. They are active in their local community groups, school groups, and they work hard to support their families. Our constituency is blessed with strong, local charitable organizations that assist those in need.

We are blessed with thriving churches, strong community bonds with the various service organizations, clubs and services. It is not unusual to drive through one of our towns and see a parking lot full of vehicles outside a community centre or rinks, as people gather to watch our youth partake in sports and activity, or gathering on a Friday night at the community centre for Chase the Ace.

Many of these venues have been sort-supported by local businesses and groups of community members who fundraise and invest their own dollars to make our communities better.

The people of my constituency do not ask for much but they do expect to have a government to deliver on the basic and fundamental essential services that they rely on.

While I am pleased to see the NDP mention rural health care, I would like to remind them that it was an NDP government that closed down 16 rural ERs.

Today, the Morris hospital in my constituency is looking for health-care workers, however, the Throne Speech failed to have a plan to recruit, retain and train health-care workers within our province.

Furthermore, there was no mention of ensuring our seniors can remain in their home, in their communities, while receiving home care. It was this NDP

government that failed to appoint a minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care dedicated to the people who deserve our respect and the care that they need.

* (15:30)

For a government today that has made a pledge to improving health care, I'm disappointed that the Throne Speech neglected to focus on the recruitment of our health-care workers. I suspect that what the NDP will find is that the problems and challenges we face in our province are complex, nuanced and multifaceted. Reducing the solutions to these problems to bullet points or 140-character tweets might work on a campaign trail, but they do not work in running the largest complex enterprise that we have.

Often politicians have difficulty transitioning from campaign mode to governing mode. Sadly, much of yesterday's Throne Speech was cut and pasted from the boilerplate stump speeches that we have heard before from this government. It is lacking perspective, and it is lacking in a complexities required to run this great province.

We have a responsibility to robustly debate ideas in this House, but ultimately, we can work together in the interests of Manitobans. I will stand up for my Midland constituents and the issues that are most important to them, as I have done today. My constituents are what brought me here, and I will not lose sight of that.

Again, I want to thank all the people who have been by my side along the way, the many mentors I've had the opportunity to work with in the agriculture sector, in the manufacturing sector, in growing and investing in Manitoba along the way. I will bring to the Legislature all my skills, experience and energy, and I will adhere to the highest moral and ethical standards.

Elected office is a privilege that I'm honoured to hold.

Thank you.

Ms. Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Honourable Speaker, this is the first time that I rise in our Legislative House as the honourable member for Radisson.

It is with great humility that I acknowledge this is also the first session that you serve us as Speaker and Deputy Speaker. I extend my sincerest congratulations and thanks for your willingness to keep this body of MLAs, a class with many firsts, in order.

And speaking of firsts, we just congratulated our new Clerk, Rick Yarish. I would like to thank our new Clerk for the work that he did to ensure that us 2023 MLAs could have the smoothest transition possible. I understand that this is the first class that the Legislature has ever seen, and we're—I can—if I can speak for our entire rookie class, I think we're all very grateful.

I would also like to deliver profound thanks to the Lieutenant Governor for overseeing this transition of governments, which signifies our province's optimism and desire for change. The Lieutenant Governor has also marked this moment with a history-making throne speech, laying out our new NDP government's plans to steadily move our province forward in a true progressive fashion, a fashion that includes working hand in hand with those on the front lines.

These are challenges that Manitobans want us to solve, and will. During our first year, our government will be taking steps for a housing-first approach to combat poverty, phasing in a universal nutrition program for K-to-12 schools so that kids go to school fed, strengthening home-care access so that seniors can age with dignity, reducing bureaucracy in health care so that we can increase our capacity and treating workers with dignity so that we have our best chance at winning our collective fight to rebuild this province.

I have the utmost confidence that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our government team will deliver justice to those who have paid dues that are not theirs. People who have had to decide between food and shelter, paying an arm and a leg for a head of lettuce, being forced on highways to other provinces for medical attention. These are difficult times, but our team is up for the task.

Gratitude has led me to a space as grand as this and is the reason that for me, the honour of serving Radisson will never be taken for granted. Therefore, it's only fitting that I begin with a round of thank yous and acknowledging those who made this happen.

The momentum that we had in Radisson brought hope from across the globe. From my loved ones abroad in the Philippines to colleagues that I met through grassroots advocacy across Canada to those just living down the street from me in Harbour View South, it took labour and sacrifice from all kinds of unexpected places to make this happen.

The campaign team that won my election embodied the best version of Manitoba. We had multi-generational and multicultural representation, new

voices and devoted party members, high school talent and senior strength, those who gave donations and those who gave their time. I always told them that I was the lucky candidate, and it's because of them that I get to say that I'm their lucky MLA.

To the people of Radisson who chose to elect the queer, young woman of colour who grew up without ever seeing herself represented in her corner of the city, thank you. Your desire for change is inspiring, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to be the person that you have trusted to make change happen.

Each of us MLAs have so many people to be grateful for. There is a team in this room and beyond that was instrumental to our transition. Thank you to the legislative staff, the caucus team, incumbent MLAs and outgoing MLAs for their guidance, assistance and reassurance as we take up this office. Honourable Speaker, I'd like to thank my fellow 2023 MLAs for embarking on this journey with me; we have our work cut out for us. When one of us rises we rise together, and I would be remiss not to give thanks for the trails blazed by Tita Flor Marcelino and her daughter, the honourable member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) and Senator Gigi Osler as well. Strong Filipina matriarchs are forces to be reckoned with, and I grew up in a family full of them.

Our Demapendan, Pili and Dela Cruz clans know full well the sacrifices, determination and compassion that our women have served as unparalleled examples for. The role models around me have worked in health care, education and front-line non-profit organizations. They taught me the importance of bayanihan [*a spirit of unity and working together toward a common goal without expecting a reward*]: approaching all things with love and solidarity for the common good. Because of them I do my best to embody bayanihan, the way that so many mastered before me.

Gratitude has shaped who I am today, largely because of my loved ones who are sitting up in the gallery and a few, including my brother, who were unable to attend. After all they've done to support me, they've also made the time to share this moment with me today after sitting through question period. Thank you.

I was raised by the youngest siblings of families of six and 12, most of which successfully immigrated here from the Philippines. With newcomer families this big, you had to be grateful for what your older siblings left for you. My dad's side of the family came from a second-class village of Estancia, Iloilo; my

mom's town was a third class component of San Pedro, Laguna. In each town neither of their families were well off; most were surviving by subsistence. My aunts and uncles felt called to take the risk and immigrate to Canada in hope of a better life. Because of their bravery and resilience, we can proudly call Manitoba home and in one generation, have one of our daughters entrusted to serve in this government.

Coming from a country that has seen governments that maintain colonial practices, my family was one that would make every effort to, quote, unquote, keep our heads down and do the work. Before me, we had not had a university graduate. We gave willingly, but none of us were wealthy. Our source of power was and is our family bonds. Holding political opposition to those in formal power was hardly ever something that we felt was within our reach. In other words, I did not come from a political family, but matters of my family became far too political.

The reason that we call Radisson home is because of the Concordia Hospital. Growing up, my family cut costs on child care and let me play secretary on the unit that my mom worked on for almost 18 years. The people of N3E and N3W quickly became family. At the age of 12, I began volunteering at Bethania nursing home and then the Concordia Hospital emergency room. I'd walk over from Kildonan-East Collegiate after school to study in the cafeteria as I waited for my mom to finish her shift.

For a while I thought I was studying to work in health care. Like my cousins, my titas, my best friends, to my mom's initial upset, I wasn't studying to become a nurse. But at least I found a nurse who miraculously wanted to be my partner.

* (15:40)

This is all to say that Concordia became a second home, and a chosen family. My parents put the bulk of their savings into building us a new house, for us to be as close to it as possible. Concordia was where my mom was ready to spend the next 20 years and retire.

So I look to members opposite as I say, the rug was pulled from under us when the now-official-opposition, the former government, cut thousands of jobs in health care, including the nursing job that belonged to my mom. Despite her seniority and skill, she was not provided a permanent position in exchange, nor one to scale up with her last job.

This is a reality faced by many like her, and despite the instability that presented for my family, we were determined—my parents were determined—to

send me to university still. I registered at the University of Manitoba, was accepted and received a handful of scholarships to help. It was just barely enough to help cover costs for my first year.

And come summer, I learned that the same PC government that took my mom's job had planned to lift the tuition freeze without notice to those that would start in the fall. They also stripped away the right to public health care from our international student friends.

The outrage brought me to protests with student organizers in this very building before I had even ever attended my first university class. And this led me to take an active leadership role outside of my local community.

To help cover costs I held a few different full-time jobs while I was completing my bachelor degree, one being elected president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union, which gave me the privilege and honour of representing over 25,000 post-secondary students and advocating at every level of decision-making on their behalf; and another, at L'Arche Winnipeg, allowing me to support people with disabilities in a Transcona organization that houses, employs and empowers them.

The original plan was to finish my bachelor's degree, go into psychology or law and make a difference away from the public eye. That all changed when the former progressive government—Progressive Conservative government brought in bill 64.

Bill 64 proposed to strip our province of the autonomy of school boards, the largest body in K-to-12 education holding the government accountable. The public began speculating whether this would have been a sweeping change similar to the ones that swept and hollowed health care. When questioned, the former premier tried to reassure teachers, EAs and administrators that their jobs would not be cut. If anything, they would take their scissors to maintenance jobs, like my dad's, first.

Like I said earlier, I did not come from a political family, but matters of my family became far too political to ignore under the austerity of the former government. I went from keeping my head down and doing the work to refusing to accept that political spaces weren't made for me. I acknowledge that this shift holds privilege. The privilege to ignore politics was no longer an option.

The reality is that many of us don't want to believe how close we are to relying on our government to save

us. That's why I was driven to do everything in my power to make our Manitoba government one that could.

I'm grateful to be representing the voices of my Radisson community in this new government. Radisson is a central hub for the northeast corner of the city. Home to the Regent commercial district and the urban gateway to Transcona, the vibrant community of Radisson has also seen steady residential and cultural growth over the last decade.

Radisson is certainly not the same as it was when the former Radisson MLA was first elected. Not only have the boundaries changed, but so have the people. Now holding the largest population of any constituency in our great province, we are a true microcosm for both all that Manitoba has to offer and all that it needs to do better.

Our area is well known as Park City, largely because of the people—or, because of the number of parks and green space that cement us. We are home to the largest urban bioserve in the province, and biologically diverse tall-grass prairie. The work of local activists lobbied and organized for decades to connect our most prominent neighborhoods with active transportation. Community gardens are budding and feeding those in need sustainably.

Our people are known to advocate for green solutions and take climate action seriously. I'm proud to say that we now have a government that does too.

I think of the many people I met at the doorstep: health-care workers, union workers, newcomers to Canada, budding families, single parents and struggling students. Their concerns about affordability, income inequality, public education and health care are close to my heart.

I think of the IV clinic that was taken from the community and the blood labs that got moved further away. I think of how many people experiencing homelessness who have found themselves calling Radisson's bus shelters home, and how many, under the watch of this former government, called them their final resting place.

Like I've said, not only have the boundaries of Radisson changed, but the people have too. Though what will always be unchanged is the steadfast history of veterans and military service in my constituency. Just recently, Bob Bullen, one of the last three World War II veterans from Transcona, passed away.

Serving one's community and country is a value that is held dear by many in Radisson. People in Radisson are not only inspiring because of how they push through hardship, but also because of the love that they have for one another and their home.

As a long-time resident of Radisson and the daughter of immigrant front-line workers, I have seen this love in action. I know that we are long overdue for the change we desire, change that honours the sacrifices of the past. Radisson has so much potential and drive for this change. Under-represented voices within this community don't just deserve to be heard, they deserve to be truly listened to. Young people from all backgrounds have been indisputably underestimated and overlooked.

We are constantly told that we are the leaders of tomorrow, but we have every opportunity to be leaders today.

As young people, we have inherited a daunting slate of problems that leave us no choice but to solve in our lifetime. Affordability, climate change, the housing crisis, gangs and addictions see more and more young people fall victim so that the wealthiest among us can make record profits. Community must find our youth before harm does.

I've faced many questions about whether I was old enough for this job. I would like to take this moment to assure all of my naysayers that I am. I am old enough to know, and to have members of my generation, being lost to addictions before they even have a chance at their first job interview. I am old enough to lose sleep over whether our climate and our planet can sustain itself. I am old enough to worry about my loved ones aging with dignity. And I am old enough to know that our government can do better by everyday Manitobans. Therefore, I am old enough to be serving my constituents of Radisson today.

Honourable Speaker, in 2002, the Golden Boy that stands above us was taken down for repairs. Recently, I found a photo of me and my dad standing with it, roughly two years ago, around the age of my goddaughter Lena now. My dad propped me up in his arms with that Mr. Manitoba grin on his face as his young daughter held up an arm to mimic the larger-than-life Golden Boy that was behind her. Neither of us knew that, 20 years later, we would both be here in a space that is equally larger than life fighting for voices like ours to be heard.

In this full circle moment, I remind everyone and myself that gratitude is what led me to where I am today, in a space that carries as much weight as this.

* (15:50)

There's a proverb that reads: It takes a village to raise a child. And as such, that child becomes the pride of the village as a whole. So I may come to this room as one, but I stand in this room as many. The confidence that I carry is from the matriarchs before me, the serving spirit of the Radisson community and from the hard-working passion of my family.

Salamat. [*Thanks.*] Merci. Thank you.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): It is with great honour and privilege that I rise today in this Chamber to speak for the first time as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Agassiz constituency.

I'd like to start off by congratulating all really—or, re-elected and newly elected MLAs, and I wish each and every one of them the very best in their new roles.

This is an incredible moment, and it's been an amazing journey thus far, one that I never imagined.

One doesn't get this far without love and support from family members and friends. I believe it is faith and strong family values that many great things can be accomplished.

I've had unwavering support from my family, my parents Ray and Lyle Byram, sister Sharon and brother-in-law Chris Sobchuk, my brother Scott Byram and his wife Jennifer and, of course, my kids Brynn, Garret and Kensi and my partner George Ong. You've all been a great support in so many ways, and I thank them for being there through the many ups and downs.

As a lifelong resident of Agassiz, I do believe I live in the best part of rural Manitoba. I grew up on a farm and understand the needs and importance of our agriculture industry and what it means to Manitoba, and the economic growth that is driven by the industry.

I was taught at a young age the value of hard work, dedication and commitment. These core values that—these are the core values that have translated into where I am today.

During the election, I had an amazing campaign team working hard in the background and on the ground. They helped with door-knocking, setting up meetings, putting up signs, helping with social media, mail-outs and, of course, much, much more.

Thanks goes out to my campaign manager Maddison Dodds, who kept me on track, and the many community volunteers: Eileen Clarke for her dedication and campaign insight, and her husband Bob, volunteers Clint, Julie Sigurdson, Darryl Young, Jack Sellers, Earl Baron, Bob Wheeler, Shawn Jackson, Bill and Carol Warren, Tom Teochrieb, Tom Yandean, Shelley Allen, Brian and Jan Bailey, Debbie Stewart, Richard and Donna Calamba, Sherry Francis, Jerilyn McBain and, of course, again, my partner George and my parents and my siblings and my kids, who continue to support me in the background and encourage me with their positive messages and motivation when I need it most.

Having lived in Agassiz my entire life, I have been to many if not all of the communities at some point. And during my campaign, it was clear what each of those small communities had in common, and that was a volunteer base. Volunteers are the backbone to communities throughout Manitoba. They are an integral part to the success of community events, celebrations and organizations.

I am grateful for what each community in Agassiz has, not only for the volunteer base, but what they do to bring their communities together. Each has their own unique special niche, and I want to recognize some of those places that I have visited routinely, or attended a special event or gone to by request.

Agassiz has nine municipalities and one First Nation within its boundaries, and I want to highlight some of the great communities within my area and all that they bring to rural Manitoba.

If you travel Highway 5 to Riding Mountain National Park, you'll come to or at least you will drive by the little village of Kelwood. This small town is well known for the Harvest Sun Musical Festival and the Eleanor Rose Outdoor Quilt Show held in August. The vocal entertainment is amazing and admits to unique outdoor display of hundreds quilts, showcasing some of Manitoba's talent at its best. A parade and fair are held the same day and this past year, it saw a record number of fair entries drawing young participants from right across the province of Manitoba. The event has something for every age and interest group.

Although a small community, it does things big in Kelwood, and this community has several businesses providing restaurant services and essential services to all.

Another site worth visiting in Agassiz is nestled in a valley northwest of Neepawa, and here you'll find the village of Polonia. The historical site is not only

known for its rich history and vibrant beauty, but well known to many for the best perogies at the fall suppers and hosts sellout crowds for their themed dinners. This small village relies on these annual fundraiser dinners to keep the community hall operational. The trip to Polonia is a scenic one in the fall and well worth it to visit the grotto and historic cemetery that sits on the hill and has a spectacular view over the valley.

If you don't make the turn to Polonia, you'll cruise by the village of Eden, another little gem in rural Manitoba that is a great community with a K-to-8 school and offers a great community rink during winter months, not only for the residents of Eden, but serves many people from the surrounding area.

Along Highway 5, you may also cruise through Riding Mountain. Passing through this village, you don't notice all the beauty that is hidden behind the homes along the route. Tucked in behind is a beautiful residential area offering a great escape to the outdoors. Riding Mountain is another small community providing great events and social gatherings, and one of those highlighted this year was their bud, spud and steak night with live entertainment from eight track, a great little band.

Neepawa is Agassiz's largest town and the third fastest growing community in Manitoba, and is ranked 13 fastest growing in Canada, as recorded in the 2021 census. The town has been seen significant growth, primarily with Filipino families moving to the area for employment. Manitoba immigration process is of great importance for the families and for employers across the province. Many have come to Manitoba through the MPNP pathway that the Conservative government put in place. Unfortunately, I did not hear anything on immigration in the Throne Speech delivery.

Neepawa has seen significant investment from the Province of Manitoba with capital projects as large as the new vocational school that many are excited about. This project would provide training to a large rural population, serving students from First Nations communities, Hutterite colonies and many more beyond the boundaries of Agassiz. Both educators and the young people are excited that this project would be closer to home for all of them.

Another investment is the new hospital, which is under construction. On my trip home from Winnipeg, I get to pass this new build and see first-hand the great progress.

The thriving community is host to many events throughout the year. Not unlike many rural towns,

there are parades, fairs, sporting events for all seasons and unique celebrations such as the Filipino heritage. Neepawa is home to Manitoba junior hockey league team, the Titans.

The small village of Franklin is a community along Highway 16 at the west side of the constituency. The village may be small, but they draw a crowd with some of the many events they host. Community volunteers often host old-time dances in the evenings and on weekends. This past summer, volunteers co-ordinated with another local organization and hosted their first-ever fish fry, and it proved to be a great success, and I look forward to the next year event.

Brookdale hosted one of its first car shows with a much larger than expected turnout of vintage cars and tractors, a show and shine and everything in between. Donations were accepted, and the funds were planned to go in support of Brookdale Community Centre. However, the plans for funds changed quickly when tragedy struck one of the community's young families. They had lost their home to a fire just days prior to the event. So, in turn, the young group of volunteer organizers opted to have all funds be donated to that family in support and aid of their time in need. The fall supper in this community was also a big success, and with donations supporting the community.

* (16:00)

Wellwood is another little town off Highway 5, and this town has been know to celebrate big. They had an amazing display of fireworks and an outdoor event for a Canada Day celebration. Great job to those who organized the event.

Carberry is known as Manitoba's largest small town fair with livestock shows and chariot and chuck wagon races early in July and all weekend long. This past summer Carberry held a great homecoming event that had live entertainment, a car show that lined the street with vintage autos. Always and a great exciting time in Carberry seeing people come home and camping in the grounds.

Treherne is in the most southern part of Agassiz and offers great amenities for all who visit. Home to great running and ski trails and hosts the Run for the Hills Marathon, one of which I participated in this year and came very close to a personal best, but the hills got the best of me. So I'll try for that again next year.

Treherne has a display of glass bottle buildings in a park dedicated specific to these unique buildings.

Also unique to Treherne and rural Manitoba is the amazing Second Chance car museum in the town. This facility is a must-see for everyone, and you don't have to be a true car enthusiast to enjoy and appreciate the vintage display that they have in their museum.

Rossendale is home to a unique all-in-one grocery store, coffee shop and post office. It serves as the gathering spot for many to get their news and a few essential items, if needed. As always, I enjoy my visits to Rossendale, also known as the knowledge centre to the locals.

Rathwell is another village close to Treherne and is home to several businesses.

Westbourne, too, hosts a fall supper with sellout crowds and an amazing fish fry like no other. The small village draws a crowd for their slow-pitch tournaments, and this year there's building on last year's success and they hosted another tournament and brought in live entertainment.

Gladstone is a town along Highway 16 where many stop to take a quick photo with the iconic happy rock, and in the summer months, stop at one of Travel Manitoba's top 10 drive-in restaurants, Lickety Splits, where one can indulge in an ice cream and maybe a homemade burger.

Williams Campground is another favourite place in Gladstone for many campers to visit in summer months, and just this year they opened their new pool and aquatic centre with community donations and provincial funding through Building Sustainable Communities. This project was welcomed by many.

Building Sustainable Community funding, it has been an important part of many of these rural recreation and outdoor enhancement projects throughout the province.

Langruth is a great little community and hosts a harvest festival, which includes children's activities. The graffiti station was a hit this year where kids could go paint an old relic car. And another unique game to play was the cow patty bingo, something for everyone there.

Plumas is host to many fundraiser events offered through their volunteer organization, Plumas Prairie Initiatives, and another notable recognition for Plumas is that Pirates baseball team who, this year, took home the Santa Clara championship.

Arden, another small community full of talent and enthusiasm, hosts the Crocus Festival in the spring and hosts many curling bonspiels in the winter. This

community of talent performs many theatrical dinners, one of which, I believe, is coming up in December.

Lansdowne Centennial Park in Arden hosted the Whitemud Festival this year, with food trucks and bands as far as Puerto Vallarta.

Sandy Bay First Nation hosts an annual powwow, and this past summer was one of the best with a record-breaking attendance at an amazing show of fireworks. Great job to that community for a fun and safe event.

Austin, Manitoba, as many know, has the agricultural museum, which, again, is a great summer and winter venue for events. Every summer the Austin Threshermen's Reunion provides the province with a great display of tractors, steam engines and wagon tours throughout the village. In the evening, the rodeo and stampede draw a big crowd. This family event draws people from all walks of life and from across the country. Great to see that success year after year.

MacGregor is a great community and has for the last number of years hosted Bull Bash rodeo. This past year alone, this event raised over \$22,000 for local organizations such as the fire department, Kinette club and the local ag society.

These are some of the small communities that make up Agassiz. Every town, village, has something unique to their area, and I'm proud to showcase what they have. Each community offers so much in business, service and delivery we can all appreciate, but one thing they have in common is groups of volunteers who dedicate and commit their time to contribute to growth and wellness in their area.

I want to say thank you to those people, and to those who work on the boards, committees, municipals and town councils: you are people on the ground who make things happen. To the many businesses in these communities: thank you for providing your service in small-town Manitoba.

Aside from communities, Agassiz has over 20 Hutterite colonies, and those communities are growing in business and diversity across the province. Thank you for your contribution to the economic growth of Manitoba.

Agassiz has four school divisions: Turtle River, Beautiful Plains, Pine Creek, Prairie Spirit. Each of these have their unique needs and challenges, but above all, they do an amazing job in keeping our youth educated while in a safe place. Thank you to the

educators in the classroom and the support staff in the education field.

Also within Agassiz are two health-care regions: Prairie Mountain Health and Southern Health. We all know there are many challenges across this sector that span far beyond the borders of Agassiz. I'd like to say thank you to the health-care professionals.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and also congratulate him on his new role. Thank you to the team in that office who organized and delivered the first-ever MLA school for four days of intensive training. This was an incredible experience for all newly elected to be in the Chamber and experience first-hand the feelings and emotions of this unique opportunity of an MLA. The information and education on legislative roles and duties, and the work behind the scenes, was invaluable.

Regardless of what political stripe we are, for what was—or what side of the House we are on, for those four days we all sat together as one and had conversations. It was an experience I appreciated, so thank you to the Clerk's office and also those who made presentations.

Thank you to the team in payroll and member's allowance who shed light on what their role is to those—and to those working in Hansard and keeping us on record.

The information and collaboration during the training was an important step for all of us as we embark on this political journey ahead. Thank you to all of those part of the—or, to those that are part of the security team who greet us every day and ensure the members' safety is priority while in this beautiful Legislative Building.

A big bouquet and thank you to the constituents of Agassiz who supported me and put their faith and trust in me by voting for me to be their next Agassiz MLA. I am passionate and committed to the well-being and future of Manitoba and the cultural diversity within the constituency of Agassiz. I'll make it a priority to continue efforts in healing health care, and hold the NDP to their promises, making life more affordable for our young people and our seniors and keeping our rural communities sustainable.

It is with honour and privilege that I will serve as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Agassiz.

Thank you.

The Speaker in the Chair

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, it is my truly honour to speak first time in this Chamber.

* (16:10)

Honourable Speaker, this week's Speech from the Throne offers an exciting vision for our province. It is a vision of hope, of change and a path highlighting the hard work ahead of us.

I am honoured to be part of what our government has planned for the coming years, including the steps to improve the health-care system in Manitoba to take better care of those who care for our communities; also taking strides to work alongside parents, educators and students to ensure education is accessible and safe for all children in Manitoba. People are ready for a government that listens.

I'm incredibly grateful to be here representing the Fort Richmond community in the Legislature as we do that work.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who helped me throughout the election. We had hundreds of people from all backgrounds involved in our campaign. Some of our volunteers are sitting in the gallery today, and I want to thank you all for your dedication, support, friendship and for believing in me.

Fort Richmond is an incredibly diverse area, and our campaign could contact people in 17 languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi, Gujarati, Hindi, Vietnamese, Tagalog, French, Ukrainian, Arabic, Spanish, Tamil, Bengali, Nepali, Urdu, Somali and English. It was such an impressive campaign because we had folks from all these languages connecting directly at the doorstep and on the phones with residents of Fort Richmond. All these volunteers took the time to connect with communities, not just as part of an election, but to empower and engage people on issues that matter to all of us.

I want to thank my family: my husband, David; my parents, Zuomin and Lijuan; my in-laws, Rob and Karen; and my two young children for their unwavering support, patience and for helping me throughout the campaign.

Thank you to my team, and especially my campaign manager, Liz Carlyle, whose progressive principles were a rock in our campaign. Official agent, Amy Wang, who stood by me as a friend, by my side on the campaign for two years and always believed in me.

Thanks, also, to voter contact organizer, David Jacks, who also had the important role as my supportive husband and taking care of our kids, and E-day co-ordinator, Chris Maddock, who brought everything together in the end.

I thank all our donors and the entire election planning committee. We had volunteers from all walks of life, and I thank all the volunteers from Fort Richmond like Scott, Graham, Fraser, Madeline and Brad and so many more.

I also want to acknowledge the previous members for Fort Richmond, especially Kerri Irvin-Ross, the former NDP member who was supportive of me when I was first—get involved in politics and served as her constituency assistant.

And thank you to the people of Fort Richmond for trusting me in this important role. Fort Richmond community members are thoughtful people. They follow current issues and are very attentive to what is affecting their community. I appreciate the conversations I was able to have at their doorsteps. It will be an honour to represent such a compassionate, invested and thoughtful community.

I want to start my remarks today by acknowledging everyone in this room, from all political parties, and all the staff who work here to make our democracy happen.

I was born in Nanjing, China. My parents were both working class, living in factory housing in the middle of a huge city. My parents worked hard so their only child could have a future, even though we lived using food coupons and rations at times.

Growing up in the late 1980s in China was different from here. It was a time of incredible social and economic instability. And a democracy like we have here in Canada was something that I could never imagine, let alone be part of.

That's why I acknowledge everyone here, because I want us all to remember how important our roles are, and how we should never take our democracy for granted.

While I celebrate the privilege it is to hold public office, especially as the first Chinese Canadian elected to the Manitoba Legislature, I want to reflect on the history of our community.

The Chinese community in Manitoba has existed since the 1880s, and has been integral to building our province. Every small community in Manitoba has a Chinese restaurant as old as the community itself, and

Winnipeg's Chinatown has been a part of our social fabric for a hundred years. Chinese workers from Brandon to Winnipeg and beyond helped build the railways, given the most dangerous jobs, and so many died without any rights or recognize.

Laws and policies were made in Canada, like the head tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act, to prevent Chinese Canadians from entering or participating freely in Canadian society.

And still our community faces discrimination, including during the pandemic where we had to mobilize to fight against anti-Asian racism.

It is particularly difficult for young Asian women who experience patriarchy and tired old sexist stereotypes intended to degrade our strength and determination.

Our communities, like many others, has had the laws or policies written against us, which is why I am so humbled to be the first Chinese Canadian lawmaker in this Legislature.

Honourable Speaker, I commit to using this privilege to ensure no Manitobans regardless of race, country of origin, faith, sexual orientation or gender identity, have laws enacted against them ever again.

I honour all those Chinese Canadians who came before me, and those who are making a difference today.

I look to people like the former Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Philip Lee, and his wife Anita Lee, who are inspirations in our community.

I look to Chinese Canadians who lead in the arts, like renowned filmmaker and manager of Gimli Film Festival, Alan Wong, who also serves as chair of the FascinAsian Film Festival and brings creative passion to our communities, and those who lead in health and social services who work tirelessly on the frontlines to serve our community, and the countless Chinese Canadians who dedicate their time to volunteering and bringing people together. And I look to educators and academics like Dr. Tina Chen, whose work challenges systems of oppression; and so many others.

I also look to the forgotten rail worker, and the lonely restaurant owner on the prairies and the laundry maker who faced ridicule and rejection. I look to the father who never saw his family again because of racist laws that kept them apart.

I hope that I can be an inspiration for the next generation, and especially for Asian women, girls and

gender diverse members of our community. Not just through words, but through action.

That is why our Throne Speech emphasized that together, we reject the division, and will create a strong future for Manitoba. Our government will work to combat any and all forms of hate and violence against Manitobans. Our throne speech emphasizes unity for Manitoba. We must face these issues together to make change happen.

Working together is what I am all about, and building trust and relationships is my greatest strength.

I came to Canada by myself in 2009 as an international student, and I immediately became involved in advocacy work, starting at the University of Manitoba.

* (16:20)

For 14 years, my 'advocacy' work has centred around building bridges between people, and working to ensure Manitoba's diverse communities have access to services and initiatives to help make our province a better place for everyone.

I served as a member of the boards for the Ethnocultural Council of Manitoba, the Asian Heritage Society, Asian Women of Winnipeg, Women of Colour Community Leadership Initiative and as a member of the CancerCare Manitoba Newcomer Advisory Committee.

Through this work I helped organize important initiatives like Asian Heritage Month celebrations, and access to information in multiple languages for Elections Manitoba and municipal elections. I helped bring the BreastCheck screening clinic to the south end. I also helped mobilize the community, including newcomer-owned businesses, to support each other throughout the pandemic.

My advocacy work during the pandemic also included supporting health-care workers at the Victoria Hospital and Southeast Personal Care Home in Fort Richmond by bringing community together and taking action for people who needed the support.

I served on the board of Family Dynamics, supporting families in need, and on the board of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives because I strongly believe we need to work together to develop smart, community-centred initiatives that protect our most vulnerable.

When I was elected as school trustee in the Winnipeg School Division, I helped establish the first

Newcomer Education Committee and worked with the Newcomer Education Coalition. And I worked closely with teachers, staff and students to formally recognize ethnocultural heritage months in the school division.

I also strongly believe in healthy, vibrant communities. And I know the people in Fort Richmond feel the same. Every evening you will see neighbours out on evening walks, bringing their families to the ice rinks, soccer fields and cricket pitches or attending Bombers games right here in the community.

I achieved my master of science degree in kinesiology from the University of Manitoba. My studies centred around city planning and identifying how our municipal environment impacts the walking behaviour of older adults in Winnipeg.

My background in kinesiology, and in particular about physical activity for older adults, will help me advocate for our community's sport and recreation needs.

Our government is committed to supporting older adults by investing in home care and other supports so they can live independently and actively for as long as they are able.

Our community values health and healthy living, and I know many people were shocked when the Victoria Hospital lost its emergency room, and the Mature Women's Centre.

South Winnipeg has been left vulnerable with the closure of the Victoria Hospital ER, despite a rapidly growing population. Bringing back the ER will ensure that people in the south end can have access to critical health services right in the area.

Our growing community also has so many young families who have children in school and child care, including my own children who are in kindergarten and grade 2.

With experience as a school trustee and as a mom, I am proud that our government is so focused on investing in better education. We recognize that schools need more teachers and EAs to reduce class sizes and help kids with additional needs.

As a former school trustee, I saw the challenges school divisions faced under the previous government, and as a parent, I see how hard it is for educators and school staff these days.

The initiatives our government promised in the Throne Speech are critical to ensuring educators, parents and students feel supported.

I know what it is like to grow up with inadequate access to food. Far too many families in Manitoba are experiencing hunger. That is why I am so proud of our government's commitment to a universal nutrition program for our province's kids.

In my role at the Legislature I want to focus on people and use my experience building bridges between communities. I want to focus on people, and use my experience building bridges between communities.

Our caucus's diversity is essential to reflect the province we are representing. It is amazing to—knowing that the children and youth of Manitoba can find role models they can relate to in their government.

Far too often, women have to put in extra work to prove that they are qualified, experienced and able to succeed in roles that have traditionally been filled by men. This is even harder for immigrant or Indigenous women.

Honourable Speaker, my intention in this role is first and foremost to serve the people of Fort Richmond and all of Manitoba.

I know my experience working with ethnocultural communities across the province, my elected governance experience and my educational background in kinesiology and healthy living will be assets to our government.

I look forward to learning and growing with my colleagues who have all—who all have something important to contribute. And I am excited to get to work for Fort Richmond.

Thank you. Merci. Gǎn xiè [*thank you*]. Gǎn'ēn [*grateful*].

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to stand here today in the overwhelmingly breathtaking beauty of this Chamber.

I would like to take this opportunity to showcase my journey to representing one of the greatest constituencies in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, I was born into an entrepreneurial small-business family, to parents that knew enjoying what we have to be thankful for in Manitoba is only possible by treating each other fair and

working hard for what you have. As I grew up in the small community of Zhoda, Manitoba, I spent my spare time working alongside my parents on the farm or in their business.

Along with a strong work ethic, I was taught that education and respect for politics was what you needed to progress in life. Politics, at a young age, made up more than just the odd conversation around my household, and being an only child, it was often involved deeper in adult conversation than the average child. Because of this, I looked for opportunities to get further involved and learn about how political decisions are made, and who makes them.

This led me to getting involved in the Youth Parliament of Manitoba program while I was in high school, and unlike most kids my age, I would look forward to four years of participating in the mock Legislative Assembly each Christmas break, right here in these same Chambers that we sit today. I thank this program for laying the base for my provincial political interests, but life would take me down other paths before leading me back here today.

After I graduated from high school in Vita, Manitoba, I knew that a strong education would be what would allow me to broaden my opportunities. Little did I know that my natural entrepreneurial mindset, along with a passion for my community, would keep me grounded close to home.

As I worked to accomplish two university degrees, one in commerce and the other in economics, I also worked at establishing and developing businesses. By the time I had been nearing the end of my second university degree, I'd established a successful import-and-export business, which didn't leave me dependent on my local rural economy or even the larger scale Manitoba economy.

For whatever reason, I never looked at where I would move my business, but instead I was focused on how my business development could grow my community. It was this passion for community that had community members approach me to run for municipal council in the 2010 election, at the age of 23. The decision was easy, because everything I learned and was taught up until that point told me that without hard work and getting involved, you cannot complain about the outcome.

* (16:30)

This first election was by far my hardest to date and required me to convince the community that I was there for the betterment of our community, and not

just an inexperienced young kid looking to make drastic changes that would be uncomfortable for the status quo.

I was elected, together with a group of very supportive fellow council members, who allowed me to take on many of the new initiatives along with accepting recommendations on things that I felt would make our municipality a better place.

The next 12 years allowed me to shape the political position that I have ended on today. I quickly realized how inefficient working as a closed council is and saw tremendous opportunity to function on a regional level, sharing initiatives between not only neighbouring municipalities but those with a common goal throughout the region.

The entire time I served on municipal council, I sat on at least half a dozen regional boards, of which many were initiatives that I was able to start.

Economic development and regional development were the strongest passions of mine during my 12 years on council.

When I was first elected back in 2010, the RM of Stuartburn didn't have an active building development, a decreasing population and a single-staff office. It didn't take me long to realize that just like growth of my business and farming operation, if you are stagnant even for a moment, you're dying.

Similar again to business, you aren't able to grow alone and everything is easier with the help of capable staff. This led us to grow our staff with capable and progressive members who were willing to think outside of the boundaries of the municipality.

In the early years following the growth of our staff, we were able to find efficiencies and many missed opportunities. As I was caught up with passionately working with my community to grow and access opportunities, I found myself representing more and more regional or provincial boards.

Some of these were organizations like Community Futures Triple R, which is a federally funded, locally directed economic development and lending institution designed to provide assistance and funding for start-up businesses and represented much of the southern portion of southeast Manitoba. Here, I served as president and later on, the provincial Community Futures board.

Another regional board that I represented was Eastman Tourism, which is the regional tourism association representing all of eastern Manitoba.

It was here that I helped to re-establish regional tourism associations and worked together with Travel Manitoba to secure the 96-4 funding model that allows for greater financial funding security for promoting the industry.

These two organizations helped to further open my eyes to the benefit of working at a regional level. I was able to take my experience with these boards back to my council and partner together with our neighbouring municipalities to promote and develop our local tourism and economic development products.

As my local municipality started to see that working together with others would not only benefit us, but the entire community and region, this made it easier to sell to both the community and the council.

The shared desire for progression and growth was passionate there as it is many times within our community, business, organization or government. We were able to start reaping the rewards of the strategic planning and hard work.

The translation meant that businesses were staying, growing and developing within the region. And along with that, people were recognizing us as being the destination to also grow, develop and settle.

As I became more involved at a regional level, it allowed me to serve on more provincial boards, including spending more time on our constituency association.

It was here that I started entertaining the thought of one day truly representing the region of Manitoba that I was so passionate about seeing grow and prosper.

There were boards of the provincial government that I started to recognize as interests to me and where I wanted to be if I was going to see my region succeed socially and economically.

So the first provincial board that I expressed interest in serving on was the Southern Health board. This was the result of seeing how important rural health care is, not only to the sustainability of growth in rural Manitoba, but also the sustainability of our entire province.

After showing interest, I was lucky to be appointed in the fall of 2016 and held a position there for two terms, holding the position of finance chair, where I felt most comfortable within the health system, since I did not possess any direct health-care experience or expertise. I felt that my time on the

board was rewarding to me and also to the organization.

After my time on the health board, I felt that if I was to pursue the appointment of another board, it would need to be something that I need to be personally passionate about and in order for it to keep me engaged with my busy personal business and municipal schedule. I, at that point, identified a board that represents something near and dear to who I am, and that was the Farm Industry Board.

It was here that I truly enjoyed provincial board representation, and discovered the true importance that they provide to Manitobans and the government of Manitoba. During the time that I've described, in the past 12 years of municipal representation, I'd also been very active in a number of community organizations, volunteer groups and with the La Vérendrye constituency.

Although many days it felt like public service was my life and I did not have a personal life during that time between university, business building and municipal government, I managed to find the love of my life, Candice, who I married in 2014. Candice has been a tremendous asset to my life, bringing me support and stability. My wife came from a similar entrepreneurial farm family and did not shy away from jumping into business and our community.

She quickly found her place on various community organizations. We both knew that business ownership was where we would likely always be, and if our personal life was to work in harmony, she would need to also be self-employed. The opportunity came up to purchase a local store in the town of Vita, approximately six months before us getting married, and we thought the fit was ideal.

Being self-employed has been extremely rewarding to my wife and I. It has given us flexibility to not only pursue our passion of community involvement, but has also given us the ability to raise our children while doing what we love. My wife has taken both of our boys to her store only a few short weeks after each one was born, and continues to have them with her at the store a couple days a week.

My journey to stand here today before you has been one that I have my community and its members to thank. I am extremely proud of the constituency that I represent and the people that make up this great province of Manitoba. I feel that I'm an example of the endless opportunities that this province has to hold for each and every one of us.

I hope that by no means anyone has misinterpreted my journey as one of privilege. I started from humble beginnings, with parents who may not have always had the financial ability to assist me in my journey in life, but they were there to support me in the ways that their abilities would allow.

Political opportunities sometimes come at the least opportune time. When Dennis Smook, our previous MLA of La Vérendrye, decided to retire this past year, I knew that I was ready, but that many compromises would need to be made. I am not someone that does something if I am not able to commit to it being done to the best of my ability.

When I ran for the nomination to have the opportunity to be the candidate on our most recent election, I knew that my family and the support network around me would need to be as committed as I was. Obviously, those conversations started with my wife, and then expanded to my support network.

* (16:40)

It is always very difficult to name people in a thank-you recognition because someone is always missed. But there are many people who deserve to be highlighted in my presentation today.

At the top of my list needs to be my wife and two boys. My sons, Nash and Theo, only two and five years old, which has made that the hardest part of my decision to run for MLA. Together with the amazing support of my wife Candice, they have been amazingly supportive through my journey. Nash and Theo are being raised in a fast-paced environment, and although you are the—generally the product of your environment, I truly feel that they enjoy all the attention around community events, parades and the high-paced lifestyle that comes with this career.

I have mentioned my support network, and that starts at the home front. Those are people like our employees that have been able to pick up the slack when not only me but my wife have needed to be absent for several events or other personal commitments. This then extends to my parents and my in-laws. These four have been instrumental in helping along the way. Whether it be my father-in-law jumping on a combine on his way to the lake because he sees me struggling or my parents being available at a moment's notice to help take care of the boys, they have all been there every step of the way.

Along with family, each and every one of our close friends has been there at a moment's notice to

pick up the slack without any expectation of compensation. It is in times like these that you truly realize the value of unconditional friendship.

On the political side, I couldn't have made it all come together without the help of my constituency executive and campaign manager. Rob Pankhurst, Cameron Peters, Justin Kehler, Mark Bernard and by far, our previous MLA, Dennis Smook.

Dennis Smook has been such a—

Some Honourable Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Narth: Dennis Smook has been such a strong political mentor to me along the way, and I have such tremendous respect for his ability to serve our constituency in a respectful manner that he did. I know that I have large shoes to fill, and I hope that I am able to carry out the same level of integrity that Mr. Smook was able to. Every one of these people have been overwhelmingly supportive, and, in turn, I'm here today to provide that same level of passion and support for the constituents of La Vérendrye.

I ran for this position in the constituency of La Vérendrye because I have felt that it is an under-recognized region of Manitoba, and not by fault of any representative or government but instead because of the stability and strength that it is composed of. La Vérendrye is one of the most progressive regions in Manitoba, with tremendous economic strength and diversity. The constituency has one of the youngest populations in Manitoba, together with being one of the fastest growing regions in rural Manitoba, strong in industry, agriculture and natural resources. The region is strong in immigration and open and supportive of the ethnic diversity that we are comprised of. Exactly half of the six municipalities are Francophone, and although the diversity extends much further, we are proud of the bilingual communities that help shape our identity.

It brings me tremendous pride to be the member of this Legislative Assembly representing a constituency that represents everything we strive to be as Manitobans. As I find my place in these Chambers and this Legislature, you can be sure that as passionate as I am to grow and prosper our province, I am proud of my community and my constituency.

As we reflect on the Throne Speech, I am hopeful about the tone of togetherness for all Manitobans, and I will be holding this government to account on that commitment. Whether it be agriculture, industry, tourism or natural resources, rural Manitoba contributes to a large portion of Manitoba's economy.

Constituencies like La Vérendrye are made up of reasonable, trusting and hard-working Manitobans that care more about their family and community than they do the political banter. As we move forward together, I will be looking at this government to treat every Manitoban with the same level of focus and respect, regardless of their involvement with a special interest group. Many Manitobans are too busy working to build this province, to have their time to lobby or, for the more—most part, be heard by the politicians. As we move forward to grow this province, I ask this government to consider the constituents of La Vérendrye the same as every other constituent in Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): Honourable Speaker, I rise today in response to our government's Throne Speech in what is also my inaugural address in this Assembly.

I think it only fitting to begin by highlighting what a privilege it is to be following long-time member Jon Gerrard as the MLA for River Heights. He ably served the people of our community for an astonishing 24 years, and the standard of public service he set during that time is the standard to which all members should strive to reach. His record is made even more impressive when one considers that he was often the lone Liberal voice in this Chamber.

I'm certain the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) will look to him for guidance as she now takes on a similar role. I know he will continue to be highly regarded by members who served with him as an able debater, a dedicated colleague and a champion of many important causes. I'm humbled to follow in his footsteps.

I do want to take a minute to express my thanks to the people who helped get me to this moment, beginning with the members of my constituency executive. It will come as no surprise to anyone in this Chamber that River Heights has not always been an easy place for New Democrats. So I want to thank you, knowing that what we accomplished during this election was built on the foundation of your work and stewardship. We said from the beginning everything is impossible until it isn't.

During the campaign I was fortunate to have an excellent core campaign team: my campaign manager, Will O'Conner, whose father ably served as chief of staff to former premier Howard Pawley, along with Dylan Bonnevoy, Katie Hurst, Bill Ried, Sue Hudson,

Bill Carlson and Pat McDonald [*phonetic*]. All embraced the daily grind that is an election campaign, and they recruited, trained and encouraged the many volunteers necessary to get us successfully across the finish line. You were all truly amazing.

I do want to say a word of thanks to one volunteer in particular, Lilly Schreyer. Lilly, along with her daughter Lisa, knocked on countless doors for me. And, I must tell you, Lilly is the ultimate Manitoba campaign closer. I know this because I got countless phone calls from people who were so impressed that Lilly was at their door that they felt compelled to call and tell me. They had been waffling in their support, but then Lilly showed up, and, well, if I was good enough for Lilly, I was good enough for them. I'll take it.

The person I owe the most to is my wife Christine. She was steadfast from the beginning, encouraging me, campaigning with me and reminding me not to take any of it too seriously or too personally, advice I suspect I will need to call on as this session begins. I'm not here today without you.

I do want to mention our children, Sarah, Megan, Reid, Holly and Madeline, because at the core of—they are at the core of what motivates me to do this work.

* (16:50)

And I think it's something all members share, and that's people in our lives for whom we want to make a difference. They help us clarify the changes that must occur in our lifetime in order to make their lives and the lives of people just like them better, fuller and more secure.

And on the days when this work is unrelenting, unbearable, they are the ones that keep us moving forward, and I know we are all grateful for that.

Finally, I want to thank the people of River Heights for the faith you've shown in me, in allowing me to serve as your representative in this place. The conversations we had and will continue to have on your doorsteps and in our community will guide me during my time here.

There is a great deal we can do together, and I very much look forward to working with you in the months and years to come.

Like you, my path to the Manitoba Legislature has been a long and scenic one. Out of high school, for example, my intention was to pursue a career as an actor and one day work on Broadway. Perhaps I should have been more specific.

The truth is, there really isn't very much difference between the politics of theatre and the theatre of politics, except that in the theatre, you get better lines.

I grew up in the small rural community of Spirit River in northern Alberta, which was for much of my youth represented by the lone New Democrat in the Alberta Legislature, Grant Notley.

Grant is, as you might have guessed, the father of the once and future premier of that province, Rachel Notley. And he continues to be regarded by Albertans of a certain age to be one of the true giants of public life, not simply because of his legislative accomplishments, which were many, but because of the example he set for others.

On issues Grant viewed as core to his principles, he was doggedly partisan. But he understood that most issues don't fall into that category, and he never let partisanship itself stand in the way of good public policy, an approach that served him and Alberta well.

I was fortunate to join Grant's staff during his time as leader of the official opposition. We gained that title when we doubled the size of our caucus in 1982, adding a second member, Ray Martin. Those were heady days to be an Alberta New Democrat.

And I was on his staff on October 20th, 1984, when heading back to his constituency on a day that no plane should have left the ground, the small commercial craft he was traveling in crashed, killing Grant and five other passengers. There were four survivors, including Conservative housing minister Larry Shaben.

At the time of his death, Grant was 45 years old.

I learned an important lesson in the days that followed, not just about politics but about people and life. I watched the Progressive Conservative government of Peter Lougheed move quickly and without hesitation to support Grant's family in their time of grief, and to publicly recognize the critical role he played in that province.

While not philosophically aligned in any way, they recognized the strength of his convictions, the principled manner in which he fought for them and they valued the way in which his voice helped make their government better without ever diminishing the institution.

Honourable Speaker, as a young political staffer, I was stunned by the depth of the personal grief being expressed by Lougheed and much of his front bench.

At the graveside, it would have been nearly impossible for a casual observer to know for certain which side of the House any of the mourners had sat. That memory has not faded with time. It's as sharp and textured as ever. And I tell that story not simply to trace my origins, but offer it as an example of what we might be over the next number of years.

While our democracy requires a full and vigorous debate to ensure that Manitobans get the best possible public policy outcome, that debate is never elevated, never improved, by the acrimony, pettiness and personal attacks that can sometimes characterize parliamentary proceedings. We can do better. And in my time here, Honourable Speaker, I commit to attempting to do so.

Our government's Throne Speech, Working Together. Working For You. offers a range of critically important policy areas around which members on both sides of the aisle should be able to rally without partisanship, the current health crisis being first among them. Over the two years that I knocked on doors in River Heights, no issue worried people more than the state of our health- and seniors-care systems.

I heard, as I'm sure other members did, heart-breaking stories from patients, their families and from front-line health-care workers. They talked of hours-long waits in overcrowded waiting rooms with loved ones who too often went home without getting the treatments they needed. There were stories of individuals living in chronic pain who were on surgery wait-lists that never seemed to get any shorter. And from doctors, nurses, radiologists, the full range of health-care professionals, I heard how they agonized about the level of care they were able to provide without the critical resources they needed.

They talked about being ground down by impossible workloads, mandatory overtime and coming to the soul-crushing realization that they were viewed as disposable by the system they always dreamt of working in. Too many times I heard: I don't think I can do this much longer; it's too hard. While others had left the health-care system early, hoping to regain a work-life balance they'd long since lost.

While our Throne Speech, Honourable Speaker, acknowledges that changes to the system are necessary, it also makes it clear that it's health-care workers themselves that are at the very heart of a strong and vibrant health-care system. Without them, we have nothing. They need to be supported, listened to and valued for the incredibly difficult work they do

every single day. That work has already started with the launch of the health-care listening tour and our desire to return more day-to-day decision making to the front lines.

As a long-time theatre teacher and hockey coach, I always believed that how you treat people, how they feel as part of your team, matters almost as much as any other aspect of your program. By extension, one of the most important tasks we have as leaders is to create a workplace culture in which success is not only possible, but it's the unquestioned expectation that's embraced by everyone. That's impossible for people to do if they don't feel valued.

Additionally, commitments like opening up more post-secondary health-care training spaces to end educational wait-lists, retaining our current workers, fast-tracking foreign-trained health-care professionals into the system, all of that is predicated on creating a workplace culture that is constructive, hopeful and

innovative in nature. And I am confident, Honourable Speaker, that is exactly the direction this Throne Speech sets out for us.

My path has also meandered its way through a gratifying 25-year teaching career, both on Vancouver Island and here in Winnipeg. The bulk of that time was spent at Cowichan Secondary School—go Thunderbirds. I will forever be grateful to have worked alongside so many incredible educators, all dedicated to providing—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member from River Heights will have six minutes remaining.

The order now being—the hour now being 5 o'clock, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow—my mistake—'til 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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