

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTomARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	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	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health—and I do note that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable Minister of Health please proceed with the statement.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I rise today to recognize October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

In 2022, nearly 20,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in Canada, and sadly, more than 5,000 will die. This represents 14 per cent of all cancer deaths in women in 2022.

On October 2nd, I had the honour in participating in the run for the cure for breast cancer. This event occurs annually and is organized by the Canadian Cancer Society. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember the first run in Winnipeg 25 years ago when I participated in honour of a co-worker who passed away from breast cancer.

I am pleased to have the run director of this year's run for the cure, Tooba Razi, here with us in the gallery today.

At this year's event, I had the opportunity to hear from survivors and families who have been affected by breast cancer. Their stories are heart-wrenching as they retold how they heard the news and the uncertainty it entailed.

I am pleased to announce that over \$13 million in donations from people and organizations across this province was raised at this year's run for the cure in support of many services and for cancer research. I would like to congratulate the individuals and teams who raised the most funds. Congratulations to the top three individuals: Marissa Poseluzney, Pat Travers, Tracy Dahl.

I would also like to congratulate the top teams including Hy's Winnipeg for the cure, Team Marlo, school team River East Kodiaks and Team Chemo Savvy.

I would invite all members to save the date for next year's run on Sunday, October 1st, 2023, and to join me as I join Manitobans from across the province.

I want to urge women across our province and across the globe to be vigilant this October. It is so important that we regularly check and screen for breast cancer at all ages, as it isn't just a disease that affects us when we are older.

I am grateful for the strength and bravery of survivors and their families for sharing their stories and reminding us of the importance of early detection. I'm equally grateful to those who donate, volunteer or work alongside cancer patients and provide valuable treatment and supports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, together we can one day find a cure for breast cancer.

Please join me in congratulating the organizer of this year's run on a job well done.

Thank you.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Deputy Speaker, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed type of cancer among women and gender-diverse Manitobans. Every year approximately 850 Manitobans will be diagnosed with breast cancer and, sadly, approximately 21 per cent of those diagnosed will, at some point, die of the disease. Thousands are fighting against it at this moment, and many more have not yet been diagnosed, as one in nine women living in Canada will face this at some point in their life.

Every family has been touched by cancer, and we know that those diagnosed with this disease deserve the dignity and ease in accessing life-saving care close to home, where they are able to spend more time with loved ones and have their support. We know people living with breast cancer need affordable and accessible health-care services, and we owe it to them to be doing better here in Manitoba. We must support those courageous Manitobans who are fighting this disease now and honour those who have fought it in the past.

It's important that we celebrate community and volunteer-driven initiatives such as Helping Hands for Manitobans with Breast Cancer Inc., which is committed to providing financial assistance to those undergoing breast cancer treatments.

Organizations such as the Canadian Breast Cancer Network are offering important patient-directed concerns of breast cancer patients through the promotion of information sharing, education and advocacy activities, including emotional support groups and financial resource navigation.

We must also recognize the incredible work done by local researchers, such as Dr. Mousumi Majumder at Brandon University, who is doing award-winning research and using biomarkers to detect breast cancer early in stages—it's rather at earlier stages.

When we talk about Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it's important that we also talk about implications of a disease as well. Cancer impacts entire families and communities. This is why cuts made to health care hurts Manitobans. Without proper funding for quick diagnosis and early treatment of this disease

and many other forms of cancer, families lose loved ones.

* (13:40)

This Conservative government cancelled plans for a new CancerCare Manitoba facility, cut the Mature Women's Centre, which treated young cancer survivors among other patients, and made cuts to CancerCare's mobile breast cancer screening services that lead to last-minute appointment cancellations. Those cuts have directly impacted Manitobans.

Those fighting breast cancer are deserving of recognition, affirmation and advocacy. I urge everyone to take some time this month to reflect on how we can be a part of the fight against breast cancer, remember those we have lost and all those who have been affected. Their memories and their strength inspire us every day.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave to speak to the minister's statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Deputy Speaker, breast cancer is the most common cause of cancer in women in Manitoba, with the exception of the non-melanoma skin cancers. Each year, about 800 women are diagnosed with breast cancer in our province.

It is important to be aware of breast cancer and to screen it with a mammogram so it can be detected early and have a higher chance of being treated well and cured. Many believe women should have access to such screening starting at age 40. While in some provinces—British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island—women can self-refer to get a mammogram starting at age 40, this is not yet possible in Manitoba.

Many women are advocating for the right of women to self-refer for a mammogram in Manitoba starting at age 40, and this is a reasonable request. Give women a choice. It is to be hoped that the government will consider this.

Some 17 per cent of breast cancers occur in women in their 40s, and 17 and a half per cent of deaths from breast cancer are from women diagnosed in their 40s. Women in their 40s who get mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive the mammogram screening.

It's important to know these facts and to know about the risk and protective factors for breast cancer. Most people are aware, for example, that breast-feeding is protective, that increased physical activity is protective or that reducing alcohol consumption is protective from getting breast cancer.

Less well-known is increasing evidence that exposure to DDT, particularly early in life, has been associated with an increase in breast cancer 40 or more years later on. I mention this in part because it speaks to the impact, long term, of environmental factors, and why we need to be paying a lot of attention to our environment.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let us bring greater awareness together to breast cancer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any other ministerial statements? No?

Moving to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Shelley Cockerill

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize and congratulate Shelley Cockerill from Roblin for her stellar contribution to female ball hockey.

Shelley started playing in the female ball hockey league with encouragement from her friends, who all shared the passion for this amazing sport. At 35, she was asked to help represent Manitoba at the nationals. She played for four years for team Manitoba and captained the team all four years. They won a silver and a bronze.

Shelley's talent caught the eye of scouts and she was asked to play for Team Canada. She played two worlds at the senior level, age 18-plus, where they won silver and gold, and three worlds at the masters level, age 35-plus, winning two golds and a silver.

This year's worlds were held in Kladno, Czech Republic, from September 7th to 11th, where Team Canada played seven games in five days. Although they beat Team USA in the round robin, they lost to them 2-1 in the final, taking home the silver.

Shelley has been able to wear both the A and C for Team Canada and captained this year's team.

Another Manitoban, Chantal Larocque, also from Manitoba, played this year. The duo were able to play together and Chantal was the top scorer of the tourney

with 14 points and Shelley was close behind with 12 points and third among all players.

Jocelyne Larocque, a former Ste. Anne's resident and Team Canada hockey player, was the head coach and her dad Andy was the assistant. Along with Chantal DeSpelage [*phonetic*], Manitoba was well represented. These tournaments occur every two years by the International Street & Ball Hockey Federation.

And the team is selected by a manager who tries to balance representation from across Canada. This requires a huge commitment and team rosters change. Canada will be setting their sights on 2023 in the US and hoping to return to the gold podium.

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

The honourable member for—is there leave for the member to finish his statement? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Wowchuk: Okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Shelley and her niece Jayden join us today, and I want to acknowledge Shelley on her accomplishments in ball hockey.

Thank you.

William Whyte Neighbourhood Association

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Today I'm pleased to be honouring the William Whyte Neighbourhood Association. In only five short years, WWNA has changed the lives of so many of my constituents for the better, and they've improved the community in more ways than I can—I have time to mention.

Affordable housing in Point Douglas is a big problem and WWNA has stepped up. The thousands of dollars they put towards affordable housing in their partnership with the Housing Opportunity Partnership, as well as their home repair fix-up grants, have made an incredible difference for low-income homeowners and families in the William Whyte area.

They helped fix up an old rooming house on Selkirk Avenue which now contains four safe and affordable suites. Without that invaluable work, some of the people they helped might not have homes today.

Seniors have a lot of love for WWNA as well, because they recently bought gift cards to help with groceries for 40 seniors in the neighbourhood.

WWNA runs free classes and programs for children and adults alike. Learn-to-paint night is a fun and relaxing class for adults, and it's something that people

in the community really look forward to. In the winter, kids look forward to their skating program. It's a great resource for low-income families, as they lend out and gift skates to local kids.

In spring and summer, they maintain several community gardens where they provide seeds, water and tools for people in the area to grow vegetables for their families. Partnering with Mount Carmel Clinic, they connected with 10 newcomer families, who all tend to their own garden plants-plots.

WWNA has also helped many neighbourhoods—helped make the neighbourhood more beautiful, partnering with Graffiti Art gallery to paint a new mural on the walls of the Pritchard park rec centre, a rec centre that I attended as a child.

With lots of love and hard work, they've uplifted neighbours and built the community, and I hope that they'll continue for many years to come. Please join me in thanking Darrell Warren, Pamela Warren, Janice Pacey and Sylvia Kowalchuk, who are here today, as well as the entire William Whyte Neighbourhood Association for the great work that they do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

Mrs. Smith: I seek leave to include all of the names of the board members in Hansard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It's unnecessary to request that, but the clerks can direct you on how that works.

William Whyte Neighbourhood Association Board: Dario Cidro, Levett Demchuk, John Hangdaan, May Henderson, Sylvia Kowalchuk, Janice Pacey, Jeanette Perez, Jun Perez, Darrell Warren, Pamela Warren.

Cindy McDonald

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Today I want you to join me in recognizing the executive director of Portage and District Chamber of Commerce Cindy McDonald.

Raised in Winnipeg, Cindy McDonald moved to Portage in 1996 to start her career in television with MTN, and moved on to the Women's Television Network, and then to Golden West radio, where she discovered her love of volunteering.

Ultimately, Cindy landed her dream job as executive director of the Portage and District Chamber of Commerce. The chamber supports and promotes our community in so many ways, and Cindy is honoured to have been a part of it for the past 12 years.

* (13:50)

The chamber has advocated for many things, but some highlights in—are the new west end bridge in Portage, the removal of parking meters in Portage and upgrades to downtown sidewalks and the redevelopment of the west end of Portage.

Over the years, Cindy has served on many local boards, including Canadian Mental Health, and the United Way, the ringette association, and the Portage Potato Festival. She also managed her son's football and daughter's ringette teams. In 2011, Cindy ran a half marathon in Dublin, Ireland, raising \$6,500 for the Arthritis Society, something she is still very proud of.

Cindy is a huge proponent of collaborating with other non-profit and stakeholder organizations to get things done in the community.

In 2016, Cindy became co-chair and treasurer of the Portage Potato Festival, and in 2024, the festival will be celebrating 20 years. Come and enjoy free french fries in Portage.

Cindy continues to support her community in any way that she can. She lives in Portage with her husband and children, Rory and Shaynne.

Please join me in recognizing Cindy McDonald for her selfless contributions to our community.

Flood Protection for Peguis First Nation

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): This year, Peguis First Nation and surrounding communities experienced the worst flooding in their history, leading to evacuations which displaced entire communities. Hundreds of families are still unable to return home. It is important to recognize that the federal and provincial governments must act to support Peguis. These communities experienced disastrous flooding in 2006, 2009, 2011 and again in 2014. Much more needs to be done to address reoccurring flooding.

Chief and council, as well as the Southern Chiefs Organization, have rightfully called for support to build and implement permanent flood protection. The provincial and federal governments have not responded to this call as they should and no commitments have been made.

Peguis First Nation was wrongfully displaced to its current location more than a century ago; it had no choice in where they were moved. They were forced out of productive farmlands and into flood-prone area

through no decision of their own. They repeatedly face significant flooding year after year. This is an example of the history of 'coloniasism' where the needs of Indigenous peoples and communities are prioritized lower than others.

The continual damage and repeated flooding of Peguis First Nation is costing all levels of government more money than if action was taken to help build more enduring—enduring flood protection in the first place. Our governments spend millions on disaster assistance whenever flooding strikes, so not even fiscal responsibility can be used as an excuse.

We will continue to advocate for permanent flood protection for the people of Peguis First Nation. We want to see both the federal and provincial governments fulfill their responsibilities towards First Nations communities by protecting them from flooding.

Ekosi, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Queen's Hotel

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): The historic and iconic Queen's Hotel in Rapid City continues to live on thanks to new owners Brent and Hanna Baker.

Earlier this year, Rapid City residents were saddened to hear of the potential closing of the oldest building in town. Upon hearing the news, the Bakers made the quick decision to jump in head first and alter the course of this beloved business.

Hanna moved from the Netherlands to Rapid City in 2002. She opened a clothing boutique in 2004, before moving it to Brandon. She reopened her store in Rapid City in 2019 when the old United Church building became vacant. Brent, originally from Brandon, ran a sports club and computer store, along with serving as a business consultant. The pair have the warmth and inviting attitudes that make them ideal candidates to operate a hospitality business.

The history of the Queen's Hotel dates back to the late 1800s. The current building was built in 1901, after the original building fell into disrepair. The hotel originally had three storeys; however the third floor was removed sometime in the early '80s. Since it was built, there have been over 20 owners, including the local municipality, which took over from 1918 to 1923 during prohibition.

The business has seen good and bad years; however, the one thing that has remained consistent is the steadfast support of community residents.

Rapid City resident Olive Walker explained, every small town needs a place to make strangers feel welcome. The Queen's in Rapid City has been doing this for years.

Currently, there are five hotel rooms on the second floor, along with an apartment at the front of the building. The Bakers plan to renovate the upstairs, including making the apartment into two additional hotel rooms and opening access to the second-floor balcony.

A rather unique part of the Queen's is a collection of bullet holes in the wall of the entryway to the building. Turns out a last call from the barkeeper, several decades ago, served up a memory for residents that no one will soon forget.

All the best to Brent and Hanna Baker as they work to keep this iconic Rapid City institution alive and well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Election Day Acknowledgements

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today is municipal election day in Manitoba, and so I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge those whose terms are coming to an end and have announced that they are not standing for re-election.

Of course, I'm thinking of mayors and reeves like Brian Bowman, Ralph Groening, Ron Kostyshyn, councillors across the province and, of course, even school trustees who've served schools in this province, like my good friend, Jennifer Chen.

We know that life as an elected official is a public service and it's also one that necessitates time away from family and personal sacrifice. So, certainly, I want to give all of these good folks their due and say miigwech, thank you and merci.

I do have a question on health care, but wanted to put those comments on the record first.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his statement. Of course, today is municipal election day in the province of Manitoba and other provinces, obviously, and we do wish those well who are not running again, including Brian Bowman and others who have chosen to move on to other areas of life beyond elected politics. We wish them all well.

And there's many across this great province. I won't mention them all, but they know who they are. We thank them for their time in office. It hasn't always been an easy time during the last couple of years, during the pandemic, and we wish them well and their families well as they embark on their new careers in life.

We also want to wish all of the candidates who have chosen to put their name forward today for election—we want to thank them for doing so. We know that elected office is a challenging one at times. We thank them for taking that plunge and putting their name forward—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: First Minister's time has expired.

Health-Care System Government Record

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are speaking out about the crisis in health care that's been created by the cuts of this PC government.

Yesterday, we heard from a respected emergency room doctor who works at one of the most important hospitals in our province. He said that things on the front lines are worse than they've ever been. In fact, he says, they've grown worse since one year ago. Of course, one year ago is when this Premier took office.

We know the impact of the cuts they're making: more nurses leaving the front lines, patients waiting longer and longer for the health-care services that they need.

Can the Premier tell Manitobans why the PC government is failing Manitobans when it comes to health?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Again, the litany of false accusations continues from the Leader of the Opposition.

The fact of the matter is that we are investing \$1 billion more in health care alone in this province, more than the NDP ever did when they were in power in this province, Madam Speaker, and Madam—and Manitobans don't want to go back to those dark days where they were closing 20 rural hospitals and lining our hallways with patients and highways with patients. We don't want to go back to those dark days.

I do want to thank Dr. Thompson for coming forward and for, you know, we need to be listening, and we are listening to he and other physicians in our

province. And we thank him for what he said. He also recognizes this is nothing that is unique to Manitoba. In fact, it's a challenge that is faced right across our country.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Kinew: We find the PC government in the last year of their second term still scrambling to try and explain away the cuts that they have overseen over years in office.

They closed emergency rooms at some of the biggest hospitals in the province. They cut nursing training seats. They—just this year, after we knew full well the impact of COVID on the front lines—oversaw the cut of more nursing positions at the Grace Hospital. They cut beds at the Grace Hospital.

We know that physicians like Dr. Thompson only speak out when a situation is very much a crisis, and while he did acknowledge that other jurisdictions are facing challenges, he was quick to point out that Manitoba is faring worse than anywhere else in Canada.

The explanation is simple: we've got a PC government that keeps cutting health care.

Will the Premier explain why the PC government is failing Manitobans when it comes to health?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to put false information on the record within this Chamber.

The fact of the matter is, we're investing \$1 billion more in health care than the NDP ever did, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And he mentioned the Grace Hospital; I attended the Grace Hospital along with many of my colleagues on this side of the House last night, and what we—we know that we've heard loud and clear from them that they are looking at a new ICU or upgrades to their ICU. And we committed last night to working very closely with them on that initiative.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it must be an election year, because what they've done so far in the calendar year 2022—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –is they've overseen–*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –the cutting of nursing positions at the Grace Hospital, and–*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –they've cut hospital beds at the Grace, as well. Those are facts.

It's also a fact that they closed emergency rooms at the biggest hospitals in our province. It's also a fact that they cut nursing training seats.

It's also a fact that the physician who spoke out yesterday said that Manitoba is faring worse than any other jurisdiction in this great country. The same physician also said—and this is a fact—that things have gotten worse since when the Premier took office one year ago.

These facts are undeniable. They're indisputable.

How does the Premier respond, and how does she tell Manitobans and explain how her government has failed when it's come to health care?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how I respond to the Leader of the Opposition is actually putting some facts on the record, so that's what I will do now.

A hundred and—we are taking action, Mr. Deputy Speaker: \$141 million, tripling the size of St. Boniface's ER; \$50 million, increase the Health Sciences Centre—for—centre surgical capacity by 25 per cent; \$30 million, increase ICU bed baseline from 72 to 108; \$4.9 million, a fifth operating room at Concordia Hospital to increase orthopedic surgery capacity by 1,000 procedures a year.

And what did members opposite do? They voted against every single one of them.

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

Mr. Kinew: They're in the last year of their second term in government, and all they have are announcements. Imaginary exercises written down on press releases.

What have they actually done? What have been their actions while in government? They closed emergency rooms at the Victoria hospital, at the Concordia Hospital, at Seven Oaks. They closed an urgent care at Misericordia. They've overseen the cuts to nursing positions at the Grace Hospital.

They've seen an unprecedented dire situation in the words of ER doctors at St. Boniface Hospital. And if you attend Health Sciences Centre—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –on a given day, you will see a very dire situation where patients—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –are not getting the care that they deserve.

All that they can do is heckle, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because their actions have decimated our health-care system—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –in Manitoba.

How does the Premier explain how badly her government has failed the people of Manitoba when it comes to health care?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can certainly go back to the dark days of the NDP government, when they closed almost 20 emergency departments across our province. I could read off all of those.

But I do want to say that we are taking action on behalf of Manitobans because—and we are helping Manitobans get the health care that they need. We are taking action, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're getting things done; \$2.5 million, creation of an adult epilepsy program and expansion of the pediatric program; \$8 million, a new acute stroke unit at Health Sciences Centre.

The list goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are helping Manitobans. We are taking action and we are getting better health care for Manitobans sooner, closer to home.

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

Mr. Kinew: Let's bring this back to the bedside. Let's bring it back to the facts on the ground right now.

What is the level of health care that people in Manitoba are receiving right now? Well, that well-respected ER doctor yesterday relayed a story of a person having a heart attack who had to wait 10 hours to be seen in the emergency room. That is a life-and-death situation, and we cannot respond in this province because of the cuts that this government has made to health care.

There are 150,000 Manitobans waiting for a family doctor as we speak. People are waiting longer than they ever have before to get the surgeries and diagnostic tests that they need. This was created because of the cuts and the mismanagement overseen, implemented and executed by this Cabinet beginning with Brian Pallister and now continuing under this Premier.

How much worse will the health—

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition continues to put false information on the record. We are making \$1 billion more in the way of investments in our health-care system than the NDP ever did.

I want to thank Dr. Thompson for coming forward and recognizing—we recognize, obviously, that there are challenges within our health-care system. We know that there—and what I want to say to anyone who is waiting: we are taking action when it comes to our surgical and diagnostic backlogs in our province that came about as a result of the pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can tell you, I remember back in those days where someone waited 33 hours in an ER wait room and died.

I can tell you, we do not, and Manitobans do not, want to go back to the dark days of the NDP government.

Lions Place Seniors Residence Affordable Rent Concerns

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Deputy Speaker, for decades, Lions Place at 610 Portage Ave. has provided affordable rent for seniors. However, this affordability is now under threat as the building is being sold to another operator.

Tenants are rightfully concerned that their rents will be raised under the new owner. It's been nearly a month since we've asked this government to step up and take action to ensure rents at Lions Place remain affordable, yet they've done nothing.

Can the minister outline what actions she will take to ensure the rents at Lions Place remain affordable?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): As the member knows, the—Lions Place, of course, is a private non-profit building that is owned by the Lions Club of Winnipeg. We have been in consultation and

collaboration with the Lions Club, the executive, as well as the tenants who live there, in meetings where we are looking at a variety of options that we can play a part in.

We—when we had our meeting with the building group, they had expressed that they want all levels of government at the table. I've reached out to the federal government, reached out to other partners to see that—what we can do to ensure that all Manitobans have a safe and affordable place to call home and that we have affordable housing options for all Manitobans.

* (14:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station, on a supplementary question.

MLA Asagwara: Deputy Speaker, the closing date for offers to purchase Lions Place was October the 14th.

The minister told us in Estimates she met with Lions Place on October the 13th. Deputy Speaker, that doesn't give the group a lot of time to actually come to a solution that works. It's unclear whether Lions Place has already been purchased, or whether this deadline has been extended.

Can the minister tell us whether Lions Place has already been sold off?

Ms. Squires: I'd like to just point out to the member that because Lions Place is a private building, the Province of Manitoba is not privy to the offers that may or may not have come in under this private sale.

MLA Asagwara: Deputy Speaker, hundreds of people live in Lions Place, the majority of which are seniors living on a fixed income. If rents are increased, many will have no choice but to move out. And, quite frankly, many will end up homeless.

We've already lost hundreds of affordable housing units under this Conservative government. We cannot afford to lose a single unit more.

We've repeatedly called on the minister to take action and ensure rents remain affordable at Lions Place. She has done nothing to this point. Thankfully, she can still take action.

Will the minister commit to taking action to ensure rents at Lions Place remain affordable, and those hundreds of seniors have affordable housing now and well into the future?

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

Ms. Squires: What I can assure the member, that the residents at the Lions Place do not need is the NDP fear mongering. They do not need them to come in and be spreading false accusations and fear.

What they need is a government that's willing to listen to them, which, of course, we have in our meetings that we've been having with the senior action committee and other individuals involved in Lions Place. And what we are also doing is making sure that we have affordable places.

The member opposite was wrong. We have created affordable housing in the province of Manitoba: 745 new units that we've created since we took office, and we're moving forward. We signed on to the National Housing Strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that we've got a lot of work—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Education System Request for Funding

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): For years, the PCs have starved our education system of—class sizes get larger and teachers are stretched thinner and thinner. We know the so-called review the government is conducting on funding is a pretext for cuts, which will hurt our kids in the classroom.

The question for the minister is simple: Will he do what school divisions have been asking for since 2016 and increase funding to regular instruction?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I thank the—my critic for the question. I know it's been some time. It's almost that time of the month, I guess, for a question.

I would like to educate the member opposite that this year alone, we've increased Education funding by \$460 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know math is hard for the NDP—that's more, not less.

Mr. Altomare: This minister knows that funding for regular instruction has been stuck at \$1.6 billion since 2016. It hasn't increased, and it has also impacted classrooms.

All we have to do is look at—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —the *[inaudible]* and know that. And these one-time grants, Deputy Speaker, are unsustainable because the next year, they're gone.

And you know what else, Deputy Speaker?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: They need a real partner in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —this government and all they have is continued cuts.

So, the question is simple: Will he ensure that our funding is in place for the needs of our kids after all of that yelling?

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —unfortunate that the member from Transcona, an educator himself, doesn't realize that right in front of him—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —is a microphone. It's not a megaphone, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He doesn't need to shout. He's getting out of hand.

The member knows that our government has increased funding to Education by \$460 million. That's well over 12 per cent over the last two years alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's unfortunate that the member opposite wants to go back to the dark days of the NDP where they were stagnant, they swept things under the rug.

We're taking action to help Manitobans, including our education system.

Mr. Altomare: They're taking action. They're taking action by absolutely—*[interjection]*—absolutely keeping—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

The honourable member for Transcona has the floor.

Mr. Altomare: All right. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

After years of cuts to schools, and fails attempts to interfere in a classroom with projects like Bill 64,

our kids and educators need support. Instead, all they see from the minister is continued cuts and flat spending for funding for kids in schools.

Will the minister commit today to Education funding that increases the needs and dynamic needs of our kids?

Mr. Ewasko: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the question coming from my friend and one of my colleagues, a fellow educator himself, from Transcona. It's just unfortunate that he takes his time here in the Legislature to stand up and put false information on the record and fear monger not only our students, but parents and stakeholders all across this great province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$460 million more this year in Education than it's ever been given. We're not going to take any lessons from the member opposite. We're taking action, we're helping Manitobans, we're getting things done.

Cosmetic Pesticide Use Request to Withdraw Bill 22

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans want a government that puts their health first.

In 2014, Manitoba brought in important changes to protect Manitobans from cosmetic pesticides. These changes protected children, pets and all those who use our public green spaces. Unfortunately, the PCs are trying to roll back these health protections through Bill 22, despite public outcry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government still has the time to do the right thing. Will the minister withdraw Bill 22 today?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Certainly enjoyed the opportunity to meet with Manitobans during the committee stage of the bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Had some good dialogue.

We also heard that Manitobans respect the science, unlike the ideology of the NDP. We'll continue with the science approach.

Ms. Naylor: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister knows full well that Canadian CancerCare cautions against the cosmetic use of this class of pesticides, and the World Health Organization calls them probable carcinogens. He should know that a federal court has recently found health—has recently forced Health

Canada to review their approval to one of these pesticides due to cancer risks.

Bill 22 would roll back health protections for Manitobans that we've had in place for the past eight years. This makes no sense. The minister heard the concerns of Manitobans at committee, yet it is very clear he was not listening.

Will the minister listen to Manitobans and withdraw Bill 22 today?

Mr. Wharton: Certainly appreciate a question on listening to Manitobans, because we know the NDP have a tough time listening to Manitobans.

* (14:20)

We know that over 70 per cent of Manitobans wanted to see the current restrictions pulled back or rescinded. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we put in further protections of—for our pets, our children, while keeping our community safe and minimizing our environmental impacts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll land on the side of science.

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

Ms. Naylor: Mr. Deputy Speaker, no jurisdiction in the world is moving backwards on pesticide protections and the application of cosmetic pesticides. Pallister wanted to move us backwards, and under the Stefanson government it's more of the same.

Bill 22 would put Manitobans' health at risk and make us an international embarrassment. The minister could do the right thing for the health of Manitobans and our children, our pets, all of those who use our green spaces by withdrawing Bill 22.

Will the minister commit to withdraw Bill 22 today?

Mr. Wharton: I know that Manitobans will agree on one thing: that they do not want to move backwards to the dark days of the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We know that we will act on the best science that's available. Over 350 scientists—federal sciences—scientists led by the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are also including in our expanded areas including schools, hospitals, child-care centres, provincial parks, designating municipal park areas, playgrounds and dog parks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the most active and protective initiatives in western Canada and across Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll rely on the science, not NDP 'ideology'.

**Plan to Address Homelessness in Manitoba
Request to Support City of Houston Model**

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Homelessness continues to get worse here in Manitoba. Far too many people are sleeping in bus shacks, under bridges and in tents. They lack—due to a lack of wraparound supports and affordable housing by this government.

Manitobans are still waiting for this government's plan to end homelessness. We announced our plan yesterday, Deputy Speaker. Within two terms of an NDP government, we would end chronic homelessness in Winnipeg.

Will the PC government get on board and support our plan today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I appreciate that the NDP was consulting in Texas, but only the NDP would think that the climate on the Gulf Coast would be similar or be applicable to Winnipeg in the wintertime.

Our government, on the other hand, spent time—we talked to over 400 people in the province of Manitoba to create a made-in-Manitoba solution, including speaking with over 100 people with lived experience. I'm incredibly grateful to all those who contributed to our homelessness strategy by participating in our consultation and sharing with us their experiences.

Our government is taking action against homelessness. We're getting things done. We've started with per-'inishity'-initiating money for shelters and we are also moving forward on a strategy to build more affordable housing in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Smith: It's unfortunate this—that this minister thinks that people living outside in bus shelters, under bridges and in tents is okay, and that they're doing good work, which we know is not true.

That's why our—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —NDP government has committed to—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —ending chronic homelessness here in Manitoba in two terms, Deputy Speaker. We've developed a plan based off the Houston model, which

reduced house—homelessness by 63 per cent, housed 25,000 people. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: End Homelessness sees the potential in our plan. And I quote: the massive turnaround in tackling homelessness in Houston has been achieved within a decade, meaning with the commitment of the government—

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

Ms. Squires: Our government does not believe it is acceptable for people to live in bus shacks. That is why we have—that's why this year we spent \$55 million, something that the NDP voted against.

And right now—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —they're trying to shout me down. I know the Leader of the Opposition, he wants to shout me down because he's ashamed that he voted against \$55 million for people who are unsheltered or precariously housed. That is their record. That is their plan, which is no plan at all.

Our plan is to get people out of bus shelters—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —to get people into warming spaces, people to get into housing centres, to get people into addictions treatment. We've got a plan to move all Manitobans forward and to look after the most vulnerable people in the province of Manitoba, something—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —they never did when they were in office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

Mrs. Smith: If this minister and this government were concerned for people who were homeless, they would start fixing up the existing social housing that continues to be boarded up and be sold off by this government.

It's clear that they have no concrete plan to address chronic homelessness here in our province. We have a plan, Deputy Speaker: the Houston plan.

Will this minister get on track? Will she support us and help those that are living under—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —bridges, living in tents and having to call bus shelters homes, today?

Ms. Squires: We know what their plan was. We inherited a billion-dollar deficit in the repair and maintenance of Manitoba Housing stock.

Their plan was to let all the housing stock fall into disrepair, something our government is taking action on. Their plan—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —also included freezing the rates for people on EIA. Every year that the NDP was in office, since 2004, people on EIA asked for an increase in their rates. And what did the NDP do? They said no. They said nothing.

Our government has raised the rates for people who are on EIA. Our government is committed to ending homelessness by enhancing initiatives and supports, including \$55 million that the NDP voted against.

They have a chance to get it right. If they really want to commit to ending homelessness, they'll vote in favour of fifteen—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Health-Care System Workforce Retention Plan

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Since 2016, we've been hearing about the disastrous changes this government has made to health care.

In 2018, there were letters from nurses signalling a crisis at the St. Boniface NICU. In January 2020, the Manitoba Nurses Union warned there was no surge capacity in the health-care system, before the pandemic. And we've had resignation after resignation of people who love their jobs but are being broken by a system because they fear they're going to hurt a patient they want to save.

Whenever we ask about these shortages, we're told they're happening everywhere. We know that, but that means everybody is competing to hire our nurses and doctors, who we're treating so badly. If our health system were a patient, it would be bleeding out.

What's the plan to stop the bleeding and to retain doctors, nurses and other health-care workers in the system?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member from St. Boniface for bringing this question forward to the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had the honour and the privilege of meeting with front-line staff to hear from them what the issues are, what their concerns are, because the best ideas come right from the hospital floor—from our health-care facilities. It's about listening to understand the problem so that when we develop solutions, the solutions adequately meet the needs of our health-care staff in this province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, listening to not just nurses but doctors. I was part of the rural doctors summit that Doctors Manitoba—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Health-Care System—Workforce Shortage International Professionals—Certification Barriers

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): There's no question this is a crisis in our ERs, our ORs, ICUs, hallways and rural emergency rooms in northern hospitals.

We know there are people who live in Manitoba right now who are fully trained as nurses and doctors, including specialists, but they can't work here. We have new immigrants, as well as Ukrainian and Afghan refugees—including doctors, nurses and more—who could be working in our system, but Manitoba's colleges of nurses and physicians won't let them, or they can't afford to go through the training.

We have patients at risk in our system because of these shortages. We need effective programs to get these people certified in Manitoba. Where are they? What is this government—is it going to step up and direct colleges to remove the barriers that are driving talented people out of the province?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I do want to remind the member for St. Boniface that we have stepped up.

* (14:30)

We have issued a compliance order to the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, which allows individuals who are living and practising in other jurisdictions in Canada to immediately become certified here.

We are also—I'm also meeting with front-line health-care staff to identify the issues and the concerns and I've been working with a Health human resource task force in my department, as well as a Shared Health recruitment group, and we will be rolling out a comprehensive action plan in the next few weeks to address recruitment, training and retention.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Supports for Seniors Advisory Committee Findings

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): We need to ensure that the needs of seniors here in Manitoba are being met.

The pandemic highlighted some serious gaps in services in care that need to be immediately addressed, and despite calling for a seniors advocate since being elected in 2016, and even garnering the support of all opposition MLAs, this government still does not see the benefit of an independent office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, lately, whenever I ask about the seniors advocate, the minister responsible references his advisory committee that he created seven months ago, yet we've seen nothing.

Can the minister share with us what tangible actions this committee has made since its formation?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I can indicate to the member how proud I am of the minister's advisory committee made up of professionals and individuals who are caring about seniors' needs.

As the House knows, we are developing a seniors strategy and we are working diligently, not only with my advisory committee, but stakeholders in Manitoba. I just had the opportunity of travelling throughout cities and towns in Manitoba and hearing Manitobans and hearing what their solutions and what their suggestion is to cure the problems that do exist.

So, we're taking action and we will continue to take that action.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Programs for At-Risk Youth in Northern Manitoba Funding for The Link and StreetReach North

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to working

collaboratively across systems and with direct service providers to ensure the overall safety and well-being of vulnerable youth.

Can the Minister of Families outline what actions have been taken to ensure the Thompson area continues to be supported in their efforts against the exploitation of youth?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): And I thank my colleague for that wonderful question. Last week, when our government was up in Thompson, we hosted our very first youth summit to hear directly from the youth in the area. We had a wonderful discussion and ideas were shared about ways in which that we can help vulnerable youth.

While in the North, we also announced additional funding for StreetReach North and we're very proud that they're receiving now annual core funding of \$900,000.

During the last five months, I can share that with the House that StreetReach North facilitated the safe return of 117 at-risk youth. Our government also gave an additional \$200,000 to The Link to—for youth programming and to enhance wellness supports for all youth, and they also operate their 24-hour bed for youth in Thompson.

Our government—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Home-Care Services Care Hours Available

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Mr. Deputy Speaker, home-care workers deliver essential health care to seniors and to members of our community. They should be treated with respect, but instead, this government is trying to cut the time they have to provide basic services.

I have heard from WRHA home-care workers whose time has been cut down to 20 minutes to drive to someone's home, to provide them with morning care and to give them a bath. This is impossible.

Why is this government cutting home-care services?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has made record expenditures into the health-care system and supporting seniors.

The home-care system is certainly under review, and we are going to continue to look and find solutions to making that system better.

In regards to overall ratios to Manitoba seniors, the Stevenson strategy, the recommendations we've adopted have also, too, addressed increased ratios for those seniors in personal-care homes.

So, we're on it, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Seniors and Long-Term Care is still talking about the Stevenson's report as if this has anything to do with home care, and it doesn't. It has to do with personal-care homes. It's a different topic. So, making absurd demands on home-care workers to drive and provide morning care and give a dignified bath to clients in 20 minutes is wrong.

To clarify, this used to be scheduled for 45 minutes and now it's only scheduled for 20 minutes. This is dangerous. This is disrespectful. It devalues the work of these frontline health-care workers and leads to cancelled appointments. It's bad for workers and for our seniors.

So will the government listen and stop cutting home-care services for our seniors?

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government takes great pride in indicating the initiatives we do to support seniors no matter what category they're in.

In regards to the home-care system, as I've said, we are working on a seniors' strategy. We're actually working on something to help seniors. The NDP had no strategy. They had no plan. We're working on something to actually help seniors, and you'll get it pretty soon. And I hope you'll support it, because you'll need to.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1, 2023—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Altomare: Number two, to—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Transcona—sorry. Order, please.

No problem with polite conversations here and there, but I really can't hear what the member's saying. It's important that I do. So, I'm just going to ask, please keep conversations either to a quiet volume, take them to the loge, take them to the hallway, wherever it is, but if we can turn the volume down, that would be much appreciated.

The honourable member for Transcona, please continue.

* (14:40)

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

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

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

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

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition is signed by Ron Tone, Maria Janhsen and Joel Tone and many more Manitobans.

Louise Bridge

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 110 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it has deteriorated extensively, becoming functionally obsolete, subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority of the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available public-available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed that residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise Bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise Bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

(10) The City expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn from Watt to the 111-year-old bridge is complete.

(11) The new Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the new Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend to the City of Winnipeg to keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping it open for active transportation in the future.

And this petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madame la Présidente, je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

1) La Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library a été avisée par la Division scolaire Vallée de la rivière Rouge de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de l'École Heritage School d'ici le 31 mars 2023.

2) L'auditorium a été construit dans les années 1960 par le célèbre architecte manitobain Étienne Gaboury. La B-R-G y est installée depuis 48 ans.

3) Une photo de l'auditorium intitulée la bibliothèque régionale est publiée dans un document de 2008 intitulé : bâtiments patrimoniaux des MR De Salaberry et Saint-Pierre-Jolys. Il est indiqué qu'il s'agit d'un bâtiment moderne important qui pourrait atteindre le statut de site patrimonial.

4) La B-R-G et la DSVRR ont prospéré grâce à un protocole d'entente mutuellement bénéfique pendant 54 ans.

5) Leur collection commune compte plus de 50 000 livres et possède la quatrième plus grande collection de littérature de langue française dans les régions rurales du Manitoba.

6) Les élèves qui sont transportés par autobus des municipalités voisines qui n'ont pas de bibliothèque publique, comme Niverville, Grunthal et Kleefeld, ont accès gratuitement à la bibliothèque publique, et à sa quatrième plus grande collection de livres en français dans les régions rurales du Manitoba pendant l'année scolaire.

Nous présentons à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba la pétition suivante :

1) De demander au ministre du Travail, de la Protection des consommateurs et des Services gouvernementaux d'envisager de concéder l'auditorium à la B-R-G d'ici le 1er mars 2023.

2) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation de reconnaître la valeur que la B-R-G apporte à la population étudiante de l'ÉHS, ainsi qu'aux communautés du Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys et de la MR De Salaberry.

3) Demander au ministre de l'Éducation et au ministre des Affaires francophones de reconnaître qu'un protocole d'entente entre la RRVSD et la G-R-L est mutuellement bénéfique, financièrement et culturellement.

4) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel

patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et son statut au sein de la communauté.

5) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine d'empêcher toute rénovation de l'auditorium qui détruirait et dévaloriserait l'intégrité architecturale du bâtiment.

Cette pétition a été signée par Carole Robidoux, Alain Robidoux et Patrice Robidoux.

Merci.

Translation

Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library was notified by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate premises currently located in the auditorium of the École Heritage School by March 31, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was built in the 1960s by famous Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the B-R-G for 48 years.

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

(4) The B-R-G and the RRVSD have flourished by means of a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

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

(6) During the school year, students who are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the B-R-G by March 1, 2023.

(2) To urge the Minister of Education to recognize the value that B-R-G provides to the student population of EHS, as well as the communities of Village of St. Pierre Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

(3) To urge the Minister of Education and the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs to recognize that a memorandum of understanding between the RRVSD and the G-R-L is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

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

(5) To urge the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy or devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition was signed by Carole Robidoux, Alain Robidoux et Patrice Robidoux.

Thank you.

South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

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) Residents of the River Park South community in Winnipeg are disturbed by the increasing noise levels caused by traffic on the South Perimeter Highway.

(2) The South Perimeter Highway functions as a transport route for semi-trucks travelling across Canada, making this stretch of the Perimeter especially loud.

(3) According to the South Perimeter Noise Study conducted in 2019, the traffic levels are expected to increase significantly over the next 20 years and backyard noise levels have already surpassed 65 decibels.

(4) Seniuk Road, which runs alongside the South Perimeter, contributes additional truck traffic causing increased noise and air pollution.

(5) Residents face a decade of construction on the South Perimeter, making this an appropriate time to add noise mitigation for the South Perimeter to these projects.

(6) The current barriers between the South Perimeter Highway and the homes of River Park

South residents are a berm and a wooden fence, neither of which are effective at reducing the traffic noise.

And we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to consult with noise specialists and other experts to help determine the most effective way to reduce the traffic noise and to commit to meaningful action to address resident concern.

* (14:50)

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation to help address this issue with a noise barrier wall along residential portions of the South Perimeter from St. Anne's Road to St. Mary's Road and for River Park South residents.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

JRL and RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

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

Students are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Ninnerville [*phonetic*], Grunthal and Kleefeld, and they're provided with free access to the public library

and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.

To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

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

To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to provide any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and 'devalue' the architectural integrity of the building.

This has been signed by Donat Mellor, Denise Tereck and Ruth Brown and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Foot-Care Services

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

The background of this petition reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and the surrounding area.

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

The implications and inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure complete an assessment of Provincial Road 224 and implement the

appropriate repairs using public funds as quickly as possible.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Ekosi.

Home-Care Services

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

(6) The provincial government's cuts to home care in Manitoba has resulted in chronic staffing issues that caused the WRHA to cancel 27,000 home-care appointments in the month of April 22–2022 alone.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

* (15:00)

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) JRL and RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

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

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

We petition the Manitoba—we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de la Saint-Pierre-Jolys and RM De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

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

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This has been signed by Rachel Hoffman, Krystelle Wiebe [*phonetic*], Tess Van Alstyne and many others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other petitions?

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive living-listening devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over with low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

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

Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving

Employment Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Bashir Fagiri, Ardale Coplas [*phonetic*], Jennifer Lowe and many others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any other petitions?

Seeing none, orders of the—oh, sorry, grievances? No grievances. All right.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call for hopeful passage this afternoon at second reading bills 45, 40, 43, 46, 38 and 42.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that this afternoon we will pursue debate on second reading for bills 45, 40, 43, 46, 38 and 42.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 45—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will begin, as announced, with Bill 45, and the honourable member for—resuming debate on second reading for Bill 45. The honourable member for Keewatinook has 24 minutes remaining.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to once again rise today to 'continue' on some of my comments on the Bill 45, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, or BITSA as we come to know it here.

I did want to kind of, again—once again say my comment as to what this government is actually using BITSA for, and it's really to, kind of, avoid accountability, to silence the voices, to not really listen to Manitobans. And that's unfortunate because pieces of

legislation that we bring forward here have that opportunity. They have that opportunity to actually engage Manitobans, to get feedback from Manitobans and help Manitobans then mold that—those legislations and those issues that come forward.

But this government, time and time again, is failing in that regard, instead using BITSA as a way to avoid accountability, to, kind of, put things through and bypass Manitobans and bypass that voice and bypass those discussions that Manitobans truly want to have input on.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And in the time that I have here this afternoon, I do, kind of, want to point out how they've used that to, kind of, bypass the accountability for Manitoba Hydro in regards to Manitobans and ratepaying Manitobans here in the province—north, south, central, all over the province. And it's unfortunate that this government, again, is just trying to, kind of, not be totally forthcoming when it comes time—to the Crown jewel and the Crown corporation that we have.

* (15:10)

Because Manitobans should have faith in that. Manitobans should have faith in their Crown corporation, should have faith in this government to be very forthcoming with information so that they can, in fact, make informed decisions as to how they go about their daily lives.

And in this case under Manitoba Hydro, how a family in Manitoba then goes about understanding how that corporation works, understanding how the rates come to be and understanding and recognizing and hoping that their voices are, in fact, heard.

And we don't see that from this government. Instead, time and time again, they're trying to bypass that engagement, trying to bypass that discussion that they have. And including hiring Brad Wall; hiring Brad Wall to give—and whether or not members opposite have a different definition of the word independent compared to everybody else in Manitoba, that's clear they're not independent. And for that matter, the word expert. Perhaps the word expert means something different on that side compared to this side, because for sure, we don't see Mr. Wall as an independent expert by any means.

But yet, this government takes that to be as such. And perhaps in a few months from now, Brian Pallister will be the expert independent voice that they

listen to; who knows. But I don't think anybody else believes that.

But Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes time to the accountability that's non-existent from this government, Hydro is a prime example of that. Prime example of that lack of accountability, lack of transparency, that this government wants to put forwards toward ratepayers here in Manitoba. And instead, misleading the Manitobans to believe that, in fact, they know what's right for Manitobans without having that engagement, without having those discussions.

Not being forthcoming about the financial well-being of Manitoba Hydro. Not disclosing billions of dollars in revenue, not disclosing millions of dollars in profits, but instead, trying to kind of not really talk about that and say, this is what we're going to do because we know what's best for you, without having that engagement.

So I did want to point that out, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I know there's a lot of people that want to be able to make their comments on this, so I did, in closing out my comments from yesterday and into today, want to just make that point, that this government is using BITSA to kind of take away that accountability, take away that transparency that Manitobans need and Manitobans deserve. And that's just disgrace from this government.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We are concerned about this bill. There are a few provisions in it which are questionable. I mean, one is that we expressed our opposition to the property tax rebates, because they've been incredibly regressive and unfair. We've seen, you know, multi-thousand-dollar cheques cut to commercial property owners who may or may not even have any residence in Manitoba, which means that we're sending cheques out of province to people who won't spend it back here, so there's actually no benefit in terms of sort of pumping money into the economy.

Because this is overwhelmingly one of these trickle-down efforts, where the people at the top get the vast majority of the money, while the people at the bottom don't. In fact, people that don't have property will get nothing. But there were examples that an individual with a condominium in Tuxedo could get a \$6,000 cheque, while a person with a condo in Point Douglas might end up getting a cheque for \$8. I mean, this is the kind of discrepancy that we're seeing.

The other thing about it is that, you know, there's a tax cut in there which essentially promotes climate change. We have peat mines in this province which are a driver of climate change, and this particular measure decides to take away the fuel tax so that we're no longer going—that peat mines, you know, will no longer be paying a fuel tax, which means effectively, we're subsidizing companies to increase climate change in Manitoba.

The other is that there's a change around the renter's act. Again, this is an attempt to save money, really on the backs of some of the poorest and most at-risk people in Manitoba. So, there are some useful non-monetary cleanups, but that's not enough to overcome our opposition to this, especially because that they're going to be embedding this in the rebate and legislation.

And part of this is simply that it's very clear that this is politically motivated; this is going to be something where the government will say, well look, we—you will oppose these tax measures. Well, we do oppose them. Because these are unfunded tax cuts. These are unfunded tax liabilities. We're—we've—we're borrowing hundreds of millions of dollars in order to cut cheques to people who are—many of whom are—may already be millionaires or billionaires or companies—or major companies; while there are people sleeping in bus shacks, while there are people who can't afford food, while there are people who can't afford medication.

We are in the process of reducing property taxes in a way that's not going to benefit the economy and that is actually negatively impacting our provincial finances. I don't understand what is supposed to be even remotely fiscally responsible about this. This is the sort of thing—unfunded tax cuts—this is the sort of thing that Liz Truss did in the UK and she ended up lasting for 44 days as prime minister because she ended up making cuts that so put her country's finances at risk that stock markets crashed, the pound crashed; and it was seen, rightly so, as a crisis.

And this is—I think it feels as if these are just the same old ideas and that this government has not actually recognized what has changed since the pandemic, is that we've had massive increases—we're facing massive increases in property prices. We're seeing massive increases in the concentration of wealth. We're seeing massive increases in money flowing upwards while everybody at the bottom is struggling because people are hiking prices.

We know that people are hiking prices. We know that oil, whether it's oil companies or whether it's grocery prices, that we have just a handful of companies controlling so much that they're in a position to be able to dictate what those prices are.

And I just want to repeat, we've had—I've said it as—a number of times, I've said it in this House, but I expressed my concern about interest rates being hiked. I said in March that the prospect of the Bank of Canada increasing interest rates was likely to drive people into bankruptcy. In fact, that's the entire point of it. It's really unfortunate, but essentially that the Bank of Canada seems to be determined to engineer a recession. I said this in March. I presented a paper about it at a conference in 2017.

The fact is, is that—and it's been recognized by others—that in the current environment, to be—when we are dealing with high prices, partly from a war in Ukraine; we've got inflation; we have instability; we have political instability because we have, you know, investigations into the storming of capitols in both the US and in Canada. For the Bank of Canada to be taking this risk is really an incredible risk.

And I just want to read a note from Edward Chancellor, who is an economic historian journalist and was a senior member of the asset allocation team of the Boston investment firm, GMO. He's just written a book which I think is extremely important. It was published on July 21st in an online magazine called The Market.

He—when interviewed, he was told—said: It will turn out to be largely impossible to normalize interest rates without collapsing the economy, quote, by aggressively pursuing an inflation target of 2 per cent and constantly living in horror at even the mildest deform of deflation. They—central banks—not only gave us the ultra-low interest rates with their unintended consequences, in terms of the everything bubble; they have facilitated a misallocation of capital on epic proportions and they created an overfinancialization of the economy and a rise in indebtedness. Putting all this together, they created and abetted an environment of low productivity growth.

I happened to come across this article because I follow a Canadian economist named William White. He's not well known. He's a former deputy governor of the Bank of Canada. He worked with the bank of international settlements and he really should actually be one of the most famous economists in the world because he's one of the few who predicted the 2008 global financial crisis, one where Canada had to bail

out banks to a tune of \$200 billion; that trillions of dollars had to be printed all around the world to prevent economies from collapsing.

And Mr. White was part—an economist with the OECD as part of the bank of international settlements. And year after year, he sat at the table, across from Alan Greenspan, the chair of the Federal Reserve, and warned him that what was happening with debt in the US was unsustainable, that they were headed for a crash. And after that crash, Alan Greenspan famously said that it turned out that reality didn't conform to his models of the world.

And Mr. White has been warning, for many years, they were facing what would be considered a global insolvency crisis. He has written of central banks, quote: They have pursued the wrong policies over the past three decades which have caused ever higher debt and greater instability in the financial system.

* (15:20)

And we need to be clear about this, because I know that there's been a lot of back and forth about the Bank of Canada and others. The Bank of Canada is independent, so the decisions it makes aren't guided by elected officials. In fact, elected officials are prohibited from doing that. Every couple of years, they're allowed to give the Bank of Canada some guidance.

But the role the Bank of Canada plays in affecting every single Canadian and the role that central banks play in affecting the economy for everybody who lives in a given country is absolutely colossal and it has been overlooked. And, unfortunately, they seem to be steering us towards a crisis.

I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister letting them know that I'm extremely concerned the Bank of Canada is trying to engineer a recession and to pop Canada's housing bubble with significant increases in interest rates. They've increased them again by half a point today. Housing prices are already dropping.

And because real estate is such a large part of the Canadian economy, it's going to have an outsized impact. It's already happening. And if people are left underwater on their mortgages, owing much more than their house of worth, it will trap them financially, in terms of labour mobility.

And given the fact that Canadians' personal debt levels are over \$2 trillion and much of that is in mortgages, the Bank of Canada is going to try to control

inflation by bankrupting individuals and bankrupting businesses. It's going to happen here. It's going to happen across Canada. And the people who'll be hurt will be younger generations, farmers, people who are already on the cusp of default.

And it needs to be recognized that this is in part because the Bank of Canada in 2008 dodged a bullet. They got credit. It was claimed at the time that when this crisis happened, it was Canada's strong regulations that helped save the day, when in fact it was an absolutely colossal bailout that almost nobody told—was told about.

And, unfortunately, exactly the same measures or similar measures were rolled out at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. Instead of helping governments, instead of helping individuals, instead of helping businesses, huge amounts of money was pumped towards investors, bondholders and banks. We ended up bailing out investors who were in danger of losing their bets, instead of the people who were being gambled on.

And so, in event of a market crash, Mr. White has warned we need various ways to carefully restructure debts, and the Canadian—current Canadian federal and provincial bankruptcy laws are not enough. And that if we're facing a series of defaults, he makes the point: look, we can either have them be orderly or we can have them be chaotic. Because many mortgages that are—that the governments—that banks currently register as assets, when they plunge in value, will suddenly become liabilities.

Oxford Economics is warning of the possibility of a financial crisis, which is to say a run on banks, because all of a sudden, when all—when a whole bunch of Canadians all end up defaulting at the end of one month, all of a sudden, the banks are not going to have enough money to pay their bills.

This is what happened in 2008. And it has to be said, I want to send this warning. I mean, some banks are predicting the greatest down—housing downturn in history. And I want to send this warning because the potential economic and political effects of such a recession occurring in a country that's already divided will be weaponized by extreme political elements. And because we know from history that financial crises and austerity lead to extremism.

And that's already happening. The world we're living in where we talk about authoritarian governments, where we talk about the fact that democracy's on the run. That people aren't—and the democratically

elected governments aren't able to achieve what they want. It's in part because of this swamp of debt that makes it impossible for people to get through.

And, usually, there are only two solutions. One is austerity and cuts on the one hand, and the other is fiscal stimulus and tax increases on the other. But neither one of these is going to provide long-lasting beliefs so long as there is a colossal debt overhead. We have to recognize re-emerging—we're emerging, we may still be in the middle.

We're not—we're trying to emerge from a pandemic, a once-in-a-hundred-year pandemic, we hope, which has wreaked incredible havoc on everything from supply chains to businesses. It's been absolutely brutal to health-care systems, to labour markets. But the other is the effect of all this debt. This debt is—and this low-cost debt, ultra-low interest rates and debt, are what drive—are driving many, many, many of our ills.

The fact that people can't afford housing is because low-cost debt has driven up housing prices. The reason rents are going up is because people have been getting all that debt and speculating and then buying up apartment buildings and then trying to pay off their big mortgages by having to rent—by having to jack up rents.

The reason why people—there's a labour shortage—is because workers can't afford to buy houses or pay rent on the wages they have right now. And it's also fuelling the concentration in wealth and inequality, because we all know that when it comes to interest rates, when you're poorer you pay a higher interest rate; when you're richer, you pay a lower interest rate. That's just the way it goes. But it means that when you massively increase the amount of money that's available, the people who have the greatest access to that money are people who already have large amounts of resources, including companies.

So, companies can go up on buying sprees. They go up and they buy up all their competitors. They snap up all their competitors, so we have a massive and growing concentration of wealth that's been happening and it's being driven by ultra-low interest rates and debt.

So, on the one hand, I have to say, we—there—we have to see interest rates go back to normal, but we can't let it break the system. If we keep and maintain interest rates low, as some have tried to do, it—all that it's going to do is extend this and make it an even worse crisis at the end.

What we need is a post-pandemic Marshall Plan. And the Marshall Plan for the Second World War included two aspects: one was in investments in industrialization and in rebuilding, and the other was debt amnesties and renegotiation. In Germany there was a complete—they had an entire—what they called a monetary reformation, but it meant that debts were reduced.

In—you know, cities and provinces in Canada, you—were—had their debts reduced after the Second World War by the federal government because those debts were racked up after a crisis, and this is part of what you have to do to emerge from a crisis.

We can't just pretend we haven't been in a crisis; we have. There's a war, there's an ongoing pandemic, there's an energy crisis and there's a financial and debt crisis. And the one thing we can do with all these things is make a difference with the finances and with a planned and structured debt amnesty. The alternative will be bankruptcies, unemployment and more, which is deliberately being planned for.

So, we really have to think this is the way the economy works, is that this is the way the economy has worked for 30 years where, rather than having governments engage in fiscal policy, rather than having governments step in, the whole idea has been to just let central banks pull a lever up and down of the amount of interest rates.

And the result has been that after every crash it's as if you have—it's like a boa constrictor around a mouse—where every single time the mouse breathes out, it gets a little bit tighter. Every single time there's a crash it gets a little tighter.

And the other thing—and we—there is enormous potential. This can be avoided. This crisis has to be avoided because the alternative is really quite grim.

So, with those words, I just wanted to say that because I think it's very important. We're in a very risky time in terms of the economy, and to be choosing to drive the economy off a cliff right after a difficult pandemic when nobody—when people—many people have not recovered, and businesses have not recovered and certainly, health care and education systems not recovered; at a time when Europe and other parts of the world are going through crises due to war, where you're talking about 80 per cent increases in the price of energy in the UK, we could face a very difficult winter.

We could—and this has to be recognized as a crisis and we have to learn from our mistakes, because this

is a repetition of the mistakes of the past, because these are the same mistakes that were made that created the Depression.

My dad grew up in the Depression and told lots of stories about it, which is part of the reason I know about it. You know, we have the opportunity and, I think, the obligation to avoid a colossal amount of human misery by actually being realistic about what has to be done and taking measures that have been used in the past that worked. But we have to be able—we have to recognize the urgency of this moment.

And that's it. Thank you very much.

* (15:30)

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Many of my colleagues have already highlighted some of the significant problems hidden in the BITSA bill, particularly with changes to The Manitoba Hydro Act. So, if I have time, I'll come back to that, but for now I'm going to apply my critic lens to the BITSA bill and focus some attention elsewhere.

Bill 45, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, makes a change to the fuel taxes. This exempts fuel from tax if the fuel is used on only off-road in peat harvesting operations. This change is actually an incentive for peat harvesting. This adds to the many incentives available through this government that support the fossil fuel industry and work against climate change.

In the government's own Climate and Green Plan, which is basically an ineffective plan with meaningless targets and no teeth at all, but a plan that was created by the Pallister government and held up under the Stefanson government and by the current minister of Environment and Climate as his plan moving forward. Under this plan, there is a passing reference to the importance of protecting peatlands and protecting land in Manitoba in general.

Yet, under this government, there's been almost no movement whatsoever to protect lands and now we have a new incentive, sliding in under BITSA so it can't be debated at committee, that rewards peat harvesting.

Although the PCs Climate and Green Plan references the legislative requirements to protect significant peatland, they do not provide a timeline or targets for more peatland protection, nor have they linked these targets for the reduction of climate emissions.

While peat is an important part of Manitoba's economy, it also gets harvested for any number of reasons in addition to being sold as a product for the horticulture industry. Peatlands are disrupted for agriculture development and commercial development.

I think that members in this Chamber should have a much better understanding of the role of peat in climate change and in flood and fire mitigation before they pass a bill that will encourage more harvesting of peat, so I've prepared some information that I hope everyone will give some serious thought to.

In Canada, peatlands are partially protected by the federal government's wetland policy, but the actual responsibility for the management of natural resources is under the authority of the provincial government.

In 2015, under the NDP government, The Environment Act was amended to require that a peat harvesting licence be obtained before a development licence can be issued under the act. The Provincial Parks Act was amended to prohibit the commercial development of peat in provincial parks, and The Peatlands Stewardship Act was proclaimed as the first provincial peatlands legislation in this country to ensure a balanced approach between peatland conservation and responsible development.

Since the NDP government amended the peatland policies in 2015, there has been a surge in available research globally and certainly local activism on this issue.

Peatlands are a type of wetland which are among the most valuable ecosystems on earth. They're critical for preserving global biodiversity. They provide safe drinking water, minimize flood risk and help address climate change.

Peatlands are the largest natural terrestrial carbon store. The area covered by near-natural peatland, worldwide, sequesters 0.37 gigatons of carbon dioxide a year, storing more carbon than all other vegetation types in the world combined. The amount of carbon held and stored in a single undisturbed hectare of wet peatland is equivalent to the annual emissions of 14,000 passenger cars.

In their natural state, peatlands provide vital ecosystem services. By regulating water flows, they help minimize the risk of flooding and drought. Draining peatlands reduces the quality of drinking water due to pollution from dissolved compounds. Damage to peatland also results in biodiversity loss, including animal habitat.

Damaged peatlands are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, annually releasing between 5 to 6 per cent of all emissions caused by human activity. Peatland restoration can therefore bring significant emission reductions. Countries are encouraged to include peatland restoration in their commitments to global international agreements, including the Paris Agreement on climate change.

While peatlands cover only 3 per cent of the earth's surface, it covers 13 per cent of Canada's surface area and approximately 42 per cent of Manitoba's surface area. That means that Manitoba has a significant responsibility to protect peatlands.

It is often said that, with our small population base, that changes to personal habits such as driving an electric car or switching to electric heat won't make a significant difference globally to climate change. I disagree with that assertion, because I do believe that every action matters. But even with that line of thinking, this government should be thinking bigger about the opportunity to make a significant difference based on our significant amount of peatland.

Ninety per cent of our wetlands are peat bogs or peat fens, and our province has 17 per cent of this country's peat, which is an incredible resource, an incredible responsibility. In Canada, peat is primarily mined for the horticulture industry, but peatlands are also drained and destroyed for mining, hydro, rail lines, roads and agriculture.

Obviously, these things are critical to economic development, jobs and Manitobans' daily lives, but we must do a better job of balancing these needs and balancing use of natural resources that can harm the climate. Giving an incentive to those who harvest peat is moving in the wrong direction.

A report from the United Nations Environment Programme in 2017 called for the protection of all remaining peatlands in the world. In other parts of the world, peat has been used for heat because it is a fossil fuel. The country of Scotland has destroyed almost all of their peat because they used it to burn for heat for generations.

Peat is a fossil fuel that takes a million years to develop, and stores up to five times more carbon than trees do. In addition to being a carbon store, drained peatlands increase wildfire risk. Disturbing peatlands always releases GHG emissions—up to five times more than deforestation does. But when peatlands burn, it releases substantially more. And so, we certainly are at risk of that with wildfires here in Manitoba. There's

one very serious example that occurred in Indonesia, where peat swamp fires emitted nearly 16 million tons of CO₂ a day, more than the daily emissions from the entire US economy.

Many people are calling on Manitoba and other provinces to do a better job of conserving peatlands. In July 2021, the federal government announced \$25 million for conservation and restoration of prairie grasslands and wetlands.

The Wilderness Committee of Manitoba is calling for protection of 66 per cent of Manitoba's peatlands. The Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society supports protection of peatlands as part of the efforts to increase protected areas in Manitoba. The Lake Winnipeg Foundation and Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective point to the preservation of peatlands as an important part of the health of Lake Winnipeg, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Manitoba branch, identifies peatlands as natural resiliency for flood mitigation.

So, before I move on to other concerning aspects of Bill 45, I will just summarise that Manitoba should be protecting more of our wetlands, including peat bogs and peat fens, and not subsidizing peat harvesting through tax incentives, as the BITSA bill sets out to do.

This bill puts additional tax changes in place that also disproportionately benefit those who are already well off, and don't alleviate the financial struggles Manitobans are facing during the current affordability crisis. This bill gives out-of-province corporations and some of the wealthiest individuals permanent tax breaks by putting the education property tax rebate into law. Tax breaks for the rich, as we know, rather than investing in education, hurts Manitobans.

This government raised taxes on renters, which makes their lives more expensive at a time when the cost of living is already at a crisis point. The provincial government is phasing out the education property tax in a way that disproportionately benefits the wealthiest Manitobans. By 2023, and in following years, it will be reduced to 50 per cent.

Commercial property owners are also receiving a 10 per cent rebate. This means tax breaks for large out-of-province corporations and some of the wealthiest individuals in the world. At a time when Manitobans are struggling with affordability, the government is choosing to give tax rebates to wealthy out-of-province corporations. This is unacceptable and

shows that they are not prioritizing the needs of Manitobans.

* (15:40)

The government has claimed that the rollback on this rebate and the plans to redistribute the money elsewhere will be cost neutral, but they haven't provided the numbers, so we won't know if this is true for several years. This is an issue of transparency. The government is not being up front with Manitobans about whether this plan will cost them even more.

BITSA also allows the minister to extend the Efficiency Manitoba efficiency plan by one year. There's no restriction on how many times an efficiency plan can be extended, either, meaning that a one-year plan, in theory, could be extended forever.

Last year, the PC government tried to give itself power to regulate other methods of obtaining public input on Efficiency Manitoba plans. And this effectively strips the PUB of approval authority on these plans and gives that power over to the minister. Independent assessment reports of the plan's outcomes will also no longer be given to the PUB.

Efficiency Manitoba has not been free from interference from the PC government. In 2019, the former minister delayed the submission of Efficiency Manitoba's three-year strategic plan by a month, and by doing so they undermined the oversight role of the PUB in the process and broke their own law.

Section 12 of The Efficiency Manitoba Act says that the minister can only approve efficiency Manitoban's plan after the PUB has 'reviewed'—reviewed and made its own recommendations. The minister had the plan on his desk before it went to the PUB.

The former minister undermined the independent role of the Public Utilities Board by passing a regulation that ended the furnace replacement program, a program ordered by the PUB. This program helped everyday Manitobans reduce their natural gas consumption and save on their energy bills.

This government cut advertising costs for efficiency programs after transferring them to Efficiency Manitoba, limiting Manitobans' ability to take part, to even know about these opportunities for energy conservation.

According to the Manitoba Hydro spokesperson, Bruce Owen, quote: Many of our programs, in parti-

cular, residential and low income, see less participation when we do not advertise or have a promotional campaign.

Efficiency Manitoba's advertising budget sunk to \$650,000 in 2019 from \$815,000 under the Power Smart program.

They also purposely delayed the advertising of services in 2018, denying Manitobans the right to education on how they could reduce their utility bills amidst raising—sorry—rising rate increases. This is—there's—this is further evidence of the fact that when the PC government interferes with Crown corporations, it ultimately hurts Manitobans.

And finally, just a word on the Manitoba renters' tax credit. The PC government is now proposing to change the renters' tax credit so that it's prorated, meaning if you only lived in your residence for six months, you'll only be eligible for half of it. Previously, renters had to cross a certain amount of rent paid before being eligible for the entire benefit. As this threshold was relatively low, renters could get the whole benefit without having to rent for the entire year.

The credit used to be \$700, but is now only \$525. This is another way that this government and BITSA has taken money out of the pockets of the most—you know, the poorest folks in our province. This is what happens over and over with this government, but BITSA enshrines more of this into law.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to put some words on the record, and I know that many of my colleagues are looking forward to their opportunity, so I will take my seat now.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): All right. It's, as always—it's always a pleasure to stand here as the member of the Legislative Assembly for The Pas-Kameesak.

Right now I just want to send condolences to many deaths that have happened in my home community. Violence has risen in my home community. In fact, on Monday our elders gathered our folks in OCN to address violence such as guns, something that we have not experienced before, so something very tragic and very important that's happening in northern Manitoba. It's not just on the streets of Winnipeg; drive-by shootings in OCN. Crazy.

So, let's get back to Bill 45, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, something that we like to call BITSA.

So, as I wake up every day and watch the news, all you hear about is the rise of cost of living, inflation, elders living next to nothing, making soup; I even—there was an interview with an elderly woman saying she was going to buy vegetables and soup stock and live on that for a few days. One income.

And I—that's why I believe that this bill does not fit the environment that we're living in today. Inflation—it's on the news. I don't know, do they watch the news in the morning? Do they watch it at night? I sure do. Keeps me up.

And what I want to say is that the last time that this type of sneaky little vehicle, if you will, to pass legislation that doesn't require committee, that was really a hit below for all of us when it comes to CFS because hidden in there was the children's special allowance.

And I remember I was talking to a lawyer who was leading First Nations on trying to get this allowance back to the children's lives. And basically, it was like these children, who are severely underrepresented, severely, severely not looked upon in society, and with many people that want to help, it just seems like this government does not want a child to be double funded—to have two sources of money coming in to a child that desperately needs it.

Especially when these services are cut off at the age of 18 or the age of 21, which a lot of these 18 year olds, once they're out, a lot of them are not taken care of and helped, and letting them know what their rights and resources are once they're 18. Because most of the kids I know are usually kicked out, because there was no longer a cheque for a awful foster parent to collect.

And this is the reality, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. Lot of these children are just cheques, which is—makes me just angry because the system does not listen to these children's voices. You know, what if these children had a voice to say hey, don't hide this children's special allowance. Don't hide this in a sneaky little bill without even voices from them that could have come at committee level. Instead, it was just bulldozed through and once again, our children are going to suffer.

There's nothing wrong with double funding a child who really needs it. Think about it. Think about a grandchild, think about a daughter. Think about that.

So, I want to get on to the education property tax rebate. When I first heard that, you know, maybe it's a few years back, I thought it was ridiculous. I'm like, why would somebody do that? You know, take away

revenue that's feeding the education, you know, where my children are going to school in northern Manitoba. How is that going to be compensated back, I was thinking.

Instead, these cheques are thrown at people where I live, and I just found, like, it's like a desperate attempt to say hey, we're good; we're going to throw money in your face for this year only. And the rest of your children's education career? Eh, it's your problem to think about.

So, I think that was not a good move on part of that government to throw these cheques into people who—really, this money should be invested into children's education.

Who's going to look after you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker?

* (15:00)

We're going to need health-care aides, we're going to need nurses, we're going to need a good, grounded education for these children. And I still don't understand how that's going to work when money is taken away from there, thrown at people's faces and you guys, you know, calling an election—an early election and hopefully that will still stay in the air and these people will, you know, vote in your favour, but that's not going to happen. It's not going to happen because people are going to remember bill 64.

I remember getting phone calls from my constituents asking, what the heck? And I had to stay on the phone with them and let them know about this crazy, crazy bill idea. And I was quite honoured how a teacher asked me, said: How can we help? How can us ordinary citizens help with this bill? I'm a principal for a school for children who are within the CFS system; children with parents with addiction problems and there's no help for them.

So, to me, this bill, when I—seen it and had a vision of it and how it would affect our people up north, it made no sense at all, and it, in fact, scared all of us. And that is why you—this government received such a huge, huge cry out for help when how many—I think it was over 500 people who signed up for committee. I remember I asked the minister of Education, did you guys ever do the math as to how many months we would be in there in order for our people to importantly express their opinion against this bad, bad bill? May it rest in peace.

So with that—with the education in the North, you know, we were talking about food security. I—it was

quite astonishing, the other—I think it was last year, a member opposite had some pretty bad remarks about feeding poor children. You know, I thought, you know, what does he have against hungry, underprivileged children?

You know, where I come from, I remember growing up in social housing in Saskatoon after Mom and Dad divorced. And you know what, this breakfast thing back in my day was, like, phenomenal. We didn't have it every day but, you know, sometimes moms can be busy in the morning and, you know, I know I chase out my children with a banana or an apple, at least, before they go to school.

But it was really disturbing what the member opposite said about the breakfast program, saying it's, you know, it's irresponsible, you know. To me, it's like this person does not truly understand real problems that happen with real families, you know, who may live paycheque to paycheque, something maybe many members on that side are lucky enough not to know about, right?

So, with the cost of living, as well, with this bill, you know, just not—like I said, is being introduced in this awful environment that we're living in right now—like I said, inflation, cost of living. You know, right now, we have people in northern Manitoba who are cancelling doctor's appointments, you know, because they can't afford to go there. They can't afford the gas, they can't afford, you know, what is it—70 bucks towards a hotel, which averages maybe over \$120. And then the food. You know, I think they're given, like, maybe \$5.

Look at the Northern Patient Transportation Program, you know—it hasn't been touched since 1995 and I think that needs to be addressed.

And also, too, my own folks—even my own relatives can't even make it here for their own appointments. Cost of everything has went up, you know, and I know for a fact that we have people who leave northern Manitoba, they can't just leave like that. They usually have to look at—find child care, make sure there's groceries in the cupboard while they're away up to three days. That's extra money, right? Your life is interrupted, you've got to make sure that you're—the family's prepared and then now you have whatever's left in your pocket to make it to your doctor's appointment, you know? Just nickel-and-diming it.

Sometimes, we're lucky enough to have relatives here in the city. I've had to deliver food to the hospital a few times. I've had to go deliver food to relatives

who stay at the Quest Inn, which is a place where people from northern Manitoba stay. It is busy in there. It was my first time in there. Holy smokes, there's people from Island Lake, everywhere. All Indigenous people staying in this hotel, Quest Inn, downtown Winnipeg—not a—not in a very safe place but hey, you know. And the way my cousin described it when I went there to go drop off some food, water, cigarettes and money for the bus that he was going to be thrown on in the next day.

Imagine if I wasn't there. He would've been starving. You know, you get one food voucher when you get there that night and that's it, nothing in the morning, right? So, it was kind of funny when I arrived there to go see him. He jokingly said, holy smokes, Amanda, it's like a big powwow here. Because there was First Nations from all over Manitoba.

So, doesn't that say something? We need first-class health facilities in northern Manitoba, and we had a golden opportunity when The Pas clinic was supposed to be built. The shovel was ready to hit the ground; I was excited. I'm a diabetic; I was hoping specialists like an eye doctor could come up there so we could get injections and eye laser treatment for diabetics, rather than us coming here. A lot of my folks don't come here and guess what, they're becoming blind.

The Pas health clinic could've survived—could've supplied those services. So, I don't know what's wrong with this other side of the House, you know, why do they—don't like northern Manitobans? Why do they feel that we do not deserve first-class health facilities, first-class health services and first-class education opportunities as well? It's very disheartening when I look at my people living in Kelsey Estates—quote, the ghetto. You know, that's what they call this: low-income, high-risk families, and you name it.

And guess what? That's my favourite place to go to when I go campaigning. I hit up the Kelsey Estates. I love talking to the young mothers, single mothers and the children, and guess what, the first place I go to, too, when I go gather and take people to the polls. And they respond because they see me as a fellow Indigenous woman and a single parent, right?

So where was I going with this, here? *[interjection]* Children, yes, yes. Okay, children. Yes, health care. All right, all right. *[interjection]* Okay, okay, now I know. Okay.

Efficiency Manitoba. Efficiency Manitoba. The member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), I invited him to a Swampy Cree Tribal Council housing conference at the end of August, at the Canad Inns Polo Park. And since we're talking infrastructure, thought it'd be an opportunity to show off my colleague, the member for Concordia, to all my northern brothers and sisters from Swampy Cree Tribal Councils.

So, we were talking about Efficiency Manitoba in there, and I was, you know, we were—all the housing directors were there listening—councillors, band councillors with housing being their portfolio. And so, of course, we all know about the even more worse housing situation on reserves. We all gathered there to collaborate and learn more about solutions, coming up with solutions or collaborating with other companies.

So, while I was there, I learned about Efficiency Manitoba, and how they're selling, you know, like, do this and do that, you know, and, you know, basically the environment, at the end of the day, was the concern. So, while I was reading this, like, they said here, you know, BITSA will allow the minister to extend the Efficiency Manitoba plan by one year. So, our concern is that there is no restriction on how many times an efficiency plan can be extended, either meaning that a one-year plan could, in theory, be extended forever.

So, I don't know. I'm kind of confused there, you know, when this program is being pushed and sold and marketed, and yet it's going to be extended and extended. You know, the credibility, you know, will probably start being lost if that's going to continue, especially when this program is being promoted and marketed to First Nations housing directors who desperately need such ideas, you know, to help collaborate and solve the severe housing crisis on-reserve.

* (16:00)

And, in terms of cost of living, I have many constituents who call me in regards to the Manitoba Housing situation in The Pas. There's many, many boarded up houses, and I remember I asked the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) to—how many housing units are there in total? How many are there that need to be fixed up? How many should be just bulldozed down because they've been boarded up for 10 years?

I don't understand why these houses are still boarded up when we have many, many families who are living with another family in order to have a house over their head, you know. How do you expect a

mother whose children was taken away—you've got to find housing. Yeah, right. You may as well say goodbye to your children.

There is no housing here in Manitoba, not even an apartment to rent that's affordable to this parent who's being told by a social worker, acting like God, you can't get your children back because we took your children away and you lost your spot in Manitoba Housing. All right. Good luck trying to get them back and another spot in Manitoba Housing again.

Where's the justice in that? It's currently happening right now—right now. Something happened. You know, instead of taking the bad person out of that house they made the mom and her seven children lose her house at Kelsey Estates, and all the kids are in Cross Lake now. And mom's alone, living couch to couch in The Pas.

What's wrong with that? They don't understand that? Absolutely, they do not understand what poverty is. They do not understand what the rage is when children are taken away. They do not understand and will not ever understand that.

That is why all I get is a little smirk from the minister of family before and yet I thought she was cool and wanted to work. Instead, I'm just getting this smile. I'm out. I don't have to worry about this anymore.

What kind of minister is that? We deserve more than that, than some smirk at committee when I'm asking questions—important questions—about children in care, about foster parents, about families who can't even get their children back. And then you get rid of the children's special allowance sneakily in this BITSA bill? Shame. Shame on this government.

So that's where I want to leave before I start using language that I'm commonly known for. I just want to say it's a privilege here to stand here with my colleagues to speak towards very important bills like this. And I hope everyone in this room consider themselves very, very lucky when they come up the stairs to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Even folks that have been here forever, you know, I hope they don't forget the privilege and the honour to walk up those steps, to come into this room, sit in this chair with their name on it. Don't ever forget why you ran in the first place. I know why I ran—to help people, not to sit on a soapbox and hear my own voice.

And I was taught good values by my late father, Oscar Lathlin. He told me, you be humble as hell, and

that's—and a sense of humour. And, most of all, is to take care of people, to help people.

So, with that, I want to end with that and I want to wish everyone the best. It's a very, very hard job. I know I've sacrificed half my family, and just to remind, take care of each other and be there for each other when things get dark, when we're here too much and we're away from our families.

Kinanâskomitin. *[I am grateful to you.]* Ekosi.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm pleased to be putting some words on the record in respect of Bill 45—the budget implementation act.

But, as I begin, I'd like to thank all my colleagues who spoke prior to me on this bill, who did a tremendous job articulating all the issues with this government's budget. From the member to Transcona with his fiery passion, to the member from St. James articulating the issues with Hydro, to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) who, I think, put on a master class discussing the issues of peat and how it relates to Bill 45.

And I'll just begin there, to reiterate some of the words that she said in respect of the choices that this government makes. And really, ultimately, that's what this is about. It's about the choices that the government makes. It's about the choice the government's making to allow the removal of a fuel tax for those who are peat harvesting.

Now, think about that decision, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker; really think about that choice that the government is making. They are choosing to allow an industry to use more fossil fuels, more fuel—encouraging them to use more fuel and more gas. And their encouragement to use more gas in the destruction of peat, one of the largest carbon sinks we have in Manitoba. So, they are encouraging people to burn more fossil fuels in the process of destructing—destruction of carbon sinks. That is simply ironic that they are choosing to use this path.

And you think about it, the fact that Manitoba has 17 per cent of the peat in our country, that's a huge part, that's a huge, frankly, responsibility that we have to maintain this peat. Peat is one of the largest carbon sinks around—natural carbon sinks. More than just planting a tree; it's four to five times the carbon sucking-up power that peat has over just planting a tree.

And for the government to choose to put that even in further danger and choosing to put it in further

danger by promoting the use of more fossil fuels is ironic and wrong, and it's not the direction that Manitobans are looking for right now.

When Manitobans are calling for more clean approaches to be taken in our economy, more clean approaches to be taken by this government, this government is choosing to ignore them. It's a choice. It's a choice that they're consciously making to ignore the concerns of those who are looking at a—reducing GHGs emissions from our communities.

Now, peat takes hundreds of years to grow. You know, it's something that we don't just have in an unlimited supply here in Manitoba. It's something that we need to value and truly protect the same way that people in Brazil have a responsibility, a duty, to protect the Amazon for the Amazon's importance to our global environmental health. The same way even other people in the Pacific, in Australia, have a responsibility to protect coral. The same way we, here in Manitoba, have a responsibility to take care of our peatlands. And that responsibility is heavy because of the role that it plays in our ecosystem in Manitoba and our environment in Manitoba, and its impact globally in terms of GHG reductions.

And even if the government could ignore the environmental impacts, which it shouldn't, because that's to all of our benefits across this province and across the globe, but even if they could, think about it from an economic and even risk standpoint. Now, we met with the insurance brokers—IBAM, not too long ago—Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba—and they talked about some of the risks that are faced now in the insurance industry as a result of major climate-change-related events.

And, of course, I think all of us in Canada, you know, hearts go out when we see and hear about the terrible stories that happened when the hurricane came through the Maritimes and Quebec. But, from our Manitoba perspective, we, too, are impacted.

According to the insurance brokers, the payouts to many of the, you know, unfortunate people in that eastern part of our country will impact the insurance rates of people across the nation. There will be a small impact to the insurance rates of us right here in Manitoba as a result of that event—which, I think it's quite clear, is related to climate change.

* (16:10)

And so, too, when we're concerned about those type of costs that Manitobans are facing, that we face as a province, we also should look at other natural

events, specifically ones that are faced here at home. And I'm talking about forest fires. And we know that forest fires, the—more and more, we see forest fires, especially over the last decade when we've seen an increased number of them, an increased scale of them in Manitoba. We need to have more protections and more preventions to ensure that Manitobans, their lives and their property, is protected.

And one of the natural ways that we can mitigate and prevent forest fires is by protecting and ensuring the healthy survival of some of our peatlands and wetlands. They act as natural fire-prevention areas. There's a huge correlation between when we reduce and get rid of our wetlands, our marshes, our peatlands and the severity and the number of forest fires that we have here.

Now, there's communities from all across the province that have been displaced, that have had their homes and their lives drastically changed as a result of forest fires. And what is this government choosing to do? They are choosing to make their lives more risky because of this decision. Because of their removal and their incentive to remove peatlands, they're in effect making the risk of fires in our communities and across the province more likely. And it's a disturbing choice that this government is making, because it's clearly from an economic—from a human perspective, a choice that is the wrong one, not the one that Manitobans want to have right now. That's very clear.

And so, it's so discouraging, disheartening, disappointing to see this government choose to go down this path. And not only with our environmental, you know, conservation when it comes to peat or wetlands and the fact that the government in this bill is, you know, encouraging that—encouraging people to burn fossil fuels to do that—but in fact, when you look at the GHG reduction strategy that this government has, or—in fact, that this government doesn't have, the fact that they're delaying by a year the Efficiency Manitoba plan—the fact that they consider reducing Manitobans' carbon footprint so less—little importance—so little importance placed on the GHG reduction of—by Manitobans that they just say, it's okay, we'll just toss our plan down the road for another year. It's not something that's high on our radar. It's a choice that, you know, frankly, is not important to us, so we don't really 'clare'—care about how we impact climate change, let's just kick the can down the road a bit. That's what they're choosing to do with this budget and with this Bill 45. They're choosing to kick that can down the road.

Well, climate change doesn't wait for anyone. It can't just stop and say, oh, pause, the PC government doesn't want to talk about climate change, so we're not going to, you know, we're not going to have an impact for you. It doesn't work that way. We've got to act now—we've got to act now. We've got to do our part to reduce emissions.

And that doesn't happen when Efficiency Manitoba underspends their budget year and—year in and year out. It doesn't happen when they can't tell and help Manitobans reduce their emissions. It doesn't happen when they underspend and they kick their plan down the road. We need to get serious about this. This government has failed to do that. They've chosen not to have that as an important issue.

And, quite frankly, it's something that Manitobans are looking at and saying, you know what, this doesn't—this government doesn't represent my values. It doesn't represent the things that are important to me in my life. And soon enough, they'll have their opportunity to make a different choice about the government that will represent their values—whether it's in a year from now, whether it's in six months, who knows? Could be sooner, could be later. We don't know. Could be this month, could be next month. According to the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), it will happen at some point in the future. And we look forward to that day. We look forward to that day. We look forward to that day.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

But again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we now know that this government is choosing to make these decisions and making the lives of Manitobans more difficult. It seems, you know, unrealistic to say, but it's true. They're choosing to make the lives of Manitobans more difficult and less affordable. When we look at the fact that hydro rates are rising—not just because the PUB, it sees that it's—from their independent perspective, that it's a reasonable increase, but because at the legislative table, at the Cabinet table, they think Manitobans ought to pay more.

It's a strange time we live in where the Premier, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), can say, oh, you know what? I think hydro rates are going up by this amount this year. And that will be that for Manitobans.

But now they propose, in Bill 45, a pass-through system for the federal government funds, instead of going directly to Hydro, for the provincial government to come right in the middle and say, you know

what, federal government, why don't you hand the money to us, we'll hold onto it and, you know, we promise we'll give it all to Hydro.

But here's the thing. They could just give it directly to Manitoba Hydro themselves. Why does the provincial government have to get their hands in the way? We know the line from Birtle to Saskatchewan was built with federal funds. So why on earth did the provincial government have to get its hands in the middle there? Unless they have a plan which they're not being transparent about, which they're not telling Manitobans about, to take some of that money before it goes to Manitoba Hydro, right?

And that's obviously the plan. And not only is it the plan, the fact—we know this because the minister has failed to tell us otherwise. When asked directly in question period, the minister had opportunities to say that the—clearly, the money—he would guarantee that the money would go directly to Hydro. But the minister chose not to do that on multiple occasions. It's clear that they want to take some of that federal money to line their own pocketbooks, out of the provincial Treasury, instead of sending that money directly to Hydro where it ought to go.

And what impact does it have on Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well, it means that, as par for the course, with this PC government, we would expect to see further increases to hydro rates, another way for the provincial government to raise our hydro rates and make the 'fishgal'—the fiscal challenges that Hydro faces even greater.

Because they are now, in this bill, threatening to take money from the federal government, interject themselves in the middle, get that federal money and say, oh, yes, we promise to give it all to Hydro, but in reality, they have taken some in between. And Hydro ratepayers—all of us in Manitoba here—are the ones who are going to be losing because of this choice that the government is making.

And, again, when it comes to 'infordability,' Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can't look much further than the huge inflation rates that we've been seeing, and this is something that Manitobans are very concerned about. The cost of living has risen.

And, you know, we see that these challenges present themselves most severely with the lowest income Manitobans. And so it should be our responsibility to help those who need the most help, help Manitobans who are the most vulnerable.

And has this government chosen to take initiatives to help those Manitobans? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they've chosen plans to help the wealthiest Manitobans. In fact, they've chosen plans which won't help Manitobans at all.

They're sending hundreds of thousands of dollars out of province—even millions of dollars out of province—to property owners who don't even live in Manitoba, who aren't going to add to any economic development in Manitoba at all, aren't really adding to our tax base. They're sending millions of dollars out of province. How does that make any sense? But yet, it's a choice they've made.

This is real life. This is not a simulation. This is reality. Not a simulation like their health plan—this is reality, the reality that all of us Manitobans are living in, right? They really did send millions of dollars out of province in a year where we're in deficit in this province.

Let's face the facts. The budget that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) put forward has us in deficit. We're in debt, but yet they think it's reasonable to send millions of dollars out of province instead of helping the most vulnerable Manitobans? That's a choice. That sure is a choice that this government is making and has made, and, sadly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm afraid that they will continue to make the—this mistake.

An Honourable Member: Not for long.

Mr. Moses: Hopefully, not for long. Hopefully, not for long is right.

* (16:20)

And, you know, this comes directly from property taxes, the education portion of property taxes. And that's why, you know, even more concerning because we not only want to help the most vulnerable Manitobans, we want to help the youngest Manitobans, like ones who are in school, the ones who are in child care. And we want to have those supports available for them. I know the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) is passionate about helping our school system, ensuring that teachers have the resources that they need to do their jobs, to educate effectively the young people in our province.

But yet, we see that job becoming more difficult because of the choices that this PC government is making each and every day. When they choose to take hundreds of thousands—no, sorry, millions of dollars out of our education system, what position does it put

our educators in? It makes their life so incredibly difficult. So challenging.

And now, I—we all applaud—on this side of the House, we all applaud the 'amazing'—amazing educators we have in our communities. And we want them to be successful at the work they do. But, quite frankly, this government is tying one hand behind their back. They are making it—life so difficult, with year-in and year-out funding cuts to education. The fact that they don't have the resources to effectively do their job, to effectively educate the young people in our province, does not only make their lives more difficult; it makes the outcome that students are expected to make even more strenuous.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we are looking at the future, when we are looking at the challenges that we want to overcome in the future, whether it's the challenges we face in health care, whether it's the challenges we face with climate change, whether it's the challenges we face with building a growing, economic and clean economy, we—no matter what, we want to tackle those challenges, then one thing we need is good and talented and well-educated people in our province.

And we can't have that unless we strengthen our education system. Unless we strengthen that with good and proper funding, which, sadly, this PC government has failed to do. And that extends from the K-to-12 system right up into the post-secondary system, where we know there is a huge rising cost of tuition. In fact, tuition has risen in Manitoba higher, by percentage, over the last seven years, than in any other province in the country. Tuition is rising here faster than anywhere else in the country.

That does not open the doors to education. That does not make education more affordable. It makes it more difficult for young people and students to get educated. It makes it more challenging for their parents to help pay for that education. It makes it more challenging for faculty to do their jobs. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, quite frankly, we're seeing these choices being made in the budget, in BITSA, to make life more difficult. And when it comes to students, when it comes to faculty and when it comes to their parents who may help them with tuition, this government is not making a lot of friends.

Not only has tuition increased. Not only has it gotten less accessible. Not only have they removed health care for international students. Now they're proposing a performance-based formula for funding that would only make all of those issues worse by

putting artificial metrics on a system that didn't need them and didn't ask for them in the first place. These—this government seems to find an issue and create a problem, and not solve a problem.

And now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we need to move to the elephant in the room, the issue that we have all heard about more than anything else, and that is our health-care system. It's quite frankly the biggest issue that we have right now in Manitoba: dealing with our crumbling health-care system due to the cuts made by this PC government.

You know, there's a laundry list of cuts so long, you know, I could take the full 30 minutes to go through them all. Now I have a mere 10 minutes left, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so I will restrict and limit my comments to simply a few points when it comes to health care.

Now, the first thing I need to address is the closure of some of our major emergency rooms that we had: Concordia, Seven Oaks. These are critical community emergency health-care services that thousands of Winnipeggers, tens of thousands of Manitobans relied on. People from the north of the city, Selkirk region, people from the east of Winnipeg came to these local emergency rooms to get the critical emergency health care that they needed. And not only those people in the surrounding areas are affected in the Elmwood, in the Concordia areas, in the Transcona areas were affected, the North Kildonan, East Kildonan areas were affected by the closure, but people from the surrounding areas outside the city.

This has a huge impact and now those people not only have to leave their home community and travel further to St. Boniface or to Health Sciences Centre but they are now faced with even longer wait times in those emergency rooms because this government failed to plan for that change. They failed to make that plan and, as a result, Manitobans are the ones who have to pay for it. They have to pay for it in their time. They have to pay for it in worse health care. They have to pay for it by suffering through longer and longer surgical wait times.

And same thing with the closure of Concordia we saw with the closure of Seven Oaks. People in that Maples area and Burrows, in West St. Paul are all affected by that closure. Those people—let's talk about CancerCare: outpatient closed. Let's talk about all of these issues that have been greatly affected.

And, you know, today, you know we—or, yesterday and today, we heard, you know, government talk about, you know, making simulations and simulated ways to help training health professionals. And as I said earlier, you know, we can't live in simulations. We live—and the NDP—we live in a reality with the rest of Manitobans. We live in a reality and we see the real cracks in our health-care system. We listen to the doctors who highlight those issues and we are committed to making concrete steps to fixing those issues, unlike the PC government that is consistently, time in and time again, made the health-care system worse.

And it's obvious. It's obvious. We're seeing it every day. We see it at the Grace Hospital, too, where they have less nurses working there because of the decisions of this PC government. We see it again when hospital workers and doctors speak out from Health Sciences Centre. We see it time and again with the long and long wait times at St. Boniface emergency room.

And yet, I haven't even mentioned the fact that there are tens of thousands of people waiting on surgical wait-lists. Nearly a year—or almost a year we've been promised a dashboard to give Manitobans an informed information and decision-making process about how long they're going to be waiting for a surgery. But where is it? When was it supposed to come? Was it supposed to come in the spring? Oh, I think it was the spring but I can't remember. They changed it. Was it the summer? Oh no, they changed it again. It didn't come in the summer. Is it coming in the fall?

Well, it's the fall now. Where is it? Where is the dashboard for the surgical wait times? Where is it? Do we have to wait winter? Do we have to wait until next spring or is the government not at all even trying to be serious about fixing our health-care system? That is really what it seems like; that they have no plan to fix our health-care system, that they're incapable of fixing our health-care system. And it seems like now they've stopped trying to fix our health-care system.

It's a shame, and I think Manitobans are ready for a different approach. They're ready for a different approach. They're ready for the approach that this team is taking, this NDP team is taking, about being proactive about some of these things, about being ahead of the game, about making announcements about how we're going to fix and help the homeless's issue here in Manitoba.

And this team is not only passionate about these issues, they've got real plans to fix these issues and

we've got the energy to fix these issues. We've got ministers over here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and let me be clear about this: We're here on a day wearing pink ribbons in this House to bring awareness to breast cancer month. We've got a minister speak on that today, on breast cancer awareness.

However, we also have another minister who is bringing forward a bill to promote carcinogens. Bill 22 is going to allow more carcinogens in our community and yet we're here talking about Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

What kind of government is doing this? A government that isn't obviously working for the people of Manitoba. This is terrible that this government can be, on one hand, saying, oh, yes, we want to make sure that people are aware of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but yet are promoting the use of more carcinogens in our province. This is absolutely terrible and this is no way to treat the people of Manitoba.

Manitobans are looking for better. They're looking for so much better, and I know I'm eager and I know people on this side of the House are eager to give Manitobans that choice. And we will have a good option for Manitoba when that time comes.

* (16:30)

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): It's my honour to rise in the House today to put few comments on Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the past, this government has taken advantage of the legislation process by hiding outrageous changes in BITSA. They infamously tried to hike Manitoba Hydro rates by 2.9 per cent. Unlike other bills, BITSA does not go to committee. The PC government used this to their advantage and tried to sneak through hydro rate increase without input from Manitobans.

We are concerned by the tax changes this bill puts into place as they will 'dispersportionally' benefit those who are already well off and don't have—'allevate' the financial struggle Manitobans are facing during the current affordability crisis.

This bill will give out-of-province corporations and some of the wealthiest individuals permanent tax breaks by putting the education property tax rebate into law. Tax breaks for rich—for the rich, rather than investing education, will hurt Manitobans.

This government raised tax on renters, which makes their lives more expensive at the time when the cost of living is already at crisis point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do like to—I'm sure there's so many members from this side of the House that would—on the record regarding issue Manitoba Hydro and other issues, but I do like to bring it back to Manitoba Public Insurance, too.

This bill is changing the process of dealing with MPI's insurance reserve. MPI has to hold back reserves every year to ensure they are able to pay off claims. In years where there are few payouts, the government is able to give Manitoba MPI rebates on their insurance costs. Up until now, the government has been able to use these rebates to help Manitobans during difficult financial years. For example, during recessions or during COVID-19 pandemic.

Under this new bill, what was previously governed by the regulations will now be permanent in legislation, meaning that legislation would need to be changed, which is a lengthy process, instead of government having the discretion to issue tax rebates to 'allevate' financial stress in difficult years.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what it means—it was used to be easy process through the regulations if there is a—extra money in the reserve, the money would go back to ratepayers. And that—it's not going to be happening anymore. The money will stay in the government.

The government has failed to give a good justification for this, and there is no reason to do it from policy perspective. They are moving a tool that government had to help Manitobans. The effect that will have is making your insurance bill unaffordable during times of financial crisis. And they are doing this in the middle of the affordability crisis in our province, showing once again how out of touch they are with Manitobans. Reserves should be set in public process by a neutral third party: the Public Utilities Board. Now the government is claiming they have this ability and they are setting it in legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this isn't the first time the government has meddled with MPI. They interfered with MPI's negotiations with brokers, which will cost ratepayers an extra \$23 million over the next five years. Manitobans value our publicly owned Crown corporations, but life has become substantially more expensive for the average Manitoban since the PC government took office and began interfering in our Crown corporations.

So, again, this is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not first time that they haven't tried taking the money from public utility—public—MPI, sorry.

I do like to bring a little bit more to education property tax rebate. PCs are passing—phasing out the education property tax in a way that disproportionately benefits the wealthy Manitoban. By 2023 in following—and in the following year, it will be reduced to 50 per cent.

Commercial property owners are also receiving a tax—10 per cent rebate. This means tax rate for large, out-of-province corporations and some of the wealthiest individuals in the world. One of those individuals—or, wealthiest corporations was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was Polo Park, which will be receiving over \$1 million.

Again, this money is borrowed money. This is the money that the provincial government does not have. They borrowed \$250 million in the first year and then they borrowed \$349 million in the second year. In the future years, they will be borrowing money again, which will cost to our future generations.

At a time when Manitobans are struggling with affordability, the government is choosing to give tax rebates to wealthy out-of-province corporations. This is unacceptable. And so is that they are not prioritizing the needs of Manitobans. Again, affordability crisis, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And people need money now, and with affordability—recently, its pronounced affordability package, there are people calling the office and trying to find out if there is two individuals and they don't have any kids and their income is even under \$100,000, there is nothing for them in that affordability package. They are affect the way the other people are also affected.

The government has claimed that rollback on this rebate and the plans to redistribute the money elsewhere will be costly, too, but they haven't provided the numbers, so we won't know if this is true for several years. This is an issue of transparency. Government is not being upfront with Manitobans about whether this plan will cost even more.

With this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to give chance to my friend—no, I'll go on. I have a few other—I'll talk on Efficiency Manitoba.

BITSA will allow the minister to extend the Efficiency Manitoba efficiency plan by one year. There is no restriction on how many times an

efficiency plan can be extended either, meaning that a one-year plan could be there—be extended forever. Last year, the PC government tried to give itself power to regulate other 'methohod' of obtaining public input on Efficiency Manitoba plan. This effectively stripped the PUB of approval authority on these plans and gave that power to the minister. Independent assessment report of the plan's outcome would also no longer be given to PUB.

Efficiency Manitoba has not been free from interference from the PC government. In 2019, the former minister delayed the submission of Efficiency Manitoba's three-year 'stregic' plan by a month. By doing so, they undermined the oversight role of the PUB in the process, and broke their own law. Section 12 of The Efficiency Manitoba Act says that the minister can only approve Efficiency Manitoba's plan after the PUB has reviewed and made its own recommendations.

* (16:40)

The minister had the plan on his desk before it went to PUB. The former minister undermined the independence role of the Public Utilities Board by passing a regulation that ended the furnace replacement program. A program ordered by the PUB, this program helped everyday Manitobans reduce their natural gas consumption and save on their energy bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recently saw that the other day, the cost of natural gas is going up 11.5 per cent, which is going to cost lots of money to Manitobans during this crisis time. Efficiency Manitoba's advertising budget sunk to 650,000 in 2019, from 850,000 under the Power Smart program. They also purposely delayed the advertisement—advertising of service in 2018, denying Manitobans the right to educate on how they can reduce their utility bill during rising rate increases.

This is a further evidence of the fact that when the PC government interferes with Crown corporations, it ultimately hurts Manitobans. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the PC government's now proposing to change the renter's tax credit so that its purported meaning, if you have only lived in your residence for six months, you will only be eligible for half of it.

First, it was reduced from \$750 a year to \$500 a year. Now—now from even if you are living there for only six months, it's reduced to around \$250. This is during the affordability crisis.

Under this bill, the government will now be allowed to receive federal funds on behalf of Manitoba Hydro. Mr. Deputy Speaker heard many things from the member from St. Vital on this. We are—why the PCs don't want the money straight going to Manitoba Hydro if it's coming from the federal government?

Even earlier, I remember—was it last year or the year before—a resolution was in this House where it was for the health-care funding. And that, I think it was a bill, where we proposed that every single penny coming from the federal government for the health care go to bedside. The PCs refused. So this is exactly the same thing they are doing now.

They are not. They have a sneaky way of maybe keeping some of the money instead of all the money is going to Manitoba Hydro. Ultimately, Manitoba Hydro is ready—can be used beneficially, very beneficially for Manitobans. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are hundreds of ways we can use clean—in the world people are looking for clean energy. Saskatchewan is burning coal. We can export more of our hydro, which is a clean energy. It will help reduce and it will help the financial for the government, too.

With this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think my [*inaudible*] want to go and say a few words on this one, too, and I'll let him to say a few words.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): All right. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do appreciate my colleague giving—ceding some time to me, I appreciate the opportunity. I would have preferred to hear him speak right to the end of the day and continue to bring his—the concerns he's bringing forward from his constituents. Not that I don't appreciate the opportunity, but just that I thought his particular take on BITSA, on Bill 45 was compelling.

And, quite frankly, it was compelling in the same way that I think every member on this side of the House who brought forward their concerns, in the same way, the member for—the member that was just speaking was articulate, was—brought forward good concerns. Every member on this side of the House brought forward those concerns in a real way that I think the government just simply doesn't want to talk about.

We didn't hear from a single member. And that's unbelievable to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because I think that if it's a budget that a government is proud of, if it's a budget that speaks to the concerns of their

constituents and to Manitobans, then they should be pushing each other aside and fighting for a spot to speak to this bill and to bring that forward. But are they doing that? No. In fact, we didn't hear from one single member opposite, outside of the member for—the Finance Minister.

That being said, as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very happy to speak to Bill 45 and to talk about the concerns that my constituents are bringing to me because we're hearing about this. We've been spending the summer and this fall talking to Manitobans, knocking on doors, not just, you know, in my home constituency of Concordia but certainly across the city, across the province.

And we're hearing from them directly that they are concerned. They're concerned that the government has left them in the cold when it comes to the health care that they're receiving, that the government doesn't seem willing to take the steps necessary to address the housing crisis in our province.

Okay. The government doesn't seem willing to deal with the affordability crisis. These are all steps that we know the government had the opportunity to take action on when they brought their budget forward. Certainly, they knew this was on the horizon. They certainly knew the mess they had made in the health-care system. But ultimately, they understood the impact that the pandemic and the global economic crisis was going to have here in Manitoba. They understood that; they went full steam ahead on austerity, on cuts and to continue to push Manitoba back.

That is—was then. That was when this government brought the budget forward. Here, with Bill 45, they had an opportunity to change course, to make a different set of choices. And yet they—it's more of the same. It's more that is going to impact Manitobans. We're very concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I do think that we, as a caucus, will continue to stand strong with Manitobans to push this government to reverse course. But at the end of the day, it's all words here in this Chamber.

The real action will be when the people of Manitoba are given the opportunity to vote, and to show this government in real terms what they think of their austerity measures. We look forward to that. I urge the government to call the election and let's hear from the people of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House— or sorry, the question before the House is second reading of Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Wiebe: On division.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On division.

* * *

* (16:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As previously announced—
[interjection]

The honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as there's only a couple of minutes left, I wonder if it's the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? [Agreed]

The time being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock a.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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