

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

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

Vol. LXXV No. 46 - 10 a.m., Friday, April 9, 2021

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 9, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 224—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting)

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member from Notre Dame, that Bill 224, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Smith: I am pleased to introduce Bill 224, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), to provide greater accountability to the government's efforts of addressing the overdose crisis.

Too many Manitobans have died from overdoses, and in this crisis has only got worse during this pandemic. Two years ago, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) tossed the safe consumption space report on the ground, a report that said a safe consumption space would save thousands of lives.

Fast-forward two years, hundreds more Manitobans continue to die from overdose, and these deaths continue to go unreported—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—order, please. The honourable Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the member is not a new member anymore. I think that she knows that the purpose of the introduction of bills is to describe the bill, not to enter into political debate. Question

period is coming. If she wants to ask a question and do political debate, she could do it at that time. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The member does have a point of order. There is supposed to be no debate in first reading. It is only been—meant to bring forward the bill in a very, very brief summary only to be about 30 seconds long, that's it. And that's the rule for everybody bringing forward first readings.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, to conclude her introduction of her bill.

Mrs. Smith: Deaths in Manitoba continue to go unreported by this government, and it's time for this to change. It's time for the public to be aware of the state of this crisis in Manitoba, and this bill will do just that—a crisis which continues to grow in our province.

This bill will require the chief medical officer to produce monthly reports on how many people have died from overdoses and from what drug.

I look forward to the House's support on this bill.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Third Report

Mr. James Teitsma (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 8, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 41)** – *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées*
- **Bill (No. 61)** – *The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'apprentissage et la reconnaissance professionnelle*

Committee Membership

- Hon. Mr. EICHLER
- Hon. Mr. HELWER
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Mr. MOSES
- Mr. SMOOK
- Mr. TEITSMA

Your Committee elected Mr. TEITSMA as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Vice-Chairperson.

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 8, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- Ms. LAMOUREUX

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following eight presentations on **Bill (No. 41)** – *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées*:

Katherine Stansfield, Manitoba Alliance of Health Regulatory Colleges

Jessica Praznik, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg

Lizeth Argila, SEED Winnipeg Inc.

Seid Ahmed, Manitoba Association of Newcomers Serving Organizations

Monika Feist, Success Skills Centre

Vikoria Vladimirova, Eastman and Interlake Region

Shawna Finnegan, Private Citizen

Darcia Senft, Law Society of Manitoba

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following 12 presentations on **Bill (No. 61)** – *The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'apprentissage et la reconnaissance professionnelle*:

Tanya Palson, Private Citizen

Ramona Coey, Mechanical Contractors Association of Manitoba

Kyle Kalcsics, Local 254 Plumbers & Pipe Fitters

Marc Lafond, Operating Engineers Local 987

Aarti Sharma, Private Citizen

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Ron Hambley, Winnipeg Construction Association

Sudhir Sandhu, Manitoba Building Trades

Shawn Kettner, Private Citizen

Patrick Falconer, Private Citizen

Peter Wightman, Construction Labour Relation Association of Manitoba

Robert Duarte, The Iron Workers

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following three written submissions on **Bill (No. 61)** – *The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'apprentissage et la reconnaissance professionnelle*:

Darryl Harrison, Winnipeg Construction Association

Yvette Milner, Merit Contractors Association

Ramona Coey, Mechanical Contractors Association of Manitoba

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 41)** – *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 61)** – *The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'apprentissage et la reconnaissance professionnelle*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Smook), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on
Legislative Affairs
Fourth Report**

Mr. Jon Reyes (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 8, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 13)** – *The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act / Loi sur les projets de construction dans le secteur public (appels d'offres)*
- **Bill (No. 17)** – *The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules*
- **Bill (No. 20)** – *The Vehicle Technology Testing Act (Various Acts Amended) / Loi sur la mise à l'essai des technologies des véhicules (modification de diverses lois)*
- **Bill (No. 23)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Control of Traffic by Flag Persons) / Loi modifiant le Code de la route (contrôle de la circulation par des signaleurs)*
- **Bill (No. 28)** – *The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement hydraulique*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mrs. GUILLEMARD*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Mr. REYES (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. SANDHU*
- *Hon. Mr. SCHULER*
- *Mr. WIEBE*

Your Committee elected Mr. MICHALESKI as the Vice-Chairperson.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 8, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following 10 presentations on **Bill (No. 13)** – *The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act / Loi sur les projets de construction dans le secteur public (appels d'offres)**

Paul Moist, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Sudhir Sandhu, Manitoba Building Trades

Tanya Palson, Private citizen

Chris Lorenc, President, Manitoba Heavy Construction Association

Jeff Skinner, IBEW 2085

Kyle Kalcsics, Local 254 Plumbers & Pipe Fitters

Marc Lafond, Operating Engineers Local 987

Aarti Sharma, Private citizen

Kyley Parker, Private citizen

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following four written submissions on **Bill (No. 13)** – *The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act / Loi sur les projets de construction dans le secteur public (appels d'offres)**

Darryl Harrison, The Winnipeg Construction Association

Yvette Milner, Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba

Nathan Koslowsky, CLAC Local 152

Mike Martens, Progressive Contractors Association of Canada

*Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 20)** – *The Vehicle Technology Testing Act (Various Acts Amended) / Loi sur la mise à l'essai des technologies des véhicules (modification de diverses lois)**

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 13)** – *The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act / Loi sur les projets de construction dans le secteur public (appels d'offres)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 17)** – *The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 20)** – *The Vehicle Technology Testing Act (Various Acts Amended) / Loi sur la mise à l'essai des technologies des véhicules (modification de diverses lois)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 23)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Control of Traffic by Flag Persons) / Loi modifiant le Code de la route (contrôle de la circulation par des signaleurs)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 28)** – *The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement hydraulique*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable First Minister please proceed with his statement.

Passing of Prince Philip

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Today, we were all saddened to learn of the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

From his first visit to Manitoba in 1951 to his last in 2010, Manitobans have had a special relationship with the Duke of Edinburgh. In 10 separate visits to our province, Madam Speaker, tours and visits, the duke visited communities all across Manitoba. He came here in 1967 to officially open the Pan American Games that we hosted. He celebrated our centennial with us in 1970. He presented the Duke of Edinburgh's gold awards in Thompson in 1984. He visited Churchill in 1992. He was everywhere. And he toured flood-ravaged communities in southern Manitoba in 1997 as well. The Duke of Edinburgh connected directly with Manitobans.

We'll remember his bravery during active service in the Royal Navy during the Second World War; his long association with the military, which his grandsons continue today; his dedication and commitment, of course, to supporting Her Royal Highness Majesty Queen Elizabeth as the longest serving royal consort in the history of that institution; with keen interest in conservation; his generosity of time; his hard work for many of the charities.

He was the hardest working member, I am told, of the royal house, doing more appearances for philanthropic and charitable institutions in his 90s than any other member of the royal house—and his vision in creating the Duke of Edinburgh awards to help young people explore their interests and to learn to give back through philanthropic and charitable efforts to their communities.

On behalf of all Manitobans, Madam Speaker, and I know all of us, I extend our sympathies to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, to the Prince of Wales, his family, the Duke of York and his family, the Earl of Wessex, the Princess Royal, His Royal Highness's grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other members of the royal family.

I encourage all Manitobans to visit WWW-dot-Manitoba-I-LG-dot-CA, where the virtual book of condolence will be posted later today. And I know that the Opposition Leader and myself will be putting our signatures on that book to indicate our sympathy and our condolences personally and on behalf of Manitobans as well.

* (10:10)

I encourage Manitobans to share their memories. Many Manitobans will have memories of their encounters with or their times with Prince Philip himself.

Madam Speaker, I'd ask that the House give leave to a moment of silence following the responses to this statement. May he rest in peace.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, passed away today at age 99 after leading a remarkable life. Prince Philip was born in Greece and spent his childhood in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, where he joined the British Royal Navy at the age of 18. He was decorated for his service during World War II and certainly we honour his commitment to fighting for freedom.

He met his wife, who was then Princess Elizabeth, when she was a child, and they were married shortly after the Second World War. In November of 2017, they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. They had four children: Charles, the Prince of Wales; Anne, Princess Royal; Prince Andrew, the Duke of York; and Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex.

Now, Prince Philip was a sports enthusiast and a member of over 780 organizations, and he served as chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh's award, a self-improvement program for young people aged 14 to 24. He retired at 96 after completing 22,219 solo engagements and, of course, after visiting Manitoba many times.

He will be remembered for all of these good acts and for his legacy, which was complicated at times, but certainly had a profound impact on many. At the time of his passing today, he is the longest serving consort of a reigning British monarch and the longest lived male member of the British royal family.

He will be missed by his family, friends and by many throughout the Commonwealth. We would like to send our condolences to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, the Earl of Wessex, the Princess Royal, His Royal Highness's great-grandchildren, great-grandchildren and the other members of the royal family.

As an Indigenous person in Canada, the relationship with the monarchy began with the foundation of the sacred treaty relationship. As a descendent of the non-Indigenous partners to that

treaty as well, of course I acknowledge the significance of this day to all members throughout the Commonwealth.

So to everyone on both side of the treaty relationship who is mourning on this day, we want to remind them that in our language, Anishinaabemowin, there is no word for goodbye—simply, we will see you again.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, in 2010, when the Queen and Prince Philip were visiting Manitoba, there was a reception at Government House. As Leader of the Liberal Party at the time, Naomi and I were invited guests. At the reception, the Queen went around one side of the room, and Prince Philip, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, went around our side of the room, and we were lucky enough to have a chance to meet him.

Prince Philip was an environmentalist and one of those involved in the founding of the World Wildlife Fund. In 1961, he became president of the British National Appeal, the first national organization in the World Wildlife Fund family. The World Wildlife Fund has since become one of the most important environment organizations on our planet. I have a personal connection to it because my daughter Pauline and her partner Roger both worked for many years with the World Wildlife Fund in Laos, and got—I got a chance to learn from them of the amazing contributions of this organization.

I became interested in birds early on in my life, and one of the books I was given when I was about 15 was a book titled *Seabirds in Southern Waters*, written by Prince Philip and published in 1962. Not well-known, Prince Philip was a very talented photographer. He'd taken many photos of seabirds, from albatrosses to shearwaters, taken during expeditions on the Royal Yacht Britannia. I was entranced. But it was not until many decades later that I had a chance to see albatrosses in New Zealand and many other seabirds in the Galapagos. Thank you, Prince Philip, for your book and your inspiration.

Notable as well, among Prince Philip's achievements, was his attention to young people. In 1956 he founded the Duke of Edinburgh awards, which recognize youth and young adults for completing

a series of activities, including volunteering in physical activities and practical and social skills and in personal interests and in completing an expedition.

And now, affiliated with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award association, there are organizations in 144 countries. What started in 1956 in the United Kingdom is now a global effort to support and empower young people.

Thank you, Prince Philip, for all you have done. Though much of your efforts have been in the shadow of the Queen, your own accomplishments in advancing environmental concerns and in helping young people have been outstanding.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Tracey Wenham

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): Hello—oh, okay. I wasn't sure if it was on.

Madam Speaker, communities play a vital role in supporting each other and bringing people together during times of need.

Today, I'm honoured to rise in the Chamber to recognize the accomplishments of Tracey Wenham for her outstanding dedication and commitment to the homeless community.

Tracey's passion for helping the homeless began in 2014 with a homeless project through the Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba that grew in 2016 to walking through the streets to connect with individuals and taking them out for coffee. Tracey's purpose and goal is to help people and bring their needs to light.

When the COVID pandemic was declared, Tracey reached out to her community, asking if people would be willing to donate clothing, and quickly found herself picking up donations from across the city.

In December 2020, Tracey organized a drive to fill backpacks and purses with items such as winter clothing, ornaments, snacks and toiletries. Through the generosity of our community, Tracey was able to

gift the donations to over 200 homeless people for Christmas.

On March 29th, Tracey launched the angel wings of love project on Facebook, collecting plastic bags and turning them into sleeping mats for the homeless. During her visits, she provides empathy, compassion and support to every person she interacts with, in hopes of lifting their spirits.

Tracey's grateful for all the donations she receives and looks forward to helping more people and making new connections.

Please join me to thank Tracey Wenham for her commitment and work with the homeless community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Encouragement for Indigenous People to get Vaccinated

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I think it's fair to say we are all ready and anxious for this pandemic to be over.

In record time, the global science community developed not one, but four, approved vaccines. That's an amazing feat.

Two days ago I received my first shot of the Pfizer vaccine. My shot was administered by 'docta' Marcia Anderson, an Indigenous doctor on the front lines and a member of the First Nations pandemic response team. I felt relief knowing that I'm doing what I need to do to protect those within my sacred circle.

* (10:20)

So it's within this profound sense of gratitude I encourage all Manitobans to get the vaccine as soon as they are eligible. More specifically, I want to encourage all Indigenous relatives in Manitoba and across our territories to get vaccinated.

I know there are some within the communities that are hesitant and distrustful of the vaccine. I get it. The colonial project has seen our ancestors die from smallpox-infested blankets. Our children were experimented on in residential schools. Our women have been sterilized without our permission or knowledge.

Despite this, Madam Speaker, our elders are leading the way for all of us by getting vaccinated, including my own grandmother, Nora Fontaine.

I believe in the science of these vaccines. They're safe and effective. They're what we need to do to protect our elders, to get to hug our friends and families once again and to gather as a community.

I think, at this point, we are very lonesome for a powwow or ceremony.

So, like our elders, we must do our part and get vaccinated. So, as soon as you are eligible, book an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Every person who gets vaccinated brings us one step closer to getting back to the people and things we love.

Miigwech.

Rossendale Knowledge Centre

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): Good morning, everyone.

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize and acknowledge a community hub in the southeast corner of Agassiz constituency. Locals in the area may know it as the Rossendale Knowledge Centre.

In years gone by, rural Manitoba had many small communities. The general store was the foundation of all these communities. They were a single-building mall of sorts. Besides all the grocery needs, you'd find miscellaneous household items, fabric, animal feed, the post office as well as many other goods and services. They were literally a one-stop shop. Rossendale was one of these communities and it still has its door open, not just to the same capacity.

Owners Tom and Melvina Hartling will be celebrating 25 years of business this year, and I would like to congratulate them on that milestone.

For years, the business offered catering services, coffee shop and provided grocery essentials and postal services. Since COVID, their business has changed slightly and they've had to close the coffee shop; however, they have kept the storefront operational and continue to provide essential grocery items to this small rural community. Keeping the store open during this pandemic has proven to be a vital service for many of the seniors in the area.

The coffee shop was named the Rossendale Knowledge Centre as it was a gathering spot for many to share their knowledge on local issues, connect with their neighbors and, of course, express their opinions on a variety of topics. Morning coffee and breakfast at the centre was routine for a number of those in the area, and on 'casion' I was very able to be a part of those coffee chats. Always interesting conversations with Will Eert, Fred Tait, Rob Werbiski, Art

Thompson, Duane Verway, Harvey Watson, Murray Perkins, just to name a few.

On behalf of all the members of this Assembly, I want to say thank you to Tom and Melvina for their many years of business and to the many patrons of the Rossendale Knowledge Centre and store. It's such a little gem in Agassiz, and I enjoyed every visit there with the locals, and I look forward to going back one day very soon.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Budget 2021 and Vaccine Rollout

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are frustrated. They thought that maybe this government's budget would begin to address the many issues that have been highlighted by this pandemic—in health care, education, our economy and in ramping up the vaccine rollout. But the Pallister government just didn't meet the moment.

In spite of the global pandemic, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government continue to put money and their political interests ahead of the needs of Manitobans. In this budget, they're spending less on health care this year than last year and cut funding to acute care. They've ignored seniors and failed to invest in long-term-care homes and home care.

They underspent the Education budget by \$8 million during the pandemic and then insulted teachers by telling them to fill in the gaps out of their own pockets. And now they've continued to fund—underfund—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —universities and colleges, raising tuition and making it more difficult for Manitobans to access post-secondary education.

I think it's pretty clear that this government is more concerned with the optics, not the effectiveness, of their vaccine rollout. Why else would they under-book appointments to avoid long lines while operating at 25 per cent of their supposed capacity while nearly 175,000 vaccines sit in freezers?

The truth is this government will do anything to avoid talking about their failed vaccine rollout. And instead of ramping up our rollout and fixing the problems that we've had so far, the minister says, well, she's satisfied with the way things are.

This is unacceptable, Madam Speaker. The pandemic has been a test of leadership, and the Pallister government is failing it. Manitobans want to

see a budget that supports all of us, not just a select few.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet should apologize to Manitobans for failing to support them when they need it most.

Joël Roy

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): Madam Speaker, many great Canadians have fought for our country—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, many great Canadians have fought for our country like they did on this day—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reyes: I'll begin again, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Reyes: Many great Canadians have fought for our country like they did on this day in 1917 at Vimy Ridge. Many have sacrificed their lives to serve.

Today I am honouring Mr. Joël Roy, who devoted an astonishing 28-plus years of his life in the Royal Canadian Air Force, up to the rank of colonel.

Joël joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in December of 1987. In April of 1990, he received his pilot wings. One year later, in June 1991, he graduated from a fighter pilots course. His time in the RCAF took him to many places around the world, including Germany, CFB Bagotville, Quebec, Ottawa, Kingston, Trenton and the Middle East, to name a few.

In 2013, he returned to Canada and assumed command of 17 Wing Winnipeg and the air force training centre. In August of 2015, Colonel Roy was appointed to the position of A5/A7 at 1 Canadian Air Division headquarters.

Some of his most successful achievements include commanding five different subsidiaries of the RCAF. These commander positions were at the RCAF wing, a multi-school formation, the Canadian contingent on deployment subsidiary and two RCAF operational squadrons.

Throughout his time in all these positions, Colonel Roy focused on family, which is why, in 2016, he decided to retire from the RCAF and take a position as the executive director at the Military

Family Resource Centre at 17 Wing. This was perhaps his biggest accomplishment to date.

This change in job made sense as he was now able to help the lives of even more families, something I know he wanted to do as family is an important part of Joël Roy's life. He has touched many lives and families during his successful career in the RCAF and the MFRC where he served honourably.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honouring and recognizing Joël Roy for his positive work in keeping Canada safe, helping to support military families and also positively changing the lives of many people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Continued)

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

Fourth Report

(Continued)

Madam Speaker: We are going to need to revert back to committee reports to correct a procedural irregularity with the motion to receive the Legislative Affairs committee report, and I would like to ask the honourable member for Waverley to put forward his motion again.

Mr. Jon Reyes (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Madam Speaker: The member only has to bring forward the actual motion.

Mr. Reyes: Oh, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Rates

PUB Hearing

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Public Utilities Board is considering having a hearing because of the Premier's cover-up at Manitoba Hydro. And, of course, we're starting to get a clearer picture of what exactly it is that he's been trying to cover up.

This year's budget shows that not only is Hydro forecasting \$111 million in revenue this year, Hydro's

also expecting to increase that to \$190 million in profit next year.

* (10:30)

Now, the Premier has consistently hidden Manitoba Hydro's true financial state. Consider the fact that, while the corporation is profitable, this team on the other side is freezing the wages, causing a strike, which is affecting the lives of many, many Manitobans. They're also raising rates on the average family out there.

So I'll ask the Premier: Just how much does he plan to raise rates by this year?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I'm glad the member's raising a question about raising rates, because that's exactly what the NDP did, by a significant amount, when they were in government, while disrespecting the Public Utilities Board, so much, in fact, that they invested billions of dollars in Americanizing Manitoba Hydro without asking for permission first. They didn't go to the Public Utilities Board.

The actual rate increase the member refers to is about 20 per cent less than the NDP average increase in their last half decade in government, Madam Speaker. And it's an interim measure so we can strengthen the Public Utilities Board so the mess the NDP made of it when they were in government never, ever happens again.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier does not respect the Public Utilities Board's role when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. That's why he didn't have a public PUB hearing with independent experts weighing in before he raised rates on Manitobans, before he raised rates on small businesses, before he raised rates on farmers.

Instead, in the cover of night, he raised hydro rates on everyone, right across Manitoba, without even having the courage to put out a press release about it. Instead, they buried it in an omnibus bill, and it was only the opposition which rightly called out this terrible mistake.

Now, we know that he is very loath to appear before the Public Utilities Board, so much so that he actually commands Manitoba Hydro not to make a general rate application to the PUB.

But now that the PUB is entertaining submissions, will the Premier make a submission and explain why he doesn't think there should be a Public Utilities Board hearing?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, again, the falsehood index is spinning out of control with the member's preambles today. So what I have to say to the member is, it's clear, it's absolutely perfectly clear, that the disrespect he had, before he got into politics, for the rules remains today. And it was made eminently clear, as we've learned now, that he actually generated a warning for disrespecting the health orders during a pandemic.

Now, if the NDP wants to encourage people to follow public health orders—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—which I hope they do, then they need to apologize for discouraging people by demonstrating they have no respect for the public health orders themselves.

And the NDP leader needs to stand in his place today, own up to the fact that he sent the totally wrong and dangerous message to Manitobans that those health orders didn't need to be followed by him or anybody else. He needs to stand up today and apologize to people in Manitoba for endangering them during a pandemic, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Premier's quite touchy this morning. I wonder if there's some bad media coming soon that he's trying to cover up on. But we'll leave that for a few days.

We know that the Public Utilities Board is the right place for there to be a hearing so that we can determine whether their raising rates on Manitobans during a pandemic was a mistake.

They never went to a public hearing. They never let the public weigh in. They never let the average family come forward and say, you know what, the middle of the pandemic might not be the right time to increase our cost of living. And yet they did exactly that.

Not only did they do that, but they failed to hold a Public Utilities Board hearing.

Now that the PUB is willing to have a hearing, will the Premier appear before them and explain—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –why he doesn't think the people of Manitoba should have a voice when it comes to Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Pallister: The member speaks about courage but fails to demonstrate it, daily, here and did in the past, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is when he speaks about cover-up in his preamble, this is a member of the Legislative Assembly who ran an election against two women of colour in our province and covered up his previous criminal record. He covered it up with the complicity of his party and then blamed them for covering it up. That's how far removed that man is from admitting to his own personal accountability.

The man is sensitive, Madam Speaker, because—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: –he deserves to be. When he breaks a public health order during a pandemic, he sends a message to others in our province that that's okay with him.

It is not okay with the people on this side of the House. We want to protect the people of this province.

Madam Speaker, I commend the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for her statement earlier today encouraging people to get the vaccine, but I would ask her to speak to her leader and get him to apologize for doing something so asinine that it places Manitobans at additional risk during a pandemic. Accept the responsibility.

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

Rent Increase Concerns Budget 2021

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, certainly touched a nerve there, Madam Speaker. I wonder what that media story is going to be, you know. The Premier just went apologetic, there, and the whole Cabinet was silent as he did so. I wonder what is coming down the pipeline.

Could it be more information about the property fleece that is being carried on over renters in our province? We know that what the Premier has announced in his budget this week will make renters worse off. The cost of living is going up for renters

and they will have less disposable income after the Premier and his Cabinet pass their budget.

Why is the Premier favouring the wealthy at the expense of the average family who has to pay rent in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I grew up on a dirt farm with no security, Madam Speaker, in a house that didn't have indoor plumbing. We had spoons, but they were not silver, like the member's. The member doesn't need to lecture me or anybody else in this House on standing up to challenges.

The member needs not make a joke about—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: –public health orders. The member jokes about breaking a public health order. He tells the media that he'll pay the fines of others who break public health orders.

This is totally dangerous behaviour. It is risky. It is reckless.

There is nothing new with that member, Madam Speaker. He broke all the rules before he got here, he'll break them now, and he'll break them in the future if anybody gives him a chance.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, you know, I see that the Premier is in a very frazzled state this morning and I just want to acknowledge that, yes, perhaps we touched a nerve, but what we're here to talk about is the people of Manitoba. And we know that they're going to be worse off because of this budget, those people who have to rent.

Madam Speaker, this government approves every single above-guideline increase that comes before the RTB. That means that this year they're going to allow landlords to increase rents by about 20 per cent, in some cases 30 per cent. Then, after that, they'll decide to freeze them at that higher level.

At the same time, they will be clawing back the tax credit—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –that renters receive on their income taxes. The net result is that life gets more expensive for the average renter and they will have less disposable income.

Why is the Premier stacking the deck against hard-working Manitobans who have to pay rent each and every month?

Mr. Pallister: Each time the member speaks he stacks the deck against the truth, Madam Speaker.

I grew up on a half section of land my great-grandparents homesteaded. And if the member wants to play class warfare games, he can go ahead and do them. But the truth is, Madam Speaker, that we're fighting for the people of this province who are struggling to make ends meet.

A rent freeze is what's in our budget, a rent freeze that protects people. This government is here to serve especially those who are struggling to make ends meet, especially those who are struggling to move up in life. They don't have the guarantees the NDP takes for granted.

We stand up for those who need our support and our protection. This budget demonstrates that very clearly. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (10:40)

Besides himself, Madam Speaker, this begs the question, who else is the member standing up for?

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, proud to come here each and every day and fight for people in my constituency, like those at Evergreen Towers, who had a 12 per cent rate increase this year.

Happy to stand up for seniors like Deborah Kunkel, who had her rent increased by this government by 30 per cent. We know how they're rigging the system. We know how they're stacking the deck. They're going to approve 20 and 30 per cent rent increases at the RTB process and then turn around and tell the media that that qualifies as a freeze.

At the same time, they are going to claw back the tax credit that renters currently get when they file their taxes. The net result is that there is going to be less money, less disposable income, for everyone who pays rent in Manitoba.

Why is the Premier making life more expensive, more difficult and more out of reach for the average family that pays rent every month right here in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: The NDP never failed, when it had a chance in the past, Madam Speaker, to make life harder for working families, for seniors, for small businesses. They made life harder year after year after year, and the member would do the same given the chance, because he believes in higher taxes.

He believes in bigger government, especially at the top. He won't stand up for people who are harassed. He runs and hides. He runs and hides. He won't stand up for people. He sends minions over to my house so they can take pictures of it, Madam Speaker. That's the degrading commentary that I have to make about the member opposite.

And when people—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and when people in this House, on his side, lie and attack a woman of colour, a child of immigrants to this country, and call them racist, Madam Speaker, he says nothing, he does nothing. He will not stand up for people who need supplies that come from trains and trucks when they're blockaded. He says nothing.

And now when it comes to health orders and the need for them to be abided by to protect the people of this province, he does the opposite of nothing. He demonstrates he, again, has no respect whatsoever for the rules that protect us all during a pandemic. If those numbers go up in this coming week, he can look in the mirror and he knows who to blame because he set the example of disrespect. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

It's not a joke when the Speaker is standing. And that means the moment the Speaker is standing, there should be silence in the room.

Sale of Old City Hall in St. Boniface Government Assistance With Purchase

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): C'est clair que 219 Provencher, l'ancien hôtel de ville de Saint-Boniface, a beaucoup d'importance patrimoniale et historique pour la communauté franco-manitobaine. Cependant, la Ville de Winnipeg veut vendre ce bâtiment.

Le gouvernement fédéral a indiqué qu'il y a des fonds que la communauté francophone peut utiliser pour acheter 219 Provencher. Le gouvernement Pallister devrait aider avec le financement de l'achat pour assurer que le bâtiment reste avec la communauté franco-manitobaine.

Est-ce que le ministre peut consacrer les fonds nécessaires aujourd'hui?

Translation

It is clear that 219 Provencher, the former St. Boniface city hall, has much heritage and historical significance for the Franco-Manitoban community. However, the City of Winnipeg wants to sell this building.

The federal government has indicated that there are funds available to the francophone community for the purchase of 219 Provencher. The Pallister government should help fund this purchase to ensure the building remains with the francophone community.

Will the minister allocate the necessary funds today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs): Merci beaucoup, Madame la Présidente, pour la question.

Je suis fière du progrès effectué par ce gouvernement en ce qui concerne l'amélioration des services en français dans tous les secteurs des activités.

Translation

Thank you very much for this question, Madam Speaker.

I am proud of this government's progress in improving French language services in all the activity sectors.

English

Madam Speaker, our government was very clear in that we believe that the City of Winnipeg, who has autonomy—it is a local government responsible for its own decisions—but we did respectfully ask them to consult with the francophone community on something as important as the city hall in St. Boniface.

We understand that this is very important, symbolically, to the francophone community, and we ask that the City of Winnipeg respectfully consult with them before making any decisions on that property.

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

Mr. Sala: Madame la Présidente, le message de la communauté franco-manitobaine est clair : notre patrimoine n'est pas à vendre.

La Ministre des affaires francophones est d'accord avec cette déclaration. Elle a écrit une lettre au maire de Winnipeg demandant qu'il ne vende pas

219 Provencher. Au lieu de prendre des actions symboliques, la ministre devrait prendre des actions concrètes pour que ce bâtiment reste avec la communauté francophone.

Est-ce qu'elle va le faire aujourd'hui?

Translation

Madam Speaker, the message from the francophone community is clear: our heritage is not for sale.

The Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs agrees with that statement. She wrote a letter to the mayor of Winnipeg asking him not to sell 219 Provencher. Instead of taking symbolic actions, she should take concrete actions to ensure this building remains with the francophone community.

Is she going to do that today?

Ms. Squires: Merci beaucoup, Madame la Présidente, pour la question.

Translation

Thank you very much for the question, Madam Speaker.

English

Our government respects the local autonomy of local governments, and we are asking the City of Winnipeg to respectfully engage in consultation with the francophone community before making any decisions on this historic asset.

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

Mr. Sala: Ce n'est pas un secret que le gouvernement Pallister n'appuie pas les services francophones, ici au Manitoba. Ils ont coupé le budget du Bureau de l'éducation française et de Santé en français, coupé plus qu'un million de dollars pour les services de traduction, et ont réduit le budget de l'Université de Saint-Boniface. Cependant, ils ont la possibilité de changer l'orientation aujourd'hui, commençant avec 219 Provencher.

Est-ce que la ministre peut consacrer les fonds nécessaires aujourd'hui?

Translation

It is no secret that this Pallister government does not support French language services here in Manitoba. They cut the budgets of the Bureau de l'éducation française and of Santé en français, they cut almost \$1 million from Translation Services, and they reduced the Université de Saint-Boniface's budget.

However, they have the opportunity to change course, starting today with 219 Provencher.

Will the minister allocate the necessary funds today?

Ms. Squires: Merci beaucoup, Madame la Présidente, pour la question.

Je comprends les—le—hôtel de ville représente—est très important pour la communauté francophone.

Translation

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the question.

I understand that the city hall is very significant for the francophone community.

English

Our government recognizes the importance of this historic institution, and we're working with the—with all the stakeholders to find a consultation.

I would like to remind the member for St. James, who is very, very keen on putting falsehoods and inaccuracies on the record, like he did with the communities—in his own community, the parent-child coalition, when he spread misinformation and was fear mongering about their perceived cuts.

There was no such cuts. Instead, he's just fear mongering—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —with misinformation. I wish that member would stop fear mongering in the community and get on board and represent the community with truth and accuracy and some dignity.

Hydro's Removal of Maple Trees Consultation with Forestry Board

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Winnipeggers who frequent Omand Park were recently shocked to discover that well over 100 beautiful Manitoba maples were clear-cut by Manitoba Hydro.

When trees are in conflict with infrastructure, Hydro collaborates with the City of Winnipeg's Urban Forestry Branch to mitigate tree loss in line with Hydro's Integrated Vegetation Management Plan. But this never happened at Omand Park.

Can the minister explain why the City of Winnipeg Urban Forestry Branch was not consulted before these trees were cut down?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations): The City of Winnipeg works hard to

maintain their canopy. You see them out planting new trees, and their judgments will ensure that we have a beautiful canopy throughout Winnipeg, not just today, but into the future and for future generations to enjoy.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, Hydro indicated that these trees were removed because they were too costly to maintain, and, clearly, this was a purely fiscal decision.

But Hydro's own vegetation management plan calls for enhancing biodiversity. Instead, the Pallister government clear-cut dozens and dozens of mature trees to save money.

This government does not see the big picture and only the bottom line when it comes to environment.

So I ask the minister again: Why were these trees cut down without consultation, and what can be done to prevent this from happening again?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Premier): I think that all members of this House recognized the value of the trees that we have in the city of Winnipeg, but also outside the city of Winnipeg, Madam Speaker.

* (10:50)

I know very well that Hydro implored the NDP government, when they were in government, to not build the hydro line on the wrong side of the province, because by doing so, they clear-cut, they cut down, millions and millions of trees by going hundreds of kilometres more on the wrong side of the province.

Is very, very nice for the member opposite to raise this issue now, but it's a little disingenuous coming from the party that cost millions and millions of trees in Manitoba by going on the wrong side of the province.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, I actually don't understand why we can't get a straight answer on this, other than that the government doesn't prioritize the environment, but I know Manitobans do. That's why the member for St. James and I wrote a letter to Hydro CEO Jay Grewal on this issue.

We simply asked for a detailed explanation of the removal of the trees—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor: –and for an outline of Hydro's plan for stewardship in this area. Her answer was to take it up with the minister.

So will the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Wharton) rise in his place to tell us why well over 100 trees were removed without consultation, and will he release Hydro's stewardship plan for the Omand Park area today?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, there are so many people who want to answer this ridiculous question from the member opposite.

I hope that she might've considered actually writing an email instead of sending a letter, and she could've saved a bit of a tree there.

But I do know–

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: I do know that the CEO of Hydro, I'm sure, will respond, but maybe she wants to write an email to the CEO and ask the question, how many millions of trees were clear-cut, cut down, by going on the wrong side of the province with Bipole III, Madam Speaker?

If the member opposite ever wants to get outside the Perimeter, I'm sure we have many members who not only want to answer her question, but will take her on a tour, take her on a tour of the clear-cut of the millions of trees that were thrown into the abyss because of the NDP.

Northern Manitoba Health-Care Services

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Let's talk about northern health issues for a minute. Snow Lake recently had their only doctor had to leave for a personal emergency. But it seems there's no contingency plan; he had to try and find his own replacement, which he did, for the most part, but there was a few days where there was no doctor available. Neither the Northern Health Region or the Minister of Health thought that was worth worrying about, to leave a community without a doctor.

So I ask, as I've asked several times already: What's the contingency plan, going forward, to ensure that there's always a doctor available in Snow Lake?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Madam Speak, I'll take no lessons from members opposite, who shut down more than

15 hospitals in rural and northern Manitoba. But what I will say is, obviously, the recruitment and retention of staff is—has been an issue in Manitoba for some time. It has been an issue across the country.

We are continuing to work with officials to ensure that we do recruit the necessary staff to these communities. We are working with the communities themselves, and we will ensure that we have adequate health care closer to home for those Manitobans who need it.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Well, it's my understanding that the public health nurses in both Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids have recently resigned. We know that, earlier, the northern regional health authority decided to not have local managers at the communities for Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids and Gillam. They've moved that position to Thompson.

She talks about listening to local communities. All of those communities were against that move, but the government didn't listen. They went ahead with it. The regional health didn't listen, they went ahead with it.

So, can the minister tell us what the plan is to ensure that all of these communities have proper health-care services available in their communities?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, our government is taking real action to address rural and northern health-care issues and to ensure that all Manitobans are receiving the best quality of health care as close to home as possible.

Madam Speaker, even the members opposite agree with us, and I quote: We do have to look at patient safety first. It means we cannot keep that ER open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We just don't have the staff there right now to do it. And who said that, Madam Speaker? Former minister of Health, Erin Selby.

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

Mr. Lindsey: So, basically, no plan.

Madam Speaker, shipping people off to Thompson—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: –for a vaccine is just not a feasible option for northern Manitobans. We're talking about

eight, 12 hours on a bus together. These are people that have been kept apart for a year, and now this government, this minister, thinks it's a good idea to put them on a bus together for 12 hours.

So we need to have the vaccines available in our communities and we need to make sure that people have paid time off so that they can actually get the vaccine. People in Flin Flon are driving to Saskatchewan to get a vaccine because it's available there.

Can the minister please tell us: Will she commit to getting the vaccines in our communities and instituting paid time off for people to get vaccinated?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, we want to encourage all Manitobans who are eligible to go out and get the vaccine when it becomes their time. And, certainly, we do know that there are opportunities for those in northern Manitoba, southern Manitoba, eastern Manitoba, western Manitoba, right here in Winnipeg.

We have a vaccine—our task force has put together supersites in all of these centres to ensure that those Manitobans are able to get the vaccine close to home.

Infrastructure Funding Budget 2021

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Wednesday's budget was a missed opportunity to increase funding in our local roads. I know my constituents, The Maples, want to see improvement our crumbling infrastructure, like further enhancement to Leila Avenue.

Unfortunately, the Pallister government has long walked away from dedicated funding that meets growing demand.

Why is the minister neglecting our local roads?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, the budget that was presented by our great Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) this week is an outstanding budget for Manitoba Infrastructure. And I would like to fill the member, who obviously wasn't listening—that in 2021-2022 the highway budget—just for highways—will be \$500 million. Compare that to the NDP records from 2001 to 2002. They spent \$98 million.

Madam Speaker, \$500 million to \$98 million. Our budget is building Manitoba. I would suggest they move their beamers and their F-150s and all their

vehicles aside. Let us build our highways. We're building Manitoba. We're getting it forward.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

* (11:00)

The honourable member for The Maples, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Sandhu: This government has not spent what they promised through the Manitoba restart capital program. In fact, Wednesday, the budget concealed how little was actually spent on strategic infrastructure. That's based on my constituents who want to see improvement, such as further upgrades to Leila Avenue.

Why is the minister overpromising and under-delivering?

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, in the great budget that was presented this week by our Finance Minister—not just in 2021-22, \$500 million; '22-23, \$500 million; '23-24, \$500 million. Compare that to the NDP record: 2000-2001, \$98 million; 2001-2002, \$93 million; 2002-2003, \$111 million.

Madam Speaker, I know that the member opposite wants us to do the roads for the City of Winnipeg. It's not our jurisdiction.

We are on a tear: St. Mary's bridge, Daly Street bridge, all of which were promised by—the 17 years of the NDP. Never accomplished. Or even doing the bridge over the Floodway on 59 north. We're getting stuff built that they committed for 17 years and never got done. We're on a roll.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: I hate Fridays.

The honourable member for The Maples, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Sandhu: I guess if the government can spend—give a little bit more money to the City so they can spend more on the roads, that—streets like Leila Avenue.

This government is not interested—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sandhu: —in fixing streets in The Maples. They are again underfunding their promise. They are so embarrassed about it, they have hidden what they actually spent on—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sandhu: –strategic infrastructure. But you can't hide the potholes. The constituents want to—want these fixed and they want improvements such as further upgrades to Leila Avenue.

Why is the Pallister government missing the mark on local roads?

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to point out to my colleague, my worthy colleague, that I am the Minister of Infrastructure, I'm not the minister responsible for highways in the city of Winnipeg. He would have to speak to his mayor and his councillors, which he has several of in his region.

I do want to point out to the House that after the south Perimeter Safety Review, the North Perimeter Safety Review, the Perimeter functional study, our government is moving the Perimeter Highway to a full, freeway-status highway. We are going to be building an economic hub for this province that will be the intersect of the Perimeter, Highway No. 1 going east-west, and 75 going south, Madam Speaker.

We are going to be building, for the city of Winnipeg and the rest of the province, an economic hub, that we can access all the markets in very easy form, in a safe way—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Teaching Expense Tax Credit Ministerial Living Allowance

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): This government's education plan and budget both ignore the issue of poverty. Manitobans in every corner of this province have to rely on government assistance to eat in this neighbourhood, even in this building and even perhaps in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) own caucus and apparently his Cabinet.

I virtually table the September 2020 living allowance for the former minister of Education and MLA for Steinbach, which shows \$645.75 in restaurant meals; \$128.73 for groceries; and \$35.99 for dry cleaning in Steinbach, for one month. And it's the same month after month.

Can the Premier or anyone else explain why he expects teachers to pay for their own school supplies when his own MLAs and ministers don't even pay for their own groceries and dry cleaning?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Premier): If the member opposite wants to have a debate about all the different things regarding members' allowance or

regarding MLAs' pay or salary, he can bring those up with the commissioner.

This is a government, however, who did something that the former—or, that the Liberal government did as well, Madam Speaker: bringing in a tax credit for school supplies. We're actually, this time, copying the Liberal government in Ottawa. If he has a problem with what the Liberal government in Ottawa did and what we're doing now with this tax credit, he can take it up with the Prime Minister at their convention this weekend and tell the Prime Minister that they did the wrong thing.

We're doing the right thing.

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

Mr. Lamont: The Pallister government has ordered cuts and layoffs at schools, universities, businesses and charities, tens of thousands of Manitobans have been denied insulin pumps just because they're over 25 and rent supports are being cut.

But this government can still afford groceries and dry cleaning for the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Wharton) and the members for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) and Agassiz (Ms. Clarke). The Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) is expensing 50 cents a kilometre to his commute to Oakbank. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

It looks to us like the reason this government doesn't have money for basic programs like health, education and more is because the Premier and the rest of his PC caucus are too busy putting it all in their own pockets.

That's how it looks to us.

Do the members opposite agree?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: –the member opposite is again attacking the commissioner of this House, who sets the members' allowances, who sets the pay of MLAs. I don't know if he doesn't like to have an independent commissioner who does that, if he wants to monkey with all that.

This is a government that is proud to have record funding for education, guaranteed record funding for education. We are also proud to bring in a tax credit to support those teachers, who are paying out-of-pocket for some school supplies, Madam Speaker,

something that was also done by the Liberal government in Ottawa that was applauded by Manitoba Teachers' Society—the former president.

The Liberal leader has no credibility on this, on anything else. It's now wonder his party is stuck in a morass.

Education System Request for Investments

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Over the last few years, this government has taken away tuition rebates, decided to charge international students for health care, made post-secondary education facilities find cuts up to 30 per cent and are now jeopardizing our post-secondary institutions' tuition, unions and programming.

The PCs are doing the opposite of what needs to be done. Even at the K-to-12 level, this government's completely gutting the school system as we know it, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has shown blatant disrespect and empathy for teachers.

Teachers need additional resources now more than ever.

With all of these cuts and refusal to use federal money, when will the government start investing in our education system?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): Well, Madam Speaker, we're very proud of our budget. We've—putting over \$3 billion in the K-to-12 education this year in Manitoba. We're also saving homeowners \$250 million.

We're proud of our record investments in K-to-12 education. We're proud of our record investments in post-secondary. And we're going to do what's best for Manitoba students.

Children with Type 1 Diabetes New Program Announcement

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Madam Speaker, families of children who have type 1 diabetes have told us about the daily challenges they face in helping their kids test and monitor their blood sugar levels each day.

Can the Minister of Health please tell the House what our government is doing to help these families access better tools to manage type 1 diabetes in children?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I'm pleased to announce that

Budget 2021 includes funding to establish a new program to pay for the cost of continuous glucose monitoring for eligible youth under the age of 25.

We're also increasing the age limit for our insulin pump program to age 25, so eligible young people with type 1 diabetes can receive continued support.

Families have told us of the challenges they are facing, and our government is listening. With Budget 2021, we are making—we are taking action to provide better care for Manitobans.

Members opposite still have a chance, Madam Speaker, to do the right thing, to support families of those with type 1 'diabilebetes'. The question is, will they? Yes or no?

* (11:10)

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson (Ms. Adams). The honourable member for Thompson, on a petition?

I will move, then, to the honourable member for Keewatinook, on a petition.

Public Child-Care Grants

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoba families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early-childhood educators leaving the sector.

While the child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly

\$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

The provincial government cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and 'stax' statutes amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care's operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoba families.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The honourable member for River Heights, on a petition?

Cochlear Implant Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

A cochlear implant is a life-changing electronic device that allows deaf people to receive and process sounds and speech, and also can partially restore hearing in people who have severe hearing loss and who do not benefit from conventional hearing aids. A processor behind the ear captures and processes sound signals, which are transmitted to a receiver implanted into the skull that relays the information to the inner ear-cochlea.

The technology's been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic, founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The surgical hearing 'impant' program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear

implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 50 devices per year.

There are no upfront costs to Manitoba residents who proceed with cochlear implant surgery, as Manitoba Health covers the surgical procedure, internal implant and the first external sound processor. Newfoundland and Manitoba have the highest estimated implantation costs of all provinces.

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,400, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement program. The provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available. The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than in other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

In Manitoba, pediatric patients, under 18 years of age, are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

It is unreasonable that this technology is inaccessible to many citizens of Manitoba who must choose between hearing and deafness due to financial constraints because the costs of maintaining the equipment are prohibitive for low-income earners or those on fixed income, such as old age pension or Employment and Income Assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide financing for upgrades to the cochlear implant covered under medicare, or provide funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program to assist with the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

Signed by Angela Lalor, Kelley Lalor, Kevin Lalor and many, many other Manitobans.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or urine sample.

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at further risk in extreme weather, being hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer wait times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they are able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all of the 'phlebotomy,' blood sample, sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

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

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

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over-capacity.

* (11:20)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw). The honourable member for Fort Garry?

The honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, and the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, the DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over-capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could we please resume debate on the budget.

BUDGET DEBATE

(Third Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the budget motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona, who has four minutes remaining.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): As always, it's a great pleasure to rise in this House. Like you, many teachers didn't like Fridays and had, of course, better days on Mondays, when kids were much more amen-

able. So I guess the House sort of resembles a classroom, but I can tell you, when I was principal, I really enjoyed Friday mornings because you can have a little more fun.

I was hoping to see the same this morning, but I just want to continue to add a few more words on the record regarding this year's budget. And there are a number of pieces where—like I said earlier, this is a budget that missed—that was a missed opportunity, a missed opportunity to show some leadership in a number of files.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And, specifically, with regards to the constituents of Transcona, as you know, this part of the city is known for many of its industries. And one of them is a leading manufacturer of green electric buses, of hydrogen fuel cell buses. Many of these buses, of course, dot the cities throughout North America, but with one glaring exception: the very city of Winnipeg, where the opportunity was there to develop a comprehensive Climate and Green Plan that included something that could have shown and showcased some of the technology that's produced right here in the constituency of Transcona. As a matter of fact, my direct neighbour directly to the south of me works at New Flyer and has a great deal of pride and expresses pride in the products that are developed there.

And yet, again, what we have here, though, is a government that prefers to get into a fight over a—over carbon taxes with the federal government when, really, it's an opportunity to show some leadership on a file that desperately needs it, perhaps even considering, you know, a plan to expand rapid transit in the city of Winnipeg, working in partnership with the City of Winnipeg to ensure that occurs. Because we know when we have readily accessible, green transportation options for citizens, what happens is we have a direct reduction in our carbon footprint.

And I think when we have that challenge put in front of us and when we know that our—in our own city of Winnipeg, we have a firm that is world-renowned for its technology in these areas, this is an opportunity that cannot be missed. And so I encourage and urge the government to explore this path.

And in wrapping up my statements, there's just something that really is bothering me a little bit and especially when it comes to the education file. We have an opportunity here as stewards. All 57 members of this Legislature are stewards of the public education system, a system that rises above partisan

politics, that rises above ideology, one that serves the common good and the people of Manitoba. I would urge this government to think about that, to think about what they're proposing for education and to ensure that it does serve the public good.

So, as the member for Transcona and as the MLA for Transcona, I will be supporting the amendments brought forth by the member from Fort Rouge, and I am speaking not in support of this budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Good morning to everybody. It's kind of a different year, for sure, when we all look at how we debate the budget. Normally, we're all in person in the Chamber and, you know, you get to really not just hear but see the body language of those that are so passionate about the budget.

As we just heard, the member—I'm going to say the exact opposite, where this is an amazing budget, one that I will definitely be supporting on behalf of the constituents in Brandon East. And I will not be supporting the amendments made by either the official opposition or the other opposition as well.

And—but, again, you look at Budget 2021, and as we continue listening to our colleagues in the House, some great points, some off point, and I find it amazing how the official opposition is always trying to lead away from the facts, playing with words, playing with numbers.

And I know just yesterday the member that was just prior speaking to me here—and I will say I have a lot of respect for the member from Transcona; I love Transcona. I mean, I go out there quite often, right beside the member's office. I have a relative who was one of the owners in Little Bones. I love going out there and spending the odd evening there.

But when we listen to what his words were yesterday on the record when he talked about the Poverty Reduction Strategy and how things are going in Manitoba—and I know it's in Hansard so I don't have to bother, you know, providing copies or quoting it—but he did talk about, ineffectively or incorrectly, how Manitoba is no better, and actually worse, than—in child poverty than the province was in 2015.

But I want to thank the member, though, because he actually gave us the evidence on page 139, which come out of his mouth: go to 139. So I did. And I look at page 139 of the Budget 2021, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is our Poverty Reduction Strategy, and 2015,

according to that member, was in much better shape than we are right now, or as reported for 2019 in the budget documents.

* (11:30)

However, when I look at it, and I'm going to go both overall in Manitoba and with children in poverty, and let's start with children in poverty. In 2015, under the previous NDP government's watch, we had 51,000 children living in poverty. And again, this is right out of the book, as quoted by the member from Transcona on page 139, 2019, under the PC government, 40,000.

So, yes, we have some work to do and that's never been a secret. We've acknowledged that. We're working hard on that. We're trying to create better pathways to a better future. But that is an improvement. It's a 21.6 per cent improvement. And even when we look at all of Manitoba, 2015, the numbers on page 139 of the document that the member referred to, 169,000 Manitobans living in poverty. In 2019, under the PC government, 145,000—so, again, a 14.2 per cent improvement.

I don't think it's something that—I don't say those numbers to be proud of the fact that we have so many people in our province living in poverty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I say them for two reasons: (1) to put the proper and correct information on the record that advancements are being made, that we are progressing in the right way, but also to acknowledge that we have more work to do. And we continue that work.

The minister responsible is doing an amazing job and is not taking the foot off the pedal, so to speak. Again, we have more work to do and we are happy to move that forward to make life better for all Manitobans.

And when I talk about why is it so important to talk about budgets and what I look forward to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is budget day. I look forward to that because it really provides us with an opportunity to speak, not just about the future that—which I will say a few words on in my allotted time here today, but I want to talk about some of the things that happened in the past. And we know that this past year has been anything but normal. We've heard many times in the House, from all parties, from all sides of the House, and we're all devastated by the results of this pandemic.

And before I go any further, though, I do want to offer my condolences to the families who have lost loved ones through this pandemic, even to those who

have been affected by job loss, by isolation from family and friends, and whose worlds have changed because of COVID-19. I wish you all the best. We are all in this together and we do look forward to the day when we can get back to normal and start visiting our family, our loved ones. And, you know, we're all in the same boat.

My daughter moved to the Yukon almost two years ago, and, because of pandemic restrictions, we have not seen her in person since prior to that move. So I certainly and personally have an understanding of the toll that isolation is placing on family and friends, and I do thank those who reach out and create social media platforms—the various platforms that we use, such as what we're using today, so that we can stay connected. And I know it's not the same as being in person. You know, I can't get that hug from my granddaughter, you know, but at the same time, we can reach out and do that and it provides us with hope going forward.

And because of that and because of that hope that we have going forward, we need to look at where we've been. And we've all heard time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the heroes in our health-care and emergency services. I, too, want to echo many, many comments that we hear and say thank you for the work that you do, but I really do not believe we can say thank you enough for the work that has happened and continues to happen.

COVID has taken the forefront in health care but that's not the only issue in health care. They still have to work hard daily for people coming into our facilities with other reasons. COVID isn't the only issue but is certainly putting a strain on the system and I just wanted to make sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I gave that big thank you to those working in that industry.

As I've said in this House before and as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I consider a lot of those folks in health care my friends. I've worked with them for over 20 years and even in government here when I had the privilege of being the legislative assistant to the Minister of Health, I created some new friendships and reacquainted some old friendships and still worked towards helping out as much as I can.

At the same time—and I know everybody in the House wants to echo this as well—we need to give a shout-out to all hardworking individuals that are in our grocery stores, in our gas stations, our restaurants and all services and retail outlets that have really provided and kept our services going. It is certainly

something that has helped maybe ease a little bit the transition that we're going through.

You know, we're hoping that when this pandemic comes to an end, that it's very soon, but I know Manitobans will be ready to move forward, not just personally, not just reaching out with their family and friends, but also financially. I know Manitobans have been working very hard to move things forward and I'm pleased that our government has come up with a budget that is really going to help that transition when we get back into some more type of normalcy after this pandemic is done.

And in saying that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to share a quote from Mr. Spencer Day, who is the president of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce for a couple more months, until they have to have their new presidential changeover in June.

His comments in regards to Budget 2021, and I quote: This budget shows an incredible commitment to immediate job creation with the Manitoba Restart capital program and a long-term plan for private sector growth with economic development initiatives like long-term recovery funding. We look forward to working with the provincial government on these commitments on the road to recovery. End of quote. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a comment from Mr. Spencer Day from the Brandon Chamber of Commerce.

Now, when I talk about budgets, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not that I really get excited on budgets, although I find them very interesting and I find it even more interesting how, depending on what side of the fence you're sitting on, like anything else, you can play with those numbers. You can play with the wording. You can drive it one way or another. You can make it to your best advantage or against somebody else.

But budgets aren't new, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and anybody in this House knows—and anybody in the province for that matter of fact—knows that budgets are around, what budgets are for, the reason for budgets. I use a budget. And it doesn't matter whether you own a business, work in the financial industry or just plain want to plan the next month for your family, budgets are extremely important. They're an understanding of numbers and that means for both expenses versus revenues.

'Buzzets'—budgets, pardon me, are, I guess a better understanding of the economy, and my favorite piece of it is they're an understanding of math. I love math,

Mr. Deputy Speaker. The opportunity to calculate solutions or to recognize the fundamentals of logistics or just simply attempting to get a better understanding of how I can support my family by having a better knowledge of the principles of numbers.

I really do need to thank a teacher of mine, Mr. Meno Isaacs, who really sparked my interest in numbers and helped me obtain a passion for budgets and more so, the importance of having a budget. And I know that kind of maybe outdates me a little bit because that was probably, I'm going to say, 30 years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it's something that has stuck with me for a long time.

Because of budgets and because of this love of learning and the challenges of math, that I took a business administration course at Assiniboine Community College in my constituency of Brandon East many years ago, and I believe probably back in the '80s. And my goal at the time was to, believe it or not, explore the world of finance and gain employment as a CPA or a chartered professional accountant. As you can tell, I did not become a CPA, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the knowledge I gained has helped me immensely in my life.

Something that a lot of folks may not know in this House is before working in health care, I was the Al Bundy in the family. I was married. I had two children. And I spent 10 years working in the footwear industry as a store manager in various locations throughout Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

* (11:40)

And, in addition to providing a product and a service to my customers, one of the most important tasks was budgeting and understanding the budgeting process. So there were so many uncontrollable variances that affected my budget, much like the effects that COVID has had on our government's finances over the past year that, you know, challenging—budgets are challenging.

So it's no surprise that Budget 2021, that we're looking at and which was recently presented to this House and now we're debating here, contains direction on how our government will not only place a priority on the COVID pandemic but it also maps out a future back to prosperity for all Manitobans.

We know, I believe, originally, there was a projection of just over—I think it was around a \$2.8-billion deficit this year because of the COVID, and I believe that's been revised to around—I think it's 1.5–1.57, in there somewhere, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And there's reasons why those things change, and it's because of the hard work of not just the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and his team, but all Manitobans. We seek input from Manitobans when providing the budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the more than 50,000 Manitobans who provided input and feedback during the consultation process. Personally, I was fortunate to join the Minister of Finance as the host of a rural and northern budget consultation. We had a great number of questions and some really good input from what Manitobans wanted to see in the budget.

So, I hear time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that while numbers and plans are extremely important, so, too, is honesty and integrity, and when I look back into politics and the reason I got into it in 2010, I knew I'd be putting myself out there under the public microscope. So while I definitely like to express my own personal and professional views, I've always worked hard to remain open to other ideas and to be honest in every response that I give.

And I bring this up today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of some of the statements that the opposition is making in the House. Again, playing on words, playing on numbers, tipping things in what they believe is their way when, in reality, they're really doing a disservice to Manitobans.

And I get around that fairly easy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I do so by providing a copy, in writing, of the budget to anybody who calls my office that wants to talk about the budget, that wants some clarifications, and I think it's important that all of us, as members of this House, take that opportunity to do that for our constituents.

I look at the faces of those on our Zoom call here this morning, as we're joining remotely, because I can't see the faces of those in the Chamber, but I can honestly say that I am looking at an amazing group of individuals, and I really believe, when we look at some of the services that we have to offer, that we can look at those that are coming into our communities that are listening to us, that are putting their faith in us, that we need to be upfront and honest with them.

I mean, let's look at the Budget 2021. I mean, we hear all the time from the opposition that there's nothing there. However, if we look at the funding increases in priority areas such as \$156 million more for health care, that's more for health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know if I was to give everybody in this

House a dollar and then come back next week and give everybody \$5, that's an increase; that's not a cut. That is an increase, and when we look at \$156 million more for health care—and, believe me, I am passionate about health care—we are investing in health care.

We have challenges in health care, absolutely. We always have. We have challenges in recruitment. We have challenges in retention. And that's why we have professionals working in our regional health authorities that are doing this work.

We're providing \$91 million more in K-to-12 education. So, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not a cut, that's not less. It's \$91 million more.

And then we look at social services. Are we providing more or less in social services—\$33 million more in social services.

I just encourage folks to—sure, they're going to listen to us. They're going to listen to us in our debates. They're going to listen to us in question period. And the member from Transcona—I loved his analogy about teaching on a Friday, because that's sometimes what it's like when we're able to listen in on question period. And I get a lot of comments from constituents about question period. And I know I've said this in the House before. My father—he might even be listening right now—he faithfully watches question period every day. And here we are on a Friday morning in Winnipeg. I'm usually back in the 'constituencely,' like most of us are, on a Friday, and I can almost guarantee you he would've called me first thing this morning and said, what is going on, right?

So I think, while there is some rhetoric and some fun going back and forth with some of the debates and some of the comments in the House, I think sometimes we really need to look at, you know, some of the truths that we have out there. And instead of trying to push it in our own favour, let's just put the facts on the table and provide those facts to our constituents. I know that's what I do.

And, I mean, I've got seven pages of notes in front of me to keep going, but I see my time is running short here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do want to talk—and I'm going to quickly just whip through my pages here, because I do want to get to one very important piece that we've talked about before. And when we look at the strategic infrastructure, we have some work going on in Brandon right now that is really a highlight of the community. Whether it's the work doing—done on the Trans-Canada Highway or a bridge that's being

rebuilt, it's a sign that our government is moving forward for the citizens of Manitoba.

And, again, when we look at a record investment—we heard this morning in question period, \$2.1-billion investment in strategic infrastructure—that's going to create jobs. That's going to drive the economy. Again, \$630 million for road construction and maintenance is amazing.

So with that, I thank you, and I definitely hope everybody supports this amazing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I want to start off talking about this budget. And I guess we can start right with the cover page and tell everybody what's wrong from there because the title of this budget is Protecting Manitobans, but throughout the entire document, it actually fails to do that. So it's just another piece of misinformation that this government is trying to foist on Manitobans when, in fact, they fail constantly to protect Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know, certainly speaking for northern Manitobans, their vaccine rollout has been a disaster, to say the least. The absolute lack of planning has just made it so bad. This government refused to actually engage in meaningful conversations with anyone from the North.

I spoke to community representatives from several communities in the North who said, they told us what they're going to do; we tried to tell them that it wouldn't work, but they wouldn't listen to us; they just went ahead and did it anyway. And lo and behold, it didn't work and continues to not work.

I talked to people at the Northern Health Region. Same story. They're not listening to us. They've decided what they're going to do and that's it, they're going to do it.

So they're not protecting Manitobans.

Do you know, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that people in Flin Flon actually drive across the border and get vaccinated in Creighton, Saskatchewan, because somehow, even though Saskatchewan has a Conservative government—call themselves something different—but they have managed to get vaccines to the communities in the North. And yet this government has abysmally failed to do that. They got hung up on a super Vaxport site in Thompson, which never did come to pass because it was just a bad idea from the

get-go. So now they have the supersite in downtown Thompson.

* (11:50)

People from Snow Lake have been forced to get on a bus and go there because this government can't seem to get its head wrapped around how to distribute vaccine in the North. We have roads, we have airports, we have runways.

Slowly, they've come to the realization, with communities screaming at them, with the northern MLAs trying to communicate with the Minister of Health, trying to communicate with anybody that would listen in this government, that there is a better way of doing it.

So, slowly they started announcing these pop-up clinics, instead of saying the vaccine will be available in Flin Flon, the vaccine will be available in Thompson, the vaccine will be available in Lynn Lake. They all have freezers. They can all get the vaccine there, because, you know what, we've seen First Nations leadership make sure that their communities had the vaccine going to their communities. They showed real leadership where this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government has the complete lack of leadership. They've bungled this whole vaccine rollout, kind of like they bungled everything to do with this COVID pandemic.

The only thing they've ever been interested in is the money. We know that the government, many times, made big announcements about how many millions of dollars were going to go to this program, how many millions of dollars were going to go to that program. The problem is they consistently underspent those dollars. The money didn't go where they claimed it was going to go. They either made it so convoluted and impossible for people, businesses, to actually get the money, that it just languished and never got spent, kind of like their budget dollars.

You know, we look at some numbers in their budget document, and places like, I don't know, Agriculture and Resource Development—something that this Premier tells his little homespun stories about down on the sod hut and dirt floor and poor me—the Minister responsible for Ag and Resource Development claims to really support farmers. They haven't had his picture on a milk carton recently, at least, but let's look at their budget numbers.

So, supposedly, in 2021, they were going to spend some \$445 million, but they only spent 422. So they, again, announced in their budget how much money

they were going to spend, but then they didn't spend it. So that's the problem with their budget documents is they are, for the most part, meaningless projections, because the Premier in particular—but the rest of these ministers are also just as guilty—like to make big announcements and look like heroes, when in fact, people in the trenches, people on the front lines in this province, people in communities, particularly people in communities in the North, know it's all a sham, because those dollars aren't getting where they need to go.

We know that we are in a bit of a climate disaster. We know that this Premier continues to fight things like carbon tax in court. He had a climate plan, he didn't have a climate plan; he had a plan to do this, he didn't have a plan to do that. Can't make up his mind what the plan is, so he just continues to ignore issues around climate and conservation.

So we know that last year, supposedly, they had budgeted \$196 million for that particular department; only spent 152. And yet, we know that there's so many issues—never mind just issues with trying to mitigate the carbon going into the atmosphere and issues with the whole climate change, but there's actual on-the-ground issues, things like blue-green algae blooms happening in northern lakes that we've written to the ministers; got no response even.

We know that there's a shortage of conservation officers. We know that they don't really believe what they say, and certainly most other Manitobans don't believe what they say.

We know that the minister swears up and down parks aren't for sale. It's just everything in the park that is for sale. We know that they want to contract out more and more. In fact, last summer, instead of hiring workers to do the jobs that have traditionally been done in the parks, they put out a call for volunteers—volunteers—to look after our parks. And you know what? I know in the North there was all kinds of people that were willing to do that. But what kind of misguided thinking thinks that those good paying jobs, particularly in the North, where good paying jobs are really hard to come by, thanks to this government and their complete lack of action in the North, why are people being expected to volunteer?

Well, I guess we see that continuing with what they think teachers should do, that teachers should pay out of their own pocket. You know, it's just that kind of backwards thinking that—it's destroying our province, one cut at a time.

So, let's move on to Economic Development and Jobs. You know, you would think that this is something that should be a priority for the government: how to create economic development, how to create good paying jobs. Well, we know in the North, for example, that the Communities Economic Development Fund hasn't given out any grant money for several years. The whole point of that program is to create economic development and jobs, and yet the government refuses to let that body do it's job.

So we know that in 2020-21 the budget was \$207 million. Well, guess what? Underspent. Only spent 178. So when they say this year they're going to spend 225, what we know is that's not true. They have a history of underspending so that they can inflate the budget numbers, not spend that money, and then increase these bogus savings, I guess so that they protect their salaries, because if they don't show those kind of savings, some of the ministers would have to give up part of their salary. And we know that, if nothing else, there's something that these Tories want to protect, and that's their own money. They want to make sure that they're doing all right. Poor people? Well, not so much, which is a shame, because they're not protecting Manitobans; they're protecting their rich friends and themselves.

Education: we've heard a lot about education and yet there's another department that they actually underspent on. Now they talk about, well, they've spent more money than, I guess, anybody since the beginning of time, if you listen to them. But it's not accurate. And now we see the disaster that they're creating in education. Their whole Bill 64 that is going to do away with elected school boards and replace them with hand-picked, I suppose, failed Tory candidates. That seems to be who they like to put on boards, commissions: people that couldn't get elected because the people that knew them knew they didn't want them representing them, so now they place them on boards and commissions to do that very thing.

* (12:00)

You know, there's members of the northern regional health authority board too, they're supposedly representing a community in the North, a failed Tory candidate. They don't live in the North anymore, but they're still there representing it. It makes no sense until you realize what this bunch is all about.

Indigenous and Northern Relations. Again, a budget that's been underspent. And in previous years when we were going through the Estimates process

talking to the minister of Indigenous and northern affairs trying to get a handle on just what it was that that department did, the answer we continually came up with was: nothing.

So maybe that's the right place to underspend, because as near as we could tell, her department did nothing. Every question we asked, well, that's not me; that's a different department. No, no, not me; that's somebody else. No, no, it's a different department. So, you know, it's those kind of things that really leave Manitobans quite distrustful of this government.

Municipal Relations: underspent. And you wonder why municipalities are scrambling trying to make ends meet: because this government won't support municipalities, either. Now they're, for the most part, afraid to stand up and call this government out because they know that the small-mindedness that prevails in that caucus will make sure that that municipality is worse off. So, you know, really, it's kind of a real shame the way this government treats people.

We talked a little bit at question period about care closer to home—another grave misstatement for people in the North. We know that so many services at the Flin Flon hospital have been just discontinued. We know that Leaf Rapids, a nurse phoned in sick, they shut the whole place down for two weeks—and thanks to MKO for stepping in and making sure that there was health-care providers there.

We know that they've cut some of the retention and training bonuses to try and attract health-care professionals to the North. We know that the Northern Health Region is such a poisoned workplace sometimes that some of the doctors that come in actually buy their contracts out and leave because they do not want to work there anymore.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that they've sold off the air ambulances—they're giving them away, making it more expensive, again, for the Province. Do you know that there's people that get medevac'd from the North with nothing but the hospital gown they have on? They get discharged from a hospital in Winnipeg and are expected to find their own way home. You have no idea how many times I've had to step in and try and help people like that that are left hanging, just so this government can save a dime because they don't want to repatriate them.

If they can get themselves discharged to the hospital in the North, then they can get a flight home, but if their doctor—which, many doctors have no

concept, like this government, of the vast scope and size of this province. So they get discharged thinking it's a taxi ride home. They don't grasp that it may be two or three flights to get home, so they're left on the sidewalk.

I talked to one guy, he was out in the parking lot, with no idea, in the middle of a pandemic, how he was supposed to get home. Nobody offered him any advice. Some charity gave him some clothes. He finally tracked down a long-lost relative in the city that he could go and stay with until they managed to get him his ID and get a flight booked. And it was only through intervention of the MLA that things started happening. It's unfortunate that we didn't get involved sooner.

We know that health care is a disaster in northern Manitoba. They talk about, well, we're going to use more of this telehealth and more Internet-based things. But once again, this government and all the members of this caucus on the PC side have failed northern Manitobans because most of those communities don't have Internet, or the Internet they have is so slow that it cuts out.

So thinking that, by not providing adequate services in the North, that somehow it'll magically happen through the Internet, is wrong again. But this government, once again, has failed in any way, shape or form, to make sure that broadband Internet is available and accessible in northern Manitoba.

I talked to people at Frontier Collegiate in Cranberry. They know the fibre optic cable runs through Cranberry Portage as it comes from The Pas into Flin Flon, but they can't convince anybody to branch it off through Cranberry Portage. Why is that? Well, because it's a small community, so the private enterprise, Bell MTS, can't make enough money. This Province refuses to step in and help out because a former PC government privatized MTS.

We know that Saskatchewan has done a much better job of getting high-speed Internet throughout the North because it's a government-owned entity still. We know that there's people in Manitoba use SaskTel because it's better service than Bell MTS.

So, we know that the fibre optic cable runs from all the hydro and yet this government, again, has failed Manitobans by now allowing access to that.

One thing I want to touch on a little bit before my time is up is about trade. The government—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in particular—has a real problem with us selling hydro south, but he doesn't have a problem

with us shipping oil south. It makes absolutely no sense, but then—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up. [*interjection*] The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): After hearing bedtime stories with the member from Flin Flon, I'm pretty—I'm very pleased to put a few words on the record about our historic investments in Manitoba found in Budget 2021.

This budget is monumental, despite ongoing financial and economic challenges posed by the pandemic. This budget continues to make record investments in public services that Manitoba relies on. This budget is—represents all Manitobans. These are real, tangible things.

Budgets are not just numbers on a page, they are people. They reflect everyday Manitobans like you and me. Our budget is about our small-business owners, nurses, teachers, your local coffee shop, tattoo artists, just to name a few. What makes this budget so significant is that it reflects everything that we have been through in the last year. This budget is about Manitobans, and they will benefit from it well into the future,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no one can deny how COVID-19 has changed all our lives. It has brought hardships and tragedy for many Manitobans, and we mourn with the families who have lost loved ones to this terrible virus. Our government recognizes that Manitobans continue to face health, social and economic impacts and uncertainty. That is why we are committed to continue to support them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, though we are not out of the woods yet, we must be vigilant and continue to plan for the light at the end of the COVID tunnel. COVID-19 has created a significant deficit due to the unanticipated health-care costs and support programs and a major drop in revenues from the economic shutdown. Our PC team has fixed Manitoba finances and balanced the budget last year. Now, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we're projecting a deficit of over \$1 billion for the 2021 and '22, which is reduced from our current 2021 projection of \$2 billion.

* (12:10)

Our PC government has a solid plan to eliminate this COVID deficit and bring Manitoba back into balance within eight years. Despite the ongoing

financial and economic challenges possessed by this pandemic, this budget continues to make record investments in priority public services that Manitobans rely on. We will continue to invest more per person on health care, education, and social services. We will be investing more than any other province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is how we will do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Budget 2021 increases funding in these priority areas by nearly \$1.5 billion. That includes \$156 million more for health care, \$91 million more for K-to-12 education and post-secondary, and \$33 million more for social services.

Our government is not afraid of hard work, because it's only the—it's the only path to success. When we look at what we can leave generations to come and what the future of our children and grandchildren inherit, we can rest assured that this PC government's efforts will make for prosperous blue skies for generations to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that keeps its promises. With Budget 2021, we are doing just that. We are keeping our promise and delivering in full our 2020 tax rollback guarantee one year earlier than planned. We are doing this as we phase out education property taxes.

Over the course of the next two years, we will reduce education property tax by 50 per cent, 25 per cent a year. That means Manitobans can expect an average rebate of around \$800 over the next two years, helping more than 650,000 homeowners. These changes will put all Manitoba students on equal footing regardless of where they live. This is an—this initiative reaps benefits both immediately and in the long term.

That being said, our results are already obvious. Manitobans, under our PC government, have already received more than \$700 million in tax and COVID-19 relief. This has been returned to Manitobans since 2016. Manitoba is the only Canadian jurisdiction that determines school taxes at the local level. It created and has—it creates and has created an uneven playing field across the province. With our government we will address this. With our changes we will ensure a more equitable system is in place to fund our education and support students.

There are many accusations out there about what our government is doing when it comes to education. I know for a fact that Budget 2021 speaks for itself.

We have made a record investment above \$3 billion in our public school system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for too long Manitoba has been one of the highest spending provinces on education. Despite this, our education results have been among the country's lowest when it comes to student achievement rates. We have a system that it was not working for us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government in no way is diminishing our supports for schools. We are increasing them. We can all agree that we want to realize a better future for our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our PC government is putting its money and policy where it matters most. Within the next five years Manitoba's government is committed to becoming the most improved education system in Canada through ensuring that students' learning and achievement is put above all else. We are focused on uplifting our educators and supporting them. With our commitment of support, significant resources will be shifted to the classroom to build up the education system and supporting Manitoba's children in achieving their goals well into the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Budget 2021 will support Better Education Starts Today strategy with an education funding guarantee of no less than \$1.6 billion of—additional that is spent in the education over four years.

Budget 2021 invests more into making sure our schools are better, safer and equipped to meet the needs of our children. This includes \$78 million for COVID-19 costs through the Safe Schools Fund. This will also include investments to implement our Better Education Starts Today strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was happy to see an additional \$5.5 million for special needs funding and nearly \$4 million to support distance and remote learning. When it comes to education, we are spending more, and Budget 2021 is our flashlight in the dark, offering comfort to Manitobans that our PC government cares about them.

When it comes to health care, this government is once again making record expenditures in the health-care sector. Our government—sorry, our PC government is committed to making decisive changes for the betterment of all Manitobans, no matter age, race, gender, location or sector. We are building a stronger health-care system with better care sooner to serve our Manitobans for generations after this pandemic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health-care funding is at its highest level in Manitoba history. At \$6.98 billion, that's more than the NDP ever spent. Key investments that we are making include: \$812-million capital commitment for rural and northern health care under the five-year clinical and preventative service plans, triple our original commitment of \$270 million; \$50 million to address the wait times for surgeries and services; also, an extra \$23 million for cancer treatment coverage; \$9 million to add more than 120 personal-care-home beds; creating a program to cover the costs of continuous glucose monitors for eligible youth under 25 and increasing insulin pump coverage to age 25. This is a request we heard often during our public budget consultations and proves that we are a government that listens.

COVID-19 has, unfortunately, impacted the mental health of many Manitobans. And at this point, I would like to actually share a little bit about how it's affected me directly and some of the struggles that our family has actually had through this pandemic. I, personally, can say there have been some very dark days, not only for people within my family, whether it be losses through suicide or even contemplation of suicide on some of my family members, part—including, and not limited to myself. It's been a very, very, very tough time. Yes, and it's—COVID-19 has unfortunately impacted the many—the mental health of many and—Manitobans.

This year's budget includes an initial \$342 million for programming and services within the new Department of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery. Our government has committed an additional \$5 million to engage with communities and stakeholders to develop and deliver a whole-of-government approach and address the mental health issues. Our government has included an additional \$1.7 million for mental health and addictions strategy and \$1.8 million more for 24 housing supports for Manitobans diagnosed with mental health conditions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite the challenges we have faced in the last year, Manitobans can take comfort in knowing that our government is working for them. And though we may not be out of the woods yet, we know that we are planning for a bigger and brighter future.

I will conclude here by saying that I'm proud to be part of a government that's getting the job done.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): My heart goes out to the member for the difficulties he and his family have been facing. It's been a brutal year for all of us.

When it comes to the budget, we are very disappointed about it. We did present a number of recommendations to the Finance Minister, and what we wanted to see, what we'd hoped to see, was stability, relief and recovery. And, unfortunately, on far too many ways, this budget falls far short.

* (12:20)

I'm going to talk about some of the difficult stories that I've heard from people over the year that—and the stories of people who've been struggling with this pandemic, and the emergency help that we called for in seeking for help because they have no other place to go.

One of them was the issue of diabetes. And while the government has increased coverage of CGM and insulin pumps to 25, as they said, it's only eligible—open to eligible young people, and type 1 diabetes does not end at the age of 26. So, while people were grateful because so many Manitobans have lost private health coverage and cannot afford life-saving medication, there is no other place for them to go. But that has always been the case for people over the age of 26 in Manitoba.

I've talked with constituents, with seniors with tears in their eyes because they have to spend \$300 a month on diabetes medication, and when this—when the government cancelled the special drugs program, I had a constituent in her 80s who all of a sudden had to start paying for insulin with her credit card. She was—clearly, somebody in their 80s is not able to go out and get an extra shift at McDonald's to cover the losses of a life-saving medication.

So that has truly been disappointing, because that should have been covered. When we—type 1 diabetes—it's no different than somebody losing—when we—when they have a—when somebody's heart stops working, we give them a pacemaker. When somebody's pancreas stops working, we should give them an insulin pump. That's the way it should work.

When it comes to EIA, we've—I've talked to constituents who had their EIA cut off because there was a suspicion they were on CERB. There have been terrible crises and breakdowns in communications in the EI and at Manitoba Housing.

When it comes to renters, I very specifically expressed my concern to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), because what's happened in the last year is we've seen what are called renovictions, where—and it's been in social media and the news—you had a group of young men who got a loan, bought an

apartment building in St. James-Assiniboia, evicted all 28 suites and then boasted about how they were going to make \$2 million over the next year, hiking rents by 50 to 70 per cent. That's \$75,000 per suite that—each—that, on average, that is going to be pulled out of the pockets of tenants. It's outrageous.

It's been frightening because what we're seeing over the last year is the acceleration of money being taken out of the pockets of the middle class and the working class, taking out—money out of the pockets of the poor and putting pockets—and accelerating that process of putting it into the pockets of the wealthiest people in society.

And that's what this budget does. It's not so much a budget as a heist. It's a smash-and-grab looting of the public treasury, where we're going to be borrowing billions of dollars to cut cheques to, you know, the hard-working pipelines of Manitoba. It's not just homeowners. It's not at all just homeowners. And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) likes to talk about the kitchen table, but all this is going to go to the boardroom table. It's totally unacceptable at a time of crisis.

What we need right now is fairness. What we need right now is honesty, especially about harsh truths, but when we hear that, you know, there's going to be 400–\$800 over the next two years for the average Manitoban, that's—so, again with the budget, we keep on getting multiple years being lumped together. We keep on getting exaggerated numbers. We hear three years of investments on infrastructure being stuck together to make it look bigger.

And this government is consistently, consistently promised things they have never delivered. They've always overpromised and they've always under-delivered. They promise gold and they deliver pyrite, because at \$400 per household is \$200—that's two months, and over 50 per cent of Manitobans right now are \$200 away from insolvency.

So that cheque is going to cover them for two months, but it's going to cost everyone else billions because we're all going to have to pay it back. It's borrowed. That is borrowed money. We're going to add \$8 billion to the deficit to pay for this. And it's going to go to commercial properties and commercial property owners. It's going—go—multiple people with multiple farms will be able to get multiple cheques. People with multiple properties will be able to get multiple cheques.

People talk about the concentration of wealth and the concentration of income. The concentration of

property ownership is way worse than the concentration of income.

So this is one of the most unjust possible tax cuts you could imagine. People at the very top of the 'insome' scale, who own tens of thousands of acres of farmland, people who own hundreds of millions of dollars worth of real estate, will get massive paybacks.

And the idea that this is going to be good for the economy is absolutely false because, when you give all that extra money to people of the top—I don't believe in trickle-down economics. The people who actually create jobs are entrepreneurs. The people who actually create jobs are small businesses in the first five years of their operations. That's known. And they don't actually have access to capital. They have to go put stuff on credit cards. They have to go put stuff on a line of credit. They have to mortgage their house in order to get paid because this government won't step up.

But instead, we're going to be funnelling millions and millions of dollars to the wealthiest people in Manitoba. And what do they do with it? They don't put it into charity. They don't. They don't put it back into business. They put it into things like luxury real estate or they funnel it away to a tax haven. It's disgusting. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. *[interjection]*

Mr. Lamont: I'll—no, I'll keep going. How much do we—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: Oh, I'll get there, no, no. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: But the other thing's—look—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

When I'm standing, everyone's supposed to be quiet.

Mr. Lamont: When we talk about early-childhood education and the fact that people won't be able to get the—back to work, we've had the worst—one of the worst death rates in the pandemic in so—in private care homes, but we're not seeing investments in private care homes, except in a few pork barrel patronage spots in southern Manitoba.

Students are being forced to take on more and more debt. Crown Lands are out of luck. They're being forced off their land. There's nothing for buy-local.

We have a crisis in health care quite aside from the other—quite aside from the absolutely failed vaccine rollout.

And I will say that last year, when I—when this government chose to permanently keep \$338 million that was taken from First Nations children by NDP and PC governments, I thought it was one of the most immoral things I've ever seen, because every time you hear about an Indigenous child or a First Nations child who's in trouble, if you hear about somebody—that they're homeless or that they're in trouble or that they're—they've been—gone missing or murdered, the likelihood is not only that they were taken from their family by CFS, but the money was taken from them as well—\$338 million.

And I did think that was one of the most immoral things that I've ever seen, because I didn't actually think it would be possible for caring people to do that when there are children who are sleeping under bridges, people who are being forced into prostitution, people who are sexually abused. This is one of the most important moral issues that Manitoba has ever faced, and it's been—and those children have been failed for decades. It's a shame. It's an absolute disgrace.

So I do get upset about it. I do get upset about it when I hear that someone who's close to my family is living under a bridge and they've got a drug problem because they went from foster home to foster home to foster home, or when I hear that a friend has gone to—for help because they've been abused, and they don't get it. And there's no help anywhere and nothing ever

happens. There are no consequences for anybody who ever did anything wrong.

Instead what happens is that we get this budget, where people are being impoverished. It's Robin Hood in reverse. We're actually seeing money being taken from the poorest people in society and given to the richest people in society. It's a smash-and-grab looting. It is the worst. It is—I will not say it's worse—I will not say it's worse than stealing money from First Nation children in care and then blocking them from ever seeking justice. That, I'm sure, will be the worst thing I ever see, but this comes close because this is going to decimate our education system, it fails our—it will continue to fail our health-care system and it is the most uncaring, selfish, greedy budget I could possibly imagine at a time when that—those are the last things we need.

We need to deal with the harsh truths and the problems in this province. We need to be honest. We need to be clear about what's happening and we need to be honest with our budgets and honest with our policies. And we need to be fair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is before us, the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday—p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 9, 2021

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Introduction of Bills

Bill 224—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act
(Overdose Death Reporting)
B. Smith 2271

Committee Reports

Standing Committee on Social and Economic
Development
Third Report
Teitsma 2271

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
Fourth Report
Reyes 2273

Ministerial Statements

Passing of Prince Philip
Pallister 2274
Kinew 2275
Gerrard 2275

Members' Statements

Tracey Wenham
Gordon 2276

Encouragement for Indigenous People to get
Vaccinated
Fontaine 2276

Rosendale Knowledge Centre
Clarke 2277

Budget 2021 and Vaccine Rollout
Wiebe 2277

Joël Roy
Reyes 2278

Committee Reports

(Continued)

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
Fourth Report
(Continued)
Reyes 2278

Oral Questions

Manitoba Hydro Rates
Kinew 2278
Pallister 2279

Rent Increase Concerns
Kinew 2280
Pallister 2280

Sale of Old City Hall in St. Boniface
Sala 2281
Squires 2282

Hydro's Removal of Maple Trees
Naylor 2283
Johnson 2283
Goertzen 2283

Northern Manitoba
Lindsey 2284
Stefanson 2284

Infrastructure Funding
Sandhu 2285
Schuler 2285

Teaching Expense Tax Credit
Lamont 2286
Goertzen 2286

Education System
Lamoureux 2287
Cullen 2287

Children with Type 1 Diabetes
Guenter 2287
Stefanson 2287

Petitions

Public Child-Care Grants
Bushie 2287

Cochlear Implant Program
Gerrard 2288

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility
Maloway 2289

Dauphin Correctional Centre
Moses 2289
Sandhu 2289
Wiebe 2290

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Budget Debate
(Third Day of Debate)

Altomare	2290
Isleifson	2291
Lindsey	2294
Lagassé	2297
Lamont	2299

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

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