

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Alzheimer Society of Manitoba

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, April 2 is National Caregivers Day. This is a day set aside to recognize the vital role in society played by those family members, friends or neighbours who—taking on care for someone and who needs help to do a physical or cognitive condition and injury or a chronic life-limiting illness.

Today, I'm honoured to recognize the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, not only for their work in advocating for those living with Alzheimer's and dementia, but for the work they do in supporting the caregivers that give of themselves on a daily basis, caring for loved ones living with dementia.

There are almost 20,000 Manitobans living with dementia and with our aging population, this number is expected to double in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, 62 per cent of Manitobans have a family member or a close friend living with dementia, and the Alzheimer society is often the first place caregivers turn after a loved one is diagnosed with dementia. The First Link Client Support program connects individuals living with dementia and their caregivers with a community of support to help plan for what's ahead and help face each day as it comes.

Amongst several other services, they offer support groups across the province aimed at helping caregivers. There are seven different support groups that focus on different challenges faced by caregivers as they navigate the world of dementia with their loved ones.

Alzheimer's and dementia takes an immeasurable toll on the family and friends of those who are living with it. We are fortunate to have a group like this in our province making life better for those living with dementia along with their family and friends.

Please join me in recognizing the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba for their work in supporting those who support us.

International Trans Day of Visibility

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, this Sunday, March 31, marked International Trans Day of Visibility, a day to lift up and celebrate our two-spirit, trans and gender-diverse neighbours here in Manitoba and across the globe. Today, we raise our voices in pride and show that our joy and authenticity walk arm in arm.

The International Trans Day of Visibility was created in 2009 by Rachel Crandall-Crocker to celebrate the beauty and vitality of trans lives in a world that too often pushes gender-diverse folks to the margins. It serves as a counterweight to the onslaught of media stories about the violence inflicted against the two-spirit, trans and gender-diverse community.

When we make ourselves visible, it gives others the courage to embrace their authentic selves. I think most trans and gender-diverse folks can remember a time when they were in the closet and maybe met or saw someone living in their full and joyful life, a visible

and authentic life which spurred them to embrace their own identity.

Today I want to again acknowledge the many organizations across the province who support two-spirit, trans and gender-diverse folks.

Thank you to Klinik, Manitoba Moon Voices, Rainbow Resource Centre, Sunshine House, Trans Manitoba, 2Spirit Manitoba and so many others for lifting up our community through advocacy and care.

With Bill 208 poised for passage this session, I wait in eager anticipation that next year, on March 31, 2025, we will celebrate the first official two-spirit and transgender day of visibility here in this Chamber and all across Manitoba.

Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I just ask for leave to recognize my guests which I couldn't spot here in the gallery—the gallery is full today—of Jessica Harper and Samantha Holland, who are both present, who give so much for Manitobans in their time of need.

Midwest US-Canada Relations Committee

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Honourable Speaker, members of this Assembly are very familiar with the Council of State Governments and its regional sections. Manitoba has been a member of the Midwest legislative conference for many years and has benefited significantly from the relationships built with 11 Midwestern states and three other provinces which are also part of MLC.

I've had the honour of serving as the co-chair of the Midwest US-Canada relations committee for several years, currently co-chairing along with Michigan representative Amos O'Neal.

This past week, I joined representatives from the committee including Michigan, North Dakota and Ontario, as a visiting delegation to Edmonton, Alberta. During our visit, we met with members of the Alberta Assembly and visited a number of sites that are working on hydrogen production and power generation as well as carbon capture efforts.

* (13:40)

A specific highlight was visiting the engineering department of the University of Alberta and meeting

with students who were working on a variety of projects to reduce carbon emissions and the impact of climate change.

During the visit, I had the opportunity to inform government officials and industry representatives about the tremendous potential Manitoba has providing provinces and states with clean renewable energy through Manitoba Hydro.

As well, we discussed the potential of the Port of Churchill for exporting goods and its importance as part of Canada's strategy to keep our North sovereign.

I'd like to thank officials at the Midwest Legislative Conference and the Alberta office of international relations for their work co-ordinating this exchange, together with my fellow committee members from Michigan: Representative Amos O'Neal, Michigan Senator Roger Victory, North Dakota Representative David Monson and Ontario MPP Arnie Halderman [*phonetic*].

We are grateful for the opportunity to learn and build relationships between provinces and Canada and the United States.

World Autism Awareness Day

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Today, I rise in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day to honour the many contributions Manitobans with autism make to our province every day and to advocate for greater inclusivity of our neighbours with autism.

Autism takes on many forms and shapes people's lives in different ways. Folks with autism often have different ways of socializing and communicating than those without autism, which leads to varied learning styles, patterns of movements or methods of concentration.

For some, the hurdles that autism presents to daily life are easily managed, while others need more consistent supports from family and community.

We all have a responsibility to question our preconceived notions about autism and embrace the rich and diverse ways that people with autism exist in our world.

In 2019, around 1.7 per cent of children aged one to 17 were assessed with autism in Manitoba, alongside many adults. From those waiting for assessments to those who are seeking supports, apprehension and uncertainty can accompany families throughout the entire process.

Over the past months I've been very fortunate to connect with autism advocates from across Waverley, folks like Michelle Chay, a Waverley resident and a parent of a child with autism, and her close friends who are working to raise awareness about autism among Manitobans. They've seen the difference we can make when we support kids with autism earlier in their development and create inclusive educational programs that work for everyone.

Our government is committed to the pursuits of inclusivity for youth and adults with autism by removing barriers to access supports and by ensuring programs are available in people's communities.

By working with the advocacy groups and agencies who are championing inclusive and welcoming spaces for folks with autism we will continue to empower those in the autism community to live full, authentic and valued lives as part of our wider Manitoba community.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Park Community Centre

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, today I rise to speak on a major social hub in Brandon, the Park Community Centre. The centre started as a club in the 1940s with an ice skating rink and a ball diamond. Following the success of the diamond and rink, Brandonites once again came together and voted to build a permanent community centre in the summer of 1946, completing it in December of that year.

The Park's main mission has always been to serve the needs of the community, hosting dances, carnivals and seniors' afternoons. The centre has place for community and connection. Many residents carry fond memories and lifelong friendships, thanks to the Park.

Unfortunately, the years caught up with the Park and it faced the threat of closure. But the residents of Brandon didn't see this threat as the end of the Park. Rather, they came together to campaign for the future of the centre.

This was one of the first things I heard in last year's election campaign, and I was so proud when our leader, and now the Premier (Mr. Kinew), promised that we would pay our fair share for the next generation of Brandonites to use this community institution.

This work wouldn't be possible without the advocacy of the Park board, especially from Eldon and Ken who are here today. They pushed me, as a

candidate, to get this done and I'm happy that our government will deliver where others have not.

Thank you—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I just remind the member that he's not allowed in a member's statement to address anything to do with government policy.

Mr. Simard: Thank you to the Park Community Centre for providing the people of Brandon with a safe space for fun, joy and community, and I look forward to working with you towards a sustainable future.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to oral questions, I want to introduce some guests in the gallery.

We have with us today from the University of Manitoba ACCESS program 30 students under the direction of Carol Johnston and Diedre Desmarais. Also, seated in the Speaker's Gallery, I'd like to draw attention of all honourable members where we have, joining us today, Debbie Campbell, director of finance for the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you to this Chamber.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: And I have a statement for the House.

As you're aware, we encountered some challenges due to equipment failure with cameras. I want to express my gratitude to Becki Derksen, Candace Smith, Daniel Chavez, Dustin Moore of the Digital Media Branch for their dedicated efforts in successfully revitalizing the camera system and ensuring its functionality for today.

Your hard work and dedication are truly valued by all of us. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Income and Property Taxes Budget 2024 Plans

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Tax increases in their first budget, Honourable Speaker. That's what is being previewed in the media through anonymous spokespeople rather than elected representatives.

The Canadian Press reported that the NDP are looking at changes to income and property taxes. Those with higher incomes and more expensive homes would pay more. This is according to another unnamed government.

Honourable Speaker, I need the Premier on the record: What does the NDP consider to be high income, and what does the NDP consider to be a more expensive home?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to welcome the member opposite back from spring break. It was a great spring break for the member opposite. It kicked off a few days earlier with the announcement that our government is going to build a personal-care home in his home constituency.

And then spring—a spring break week to remember. It continued on with the man that he plans to vote for in the next federal election coming here to say we're doing a great job lowering costs for the people of Manitoba. And then the spring break, it wrapped up today with the welcome news that we're going to extend the fuel tax holiday for three more months to help everybody in the province of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Ewasko: As usual, no answers from you-know-who.

Honourable Speaker, we on this side of the House don't think anyone should be asked to pay more when everyone is struggling to meet ends meet—make ends meet. No one can afford higher taxes, but that's what Manitobans are getting with this NDP government.

Bigger homes housing larger families with higher costs will be taxed higher. Hard-working Manitobans earning more will be taxed higher. Overall, the Province will take in more money, a government spokesperson said to The Canadian Press.

My question for the Premier, if he can answer this one, made it a little bit simpler: How much more money does he plan on taking from pockets of hard-working Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: We're saving everybody in the province money every single day. That started on January 1 when we cut the provincial fuel tax to zero.

You know who was bringing higher taxes when it came to prices at the pump? It was the members opposite. The member for Lac du Bonnet and everyone in the former government charged Manitobans 14 cents

a litre every single day that they were in office. We took immediate steps to bring in affordability on that side. It's saving you money each and every single day.

* (13:50)

We're also going to bring in more affordability measures, because our 2024 budget, it cuts taxes. Stay tuned for the good news from our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala).

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

Mr. Ewasko:—Speaker, he should be pointing at is Singh, Trudeau and now Daniel Blaikie. Taking in more money through taxation is indeed raising taxes. The Premier stood up six months ago and promised not to raise taxes. Now he's breaking that promise in his very first budget.

Here are the facts: On income tax, Manitobans who need to earn more to feed bigger families can't afford higher taxes. On property tax, Manitobans who need homes with more bedrooms can't afford higher taxes. Everybody is stretched thin and nobody can afford higher taxes, Honourable Speaker.

Why is the Premier picking winners and losers right here in Manitoba?

Mr. Kinew: The member opposite wants to talk about Mr. Singh and Mr. Trudeau, but he's glossing over Mr. Poilievre. Mr. Poilievre was here within the last week saying that our move to cut the provincial fuel tax to zero is saving Manitobans money, and he supports it.

Why doesn't he get on board with team save Manitobans money?

Children in CFS Care Public Safety Concerns

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, last time we were in this Chamber, I attempted to ask the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) about public safety. With the Winnipeg Police Service raising concerns about organized groups of kids in care lacking the basic supports that they need to stay on the straight and narrow, just like the minister dodged the questions of the media, she let the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) deflect for her on this matter as well.

So, I want to pick up where we left off. Why does this minister have time for social media, but not the kids in her charge?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, I'll happily respond any time the members opposite want to take personal shots, to remind people that it's this team that's making Manitoba safer, and it's this team that's growing our provincial economy.

The members opposite were in power for two terms, and they never brought forward bail reform measures. They never provided direction to Crown prosecutors on bail measures to be strengthened. That's something that they never did.

We did it within months of taking office, thanks to the hard work of the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe). And now that work continues with the important, super meaningful task of improving outcomes for those in child welfare here in Manitoba, and I'll tell you what: while they take personal shots, our team has the back of the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), who is going to make life better for so many future generations of Manitoba youth.

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

Mr. Balcaen: I see the minister still won't or perhaps can't answer for herself. In this House, the minister said she was too busy to discuss the needs of kids in care and supports for foster parents. She thought she had better things to do, so when media reached out to her in New York on her junket, she couldn't be bothered to pick up the phone to do anything beyond take a selfie.

But she wants Manitobans to believe it's different when it's Chief Smyth. From the same interview, she alleged she knows more than Chief Smyth.

Can she elaborate on her years of public safety experience? I don't remember seeing her at any of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police meetings.

Mr. Kinew: You know, what I'll say to the member for Brandon West is, I understand that he is a new member of the Legislative Assembly here, and I'll simply provide direction that he does not need to read whatever it says on the piece of paper handed to him by PC caucus staff.

The reason why is because he's taking this time that's valuable, hallowed time in this important Chamber, to launch personal attacks against the Minister of Families, who is an inspiration to young people in our province.

He does a disservice to the time of question period because—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —there's actually a substantive issue here. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: There's a substantive issue about the question of improving outcomes for young people in the child-welfare system.

But that's the difference between these two teams. With them, you get personal attacks; with our Minister of Families and our team, you get real action to make life better for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Balcaen: The Minister of Families thinks that she's know—she knows more than the men and women who step up each and every day to put public safety first. And she has the audacity to think she gets to determine when a chief of police can or cannot report about public safety issues.

To paraphrase that very minister, she's just a new minister recently appointed in her position for a couple of minutes and doesn't understand how important her responsibilities are.

Why does this minister think Manitobans' public safety should have waited for her to get back from a vacation?

Mr. Kinew: I'll repeat that there is an important, substantive question lurking somewhere behind the personal attacks and innuendo brought forward by the member, and it is the question of improving outcomes for young people in the child-welfare system.

The member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) knows full well what I'm talking about. That's why he's trying to heckle to interrupt. But our team is committed to moving forward. We support our Families Minister as—for somebody who's been active in the community for decades.

The PCs want to come in, comment on social media, and then boom, it's off to the next wedge political issue. They know full well the member for Tuxedo (Ms. Stefanson) attacked Chief Smyth, and they all thought that that was a great idea at the time. Now that they've lost the election, they say that that crosses a line.

All we're looking for is a little bit of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I would remind all members in this Chamber, when the Speaker stands up and calls for order, everybody else is supposed to stop and be quiet. I expect that to happen from all members in this Chamber.

And I would remind members to try and keep it respectful. There's no point screaming and hollering at the top of your lungs; nobody can hear the answers.

Health-Care Wait Times Constituent Case Concern

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): One of the first things this NDP government did was block Manitobans from going out of province for surgery. My constituent, Miron Kereluk, was one of the Manitobans directly impacted by the NDP's decision.

Miron was unable to walk or stand without extreme pain and needed immediate spinal surgery. His specialist told him he was a great candidate to have his surgery out of province covered by Manitoba Health. But once the NDP were elected, that option was taken away and Miron was told he could be waiting years for surgery.

I'll table an email from Miron to the minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) a few months ago where he said: So now your government has cancelled my hope and sentenced me to more endless discomfort and pain.

Why are the NDP putting politics ahead of patient care?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Certainly, on this side of the House, our top priority, like that of Manitobans, is investing and making sure that health care in Manitoba is as strong as it can possibly be.

Under the previous government, their decision was to spend millions, almost \$40 million, out of province to the United States so that Manitobans couldn't get care in their own communities.

Now, Honourable Speaker, it's also important to note that the previous government and the task force didn't make efforts to make sure that folks just like Miron could access streamlined pathways and have clarity around the process here in Manitoba.

We are doing the work to undo the mess that they created and we're advancing, making sure Manitobans can get care in Manitoba every single day.

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

An Honourable Member: The NDP government abandoned Miron as a patient and forced him to choose between staying in pain on a years-long wait-list or finding his own solution. Without surgery, Miron would end up in a wheelchair. As it is, his wife was forced to retire early to care for him.

So Miron took matters into his own hands and went to Calgary for his surgery, which was, thankfully, a resounding success. If he'd taken the minister's advice, he'd still be in pain and on an NDP wait-list because they continue to put politics ahead of patients.

Miron and his wife are now out thousands of dollars with no answers from this NDP government.

* (14:00)

Why is the NDP needlessly putting patients like Miron in such a terrible position?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, our government has made it clear that our priority is making sure that health care in Manitoba is as strong as it can possibly be.

It's interesting that under the previous government—under two terms of government—we saw wait times for hip and knee surgeries start to increase not during the pandemic, not after, but before the pandemic. Their own surgical task force told Manitobans the wait time started increasing back in 2019. The previous government took no meaningful steps to build capacity here in Manitoba. We're taking a different approach.

I look forward to following up with Miron and his family on this really important issue as well.

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

Mrs. Cook: In his most recent email, Miron states something that Manitobans have been asking for months. We still haven't been given an adequate answer as to why out-of-province surgeries were cancelled. The HSC spine clinic said one thing, his family doctor said another and all the NDP have been able to give are excuses.

Six months after the election, and the NDP has still done nothing to reduce surgical wait times for patients who are in pain today. Patients shouldn't be forced to go out of pocket to be out of pain.

Will the minister please give an adequate answer as to why they cut surgical options for Manitoba patients?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I know the member opposite, like the entire side of that House, loves to talk about cuts. That is something they mastered the art of while they were in power for two terms of government.

Our government immediately took a different approach. We've invested in not only increasing capacity for hip and knee surgeries, we've invested in making sure that Manitoba, for the first time in this province's history, is actually going to have a comprehensive approach to doing spine surgeries in our own province.

This government, Honourable Speaker, has taken an approach that Manitobans have been waiting years for; an approach that puts people first. We didn't get here overnight, we're not going to fix it overnight. But every single day, we're taking a step in the right direction, alongside the health-care workers they didn't care about for two terms.

Incidents Involving Children in CFS Care Response Request from Families Minister

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, the last time we were in this House, I asked the Minister of Families why she did not make the time to respond to serious incident regarding children in care that left an innocent woman with life-threatening injuries.

The chief of police made a statement; the Manitoba advocate made a statement; the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs made a statement. But when the media called, the minister did not.

Will the Minister of Families please explain why she's refusing to speak about public safety and kids in care?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I know that the 'min'—or, the member for Midland is also new here, but what I would share with folks here is that, as the minister responsible for Families, I have a duty that there are certain things that I am not able to share or comment with the public. It is actually the law, Honourable Speaker.

And so, I am going to protect individuals that I am charged with and responsible for their safety. And the members opposite can continue to ask those questions, but I simply just can't answer questions that put people and youth at risk.

So, they can continue to ask; unfortunately, I'm just not able to answer some of those questions.

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

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, ignoring the seriousness of children falling through the cracks appears to be a pattern with this minister.

First, she is rushing the Manitoba advocate legislative review and not having independent non-partisan experts around the table.

Second, she was too busy to have a discussion here in the House through a matter of urgent public importance regarding children in care.

And most recently, she was unavailable to speak to the media when she was in New York, at taxpayer expense, when kids in care were robbing and injuring Manitobans with machetes.

So I have to ask again, Honourable Speaker: Is the Minister of Families just too busy, or what is she hiding?

MLA Fontaine: That's a really unfortunate question to—actually, continue furthering a narrative and discourse that members opposite have been fuelling the public since 2016.

To describe children who are at risk, who are mitigating enormous traumas and in—who are in care as running around with machetes and all of these things. It's disgusting that a member in this House would construct children in such a disgusting way.

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

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, I'm looking for answers, those of us on this side of the House are looking for answers and Manitobans are looking for answers.

When I asked the minister in this House, she responded, and I quote, that she didn't have all the facts at his disposal when he had that press conference.

If the chief of police doesn't have the facts, then I ask the minister: What are the facts? Or is she hiding them from Manitobans and the Winnipeg police?

MLA Fontaine: To reiterate my first question, there are things that I am simply by law not allowed to answer in this House or in the public, Honourable Speaker. I take my job very seriously.

And if you want to talk about members opposite, they were no friends of children in care at all. In fact, when members opposite closed down the Agassiz Youth Centre in 2022, they did so without any

resources or plans for children that need extra supports. Nothing, nada; they just sent these kids out into the world with no supports.

So, I will take no lessons from any single one of those members opposite.

The Speaker: Minister's time has expired.

Federal International Student Cap Allocation per Institution and Selection Criteria

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I'd like to thank the Minister for Advanced Education and Training for the meeting we finally had last week.

I'm very hopeful we can work together to ensure our institutions and students are being treated fairly. Manitobans are concerned when it comes to the restriction of international students, and they're concerned there's a serious oversight for the students permitted to seek education in this province.

Can the minister tell Manitobans what percentage of international students were restricted from each of the private and public sectors, separately?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I thank the member for the question. I thank him for the lovely meeting in my office last week, and I just want to say hello to the many heads of post-secondaries that are in the audience today that are looking forward to the good news in the budget.

I thank you for the question. It's unfortunate that the federal government imposed this policy on us around international students. We value international students very much. They're a good portion of our student population. We value the contributions they make at our post-secondaries, and we value them as folks who stay and build good lives in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, the federal government's decision to force Manitoba to restrict international students harms our economy and our workforce and our families.

The minister told me that we need to keep our public institutions as whole as possible.

Can the minister explain how she balanced the allocation per institution and if there will be any compensation for institutions now bearing the financial costs of the federal government's decision that she has implemented?

MLA Cable: The question went a little bit all over the place. I—was the federal government's policy, as you noted, and I've been very transparent about the fact that public institutions will be given the greatest consideration.

We were given a policy that wasn't ideal but we've made it work. We've done all we can to ensure that our post-secondaries are as healthy as possible, and we've tried to implement this in as fair of a way as possible to ensure that our workforce stays strong, that students get what they need and that we build a strong economy of tomorrow.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, the minister told me in that meeting the NDP government chose to support the good actors when making their decision who would be permitted international students and who would not. This minister is picking winners and losers when she allocates these caps to the institutions.

* (14:10)

Can the minister tell Manitoba who are the bad actors, in her eyes, and will she commit to making the report she used to make this determination public?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question. It's a pretty easy answer: I know who the good actors are in this side of the House and the bad actors.

KPPA Agricultural Producer New Water Licence

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Last week was the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair in Brandon and I was overjoyed to be joined by my colleagues as we met with farmers and agriculture experts from across Manitoba.

What we heard is that these producers are getting a deaf ear from the minister. Agriculture provides almost 10 per cent of our GDP; it feeds our growth. KPPA has indicated that there is a dramatic need for new water licences.

Will this minister allow them to grow their business?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Thanks—the question from members opposite. Gave me an opportunity to thank all the agriculture producers in the province of Manitoba. Some of our producers are on the agenda today and they're so

patiently waiting, member opposite, of the great news that we have today in our budget speech.

And need I say any more because the good news is coming, and I wish member opposite would be in attendance to hear all the great news we'll have today at our budget speech.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: I don't think I heard an answer to that. But, Honourable Speaker, this isn't a partisan issue. These are hard-working Manitobans who are providing a product that is enjoyed across Canada.

We're leading the nation in this production and the only thing limiting growth is this government's refusal to sit down with these experts and update this antiquated model. They have done the science, yet this minister will not work on their behalf.

Why is this minister trying to pick winners and losers in the ag sector?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Well, let me tell you, when we refer to winners and losers, I was up in the Eddystone country this—a couple days ago, talking to some producers that unfortunately, members opposite—the government, previous government—chose to do Crown land changes. And to—they—there are young producers still talking about the challenges they face of a 300 per cent increase in Crown land lease rates. They double-billed the young producers.

You want to talk about being held accountable, Honourable Speaker? That government—it should be held accountable to the future of agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: I have to say, it's sad to see this minister is so caught up in this partisanship that he is willing to let Manitobans suffer so he can make a political point. Not that it surprises me; this is the same minister who refused to stand up against Greg Selinger at the Cabinet table on behalf of hog farmers.

He failed Manitobans then, he's failing Manitobans—and every day that he stays silent to keep his seat at the Cabinet table.

Will this failed minister admit that farmers deserve the support more than his Cabinet colleagues?

Mr. Kostyshyn: And yet, obviously the member opposite is—call him the rookie coming on place of

what happened in the previous seven years' government of the party he represents—we had an opportunity to talk about the importance of agriculture.

And, Honourable Speaker, I was a producer from 40-some-odd years, and I know the struggles that the agriculture producers used to have. And the fact is that we have partnerships with our urban centres. I'd like to acknowledge the mayor of—city of Dauphin and let him tell you the stories of the importance of agriculture to the city of Dauphin and all other communities in the—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Access to Shingles Vaccine Request to Establish Program

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Many Manitobans are concerned about the lack of funding for the shingles vaccination among older adults.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization advised in 2018 that all individuals 50 years and older should be vaccinated against shingles.

Does the minister agree with the national advisory committee's recommendation to put in place a government-funded shingles vaccine program for those aged 50 and older in Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that really important question. I know that many seniors across the province are concerned about shingles and having access to vaccinations to protect themselves and their—for their loved ones to be protected.

I also do know that, in terms of the shingles vaccine, that there's not necessarily a full consensus on whether or not that age should be 50 or should be 65 and up, but I'm more than happy to have that conversation with the member opposite.

I think it's really important that Manitobans have access to the information that they need and can make the best informed decisions.

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

Barriers for Low-Income Manitobans

MLA Lamoureux: We know that many seniors in Manitoba are on fixed incomes, and with the way cost of living has been rising, it is proving more and more difficult for all seniors to be able to afford the needed shingles vaccine.

Honourable Speaker, 94 per cent of those surveyed by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons believe that all adult vaccines recommended for older adults be publicly funded.

What does the minister advise seniors who presently cannot afford the vaccine do?

MLA Asagwara: Again, I thank the member for that really important question. It's great to have members opposite standing up asking questions about health care, especially what it means to seniors.

Very much looking forward to our budget, which will talk a lot about what we are going to do for seniors in Manitoba, an area of health care that the previous government did not address with any seriousness at all.

It is very important that we follow guidelines as they are distributed by NACI, in terms of vaccines for seniors. And I know that seniors have concerns not only for shingles but other vaccines as well.

Our government is going to make sure we're taking steps to improve coverage for seniors when it comes to vaccines.

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

Pharmacare Coverage Request

MLA Lamoureux: I've had several constituents reach out to me on this subject. One even shared with me how they have had shingles three times and just cannot afford the vaccine. This condition can be debilitating for seniors, with each subsequent infection being more and more severe.

Shingrix is the only approved vaccine and, to be effective, requires two doses equalling about \$300.

Will the minister commit today to ensuring the provincial government covers the expense of the approved shingles vaccine for those who need it but cannot afford it?

MLA Asagwara: You know, it's important for those who don't know about shingles to understand the impact it does have on folks. You know, hearing about a senior experiencing shingles several times is really concerning. Obviously, the impacts can be quite painful, and, you know, that's something that needs to be addressed.

As I said, you know, there's information that varies a bit in terms of the appropriate age for—or, the most appropriate age for shingles vaccines to be accessed.

But what I will say is that our government is actively doing the work of making sure that we take steps for seniors in our province that meet the needs of Manitobans, and we're going to continue to do that work alongside the experts in Manitoba as the information is generated for our constituents across the province.

Again, I'm happy to have this conversation in more detail with the member opposite, as it's a really important issue for seniors in our province.

New Plastic Health Cards Implementation Announcement

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, when our government took office, some Manitobans were waiting months to get their Manitoba health card, but our government fixed that.

And in addition to eliminating the wait-time backlog, last week, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and minister announced new plastic health cards for all Manitobans. Just like health care under our government, your health card won't deteriorate like it did under the PCs.

Can the minister tell the House more about this exciting announcement and why it matters to Manitobans?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that really great question. And as the Premier said last week, it is 2024; it's time to bring Manitoba health cards into the 21st century.

* (14:20)

Our budget will see that Manitobans are no longer dependent on torn, ripped up, faded paper health cards, but have a durable, reliable plastic card as well as a digital option. This work is part of a broader investment to move health care away from paper and fax machines and towards electronic patient records.

I'm so proud of the work the staff have done on this, they've been working tirelessly to address the backlog created by the previous government. Since we've taken office, we have reduced months-long processing time down to two weeks, Honourable Speaker.

Manitobans should not have to wait months to know that they'll get the coverage they need where and when they need it. Our government is making sure that's not the case.

Personal-Care-Home Shortage Funding and Nurse Staffing Concerns

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, Manitoba is facing a shortage of over 1,000 personal-care-home spaces. New care home spaces are sorely needed and indeed were in the final planning stages until the change in government last fall.

Arborg, Oakbank, Stonewall, Bridgwater right here in Winnipeg are still waiting to hear if they will get much-needed additional personal-care-home spaces.

So, I ask the Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services (MLA Naylor): Will funding resume immediately for personal-care homes in Arborg, Oakbank, Stonewall and Bridgwater right here in Winnipeg?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I wish that I could properly convey the excitement, the joy, the literal pompoms in the room when the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and I and the minister for northern affairs went to Lac du Bonnet to announce that they're finally going to get the personal-care home they deserve.

Honourable Speaker, unlike members opposite, our government doesn't go out and just make empty promises. We go out and make commitments and we deliver on them for Manitobans. We're going to keep that good news going this afternoon.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: I'm not sure if the member is aware, but one out of six is roughly 16 per cent. She might want to check with the Education Minister to see if—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'd remind the member once again, proper pronouns are required and I would expect him to know them and follow that rule.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, absolutely, my apologies for that.

Arborg is one of the communities that is desperate for these new PCHs. Under the previous government, the Arborg PCH, along with Bridgwater, was given written confirmation that they could go ahead with the final planning for a 60-bed facility.

This project was shovel ready, including funding—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'm proud to stand on this side of the House under the leadership of a Premier and alongside colleagues who, when they make commitments to Manitobans, our commitment is to follow through on that.

Being in Lac du Bonnet for that announcement was huge. These folks have been waiting years and years and years to finally see the day when a government would take their concerns seriously and deliver.

Now, I know that, on that side of the House, they would prefer to heckle me and heckle this side of the House, because it's tough to hear the truth: that they fail, they cut; we build, and we deliver.

More great news in just a little while on this side of the House with our Finance Minister.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: That member knows 16 per cent is a failing grade. It's estimated that 300 additional nurses will be required to properly staff 1,000 new personal-care-home beds. We all know that there is a shortage of nurses in Canada.

This government went out of their way to cancel job offers for provincial nominee applications of foreign-trained nurses who were eager to supplement our staffing numbers. That is the NDP record of picking winners and losers.

The Minister of Immigration and Labour said she is prioritizing the right kind of immigrants. So I ask: Why are internationally trained nurses the wrong kind of immigrants to her?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the member opposite just asked a question in a pretty disappointing way, which is unsurprising. On that side of the House, them leaning into division, them leaning into speaking poorly about what it means to be a Manitoban, is something that they have done consistently, and I reject that wholly.

On this side of the House, we're cleaning up the mess that they made. He's talking about nurses in our health-care system; they fired hundreds of them. He's talking about internationally educated nurses; they promised Manitobans 300 nurses from the Philippines last July. When we took office, how many nurses, how many health-care workers, had successfully been recruited? Six, Honourable Speaker.

That member opposite wants to talk about—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Water Infrastructure Funding Inquiry

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): In February, we saw what decades of neglect can do to infrastructure. Millions upon millions of litres of sewage spilt unabated into the Red River.

The PC government was talking real steps to improve our water infrastructure. The water strategy action plan earmarked \$990 million for water-related projects over five years. On the other side of the coin, the NDP have given the City of Winnipeg \$10 million.

Will this government step up and commit the necessary funds to solve the problems once and for all?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I am thrilled to finally get a question that addresses the environment here in the House.

Manitobans have finally elected a government that cares about the environment. We prioritize the environment and the health of our waterways. That's why we are so proud to have committed that initial \$10 million.

Thank you for bringing it up, thank you for the question and there will be more help to come for municipalities across this province to protect their waterways and their water infrastructure.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make, it is a necessity of

life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating in the Atlantic provinces of Canada but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much-needed relief.

This petition is signed by John Niemczyk, Ken Sackvie, Ray Shirle and many other fine Manitobans.

The Speaker: No further petitions?

Orders of the day—grievances, sorry.

* (14:30)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Is there leave for a 10-minute recess with a one-bell—one-minute bell ringing to prepare for the budget speech?

The Speaker: Is there leave for a 10-minute recess with one-minute bell ringing to prepare for the Budget Address? *[Agreed]*

The House now is recessed for 10 minutes. The one-minute bell will call members back to the Chamber.

The House recessed at 2:30 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:40 p.m.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order, please, once again.

Members, when the Speaker calls for order, please quit speaking. It's time to resume the business that we're here for.

So orders of the day, government business. *[interjection]* Please be seated. Orders of the day, government business.

BUDGET ADDRESS

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Premier (Mr. Kinew), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion presented.

MLA Sala: Thank you to everyone who has joined us for our government's first budget.

C'est avec beaucoup d'humilité que nous vous accueillons à l'Assemblée législative, pour embarquer sur une voie positive pour le Manitoba, ensemble.

Translation

It is with great humility that we welcome you to the Legislative Assembly, to set out together on a positive path for Manitoba.

English

On behalf of the Manitoba government, we honour the sacredness and importance of this land, and of the ancestors that once walked where we are standing today. The Anishinewuk, the Cree, the Dene, the Dakota, the Métis, the Inuit and the Anishinaabe nations who paved the way to what is now known as Manitoba, home to all treaty people.

We share this with you as a reminder of our treaty and shared histories and the original homelands of these nations which have become home to all of us here today.

Honourable Speaker, six months ago, Manitobans put their trust in our government to deliver on better health care and lower costs. And with this budget, we're doing just that.

It's a budget that will get Manitobans and their families off the waiting list and into the doctor's office. It's a budget that lowers costs for families, so

parents can stop worrying and start saying yes. It's a budget that will make it easier for more Manitobans to join the middle class, and stay there. Our budget will deliver help for you and help for those who need it most.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans put their trust in our government to stop the cuts and fix health care. For years, we've heard about the frustrations and the burnout from patients and from health-care workers. The previous government took advantage of this hopelessness. They wanted Manitobans to think that the best they could do was the best that we could do. We're going to prove them wrong.

As my colleague, the Minister of Health (MLA Asagwara) will tell you, there are people with solutions. There are lessons we can learn. There is a path forward, and it will get better.

This year, we are hiring 1,000 health-care workers—100 doctors, 90 paramedics, 210 nurses and 600 health-care aides. Some of them will be young Manitobans who see there is a bright future working in Manitoba in health care. Some will be those who left health care under the previous government, now returning to the front lines. Many came to Manitoba as newcomers. They want to use their skills to care for Manitoba families, and we're going to make that possible.

They're going to work in personal-care homes, including the new personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet. They're going to work in your community and in new doctors' clinics across Manitoba. And they're going to work in home care for our seniors and our elders. And they're going to work in new ERs, like the new Victoria ER and the new Eriksdale ER.

Honourable Speaker, this is great news. We're adding more ICU beds to our hospitals, including pediatric ICU beds. We're hiring more allied health professionals and midwives. We're restoring the rural doctor recruitment fund and we're bringing MRI services to the North.

We're creating an independent seniors advocate to protect seniors and elders in our province from harm. We're rebuilding emergency care and coming through on the commitments we made to Manitobans because no family should have to drive past a closed hospital in an emergency.

And for families in rural and northern Manitoba who've watched over the last seven years as their health-care services have become fewer and farther away, we're working for you, too. No more waiting

for the ambulance to finally arrive. No more medical mystery tour wondering which hospital has a doctor and when you'll finally get the care you need. This budget will train more advanced-care paramedics to serve people in rural and northern communities and put more ambulances on the road so help will come faster when you need it most.

Honourable Speaker, everyone in Manitoba loves someone who has been diagnosed with cancer. We need to do more, so we're expanding CancerCare to include new and emerging technologies, world-class research, more treatment options and a new CancerCare headquarters to provide comfort and dignity to patients on their journey to recovery.

Manitobans will remember the new CancerCare headquarters was one of the first things the previous government cut, and now it's one of the first things our government is building. Our government is inspired by the hope and optimism of health-care workers. After everything they've been through, they still believe that caring for people is a noble profession, and we do, too. Together with front-line workers, we're rebuilding health care so it's there for you when you need it.

When Manitobans chose our team, we got to work right away to lower costs for you and your family. In our first 100 days, we delivered real relief to Manitobans who felt squeezed by prices at the pump. With our cut to the gas tax, we're saving Manitobans 14 cents a litre every time they fill up their tank.

For us, it was an easy decision and it made a real impact. It drove down inflation in Manitoba. It lowered inflation for Canadians across the country, and it helped working people. And that's why we're extending the gas tax holiday.

* (14:50)

We are going to keep delivering on lower costs for all Manitobans so that people who spend hours commuting every day can put food on the table; so more families can afford to get their kids to that hockey game; so everyone can keep just a little bit more in their pocket.

And this is just the first step. This budget gives Manitobans 21 new ways to save: a broad middle-class tax cut; a \$1,500 tax credit for homeowners; and no school property taxes for families that need the most help; a tax credit for renters; a tax credit for seniors; and \$10-a-day child care for every day of the year.

Honourable Speaker, I'm not done yet. We're lowering rents on agricultural Crown lands, we're doubling the fertility tax credit and we're making prescription birth control free.

We're giving rebates for home and business security, rebates for EVs and, Honourable Speaker, we are raising the minimum wage. Drivers get lower insurance; students get more financial aid and the families who need the most help get the most support.

But that's not all, Honourable Speaker. We are delivering bigger paycheques, bigger pensions and more benefits because that's what you get when you join a union. How about that?

In my neighbourhood of sunny St. James, there are good people. People like Stacy, who volunteer, who give back and who want to make a difference. And it's really great to see Stacy here joining us today.

What Stacy has in common with all Manitobans is this: We all want our province to be better. We know we have to do something. We have to do something about homelessness, and we have to do something to help people with addictions. And when our kids don't feel safe in their neighbourhood, we have to do something.

So here's what we're going to do: We are taking action right now to end chronic homelessness in two terms. This budget invests \$116 million to build and maintain social and affordable housing for the families that need it.

In total, we are investing nearly 30 per cent more than the previous government budgeted for housing last year. We're building more housing than the previous government created over an entire term. And we're keeping rents low with stronger rent control.

We will care for Manitobans struggling with addictions. We will expand treatment options and detox beds, and we will open a supervised consumption site to connect Manitobans with the services and supports they need. Because, Honourable Speaker, we believe that if you take the first step, government should be there for you.

We'll make our streets safer for everyone by being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We will crack down on organized crime and drug traffickers. We are going to hire new mental health workers to work with law enforcement to be there for Manitobans when they're in crisis.

And we're helping more young people find a better path with food in every school for every kid that

needs it, with more opportunities to play sports, to learn new skills and to get support with math and reading in local community centres. And we're strengthening enforcement tools under The Environment Act to make it easier for government to protect lakes and rivers for Manitobans to enjoy for generations to come.

Now, Honourable Speaker, I want to speak about something difficult. There are three murdered Indigenous women in a Manitoba landfill. They are loved. Their lives are sacred. They deserve respect, no matter what the billboards say. And their families deserve closure. This is about who we are: one people with one future. Manitobans don't leave anyone behind. Honourable Speaker, this budget has the funds to search the landfill.

Manitoba has one of the highest rates of child poverty and child mortality in the country. We're going to do something about that, too. This budget doubles the prenatal benefit, making it the highest in Canada, because we know when you invest in mothers, they spend it on food for their kids and opportunities for their families. They build up their communities, and that is worth investing in.

And for kids, adults and families living with a disability, we're creating more opportunities and providing more programs, more services for you.

We're strengthening Manitoba communities, lifting the municipal funding freeze—the seven-year funding freeze. *[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

MLA Sala: That's right.

We're building schools in Sage Creek and West Kildonan. We're building highways and roads, like the Mollard Road to the Sikh Society gurdwara.

We're building pools, yes. We're building pools, rinks and rec centres in Thompson, in Brandon and in south Winnipeg.

And we're building a new airport in Wasagamack for northern families.

Honourable Speaker, this is how we build up our economy. With people and with jobs.

The previous government stifled growth, they froze projects and they sent jobs out of province. They let workers go without work.

We're different. We're putting people to work, and we're building up Manitoba. We're putting people

to work with good jobs that pay the bills. We'll make it easier for more Manitobans to join the workforce, join a union and join the middle class, with stronger protections for workers to exercise their rights. That's right.

Honourable Speaker, we're banning replacement workers, because no one should be able to take your job when you're fighting for better pay and more respect. Right? And we will provide more supports to the Labour Board to get it done. Plus, we'll ensure that there are essential service agreements in place across Manitoba.

Manitoba has always been a place where young people could get their first house and families could afford to build a good life. But in the last few years, that's gotten harder. So we're getting ahead of the problem. We're taking the PST off new builds to jumpstart housing development in our province, and we're expanding housing stock in downtown Winnipeg.

We're building on our stable, diversified economy by investing in producers that feed Manitoba and feed the world. We're living up to our potential as a Maritime province by investing in the port of Churchill. And we're leaning into our strength as a central trade corridor by investing in CentrePort.

The untapped potential of Manitoba's critical minerals gives us an advantage. We're not going to let that opportunity pass us by. We are engaging in real nation-to-nation consultation with First Nations and Métis governments, and together, we can spur economic growth for everyone.

We're promoting made-in-Manitoba success stories like New Flyer Industries by partnering with them to create an all-Canadian build centre and 400 new jobs.

And we're going to create more success stories by giving young people the skills and education they need to find a good job, start their first business and launch the next clean energy innovation.

* (15:00)

We're tapping into Manitoba talent by increasing funding to our public universities and colleges by nearly 6 per cent. And, instead of selling Manitoba Hydro, we will keep it public and keep it affordable by strengthening the Public Utilities Board. Because 50 years ago, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans invested in hydro and it's time to cash in.

And we know the best investment in our economy starts with you, the people of Manitoba. Budget 2024 doesn't just invest in roads and buildings; it invests in people.

Before I wrap up, I need to talk about the elephant in the room. We've inherited a historic deficit from the previous government. We're starting with a health-care system that's been broken by seven years of cuts and chaos. We're coming out of years of rising costs, and people are struggling. There are those who will say this budget is too ambitious, but it's for those reasons it needs to be ambitious.

We can fix health care and make life more affordable and we can do it while charting a path back to balance in four years. And if anyone tries to tell you it can't be done, we're going to prove them wrong. Just watch us.

As Finance Minister, it is my job to present this budget, but in many ways this is not my budget. And even though he's inspired us with his vision and brought Manitobans on this path, I think if you ask the Premier (Mr. Kinew), he'd say it isn't his budget either. It's yours. It's ours.

We have one future, we are one people, and we are one Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the MLA for Roblin, that the debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: The debate is adjourned and will remain standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Messages

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I have a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as well as the budget documents, which I'd like to table.

The Speaker: Please stand for the reading of the message.

Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of the sums required for the services of the Province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2025, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And this has been signed by the Honourable Anita Neville, Lieutenant Governor.

Please be seated.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Justice, that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: This House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

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