



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LXXIX No. 3 - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, November 21, 2024

ISSN 0542-5492

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
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	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, Hon.	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, Hon.	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, Hon.	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
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 21, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, 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, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, Nehethowuk. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 201—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act (Expanding Liquor Retail)

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): I move, seconded by the member from Interlake-Gimli, that Bill 201, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act (Expanding Liquor Retail), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wharton: The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act will allow retailers to expand their product selection and expand their services across Manitoba under a five-year pilot project.

Honourable Speaker, for years, Manitobans have been asking for this legislation. This bill is about levelling the playing the playing field for Manitoba businesses. It's about reducing red tape and giving Manitobans what they want: consumer choice, convenience when they go shopping all across this great province of Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Further introduction of bills?

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

Bill 202—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements)

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for Red River North, that Bill 202, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Johnson: The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act is amended to allow residential customers who operate a solar 'photovoltaic' system to request Manitoba Hydro enter into a net-metering agreement.

Manitoba Hydro must enter into the agreement if the customer's solar PV system meets the requirements set out in the regulations, the customer has the necessary permits and the system is not likely to cause a serious adverse impact.

The person who wishes to install a solar 'photovoltaic' system can request Manitoba Hydro to approve the proposed system for the purpose of a net-metering agreement. If Manitoba Hydro approves the proposed system and the customer installs the system within six months, Manitoba Hydro must enter into a net-metering agreement with the customer.

Under the net-metering agreement, the customer provides electricity to—generated by their solar PV system to Manitoba Hydro, and Manitoba Hydro must award the customer credit measured in kilowatt hours. This is equal to the difference between the amount of electricity the consumer produced and consumed in a billing period. The credit must be applied to the customer's future bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 203—The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), that Bill 203, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Cook: Bill 203 addresses a pressing issue in women's health in Manitoba by requiring the Minister of Health to lower the age for routine breast screening to age 40 before the end of 2026 and also to require the minister to report annually on the number of screening mammograms that are completed.

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

Committee reports?

Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Harry Schellenberg

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I rise today with a heavy heart, with sad news to share with this House.

Our dear friend, the former MLA for Rossmere, Harry Schellenberg, has sadly passed away.

We can all take solace, however, that Harry is now released from any suffering and that he left this world in the comfort of his home, surrounded by the people that he loved the most, his adoring family, and today, each of them are in our hearts.

To his wife Irene, his children Angela and Harold and to his four precious grandchildren, we grieve this great loss alongside you, and on behalf of all Manitobans, thank you for sharing your husband, your father, your opa with us.

Harry was a dedicated and passionate member of this Assembly and served his community in a way that we should all aspire to. No one knocked on more doors than Harry. No one shook as many hands. No one tried harder or was more sincere in their efforts. His demeanour was gentle, but his will was fierce.

After decades of serving our community as a teacher, and a fine one at that, Harry was first elected in a by-election in 1993. Unfortunately, he went on

to lose the seat in the 1995 general election by just 117 votes.

But Harry kept working, kept fighting, kept knocking on doors and building connections in the community. And in historic fashion, in 1999, Harry came back to defeat Tory Cabinet minister Vic Toews by more than 5,000 votes, in one of the greatest comeback stories in Manitoba politics and a true testament to the tenacity and the work ethic that Harry was known for.

* (13:40)

Harry taught us about second chances, not just in his political comeback, but in his work teaching at Stony Mountain penitentiary, empowering those who wanted to pursue a better life—an education, a job, a way out of the circumstances that had brought them into conflict with the law.

Harry lived with an open heart and an inherent belief that caring for our neighbours and our community could inspire lasting change. And lasting change he delivered.

As a founding member of the Manitoba Parents for German Education, Harry was instrumental in establishing the German bilingual program in our education system, and I know that his daughter Angela continues on that legacy as an advocate for that program. Every child deserves equitable access to quality multilingual education, and Harry's worked help—Harry's work helped set the stage for many bilingual programs that are offered in our schools today.

The legacy he leaves to Manitobans is great, and, more personally, I know that he was a cherished friend to so many in this Chamber, on both sides of the aisle.

Make no mistake, however; Harry was fiercely loyal—was a fiercely loyal New Democrat, and many of us have benefited from his insights, his guidance and his support, especially those of us in northeast Winnipeg—myself, the member from Kildonan-River East, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)—even the Premier (Mr. Kinew), were all mentored by Harry and will always be indebted to him.

So today we honour a steadfast advocate, an engaging educator, a dedicated family man and a gentle spirit.

I ask for leave for a moment of silence for a legendary member of our Rossmere community. And our friend, Harry Schellenberg, may he rest in peace.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence aster—other members have spoken? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Today, I rise with a heavy heart and profound sadness to reflect on the passing of our colleague and friend, the late MLA Harry Schellenberg. We come together today not only to mourn his loss but also to honour the life of a man who served this province with unwavering dedication, commitment and enduring love for his community.

Harry's life was a testament to service. Before entering the political arena, he dedicated over 30 years to education, teaching Canadian history and world issues at River East Collegiate. His commitment to shaping young minds went beyond the classroom, as he pursued a master's of education at the University of Manitoba and became a founding member of Manitoba Parents for German Education Inc., which is where I got to know him. His passion for education and his drive to preserve culture enriched countless lives and strengthened our communities for the better.

And on a personal note, Harry Schellenberg and I, yes, worked on a political campaign together for Henry Tessmann for school trustee. And that's where I got to know Harry Schellenberg and his passion for knocking on doors. Henry probably should've vetted his team a little bit better because he went on to lose.

But Harry was not to be deterred. He was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in September 1993 to '95, where he was defeated, and then came back in '99 and retired in 2007, representing the constituency of Rossmere. His career in public service was defined by a deep love for the people he served and a relentless commitment to their well-being. Harry's dedication was evident in every action he took, always prioritizing the needs of his constituents and putting others first—his Mennonite upbringing.

But beyond his role as an MLA, Harry was much more. He was a beloved husband, father, colleague and friend. His kindness, humility and sense of humor were the qualities that touched everyone who had the privilege to know him. He wasn't just a representative of Rossmere, he was a teacher, a mentor and a guide. Before entering politics, Harry spent several decades shaping young minds as an educator, instilling in his students not only knowledge but a passion for learning a deep sense of social responsibility.

As we mourn his passing, we also take time to celebrate the remarkable life he lived. His legacy of service and compassion and respect will continue to inspire all of us who had the honour of working along-

side him. The impact he had on this province, on his community and on the countless lives he touched will be felt for generations to come.

To Harry's family and all who loved him, please know that our thoughts and prayers—with you during this incredible difficult time. Harry's legacy will endure, not only in his work he did, but in the hearts of all who were fortunate enough to know him.

As we reflect on his life, let us remember these words by Thomas Campbell: To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.

Harry Schellenberg's legacy will live on with us, and we will never, never forget him.

In closing, Harry: Ruhe sanft in stiller Gruft, bis der Herr dich wieder ruft. *[Rest gently in a quiet tomb, until the Lord calls you home.]*

The Speaker: All members rise for a moment of silence, please.

A moment of silence was observed.

National Housing Day

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): As Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness and Minister responsible for Mental Health, it is my honour to rise today to recognize National Housing Day.

I had the great privilege of hosting an event earlier for National Housing Day in collaboration with the Right to Housing Coalition and community sector partners.

I want to lift up our colleagues across the housing sector for their important heart work each and every day, many of whom join us in the gallery today. Thank you for the heart work that you do each and every day. We see you and we appreciate you.

National Housing Day is an important opportunity for us to reflect upon the collaborative approach that is needed to build more housing here in Manitoba and across the country. Our NDP government is proud to be working alongside all levels of government, front-line organizations and the private sector to build more housing in our province.

After seven and a half long years of the former government slashing the repair and maintenance budget for Manitoba Housing, selling off hundreds of units of social housing across the province, Manitobans now have a government who is proud to stand with

our community partners and increase the availability of housing across our great province.

Since we took office just over a year ago, we have committed \$37 million in funding to over 17 projects with 525 rent-geared-to-income units. This includes: Market Lands, 108 million—\$1.8 million for 48 units; Transcona, \$3.8 million for capital for 31 units; Balmoral, \$2.2 million for 31 units; Balmoral, \$2.25 million for 15 units; Centre Village, \$2.2 million for 30 units; Roblin, \$844,800 for 32 supportive units for seniors.

And this fiscal year alone, we have committed over \$116 million for building and maintaining social housing. This includes \$30 million for building new housing; \$6 million to acquire new Manitoba Housing stock; \$13.4 million towards protecting existing housing supply, something that the former government never did.

We reinstated and enhanced the repair maintenance budget to make sure our own housing units are repaired and available, leading to hundreds more units coming online under construction and repair.

And to make sure the private sector can help create more affordable housing, we provided \$10 million for a private social investment trust to help leverage private sector dollars, and we are removing the PST on new affordable housing units to help incentivize the creation of more housing projects here in our province.

Earlier this year—or earlier this month, a new Housing Starts Here—a new Housing Starts portal opened to simplify the application process for \$26 million in capital grants for non-profit organizations, Indigenous governments and municipalities.

Additionally, \$5 million in—is being provided to the proposal development fund so our partners can engage the professional services needed to move housing proposals to the financial stage.

We've also connected over 1,200 people with housing supports over the past year, helping to stem the flow from houses into encampments.

We've also invested \$2.6 million to keep shelters open during the daytime in cold months from October to the end of March.

We've expanded the downtown community safety patrol, allowing them to work with the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service to address safety issues in encampments, prevent deaths and prepare Manitobans to move into housing.

* (13:50)

We've also invested over \$5 million in 10 programs to provide wraparound supports to Manitobans exiting shelters and encampments, with true wraparound supports so that they can stay housed—something that the former government didn't do; and with a revolving door, people would get housed without proper supports, they would go right back into shelters and encampments.

We are engaging with partnering—we are engaging and partnering with municipalities, Indigenous governments and the service sectors to determine the specific local needs for housing and supports to end chronic homelessness here in our province.

On National Housing Day, I want to re-infirm our government's commitment to use every resource available, fully embracing the mission of ending chronic homelessness here in our province.

We know that the work to solve and to solve chronic homelessness will take years. However, our government is not waiting years to act. We are acting now, working with all of our partners to make sure Manitobans have access to safe, dignified housing.

Miigwech.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to respond to the ministerial statement recognizing November 22, National Housing Day.

Annually, November 22 is a day dedicated to raising awareness about housing and homelessness, and a call to action to work together to develop impactful solutions to address the housing needs of all.

In my critic role, I have had the opportunity to meet with organizations in the housing sector and to hear about the challenges they face and their—come up with innovation solutions that they have to offer.

I send my deep appreciation and many thanks to the individuals that serve on the front lines and work in our communities providing assistance and resources for individuals experiencing homelessness and their work to improve access to housing for all.

Our firm—former PC government recognized the serious need for a comprehensive plan to tackle homelessness in the 2023 released—in 2023 released a historic homelessness strategy that would focus on strengthening services, helping people transition out of homelessness and increase co-ordination with provincial departments. This strategy was drafted in

consultation with over 400 people and groups across the province, including service providers, Indigenous leaders and people with lived experience.

A notable pillar of the plan was to invest in strengthening services and help individuals find and train-retain housing. One of the notable investments to support these objectives was providing funding for emergency shelters to enable 24-7 operation in winter months.

It is unfortunate that this NDP government has abandoned the first ever whole-of-government homelessness strategy, A Place for Everyone, and has even gone as far to remove it from the government website. Manitobans deserved a comprehensive plan to end homelessness.

I will conclude my remarks by saying that all Manitobans should have access to safe, quality and affordable housing, and I call this—on the NDP government to reinstate A Place for Everyone, Manitoba's first comprehensive homeless strategy.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Council

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Today I would like to recognize the incredible work of the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Council, or the MASRC. The MASRC empowers Indigenous nations in Manitoba through sports and recreation.

They believe that physical activity is a healthy and positive tool to build strong and vibrant First Nations, Red River Métis and Inuit communities across our province.

MASRC acts as the bridge between existing partners in the sport and recreation delivery system and Indigenous nations in Manitoba. Their work focuses on the creation of sport and recreational opportunities for Indigenous peoples, offering a wide range of programs.

I had the pleasure of taking a tour of MASRC's equipment warehouse, with the now Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations (Mr. Simard) back in October, to hear about their amazing sport equipment collection program. MASRC collects new and gently used sports equipment to distribute to individuals, communities and organizations across Manitoba that support youth in sport and recreation.

MASRC is currently running their hockey equipment drive, led by Donna Mathieson, set up to collect

hockey equipment donations. Donna bundles the equipment together to make full sets for youth. They send these sets to northern and rural communities, and to supply their own North End hockey program, outfitting five teams every season.

Last year, they gave out 500 sets of equipment, but it was still not enough to satisfy community requests. They have received 3,000 set requests this year—yes, 3,000—but Donna thinks it will be difficult to put together 100 sets this year. MASRC has set up collection bins at many local community centres across Winnipeg. If you have any gently used hockey equipment that is no longer in use, please donate so that every child can play hockey.

While Donna was not able to be here today, Cadin Dupasquier and Robyn Cruz are here in the gallery. Please join me in recognizing their work at MASRC.

Tim Arnason

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I rise today to recognize an individual who has given back to our community for over 50 years: Tim Arnason.

Tim has volunteered with numerous organizations including the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Pan Am Games, Gimli Film Festival, the Canada Iceland Foundation, the Viking Park capital campaign, the Westshore Community Foundation, to name just a few.

Tim's volunteer work experience has also led him to taking leadership roles for many other community-based organizations.

A few of these include being tasked with raising funds to save Lögberg-Heimskringla, which is the longest continually operating ethnic newspaper in North America serving those with Icelandic heritage.

Tim has been involved in—the longest with the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba where he has served for over 50 years.

His work with *Íslendingadagurinn*—I can say it when I don't read it, but when I read it, I have trouble, so—has become a family tradition where a member of the Arnason family has continually escorted the Fjallkona or lady of the mountain on her duties.

Tim's father, Valdi, served as the official escort for the Fjallkona for 35 years. Tim took over for his father and served the role for another 27 years, and most recently he passed the torch on to his son Brady, who carries on this tradition.

Most recently Tim is chairing a project known as the Gimli wetland interpretive centre, which is working to transform the 144-acre old Gimli wastewater lagoon into a wetland-wildlife sanctuary, and an interpretive centre focusing on the health of Lake Winnipeg and the relationship that existed between Indigenous peoples and the Icelandic settlers.

Tim and his family, whose names I submit to Hansard, join us in the gallery today, and with only two minutes I just scratched the surface of all of Tim's accomplishments.

Please join me in extending our sincerest gratitude for Tim for all that he has done and continues to do for Interlake-Gimli.

Delphine Arnason, wife; Brady Arnason, son; Alena Arnason, daughter; Valdine Evans, sister; Don Evans, brother-in-law; Patty Wilcox, sister; Colin Wilcox, brother-in-law; Bjorn Valdimar "Valdi" Arnason, in spirit.

McIvor MB Food Bank

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): Honourable Speaker, as we approach the holiday season, the stress of food insecurity on families becomes more prevalent even in communities such as ours in Kildonan-River East.

A past member of McIvor MB and Winnipeg Harvest volunteer saw this need in our community and suggested that McIvor MB become one of the organization's food distribution centres here in KRE.

Through the pandemic, the hard-working volunteers at McIvor MB brought food hampers to 20 families biweekly, meeting neighbours literally where they were at. They were eager to provide people in need with more than just food hampers, but with connection. The volunteer team helped set up tables outside the church where they could sit and connect.

Now the McIvor MB food bank is helping 320 families every month. They also work hard to combat the stigma surrounding food banks. They want everyone to know that food insecurity can affect anyone in our community. Food banks such as the one here at McIvor MB are a resource to people struggling to help get them back on their feet.

* (14:00)

Volunteers are vital to our communities. The team of 50 McIvor MB food bank volunteers are the reason why Harvest services can be accessed by KRE community members in need right here in our

community. Their contributions prove that our neighbourhoods are stronger when we support each other.

McIvor MB has had a long partnership with Harvest Manitoba, and they have every desire to continue to partner with them and serve our KRE community for as long as there is a need.

Please join me in thanking the McIvor MB church food bank volunteers, whose names I would like to have entered into Hansard.

Thank you.

Rodney Badgley, Ernie Boschmann, Rita Giesbrecht, Vic Giesbrecht, Ernie Koslowsky, Ken Koslowsky, Brenda Marinelli, Bruno Marinelli, Marcia McAuley, Colleen Loewen, Frank Penner, Eugene Regier, Rob Simpson, Jeanette Thomas

Recognizing SAFARI Farmers

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): By now we have all cleared out our gardens and shared our abundance with neighbours, and we can all be thankful for our daily bread and a truly wonderful summer, and we are not alone.

The Canadian prairies help feed the world with abundance of our harvest that is renowned for its consistent high quality. And for that the rest of Canada and the world can also be thankful. Our long, warm summer days, coupled with adequate moisture and rich soils, makes Manitoba one of the most productive places in the world to grow our crops, positioning Canada as one of the world's greatest producers and exporters.

One of our great joys is helping others. This is the case with the Springfield Area Farmers Aiding Relief Internationally—or the acronym SAFARI—which is a group of local farmers that are actively thankful through sharing. These SAFARI farmers pay it forward by designating some of their acres to provide food in times of crisis for hungry people in the developing world. Crops from these designated acres are given to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank whose goal is a world without hunger.

Since its inception SAFARI has raised an astounding \$500,000, all of which goes to the Canada Food Grains Bank. The federal government has agreed to continue to match the yearly funds raised, across Canada. In fact, the Government of Canada has donated \$45 million to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank as of last year, and that year alone.

I want to thank SAFARI, or the Springfield Area Farmers Aiding Relief Internationally, the group—and they are: Howard Bredin, Roger Vaags, Irene Vaags, Brent Reid, Debbie Shaver, Neil Van Ryssel, Rick Vaags.

And on Saturday, these Springfield leaders held a dinner at the Cooks Creek Community Centre where an additional \$40,000 was raised. We say thank you to all the community farmers who come together to donate land, seed, money, equipment and time to help to do their part in achieving a world without hunger.

Chai Folk Ensemble

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): Today, I'm proud to recognize the Chai Folk Ensemble, a cultural gem in Manitoba and a symbol of our province's rich diversity. This year marks a remarkable milestone as Chai celebrates its 60th anniversary, a testament to six decades of artistic excellence, cultural preservation and community building.

Founded in 1964, the Chai Folk Ensemble has grown from humble beginnings into one of North America's most renowned Jewish performing arts groups. Its vibrant performances, featuring traditional and contemporary music, dance and storytelling, capture the spirit and resilience of Jewish culture while resonating deeply with audiences of all backgrounds.

Over the years, Chai has become more than a folk ensemble. It serves as a cultural bridge, fostering understanding and appreciation among Manitoba's diverse communities. Through its inclusive approach to collaboration and its commitment to showcasing the universal power of art, Chai has enriched the lives of countless Manitobans.

The 60th anniversary is a time to celebrate not only the incredible talent of the ensemble's performers but also the dedication of its directors, choreographers, musicians and countless volunteers. It is their passion and perseverance that have kept this cherished tradition alive and thriving for six decades.

Honourable Speaker, as we reflect on this remarkable milestone, let us extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Chai Folk Ensemble for their invaluable contributions to Manitoba's cultural heritage, and may their legacy continue to inspire future generations, and may they share their artistry with the world for many years to come.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

North End Sewage Treatment Project Funding Commitment Inquiry

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to start by saying, from our PC team, that we're deeply saddened by the loss of Chad Posthumus, and we want to send our heartfelt condolences to Chad's family and friends at this time, as well as to Mrs. Schellenberg and their family.

Honourable Speaker, in 2021, our government partnered with the federal government to invest over \$212 million for upgrades to the North End wastewater treatment plant's facilities. I table the release for the Premier's awareness.

All levels of government worked together to get that done, and where was the member for Fort Rouge? He stood in his place in this Chamber and voted no to sewage treatment.

Honourable Speaker, if the Premier didn't support the project now—then—what's changed his mind?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to offer, on behalf of the Province of Manitoba, our sincere condolences to the family of the late Harry Schellenberg. He was a remarkable person who embodied kindness and also perseverance when it came to volunteering politically. And he represented that value of helping the next generation insofar as he helped to teach so many of us the skills that he earned as he plied his trade.

I also, with a heavy heart, want to offer our condolences to the family of Chad Posthumus. He was our captain, the leader of the Sea Bears, the Beast from River East; somebody that we were so proud of, to have come out of our hometown.

On a personal level, I saw him playing basketball with kids at the Mayfair basketball courts when we had our community barbecue just this past year. Wonderful person, and thinking of his father, Charles, and the whole family at this time. Somebody taken from all of us far too soon, but the Province of Manitoba is with you. God bless the mourners.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, that wasn't the only time the Premier was proud to stand in opposition to good environmental governance.

A year later, when Premier Stefanson was standing with Mayor Bowman and a representative of the

federal government announcing a further investment of over \$550 million for phase 2 of the project, and I'll table that release so the Premier can at least try and put some facts on the record this time instead of whatever that he is spewing on a daily basis.

Manitobans in the gallery and those watching at home got to see this Premier to be a showman once again instead of a statesman. He didn't look at the notes because he wasn't interested in the facts. He was making it up all along, as usual.

Why does this Premier deflect and dodge instead of committing firm dollars to—firm dollar values to this very important project?

We've committed many dollars. Premier, the ball's in your court.

Mr. Kinew: We, on this side of the House, we're like you, the people of Manitoba. We build. We're going to build the North End Water Pollution Control Centre to protect Lake Winnipeg and to grow our provincial economy.

Here's a fact: The PCs couldn't build a North End Water Pollution Control Centre. Two terms in government, not a litre, not a cup, not a tablespoon of water purified at the North End plant. So again, they can put out the press releases. They can pat Heather Stefanson on the back all they want. We know the truth: she was voted out because she couldn't get things done.

We're working with the City of Winnipeg. We're working with the federal government. But most of all, when it comes to building a North End Water Pollution Control Centre, we're working for you.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, we know that this Premier had as good of a relationship with the truth as he does with the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv).

* (14:10)

And he has nothing to say about the North End water treatment plant. He may fail to grasp that there is a process between government announcement and grand opening. That might explain why he announces and announces, but doesn't actually build anything.

I table an article from this summer outlining the work that is under way that outlines the efforts that he voted against. The Premier talks about support for the media. Maybe he can start by reading the paper or at least taking a look at the full-colour pictures of work actually being done.

Was the Premier being deliberate in his words—word choice yesterday, or was he unaware that he was factually out to lunch, Honourable Speaker?

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'd just caution the Leader of the Official Opposition to tone down some of his comments that are clearly intended just to inflame debate here rather than actually have a good debate.

So just tone your comments down a little, please.

Mr. Kinew: Well, Manitobans know that people go personal when they don't have the facts on their side. And again, two terms in government—there's no North End Water Pollution Control Centre to show for that time.

Here's the difference: we're going to work with other levels of government and trying to—instead of trying to pick fights, and we're going to deliver this project for you.

But when it comes to the PCs, I have to say, I'm surprised that they even have the nerve to show up for work. Yesterday, they couldn't even sustain an entire question period. We're talking about the first day after the government's Throne Speech. They couldn't even get through a whole question period. What is that?

If that is not a failed opposition—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The Leader of the Official Opposition will please quit hollering across the Chamber while someone is speaking.

Mr. Kinew: All that I can say to that is if on the first question period after our government's Throne Speech they can't even sustain a full set of questions, then perhaps we should just take that as a good sign that they support our agenda and they agree with Manitobans that good times—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

And I would call the member from St. Johns and the member from Red River North to order, please. There's no need for carrying on like that.

Brandon Hospital ER Staffing Levels Request for Government to Address

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Yesterday, the NDP made it clear they have absolutely no plan to address the crisis that's happening right now in the Brandon ER.

A letter from medical professionals that I tabled yesterday showed Manitobans the grim reality of the

situation with front-line staff stating bluntly that operations in the ER are not sustainable and not safe. The Premier's response yesterday has made it clear he would rather point fingers than find real solutions.

The staff, in their own words, are experiencing levels of burnout never experienced before under this NDP government.

What steps is the Premier taking to immediately address the crisis in the Brandon ER?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We have a responsibility in government to bring Manitobans together. And here's one of the things that everybody in Manitoba agrees on: that after Heather Stefanson and the PCs, we need to focus on fixing health care.

And so what has our government done? Well, first of all, we've appointed the best Health Minister in the country. And the Minister of Health has been speaking with doctors in the emergency room from Brandon, and we can tell you that help is on the way. New doctor recruits are in the pipeline for us to be able to staff up adequately the Brandon emergency room.

However, the point that the member opposite refuses to acknowledge is that in running under the Heather Stefanson banner, she supported the plan to cut physician positions and to close ERs.

However, was she aware of this important fact: that in the last collective bargaining agreement with Doctors Manitoba, the members—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Again, in the words of front-line staff working in the Brandon ER: In our current conditions we will experience a catastrophic outcome that could have been prevented.

I'll table the physicians' schedule for the Brandon ER, December through March. The document shows that from December through March, just 12 days have a fully staffed physician complement; 32 per cent, or 39 total days have shifts with no physician coverage at all, and the vast majority have one or more shifts with only single-physician coverage.

Will the Premier do whatever it takes to ensure the people of Westman have a safe and sustainable ER, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: Yes, of course. Our team is hard at work to address the issues in the Brandon Regional Health Centre's emergency room. The minister is engaging with them and we're bringing more physicians to the bedside.

However, the member opposite neglects the responsibility that years of PC cuts caused in damaging our health-care system. Again, we go to Victoria, we go to the Conc [*phonetic*], we go to the Seven Oaks, we go to Carberry. During their time in offices, emergency rooms were closed and cut.

Was the member opposite aware, however, that in the most recent collective bargaining agreement, the PCs also cut a specific incentive program designed to retain doctors in Brandon? If she wants to pose a yes or no question, I invite her to answer that one.

What I would say, however, is that we are working with the existing CBA that we've inherited. We're listening to the front lines and we're fixing emergency departments across the province, including in Brandon.

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

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, just 10 per cent of days in the Brandon ER, from December through March, are fully staffed with doctors. Let me repeat that: just 10 per cent of days over the next four months have a full complement of doctors in Brandon.

Medical professionals from Brandon have gone to this NDP government begging for action, and all they get are this Premier's excuses and spin. They remain—the doctors remain committed to the patients of Westman, but they have come to a breaking point. They are burning out. They need this government to step up and help them safely care for their patients.

What action will the Premier take today to address this immediate crisis in the Brandon ER?

Mr. Kinew: Well, what I say to the people of Manitoba is: Would listening to the front lines seem like a necessary next step? Would delivering more physicians to the bedside in Brandon seem like an important part of the solution?

Well, if you agree with those steps, then you're agreeing with the steps that our Health Minister is taking, and that is exactly what we're doing.

However, the members opposite continue to stand with a burnt match in their hand and then complain about us not bringing the fire hose quick enough. During the final months of their time in office, they

cut a specific incentive program that would have resulted in higher pay for physicians in Brandon.

So I ask you again, dear Manitobans: Do you think that more wages, higher wages for physicians in the emergency room in Brandon would have helped us retain physicians and avoid this current situation? The answer, of course, is yes.

But the reality is, much like with what we're dealing with in the health-care system province-wide, we are starting with the hand we were dealt by the former PC government, but we are listening to the front lines, we are adding—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Violent Crime Incidents Government Record

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): For over a year, this NDP government has failed to stop violent crime in Manitoba. This minister even had the audacity to recycle this claim in the Throne Speech.

Pawn trades owner Richard Doering told the media he has never seen crime this bad in his 25 years on the job. This was said after suspects burst into his shop, hopped over the counter and pointed a shotgun and machete at employees.

Does the minister consider armed robbery with a weapon a violent crime? And why did he fail to share his memo on violent crime with these suspects?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Last week we were proud to release our public safety strategy, which outlines a number of initiatives that our government is undertaking.

But I want to highlight first of all, Honourable Speaker, that it really came together because we consulted with thousands of Manitobans, with community groups, across communities, all the way across this province, and we listened. We listen.

* (14:20)

And then we decided, what can we do, how can we put those into action and how can we start taking the steps that Manitobans asked.

We acted, of course, this fall by bringing in a bill around machetes and long-bladed weapons. That was an important step in the right direction, but there's more to come, Honourable Speaker. It starts with collaboration and it ends with safer—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Following a recent violent incident in Tuxedo, a 27-year-old male from Winnipeg is facing the following charges: robbery, forcible confinement and uttering threats to cause death or bodily harm; and another 27-year-old male from Winnipeg is facing charges of robbery and forcible confinement.

These two violent offenders have another thing in common: besides their charges, they were both released by this Minister of Justice.

If the Kinew government believes robbery, assault, kidnapping, threats to cause bodily harm and death isn't enough to keep an offender behind bars, then exactly what crimes do?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, the member opposite uses inflammatory language that is just absolutely false, and of course misrepresents the way that the justice system works. He should know that, but again, he prefers to use this kind of language.

What I would say is, is we are making streets safer by working with law enforcement. Of course, our initiative to bring more officers to the street, 12 new officers on the street as of November of this year. More coming next year, an additional 12 officers.

More officers for bail. A 2 per cent increase across the province when it comes to law enforcement funding. We're working with law enforcement to ensure that mental health workers are in place. Twenty-five new mental health workers coming down. This—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: On November 19, less than 24 hours before this Minister of Justice declared that he would personally stop violent crime, a 21-year-old female was assaulted and robbed. Officers determined the victim was followed by the suspect as she exited a bus, and without provocation, the suspects began physically assaulting the victim while demanding her personal property.

This young woman was actively stalked, randomly assaulted and robbed while simply riding transit. No surprise that the head of the transit unit has described unchecked violence on transit as like the Wild West.

Why has this minister's self-congratulatory announcements failed to protect this Manitoban?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, the member opposite still doesn't get it. They cut the electronic monitoring program. We're reinstating it. They closed the Dauphin jail; we're rebuilding it. The member opposite, he voted against increases to police funding, and he called the 2 per cent increase announced a pittance.

He continues to say that the police recruitment issues have become a crisis years ago, but will not take any responsibility for the previous government's actions.

Honourable Speaker, we are acting to make communities safer. While members opposite are continuing to vote against these kind of investments, our government will make investments that make our communities safer.

Changes to Education Requirements for Teachers Concern for Student Outcomes

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): The outpouring of shock, disbelief and outrage from parents and educators has rolled in in substantial amounts since the NDP slipped it off their desk that they were deleting all educational criteria requirement for teachers in the province.

And the minister, in doubling down in her decision, says that she consulted with everybody on this issue, except for apparently the subject matter experts who teach these subjects at universities. Dr. Narad Rampersad, the U of W chair of mathematics, published a letter in the Winnipeg Free Press that says, quote: The Manitoba government needs to reverse course on this backwards policy. The children in this province, especially those parents whose parents lack the resources to correct for bad educational policies will be the ones—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It gives me great pleasure to rise today and talk about some of the great work that our government is doing in the education system.

The amendments that the member opposite speaks of respond to a key priority identified by the sector in addressing concerns regarding ongoing teacher shortages after seven and a half years of neglect by the previous government. And if the member opposite wants to talk about quoting educators, I have some quotes of my own, Honourable Speaker.

At the University of Manitoba, the dean of education has said: These changes were made in response

to a need to modernize certification, ensure greater alignment with other Canadian jurisdictions and to remove barriers for entry into after-degree teacher education programs here in Manitoba.

The faculty of education welcomed—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: Well, Honourable Speaker, extraordinary claims—this is also from Dr. Rampersad's letter—extraordinary claims made by education professor Martha Koch require extraordinary evidence, and the onus is now on Koch to provide the research supporting her claims, which has not been done by her or this government.

The minister wants to hear some more quotes. These are all posted on social media: But I am saying I don't like this decision, and if someone knows education—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jackson: —doctors—like Dr. Stokke says, we need to reverse it—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jackson: —we should reverse it. I'm a final-year education student who spent years repeating my required math courses to get my degree. As frustrating as it was at the time, those courses did make me much better at math—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: These changes that were made were—had broad support in the sector and were also made in consultation with folks that can—are consulting on—sorry, my apologies—mathematical research and educational research and not opinions from social media.

If, again, the member would like to exchange quotes, I have some more I would be glad to share. From the Brandon Teachers' Association president: This means that qualified teachers will be able to get certified with less barriers. The certification process will require focus more on pedagogy. It also means that teachers who are certified in other countries will be able to be certified in Manitoba with less hoops to jump through.

I can also quote Brandon University's dean of education, Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: Well, Honourable Speaker, it's very clear that the minister is doubling down on reducing barriers, which means lowering the required education for teachers to enter the sector.

We would strongly encourage her to deal with a teacher shortage by increasing incentives for teachers and people wanting to enter the education profession, just like folks from this quote: We want students to have a strong foundation in math that gives them the knowledge and skills they need to reach that full potential. Strong teacher training in math is an important part of that, and we're working with teachers and universities to ensure graduating teachers are well prepared to provide that solid foundation to students.

Who said that, Honourable Speaker? Former NDP minister of Education James Allum.

So why don't they agree with their own party members?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: Where the previous failed Heather Stefanson government failed to act, failed to make any changes in our education system to help educators and fundamentally to help students and families and children in this province, on this side of the aisle, we will act, and that's what these amendments did.

I didn't finish quoting the Brandon University dean of education, who said, in—quote: In rural communities, you're often required to teach many different subjects across multiple grade levels. These changes will help us recruit more teacher candidates with diverse educational backgrounds.

This is good news for rural school communities. The member opposite needs to get educated and get on board.

Mr. Jackson: Point of order. If she was—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Points of order are not—[interjection]

Order, please.

Points of order are not allowed during oral questions.

Manitoba Hydro Rates Government Intention

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, this morning, on CJOB, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) said

that the idea for a one-year rate freeze actually came from Manitoba Hydro, despite the fact that Hydro themselves said rate increases were necessary.

* (14:30)

Once again, the Premier's changing his story. First, during the election, they said they were going to freeze rates within 10 days in office, then they gave themselves the power to raise rates by 4 per cent. Now, he's freezing the rates but saying it was Hydro's idea.

So who's making the decisions here? Is it the PUB? Is it Hydro? Is it the minister, or is it the Premier, or is the Premier just trying to place the blame of his poorly thought out, phony rate freeze on someone else?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I know it's very hard—it's very hard—for the members opposite to understand that a government is doing anything but raising hydro rates on Manitobans.

That's what Manitobans experienced for seven and a half years: new and creative ways of raising hydro rates, whether it's baking a hydro rate increase into a BITSA bill for the first time in our province's history, bringing in other legislation that will jack up rates. That's their history.

Finally, Manitobans have a government focused on affordability and keeping hydro rates low, and we're proud to be doing that work, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mrs. Stone: It was reported in the Brandon Sun the Consumers' Association of Canada, Harvest Manitoba and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg said they are deeply concerned that a rate freeze, quote, creates significant risk of higher than necessary rate increases in future years. I table that today.

The minister and the Premier had their Cabinet approve 4 per cent rate increases at Hydro, so these concerns are well grounded. The same article suggests Hydro may be rationing electricity going forward.

Can the minister tell us what his projections are for rate increases after the one-year rate freeze and whether all customers will be able to get hooked up to hydroelectricity?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, one thing we know is that the members opposite are not fans of affordability

measures, right? Over and over, we see that in this House.

One thing that Manitobans know is that we are fans of affordability measures. Right out of the gate when we came in, what did we do? We brought in a fuel tax holiday. And of course, yesterday, with our recent Throne Speech, we did bring forward this hydro rate freeze, something we're really proud to have brought forward.

One of the only reasons Hydro is able to deliver on that hydro rate freeze is because we repealed financial targets that were set by the last government for hydro that was set to bring in a 5 per cent rate increase for Manitobans on April 1. That's their legacy: jacking up hydro rates.

We're going to keep work to keep hydro rates low.

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

Mrs. Stone: Manitoba Hydro is almost \$25 billion in debt. Honourable Speaker, 33 cents of every Manitoban's dollar goes to the interest rates for Manitoba Hydro.

The NDP has thrown out financial targets; they've thrown out the IRP, and they have no debt management plan for Hydro. And now, they're freezing rates with no plan to pay for it.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) is backpedalling on his own words and now blaming Manitoba Hydro. This is not just embarrassing for the NDP, but it's fiscally irresponsible.

The NDP has every intention of saddling consumers with rate increases in the future while adding further to Manitoba Hydro's debt.

What is this minister's plan to pay for his phony rate freeze, or does he just plan to place this on the backs of Manitoba consumers in the future?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, here you have it: more PCs fighting for higher hydro rates. That's what we're hearing here in this House.

What are we doing? We're fighting to ensure that Manitobans can have an affordable quality of life. We're doing that by reducing their costs in a huge number of areas. Again, 21 ways to save in our budget. We kicked it off with the amazing fuel tax holiday. And by the way, again, this month, what did StatsCan report? We are tied for the lowest inflation in Canada, once again.

We are doing the big things. Led by this Premier, this amazing team—we're going to keep fighting to make life more affordable in Manitoba.

Child-Care Spaces 2026 Target Concerns

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, this government Throne Speech has fallen short of the required child-care spaces that the former government committed to.

At a rate—at this rate the NDP government is going, it will take 39 years to meet this commitment. MCCA executive director says, and I quote: There is much, much more work to be done. We are falling short.

With the cuts to the new school constructions which would have included much-needed child-care spaces, how does this government plan to reach the goal of 23,000 spaces by 2026?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I thank the member opposite for the question.

And to answer her question, we're going by do—we're going to do that by working with the sector, we're going to build those spaces.

In the member's question, she said that, you know, the previous government made some commitments. Well, I'd like to see what those commitments brought to fruition—which was little to nothing.

So, unfortunately, we are playing catch up; we'll admit that. There is a heck of a lot of work to do after seven and a half years of inaction on daycare from the previous failed Heather Stefanson government.

On this side of the House, we're going to work with folks like the MCCA, and if the member read the entire statement issued yesterday, it started with: Manitoba is the only province in Canada with true \$10-a-day child care for all licensed not-for-profit spaces, something to celebrate on National Child Day.

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, over 12,000 spaces from our previous Conservative government was over-opened.

Because of the NDP's lack of action, parents are increasingly having to volunteer and create their own non-profit child-care centres, according to Jodie Kehl of the C—or, the MCCA. Under the NDP, about 95 per cent of the centres are parent-volunteer run.

When is this government going to propose a delivery of child care that does not—is not on the backs of our parents?

MLA Schmidt: So, in order to open child-care spaces here in Manitoba, we also need the workforce to be able to do that. And under the previous government, unfortunately, not only were early childhood educators disrespected and disregarded and not valued, but they weren't paid, and their centres' operating grants were frozen.

We are so proud that this year, we lifted the operating freeze on daycare centres—I believe it's a 5 per cent increase that they got this year under an NDP government. We also—[interjection]—yes, it deserves applause. And we also 'implepended' a new wage grid that saw early childhood educators get a 2.7—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, this NDP government has made no progress towards this target and has no plan to achieve these spaces by 2026.

Parents across Manitoba are left uninformed of what they can look forward to accessible and—when they can look forward to accessible and sufficient daycare centres.

Once again, Honourable Speaker, I ask the minister: How many promised spaces will be opened and staffed by 2026?

MLA Schmidt: I'm very proud of the Throne Speech that our government delivered early this week where we committed to adding 3,500 spaces across the province at schools, at universities, at hospitals.

We're here to work for Manitobans, to work with Manitobans, to work with the sector, to work with school divisions, to work with institutions across Manitoba to make sure that Manitobans' children and their families' needs are met. That's what they're going to get on this side of the House.

We've got a plan, we're going to get it done, just wait and see.

Children's Hospital Foundation ER Renovation Partnership

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): Honourable Speaker, our government's Throne Speech is a historic and exciting vision for the future of our province. Manitobans have given us a clear mandate to fix health care and the mess left behind by the Stefanson PC government. We have a passionate team working on this each and every day, and they take our—or, we take our job very seriously.

Honourable Speaker, can the Minister of Health update the House on our government's plans for the Children's Hospital emergency room mentioned in the Throne Speech earlier this week?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank my colleague from Riel for that very important question.

One of the most stressful experiences that a person can have, Honourable Speaker, is having to take their child to an emergency room. This is why, in our Throne Speech, we announced our partnership with the Children's Hospital Foundation, to renovate the Children's Hospital ER with more safety, spaces and comfort for children and their families.

Now, the damage the PCs did to health care is being felt right there in that ER, and it won't be fixed overnight. But our government is focused on addressing every single aspect of health care in the system, to improve quality for folks, for families and for kids, Honourable Speaker.

* (14:40)

While the previous government closed ERs, cut services and fired health-care workers, we're taking an entirely different approach. And we're going to make sure kids across this province have better access to health care, and we're going to do that by—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MRI Services Portage la Prairie

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, this government has certainly not liked hearing what Manitobans are saying. In fact, the Minister of Health and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) were in the city of Portage la Prairie the same day as our MRI town hall, but they didn't attend after being invited to do so, to avoid hearing from the residents.

Can the Minister of Health explain why there is only one MRI mentioned in their entire Throne Speech when there is currently a waiting list of over 20,000 people?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): That member is correct. The Premier and I were in Portage la Prairie and we were at the site of the new hospital. But the interesting thing is we were there meeting with the very doctors who were not at that member's town hall.

Why? The reality is that town hall was more of a leadership race launch of some kind. It was a very

political forum that was being held. We were busy meeting with the very doctors that provide care in Portage la Prairie each and every day, and we're going to keep meeting with them and working with them to make health care in Portage la Prairie better.

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

MLA Bereza: I will quote from what one of those doctors said to me: I'm sorry, we are told not to attend the meeting.

Honourable Speaker, this government is pitting Manitobans against each other with this Throne Speech. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza: And there is no room for such decisive rhetoric. This Health Minister has ignored and opposed residents' calls for diagnostic care in Portage la Prairie.

Why does this minister refuse to work with this community, with local experts and Manitobans?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, just this week, our government was so proud to share our Throne Speech with Manitobans. It is so well received.

And I had the opportunity at the reception to have a great conversation with the mayor of Portage la Prairie. And it was a great conversation around the needs of the doctors and folks in the community. We talked about the fact that mammography services need capacity building. We need more folks on the front lines. And in our conversation, we were delighted to know that we are on the same page.

We're working together to staff up the front lines, to listen to health leaders and work together to make sure that that hospital is a great success. And so that member opposite is welcome to get on board and work in collaboration with those who are working with us. But we're going to keep doing that work no matter what his approach continues to be.

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

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, the minister insists staffing concerns are part of why they refuse to consider an MRI in Portage la Prairie, yet this isn't a problem for the northern mobile unit. And I'll table a copy of an RFP that closed a month ago showing that this minister has no problem with privatizing health care when it suits their agenda.

Why has this minister flat out refused my constituency and surrounding area the care that they deserve?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I want to be very clear: On this side of the House, we care about Manitobans all across the province. We serve Manitobans no matter where they live.

I think it is quite disturbing—I think it's actually reprehensible that that member would stand in his place and talk about the North as though they don't deserve access to diagnostics in their own communities. That is disgraceful—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: For seven and a half years, the failed Stefanson government turned their backs on the North. We will not take that approach. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: We are bringing MRI technology to northern Manitobans because they deserve access to that care, and we're going to strengthen care all across the province for all Manitobans.

EIA Recipients in the Interlake Impact of Postal Strike

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, the minister just said that they serve all Manitobans, all Manitobans deserve fair access.

And it is deeply concerning that this new Minister of Public Service Delivery is either unaware of the geography outside of Winnipeg or, worse, doesn't care.

I have constituents that this government expects to drive an hour and a half each way to get their EIA benefits during this postal strike. The only options for Interlake-Gimli are Portage la Prairie, Selkirk or Dauphin.

Why is this minister putting the burden on those who are most vulnerable?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Thank you to the member for the question.

I would like to thank the Premier (Mr. Kinew) for trusting me with this responsibility. I am looking forward to working with our amazing Cabinet team to deliver on Manitobans' priorities. I take this responsibility very seriously, and I look forward to fulfilling this important mandate.

Lastly, I would like to thank the great people of the Maples for putting their trust in me as their MLA.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): On a point of order.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a point of order.

Mr. Jackson: In the Minister of Education's response to my third supplementary—third question, she said, and I quote, and then proceeded to apparently provide a quote from someone in rural Manitoba, but did not specify who that person was or what document, public or private, she was quoting from.

So I would ask for clarification about that quote, and if it's from a private document, I would ask that she table it.

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Yes.

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

MLA Fontaine: I would just say to the member opposite, first off, it's not a point of order. The member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) did that, and also, the member himself when he got up and talked about some social media. We don't know which social media platforms he's going to for his news and his research. Inquiring minds need to know.

So, Honourable Speaker, I would say that there's no point of order.

The Speaker: If I could please ask the minister to just clarify where she got her quote from. The—[interjection] Sorry.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I was quoting from the Brandon Sun.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

The Speaker is standing, which should indicate that others should be being quiet.

Recognizing that the honourable minister clarified that the quote came from the Brandon Sun, there is no need to table that document.

And there—and just for clarification, there is no point of order.

PETITIONS

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the ages of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

* (14:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before proceeding with any further petitions or other business, I do want to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Rita Lofto and Ambyr Hawkins, who are the guests of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

And we welcome you here today.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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 oil 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 Jayde Ross, Brenda Szatkowski, Tyson Baker and many, many more fine Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): 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) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and the agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one bread loaf worth of wheat after paying carbon tax at every stage of production, to grow the crop and get it to market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog production—hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

(6) In food production there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agricultural producers—their ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to

remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the tables for Manitoba consumers.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

This petition was signed by Cindy Alexander, Jeff Alexander, Alyssa Buscemi and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Breast Screening

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, is now urging all provinces, territories to lower their starting age for breast screening to 40 years old.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer, starting at age 40, will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

* (15:00)

(5) In every other province and territory in Canada—has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase screening capacity or lower the breast screening—breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This is signed by Shirleen Tharza [*phonetic*], Bonita Couckell and Tammy Lynch and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, or the CCS, is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, or 85–84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of

expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition is signed by Jorja Carrothers, Andrew Henry, Mats Borgsberg [*phonetic*] and many, many other fine Manitobans.

FortWhyte Alive

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker—Honourable Deputy Speaker, sorry—I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The community of Fort Whyte has over 22,000 residents and the RM of Macdonald has over 8,000 residents, many of them using McGillivray road and PTH 3 as a means of transportation or commute to and from the city of Winnipeg. PTH 3 is a major traffic corridor that services many communities, including Oak Bluff, Sanford, Brunkild, Carman, Morden, Manitou and Killarney, just to name a few.

(2) Thousands of vehicles travel down McGillivray and PTH 3 each day, and with the growing industrial park in this area and connections to the Perimeter Highway, many transport vehicles, large trucks and farm equipment need to travel down these roads each day.

(3) In the last three years under the previous PC provincial government, two new sets of traffic lights were installed along this roadway. Local officials praised these initiatives, stating that it was greatly needed to help reduce traffic incidences.

(4) FortWhyte Alive is located in this area, which is a reclaimed wildlife preserve, recreation area and environmental education centre in southwest Winnipeg that attracts over 100,000 visitors each and every year.

This 660-acre park is located along the migratory path of Canadian geese, and is named after the surrounding community of Fort Whyte. A failure to install traffic lights poses a significant safety risk to all those who frequent this area.

(5) FortWhyte Alive has been undergoing renovations along 2505 McGillivray Blvd., across from Brady Road, and is to be transformed into a new building called Buffalo Crossing, which will attract many more visitors to this area by vehicle, transit, bicycle and by foot.

(6) The City of Winnipeg has been slated to install a new crosswalk at the intersection of Brady Road and McGillivray Boulevard by the summer of 2024; the previous PC provincial government committed to working with the City and Fort White Alive to complete this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to assist the City of Winnipeg to address serious safety 'riks'—risks for all that frequent the Fort Whyte Alive area by twinning and installing a traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of McGillivray Boulevard and Brady Road, as it transitions into Provincial Trunk Highway 3.

This petition has been signed by Kaylie Specula, Julianna Roberts and Brett Johnson.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts

and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

* (15:10)

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance; and

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

And this petition has been signed by Judy Betker, Eva Krahn, George Adair and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Breast Screening

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, or CCS, is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age of breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian

women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught early are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast screening cancer screening age to 40.

This petition is signed by Cathy [phonetic] Winters, Byran [phonetic] Bates, Joyce Gancher and many, many, many Manitobans.

Teaching Certification

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificate and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early-to-middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early-to-middle years credit requirements for specific subjects including: math; physical or biological science, English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early-to-middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition has been signed by many, many, many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

* (15:20)

Breast Screening

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): 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:

Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, CCS, is now urging all provinces and

territories to lower the starting age for breast—or breast screening to 40.

Based off 2023 treatment standards, it's estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s will—have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who do—who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

I urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

FortWhyte Alive

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The community of Fort Whyte has over 22,000 residents and the RM of Macdonald has over 8,000 residents, many of them using McGillivray road

and PTH 3 as a means of transportation or commute to and from the city of Winnipeg. PTH 3 is a major traffic corridor that services many communities, including Oak Bluff, Sanford, Brunkild, Carman, Morden, Manitou and Killarney, to name a few.

(2) Thousands of vehicles travel down McGillivray and PTH 3 each day, and with the growing industrial park in the area and connections to the Perimeter Highway, many transport vehicles, large trucks and farm equipment need to travel down these roads each day.

(3) In the last three years under the previous PC government, two new sets of traffic lights were installed along this road. Local officials praised these initiatives, stating that it was greatly needed to help reduce traffic incidents.

(4) FortWhyte Alive is located in this area, which is a reclaimed wildlife preserve, recreation area and environmental education centre in southwest Winnipeg that attracts 100,000 visitors each year. This 660-acre park is located along the migratory path of Canadian geese and is named after the surrounding community of Fort Whyte. A failure to install traffic lights poses a significant safety risk to all those who frequent the area.

(5) FortWhyte Alive has been undergoing renovations along 2505 McGillivray Blvd., across from the Brady Road, and is to be transformed into a new building called Buffalo Crossing, which will attract many more visitors to the area by vehicle, transit, bicycle and by foot.

(6) The City of Winnipeg has been slated to install a new crosswalk at the intersection of Brady Road and McGillivray Boulevard by the summer of 2024; the previous PC provincial government committed to working with the City and FortWhyte Alive to complete this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to assist the City of Winnipeg to address serious safety risks for all that frequent the FortWhyte Alive area by twinning and installing a traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of McGillivray Boulevard and Brady Road, as it transitions into Provincial Trunk Highway 3.

This petition has been signed by many Harlan Perchotte, Reed Sutherland, Gerald Sawatsky and many other Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Beginning March 17, 2024, persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

* (15:30)

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This is signed by Sarah Danacay *[phonetic]*, Kurt Desanter *[phonetic]*, Amanda DeSchultz *[phonetic]* and many, many other Manitobans.

Breast Screening

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, CCS, is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who do not receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age, or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because the cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer

screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This is signed by Joanne Watkins, Courtney Chafe, Ron Lamont, and many more Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): 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) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical, preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

The Speaker in the Chair

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently, there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to service and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport

patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently close—currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Christine Waddell, Doug Wilson, Maureen Hill, and many, many other Manitobans.

* (15:40)

Teaching Certification

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subject they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments to the provincial—Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificate and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teaching—for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major or minor; early-to-middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major or minor; and also early/middle years credit requirements for specific subjects including: math, physical or biological science, English or French, and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the facilities of education

and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without significant training in core academic areas, whereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition has been signed by many, many great Manitobans, including Brie Westen Pajan [*phonetic*], Dannah Mojica and John Bruwoski [*phonetic*].

Thank you.

Provincial Trunk Highway 34

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Thank you, Honourable Speaker. 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) Provincial Trunk Highway 34 (PTH 34) is a two-lane provincial primary highway that runs from the US border where it meets with ND 20 to PTH 16 at the town of Gladstone.

(2) PTH 34 runs north-south in the south-central region of the province. It is the main highway for the towns of Crystal City, Pilot Mound and Holland, serving as a main corridor for semi-trailers, farm equipment, daily drivers and local school bus routes.

(3) A new bridge is currently being constructed over the Assiniboine River at PTH 34, north of Holland, in the RM of Victoria. The bridge serves as

an important north-south link over the Assiniboine River between the Trans-Canada Highway and PTH 2.

(4) The deterioration of PTH 34 has raised serious—I'm sorry—has raised major concerns due to its narrow shoulders and numerous deep potholes that pose serious safety risks considering farmers often need to use the highway to transport heavy equipment.

(5) Construction of a new bridge in accordance current design codes and the RTAC standard, located on PTH 34 crossing the Assiniboine River, will support trade and commerce and improve public safety in the area, and also accommodate flood events on the Assiniboine River.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the conditions of Provincial Trunk Highway 34, making the necessary upgrades to RTAC standard and to resurface the road once the new bridge has been completed.

This petition has been signed by Terry Verniest, Terry Feezby [*phonetic*], Randy Desrochers and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the [*inaudible*] to the—

The Speaker: The honourable member for La Vérendrye, we can't really hear what you're saying. You're breaking up really badly. If you have a set of headphones, please put them on.

Mr. Narth: —this petition.

Is it any better now, Honourable Speaker?

The Speaker: I think so. Try it again, and we'll see.

Mr. Narth: Honourable [*inaudible*]

The Speaker: The honourable member for La Vérendrye, it is no better.

Mr. Narth: Sorry, I'll skip the petition for today.

Breast Screening

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to the evolving scientific evidence of Canadian Cancer Society—is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age of breast screening to age 40.

(2) Based off the 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at the age of 40 will save the Canadian health-care system over \$460 million annually.

(3) After 'non-melanoma' skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women—Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one out of 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and five hundred and—5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

* (15:50)

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women that are in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who do not receive screens.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced that their intention is to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into the public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because the cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

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

To urge the province of government—the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower breast cancer screenings to the age 40.

This has been signed by Christin [*phonetic*] Davidson, Kathryn Dalton, Jessica Stewart and many other Manitobans.

The Speaker: Seeing no other petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):

After so long, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, December 2, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider the annual report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2022; annual report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2023; Elections Manitoba proposal Vote Anywhere in Manitoba on Election Day at any Returning Office, dated October 2024.

The Speaker: It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, December 2, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider annual report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2022; annual report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2023; Elections Manitoba proposal: vote anywhere in Manitoba on election day at returning office, dated October 2024.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant—on House business.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on House business.

Mr. Jackson: Pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by myself, the honourable member for Spruce Woods. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Reverse Recent Amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation.

The Speaker: It has been announced—that pursuant to rule 34(8), the official opposition has announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Spruce Woods. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Reverse Recent Amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation.

THRONE SPEECH (Second Day of Debate)

The Speaker: We will now resume debate on the motion moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo

(MLA Compton) for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne and the amendments thereto.

The floor is now open for debate.

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): I rise today with the greatest of humility to provide a response to our second Speech from the Throne.

It's been just over a year now since our government was sworn in, and it remains the greatest honour to represent the fine people of Riel.

The area of southeast Winnipeg is where I live. It's where I have raised my family, and it's where I feel deeply connected to. It's not far from where I grew up. In fact, it's just a short distance on the other side of the Red River.

I continue to believe that the work we do in this Legislature on behalf of constituents and for all Manitobans is a sacred responsibility. It's not something that I take lightly, and I know that that is the case for all the folks on our amazing team.

Before I get into the substantive portion of my response, I want to take a moment to thank my family for their continued support that they've provided that allows me to do this important work. I deeply appreciate your ongoing love and understanding. Time is the greatest commodity, and being away from family and the people we love is the most challenging aspect of this job, and so I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I'd also like to thank my constituency office staff, Kiera Butterfield and Joseph Brache, for all their continued support in meeting the needs of the people of Riel.

The Speech from the Throne read by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor continues on a good path; this path is one of hope. It's one that brings Manitobans together, a path where Manitobans will continue to see a focus on health care.

We know that it is a major focus for Manitobans, and something that is a major concern; especially after the decisions of the previous government: closing emergency rooms, firing nurses, not working with the front-line health-care workers, wait times that continue to grow; those are all things that Manitobans had to face.

After one year in office, we're on a better path. We've hired 873 net new health-care workers that will care for you and your family. We know that the staffing of health care is the first step in ensuring that

you and your family can receive the health care that you need, and make sure that it is received close to home.

This is why we've worked so hard to ensure the nurses, the doctors, the health-care aides, the allied health workers are in place before we build the new emergency rooms around Winnipeg, beginning with the Victoria Hospital.

While we're pleased with the initial results, we know we need to continue to do that work, to repair the damage caused by the seven and a half dark years under the PC government. We're also making it easier for Manitobans to receive primary care; we're doing this having opened 201 fully staffed beds since April alone, and a plan to open another 102 within the next year.

This, in addition to opening new clinics, minor injury and illness clinics, that are built around meeting the needs of Manitoba families, means wait times will come down. Perhaps you won't have to wait countless hours at the emergency room or urgent care that you did previously, and instead you can see a medical professional in a quick and efficient manner. This is what all Manitobans want and what is guiding our work in health care.

Over this past summer, I was able to get out and do a lot of outreach with my constituents, whether that was at public events, at local community centres, in religious celebrations at churches, mosques and temples, or in door-knocking in my constituency. And one area that I heard a lot about was the issue of affordability.

Manitoba has always been an affordable place to live, but that wasn't the case over the last number of years. With inflation significantly rising, housing prices and interest rates going up, and the price of groceries increasing faster than wages, Manitobans were feeling the pinch. That is why we took action right away.

We know that everyday Manitobans were doing their part, and finally, they have a government that's willing and able to meet them where they're at. We cut the gas tax, saving you 14 cents a litre every time you filled up. We also made it more affordable for you to get a new or used electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid with a \$4,000 rebate that, coupled with the federal program, would take \$9,000 off the price.

In total, we had 21 different ways, Honourable Speaker, that made life more affordable for Manitobans, putting more money in the pockets of renters, seniors

on fixed incomes, agricultural producers, and giving homeowners up to \$1,500 in relief through the homeowners affordable-affordability tax credit.

All of these actions drove our inflation rate to the lowest in the country. As of the latest stats, our inflation rate is only at 0.8 per cent, which is giving Manitobans a chance to catch their breath.

This doesn't mean, however, that our NDP government is going to stop making life more affordable for all Manitobans. This is why we're freezing Hydro rates for one year starting in 2025; this is a commitment we made to Manitobans, and something that we're delivering on to ensure that our Crown jewel continues to benefit all Manitobans with affordable energy.

Additionally, our government is doing what we can to ensure groceries are affordable by putting an end to anti-competitive contracts that keep additional stores and businesses away, allowing monopoly situations to occur in areas, thereby allowing businesses to charge whatever they want. By allowing more groceries—grocers and small food businesses to set up shop, Manitobans will be able to have more choice and freedom to choose more affordable options.

* (16:00)

Through these measures, our team stands by everyday Manitobans. We will continue to do the work to ensure that Manitoba is an affordable place to live and to raise your family.

Over this past year, I've been very proud to help work on a variety of environmental files and initiatives. Our Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt), our climate committee and our whole team has been working tirelessly to protect the environment that Manitobans care and love.

We know that for seven and a half years, there wasn't anything done to help ensure the next generation and the generation after that can have clean water, clean air or land that is protected. Our government is taking a different approach.

We know that Manitobans care about the environment, care about doing their part for climate action and will do so when they can afford to. That is what our new energy-affordable energy plan is all about. We are putting measures in place that will help save you energy that can be used to help grow our economy, all the while saving you money when—with rebates and incentives for geothermal heating and

cooling systems, electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles and home retrofits.

We're also moving significantly into the next generation of clean energy, beginning with 600 megawatts of wind in partnership with First Nations and Métis communities. This is only going to be the first step and our affordability energy plan is laying the groundwork for how we can ensure that Manitoba Hydro is always able to meet our energy needs while remaining affordable and always, always, always remaining publicly owned.

One aspect of the Throne Speech that I'm particularly excited about is the commitment to work with industry and home builders to improve our building energy efficiency codes, something—*[interjection]*—absolutely.

This is something that the previous PC government actually made worse. Rather than improving energy efficiency, the PCs actually decided we should make building codes less energy efficient and less environmentally friendly, which ultimately cost Manitobans more money when the homes they live in are less efficient.

We're also moving toward district geothermal models that will help power whole neighbourhoods and will change how we are able to keep our homes warmer in the winter and cool in the summer, all the while not burning fossil fuels.

I'm also very excited about the steps we're taking to ensure the health of one of Manitoba's treasures, Lake Winnipeg. Earlier this year, we set nutrient targets for the lake to much environmental fanfare, and we're following that up now with a Lake Winnipeg stakeholder working group that will have environmental experts, agricultural producers, Indigenous nations and representatives from industry to ensure we are all bringing in the different groups to discuss and create plans toward ensuring the sustainability of our lake.

There's lots of work to be done to ensure that Manitoba remains a clean and beautiful place, but our government is committed to doing this ongoing work for our environment and doing our part for climate action.

The other area that I've been very involved with is education. As the saying goes, once a teacher, always a teacher. Being involved with education for two decades prior to being elected is something that I treasure.

I often think about the students, both in those early childhood education centres and those older folks in high schools. I think about how our government can create the environment where all kids have the best chance at being successful, have the best chance to thrive, where those that need a little extra help can get it, where those that are doing well can continue to be challenged. That is why I am so proud of the educational initiatives we're putting forward. We are creating environments where kids can learn better, where kids can get the support they need from teachers and educators, where we are teaching our kids what it means to be inclusive.

I'm so proud to be a part of a government that brought in the first universal nutrition program so kids across our province don't have to go hungry. We know that hungry kids can't learn. We know that by eliminating one of the major barriers to learning, we're going to start seeing kids that previously struggled doing better.

We have already heard from countless teachers, principals and other educators that they're seeing a real difference with our universal nutrition program. Kids are able to focus. Kids that struggled with attendance are coming more, behaviour issues are decreasing. This is something that will have a significant impact on education and the trajectory of students' lives.

I'm also very proud of our cellphone ban. As a teacher, I saw the distraction that takes place with phones, with social media, with group chats, with video games. By eliminating a major distraction, our government is setting an environment where kids can live up to their potential.

Our government has hired over 630 teachers this past year alone. This is a remarkable number, and we know that ensuring we have qualified teachers in classrooms is going to allow kids to receive more attention, more one-on-one time with their teacher and smaller class sizes.

I'm also very proud that we're building schools for all Manitobans, ones that are going to be owned by the people on your street and not Bay Street. The P3 model that the PCs themselves said were—would be a bad idea in 2018 would have cost Manitobans millions extra. Instead, we're taking an approach where we will build the schools with real plans, real dollars set aside within budgets, going through Treasury Board so that our kids can have the learning environment they deserve.

This can be contrasted with the back-of-the-napkin PC plan that was thrown together in a desperate attempt to hold power. It's easy to say that you would have built all these schools. We're actually going to do it.

Ultimately, the Speech from the Throne outlines what Manitobans want. It outlines a realistic and forward-thinking plan that will improve our health care, will keep life affordable for all Manitobans, will work to keep our environment clean while taking climate action and will build the education system we all want for our kids.

The Speech from the Throne brings Manitobans together in the challenges we are still facing, united in a hope of one Manitoba. As was stated, we will measure our government's success by how much Manitobans are free to pursue a good life. This includes being able to get a good job; being able to afford a place to live; having health care available when you or your family needs it; and being able to enjoy our beautiful province.

It's a message of hope, because we do indeed have one future, we are one people, and we are one Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'm very pleased to rise today for this, my second speech in response to a Throne Speech as an MLA. Very pleased to speak in favour of the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) and very pleased to put some facts on the record, Honourable Speaker, with respect to this Throne Speech offered by the NDP government. Because there's a big gap between what the NDP say and what is actually happening on the ground.

I'm going to start with health care, because as the Health critic, that's a file I've become intimately familiar with. I want to start with the Throne Speech's assertion that the NDP are hiring a record number of doctors and retaining doctors at a higher rate than we have seen in years.

Any doctor hiring and retention that we're seeing right now is a direct result of PC initiatives; PC initiatives that the NDP touted in their own news release just a few weeks ago. There was a full-page backgrounder to their health human resources update with all of the initiatives that helped contribute to those numbers. And guess what, Honourable Speaker, they were all PC initiatives.

It was things like 40 undergraduate physician training seats that the PCs put in; a 10-seat increase in

the international medical graduate program that the PCs put in; 30 seats for internationally educated medical students; more residency positions; the creation of a provincial float pool. All PC initiatives that are bearing fruit now, because the previous government could look beyond the next election cycle, which is not something this NDP government is proving capable of doing.

In their Throne Speech, they say that they're a listening government over and over and over again. But if the documents I tabled just this week in the Legislature are any proof, they are not, in fact, a listening government.

*(16:10)

A letter sent by front-line health-care workers in Brandon who work in that emergency room went ignored by the NDP until I brought it up in question period. And that's not the first time, Honourable Speaker, that the NDP have failed to listen to front-line health-care workers.

You know, just today, you know, speaking of ERs, the Brandon ER is in crisis and on the brink of collapse. But it's not the only one. The Grace Hospital ER that serves my community, the constituency of Roblin, is in dire straits. Just this morning, I had a constituent call my office. Their 72-year-old mother has been in the hallway of the Grace Hospital for over 48 hours with a broken leg waiting to be seen by a physician.

I—of course, I immediately forwarded those concerns to the Minister of Health in hopes that their concerns will be addressed. I hope that I don't have to bring it up in question period to get action for my constituent.

Just this week, an emergency doctor called the ER at the Grace Hospital a catastrophe. He said that the ER was more than overflowing, forcing patients into the hallways. In fact, Honourable Speaker, the Grace Hospital has an median wait time in September of nearly 5 and a half hours, up from the same time frame last year; and one in 10 patients were waiting over 11 hours for care in September.

And what did this Throne Speech have to say about that? Nothing, Honourable Speaker. They promise a strategy is on the way. That's cold comfort to Manitobans like my constituent who has spent 48 hours lying in a hallway with a broken leg in the Grace Hospital ER.

For a party that campaigned almost solely on health care, I think Manitobans could be forgiven for

thinking that there was a plan, or there was a strategy. Clearly, there is nothing if they're just starting now to come up with plans and ideas.

I'd love to know what came of the much bally-hoed listening tour that the NDP went on for the last year. What did you learn? What changes are you implementing as a result of that listening tour? We've seen nothing, Honourable Speaker—nothing tangible for health care in Manitoba. Instead, things are getting worse.

Some of this is backed up by front line health-care professionals, Honourable Speaker. I want to put on the record some comments made by Manitoba Nurses Union president, Darlene Jackson. On November 18, on Facebook and Instagram—you can go look—where Ms. Jackson said, every day, we are learning of more and more disturbing events that are seemingly becoming commonplace in health-care facilities all over our province.

Every day, we hear about nurses reporting unsafe and violent situations to their employers with no tangible plan or follow-up action to prevent future incidents and to keep patients, staff and visitors safe. This is totally unacceptable. If our government does not believe violence is happening in all Manitoba facilities, they have not been listening.

Another community that's been in the news recently, with respect to safety in health-care facilities, is Swan River, Honourable Speaker. There was nothing in the Throne Speech to address safety concerns in rural facilities like Swan River.

A few more quotes from the Manitoba Nurses Union, from an Instagram post on November 15: but for hospital staff, this growing trend hits even harder with insufficient security if at all. Violence in the ER is escalating. Random people walking off the elevator and into empty rooms to sleep or even into staff rooms, and helping themselves to items in the fridge is incredibly unnerving. Most of the cameras in the building don't work. There is an unsafe triage system and as of November 8, the overhead paging system is down until further notice.

How can you possibly alert the building staff to codes without a proper communication system?

This is unsafe, unacceptable and a perfect example of poor culture—which the NDP promised to fix, by the way. Clearly, nothing's been done. Back to the quote. Not only do Manitobans deserve better, but the gravity of this situation is one where everyone in leadership

who reads this post should stop what they are doing and act.

What the NDP should stop doing, Honourable Speaker, and something they return to, time and time again in this Throne Speech, is blaming the previous PC government for the problems they have no plan to address. Time and time again, myself, my colleagues, we have brought issues to this Legislature because that's our job—issues in health care, and all the NDP have to offer are excuses and political spin and blame and no solutions.

That's cold comfort to Manitoba patients, and it's certainly no comfort to front-line health-care workers who have asked my colleagues and I to take these issues to the Legislature and get them the attention they deserve. Because as we've seen time and time again, the only way the NDP respond to issues is if the media report on them or we bring them here to the Legislature.

I'm happy to continue doing that, Honourable Speaker. I consider it part of my job as an MLA, part of my job as Health critic, but I think it's probably very frustrating for those health-care workers to know that they've got to pursue their issues through the media in order to get the NDP to pay attention.

In a poll of Manitoba Nurses Union members, posted online on October 24, an average of 88 per cent of MNU members said that despite the NDP's many campaign promises, nothing has changed on the front line over the past year. Not as advertised, Honourable Speaker. The NDP government is not doing what they said they would do.

On November 17, the MNU president told the Winnipeg Sun that, quote: What we monitor is vacancy rates, agency nurse use and the amount of overtime both mandated and voluntary worked. Until we see some definitive change in those numbers, it's very difficult to say with accuracy whether that measure has been of benefit.

Quote: "We just completed a poll and we're still hearing from our members that there's no decrease in their heavy workload and a lot of mandated and voluntary overtime, as well as a very high number of vacancy nurses used."

Quote: "When we open new beds, it's great, but until we see an increase in the number of nurses in our system, those beds aren't going to be effective. A hospital bed is just a bed unless there's a nurse beside it."

And speaking of beds, Honourable Speaker, the NDP committed to beds last November that we're not—we're still not sure if they're open and fully staffed in the health-care system. They committed to have 21 new beds open at the Grace Hospital by the end of March.

I've tabled documents in this House to show that they weren't there; that commitment was not met. And perhaps if those beds were in place when the NDP had promised to have them there, we wouldn't be seeing wait times climbing in the Grace Hospital ER because those beds were touted as part of the solution to rising ER wait times at the Grace.

Going back to safety issues in Swan River, union president Darlene Jackson says nurses are facing daily safety issues at the Swan Valley health centre emergency room, including aggression and violence and, as I mentioned, the security cameras don't work. Ms. Jackson said it's just becoming more unsafe.

That's what's happening right now, today, and it's disheartening and it's disappointing that all the NDP have to offer in response to that is more excuses, more spin, more blaming the previous government and nothing in the way of solutions, Honourable Speaker.

I also want to touch on the minor injury clinics that the government has promised. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) went out and promised that these minor injury clinics would be operating like urgent-care centres. Those are his words to the media.

When I went to Brandon earlier this week to meet with front-line health-care professionals—Brandon, where a minor injury clinic has been opened—they advised me that that minor injury clinic is not operating anywhere near the level of an urgent-care centre and, furthermore, that it's not alleviating pressure on the ER as promised.

And here's why, Honourable Speaker: it lacks the basic diagnostic tools and capacity that would be required for it to operate at that level, for one thing. Secondly, it's not fully staffed. And, third, it doesn't take walk-in appointments; you can only make an appointment to go in there.

So that's not alleviating pressure on the ER, and as we've seen in the media today and based on correspondence tabled in this House yesterday, is a very dire situation in Brandon, Honourable Speaker, and there was nothing for the Brandon emergency room in this Throne Speech.

I also want to touch on the ways that this Throne Speech failed my constituency in particular. And I'm going to start talking about education. Phoenix School in Headingley is bursting at the seams. Students are in portable classrooms, enrolment continues to rise and is expected to continue to rise for the next several years because Headingley is a growing community.

So back in 2022, the previous government had approved a renovation and expansion project that was under way.

* (16:20)

When the NDP came into office, as far as the school division knew, the project was still going ahead. It was in design phase and, in fact, reached 99 per cent project design stage. And then, in July, the school division received deferral correspondence from this NDP government, essentially cancelling this much-needed project. This project has been the top priority of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division for many years, and the NDP have quashed it. They have given no reason why.

Also troubling in the context of Phoenix School, Honourable Speaker, is that that renovation and expansion project included more child-care spaces. And there are hundreds of children on a wait-list for child care in Headingley. And now, the daycare operator that currently operates school-age spaces in Phoenix School has been told that they won't have space for further expansion and they may in fact have their space further reduced because there's such a shortage of classrooms.

That's putting the future of child-care spaces in Headingley in jeopardy. And, again, there was nothing in this Throne Speech to address this very serious problem in my community. And I would just once again urge the NDP government to put forward a plan to make sure that the Phoenix School expansion and renovation continues forward as planned. It's already under way. It's not a new school; it's just a renovation and expansion. We need to get it done, Honourable Speaker.

Daycare, generally, is really lacking in west Winnipeg. Being a parent myself and hearing from parents almost every day, it's an incredibly stressful situation when parents can't access daycare. And the number of letters I got from constituents this last summer who were disappointed that the NDP failed in their promise to create \$10-a-day spaces for summer-time child care is astounding, Honourable Speaker. And I really feel for those parents who were led astray

by this NDP government who promised them \$10 a day all summer long and failed to deliver.

The NDP also cut Green Team funding, Building Sustainable Communities funding and arts, culture and sport and community funding that my community relied on. Community centres, baseball fields, church groups, museums all relied on this funding to hire students in our communities and to offer programming, generally for youth, that really benefited our community. And it was a real blow to them this year when the NDP cut that funding in the budget, funding that these community groups and organizations have come to rely on. And I noticed again that in this Throne Speech there was no mention of that.

Small businesses in my community are also suffering because of this NDP government, the same NDP government that gutted red-tape legislation in this province. As I've said before in this House, and I believe this very strongly, red tape comes with a real financial cost to small businesses, small businesses who often don't have a compliance department, don't have an HR department. It often falls on that small business owner themselves to do the work of ensuring that they're complying with government regulations.

And the fact that this NDP government wants to remove any accountability for the regulations they introduce, wants to do away with any rules that limit the number of regulations they can put in really casts fear into the small-business community, that they're going to see an onslaught of new regulations, more red tape and that's going to result in more costs to their business.

That's not even to touch on the fact that their taxes are going up under this NDP government. Small businesses in the Roblin constituency are going to lose their education property tax rebate this year. They own their property; their costs are going to go up. They have lost their commission on PST submissions to this government, and this on top of very serious issues that they continue to deal with.

The hospitality sector still has not recovered from COVID. Many businesses are dealing with ongoing labour shortages. There was nothing in this Throne Speech that's going to help them.

And the government's response to retail crime has frankly been a joke, Honourable Speaker. It's not helped businesses in my community that continue to deal with property crime, break-ins, graffiti and all of those are types of crimes that can escalate to violent crime.

And speaking of crime, Honourable Speaker, there was precious little in this Throne Speech to address rising crime in Winnipeg. I may represent a suburban constituency, but I represent a group of Manitobans that like to come to downtown Winnipeg. Many of them work in downtown Winnipeg. They like to come downtown for concerts, for Jets games.

And many of them are scared. They're scared to come downtown, and that's frankly why our downtown is dying. It's very sad, and I expected more from this NDP government that frankly represents the majority of downtown Winnipeg to have a better solution to address rising crime in the core.

They say that they're tough on crime, they say that they're tough on the causes of crime, but the statistics don't bear that out. What we're seeing is rising crime, rising poverty. Just earlier this week, we saw a report that Manitoba now has the highest child poverty rate in the country. That's terrible, Honourable Speaker, and there's nothing in this budget to address that.

Homelessness is an ongoing problem, and very little in this Throne Speech is going to improve life for Manitobans that want to enjoy Winnipeg's downtown.

Another glaring omission from this Throne Speech, Honourable Speaker, is long-term-care options for seniors. They talk about increasing personal-care-home beds, but they cut five personal-care homes that were in the process of planning and building. They just cut them.

And personal-care homes aren't the only type of care that's needed. More and more seniors want to remain in their homes for as long as they can, and nowhere is this more true than in my constituency, which has a very high proportion of seniors. They're looking for options that will enable them to stay in their homes as long as possible. That's going to require more accessible home-care options. It's going to require access to assisted living or supportive housing, and there's none of that in this Throne Speech.

Manitobans who are being discharged from hospital often can't care for themselves at home the way that they did before, whatever caused them to go into hospital in the first place. If the government wants to improve hospital discharges and thereby improve wait times and improve care for seniors, there needs to be a plan to increase home-care capacity in this province, and this Throne Speech contained none of that.

Frankly, Honourable Speaker, there have been so many broken promises from this government already that this Throne Speech does not inspire confidence.

In the Health Minister's mandate letter—you know, they were mandated with hiring 200 paramedics, including 90 in the last year. You know how many they hired. They hired seven. That's a broken promise.

As I've already mentioned, they promised 21 beds at the Grace Hospital by the end of March; they didn't deliver on that. They promised a minor injury clinic that would function like an urgent-care centre; they didn't deliver on that. The Health Minister promised a new CancerCare facility; zero action on that so far and nothing about that in the Throne Speech.

They promised to reopen the Carberry ER; well, that ER was closed more than it was open this last summer. They promised more personal-care-home beds, and as I've mentioned, they cut five personal-care homes from communities that desperately needed more beds.

I'm running out of time, Honourable Speaker. I'm pleased to speak in favour of my colleague's amendment, and I will be voting against this Throne Speech.

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): I am honoured to rise and reflect and sort of outline the vision our Throne Speech lays out, which—I think it's a vision for Manitoba that's rooted in hope, driven by resilience and ultimately inspired by the everyday heroism, I would say, of its people.

You know, the speech and the commitments that it reflects speak to challenges we face and the opportunities before us, and it's a testament to what we can accomplish when we come together with a shared purpose to build a province where every family has the freedom to thrive, every community has the opportunity to grow and every person has the chance to leave their mark.

And you know, I just want to stop for one second and say that part of that work, that incredible work that I get to do with the constituents of Waverley, a whole bunch of that isn't able to be done without my fantastic staff. So I just want to thank Fahad Rias, who has moved on to help out in Health—he's going to be fantastic there; Mahr Un-Nisa and Shamaila Islam for all of their support over the last year. Yes.

You know, Waverley is a community of builders—say builders, dreamers, doers, however you want to say it. They're parents working long hours to give their children better opportunities; seniors that are contributing their wisdom and guidance to strengthen their neighbourhoods; and newcomers arriving with little more than hope and determination, eager to find their place

in a province that has always welcomed those seeking a better life.

And you know, this Throne Speech delivers for Waverley. It addresses many of the concerns that I hear from constituents every day and offers solutions that'll make a tangible difference in their lives.

* (16:30)

We've committed to freezing hydro rates, providing stability for families as they navigate rising costs.

We just this past year eliminated the gas tax, saving Manitobans 14 cents per litre and driving inflation to the lowest rates in the country.

We've also hired 873 net new health-care workers, ensuring that families can access care close to home, when and where they need it.

And you know, we're also expanding child-care options, opening 3,500 new spaces as laid out in this Throne Speech, and implementing true \$10-a-day child care for Manitoba families.

These initiatives, they're about more than affordability, though. They're really about giving parents the freedom to pursue their careers and their dreams, knowing their children are going to be cared for.

And you know, I can't forget—I'd be remiss not to mention also our work to expand access to education. So it's been so exciting that we introduced the universal school nutrition program this last year, ensuring that every child in Manitoba has the food they need to focus on learning and growing. And we have heard the results from teachers and administrators directly, saying it has made such a huge difference in growing the community and the ability for kids to learn.

So these commitments, they really reflect the values of Waverley, as I said. They're about hope, opportunity, the belief that everyone deserves a fair shot at building a good life here in Manitoba.

And Honourable Speaker, Manitoba's story is written by its people, by the quiet, determined heroism of everyday Manitobans. You know, these heroes, they're all around us. They are the first responders who answer the call during moments of crisis, they're teachers who inspire our kids, the health-care workers who heal us and parents and grandparents who build these strong foundations for their families.

And, you know, I know this about first responders because I have seen it first-hand. As a firefighter and a paramedic, I had the privilege of working alongside these everyday heroes, saw them run toward danger

when others ran away. I saw them bring comfort to families in the face of unimaginable loss.

I also saw the toll that it takes and, Honourable Speaker, the work that first responders do, whether they're in a burning building or in an ambulance or on the streets, it leaves scars, both visible and invisible. And it's okay to not be okay. And there's been a lot of good conversation around mental health here in this Chamber over the last year. And that's why I'm proud of the steps our government has taken to provide mental health resources for first responders. We're not just recognizing their sacrifices, which is incredibly important. But we're also honouring them by ensuring they have the support they need when the weight of their work becomes too heavy.

During a recent ride-along with Winnipeg police, I got to see, once again, the extraordinary dedication it takes to keep our communities safe. And those officers face challenges that most of us can't imagine. Yet, they show up day after day, driven by an unwavering commitment to serve and protect. And everyday heroes like those remind us that progress is not about grand gestures all the time, it's about the daily acts of service, of sacrifice and kindness, ultimately, that holds our community together.

And when I think about some of these values about hope, resilience, the importance of opportunity, I can't help but think of my own family's story. So in the 1920s, my great-grandparents fled persecution in Russia. And Mennonites, like so many others, faced unimaginable hardships. They left behind their homes, their communities and everything they knew to seek refuge in Canada, a place that offered them safety, freedom and ultimately, a chance to rebuild.

Now, my great-grandfather, J.J. Thiessen, who settled in Saskatoon with little more than faith and determination, he became the pastor of First Mennonite Church, providing spiritual guidance to a growing immigrant community.

But his work didn't end there. J.J. opened up a girls' home. He offered a safe haven for women and girls who needed protection, and as house parents, they didn't just provide shelter, they provided guidance, support and a sense of belonging to those who needed it most.

You know, he ended up officiating hundreds of marriages and funerals and oversaw baptisms. He was the long-time chairperson of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

And later on, my great-grandfather actually helped to found the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, which went on to become Canadian Mennonite University here in Winnipeg. And his legacy of service, education and hope, I would say, continues to inspire his family and also the wider community.

But what stands out most, I would say, about my great-grandfather's story is that his approach was really rooted in listening. He understood the needs of his community because he took the time to hear their stories, to actually deeply understand their challenges and to offer practical common sense solutions.

You know, Honourable Speaker, this is the same approach we're taking as a government: listening to Manitobans, learning from them and then responding in ways that make their lives better.

Now, the beautiful thing, I think, about my family's story is that I don't think it's unique; I think it's the story of Canada. It's the story of so many newcomers who arrive in this country with dreams as big as the challenges that they faced, bringing them—you know, with them that determination to build something bigger and better in their new home. And it's the story of a lot of families in Waverley today, families who, much like my great-grandparents, have come here with hopes of freedom, safety and opportunity.

Yet, Honourable Speaker, I'd be remiss not to mention that I've heard some really troubling rhetoric from members opposite, words that seek to divide us, to marginalize and stereotype, and these words really stand in stark contrast to the values that define our province and our country and the values that my great-grandfather really held dear.

And I know that my family's story would personally resonate with many members from Borderland, or many of the constituents of Borderland, as well as the member, who I know is the MLA for many proud Mennonites. And I hope that the next time he so quickly publicly disparages or marginalize others, he takes a moment to reflect on that story and to remember that behind every family is that same hope, the same determination, the same potential to contribute meaningfully to our shared community.

Now, Honourable Speaker, this Throne Speech reflects the priorities of Manitobans. It's a blueprint for progress, addressing challenges that we face and creating opportunities for growth. In health care we're making incredible investments to rebuild a system that was absolutely decimated by years and years of cuts by the Stefanson government.

And, you know, the members opposite, they say, what have you learned from listening to people through these listening tours? And that's something that we've heard over and over again, is that there's a deep, deep appreciation for the fact that we're starting to reinvest in these services, and the disappointments in the previous government for the cuts and the realization that it's going to take time, but we need to walk this path together and continue to have these hard conversations.

We're also supporting seniors in Manitoba with the creation of a new seniors advocate office and the construction of our government's first new personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet, which is incredibly exciting news.

You know, in education we're modernizing curriculums, increasing teacher supports. We've hired 630 new educators, and we're ensuring that every student has access to nutritious meals through our universal school nutrition program. And, again, these are initiatives that'll make sure parents, students and teachers feel connected, supported and are able to reach their personal goals and their full potential together. And I know that my great-grandfather would be thrilled to hear news like that.

In affordability, we are freezing hydro rates, as I said earlier. We're introducing tax credits for homeowners and renters and ensuring that Manitobans have more money in their pockets to deliver and to build the lives that they deserve. These initiatives are really—they're more than just policies. They're about people; they're about giving Manitobans the tools they need to thrive.

And, Honourable Speaker, again, as I reflect on that vision for Manitoba and the story of my great-grandparents, I really can't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for being in this role and for being part of a team that has so much hope and a big plan for our shared future.

* (16:40)

My great-grandparents came to this country, again, with not much more than that hope, seeking a chance to build something better. And Canada gave them that chance. It gave them the freedom to dream, the opportunity to contribute and the safety to raise their family with dignity. And in return, they gave back. They built a church community, a girls' home, an institution of higher learning. They contributed not just to their community but to the fabric of this country.

And, Honourable Speaker, I believe this is what this Throne Speech is about. It's about ensuring that every Manitoban, whether they have been here for generations or just arrived last week, has the same chance to succeed. It's about honouring the sacrifices of those who came before us, and some of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for those freedoms, by building a province where hope isn't just a feeling but an actual force, you know, a force that drives us forward, unites us in that purpose and inspires us to leave a legacy for future generations.

So, to the people of Waverley, I would say: Let's build on the progress that we've made together over the past year. Let's honour the everyday heroes among us and let's work together to create a community where every family can thrive.

And more generally, to Manitoba I would say: Please, let's reject the division and fear. Let's embrace that hope, resilience and the kind-hearted, hard-working prairie spirit that I know—because I see it every day—binds us together. Because that, to me, is what it truly means to be one Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): It's always an honour to rise in this House and discuss matters of importance to Manitobans and to put a few words on the record in response to what is, quite frankly, a very lacklustre Throne Speech.

It's been over one year since I was first elected and I'm very fortunate to represent the citizens of Midland. Each and every day, I get the opportunity to speak to great people across my great constituency, a vast area that spans from the perimeter down the 75 and over to the escarpment. I hear about my constituents' successes, their challenges, their opportunities for the future, and it is a humbling experience and I have learned a great deal from those people so that I can return here and represent them.

So first and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity as I stand here in this House to thank the people of Midland for continuing to invite me into their communities, their homes, their farms and their businesses. And as I've been travelling around my constituency, I hear often from my constituents about how they're being ignored by this NDP government in favour of the NDP's own special interest groups.

The NDP has laid out a very aggressive and expensive \$3-billion agenda in the election. Yet, we are over a year later and Manitobans have witnessed

the broken promises and empty words spoken by this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and his caucus.

And we saw it again in the Throne Speech earlier this week, a Throne Speech that lacked any substance and any realistic or 'tangible' flags that will benefit Manitobans. What we did hear was a lot of empty words and recycled promises from last year's Throne Speech that failed to come to fruition.

Yet, time and time again, we see the NDP will not be able to fulfill its \$3 billion in election promises without taxing already financially stretched Manitobans. With the scarce commitments that were in this three—this week's Throne Speech, the NDP has no plan to pay for them.

The NDP is forecasting a \$1-billion deficit this year alone and has no plans to return to balance despite S&P Global indicating that this is possible by next year. A \$1-billion deficit, a \$35-billion debt that this Province is soaring to, yet they still gave themselves \$9 million in borrowing powers. They approved a \$700-million special warrant. And we have \$2.1 billion in debt interest costs that are on the backs of not just us today as Manitobans, but on our future children and future generations.

Yet, what they did announce was a phony hydro rate freeze that will not save Manitobans any additional dollars during a time of cost-of-living challenges. They announced a status quo rate freeze—that's what it is, it's a freeze; it's status quo. Manitobans are already paying it.

But pretending that it will add more money into the pockets of Manitobans is misleading while instead, Manitobans are paying 33 cents to every dollar to Hydro's \$24-billion debt servicing costs. The last time the NDP were in government, they maxed out Manitoba Hydro's credit card, and they're doing it again with our Manitoba budget.

Yet, the Manitoba NDP—despite an almost \$25-billion debt with Manitoba Hydro—they've wiped out financial targets, they've thrown out the integrated resource plan and they have no plan to manage Manitoba Hydro's overall debt while growing our energy capacity needs at the same time. This is financially irresponsible of this minister and this Premier.

On top of that, what did we see, couple weeks ago? They gave themselves sweeping powers to set hydro rates at the Cabinet table by 4 per cent annually. A rate freeze now will mean rate shock and surging prices into the future on the backs of Manitobans.

We all know that Manitoba Hydro is already very highly leveraged and the NDP's mismanagement and fiscal irresponsibility is putting it at greater financial risk, while placing further debt on the backs of Manitobans and our future generations.

In last year's Throne Speech, the NDP didn't tell Manitobans that they were going to increase property taxes and income taxes. Yet, what did they do? They did the exact that in their budget.

Last year's Throne Speech, the NDP didn't tell Manitobans that they would increase subsidies for their own political party. Yet, what did we see? It was in their budget, all while dodging public scrutiny and accountability.

Despite Manitobans—and I hear this across my constituency, they were hoping the NDP would do the right thing. They were hoping that they would shift course on their recent tax grabs. But yet, there is no new tax breaks in the Throne Speech for Manitobans during affordability and cost-of-living challenges.

In fact, Manitobans should expect a new tax on January 1 when the fuel tax is expected to rise. And what's very curious is the past year, the NDP has been out there talking about their fuel tax holiday, yet there is nothing about it in the budget. Manitobans should expect a fuel tax increase as of January 1.

Manitobans, be prepared. The holiday is about to end with this NDP government.

And so I have to question, no income taxes in last year's Throne Speech—increases. No increases to property taxes in last Throne Speech, yet it was in their budget. Well, Manitobans should expect the same with this up-coming budget, and I question what other tax regime they will impose on Manitobans without consulting with them.

And that's what I hear time and time again, is that Manitobans are not only upset about the broken promises and empty words spoken by this Premier and this NDP government. But they're also upset that they had no right to speak at public committees. That this right was removed by the NDP government. It was just taken away from them. Their rights were taken away.

So my constituents and Manitobans are rightfully concerned about what else this Premier is not saying in his Throne Speech and, come budget time, what other taxes the NDP will be trying to ram through on Manitobans.

Now, let's talk about health care, an area the NDP had as their key election campaign but that they are utterly failing in. Despite bragging about listening to nurses in their Throne Speech, the Manitoba Nurses Union has disagreed. They've called for increased safety at all health-care facilities.

On a personal note, I spent almost five weeks at HSC and witnessed—my family witnessed—the safety situations that are occurring at that hospital for the nurses, for the doctors, for the health-care workers, for the patients and for the caregivers and their families.

And in fact, the day that we were at Children's Hospital emergency, a man walked in with a machete. The alert went out to the health-care workers and sadly, when speaking with health-care workers during my time there, this is happening far too often, sometimes daily and often many times throughout a day, even.

* (16:50)

The NDP's public safety strategy has no timelines or goals to keep the NDP accountable, and they're using the same old recycled talking points on public safety. Crime rates are soaring, and local businesses are closing. We've seen across Winnipeg, 7-11s have had to shut their doors to citizens because of concerns with safety, open drug use. Even a Starbucks in the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) own constituency had to shut down last year as a result of public drug use and safety concerns.

We are seeing machete—regular machete attacks. It's in the news almost every single day. Most recently, unfortunately, a University of Manitoba man walking around with an open knife; carjackings and break-ins causing very serious injury. This is in the news every week, sometimes every single day.

The NDP broke its promise on any meaningful bail reform in its first 100 days.

But let's go back to health care for a moment. The NDP fired the diagnostic and surgical task force, leaving thousands of Manitobans in pain. And I would just like to commend my colleague, the MLA for Roblin, for holding the NDP to account on this.

Under this NDP, surgical and diagnostic wait times have skyrocketed, and they fired the doctors in charge of reducing them. CT scan waits are the highest they have been outside of a pandemic; MRI wait times are as high as 56 weeks in Winnipeg; hip and knee waits are the highest they've been in the last five years; and cataract waits have almost doubled at Misericordia. ER wait times continue to climb, as

we're hearing the challenges that Brandon hospital is facing and Grace Hospital is facing, and wait times to see a specialist are not even part of the equation for the NDP, with some patients waiting for years.

And we're seeing this in our rural communities as well. Boyne Lodge in Carman is overflowing most days. Several days in October, they had patients admitted on stretchers and had no place to put them, where they actually had to close their emergency room doors. I sent a letter to the minister informing her of these challenges. I got a response saying they would look into it. Never heard back. And this is a situation that Carman Boyne Lodge is dealing with every single day.

So let's also talk about what's not in the Throne Speech. The NDP's first budget cut infrastructure funding while our roads and bridges are crumbling around us—a \$100-million tax cut to Interlake flood protection, \$57-million cut to highways, \$50-million cut to emergency expenditures.

As our Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, less money definitely equals a cut. They cut parks infrastructure, \$6 million. Many of us enjoy our beautiful provincial parks and lakes; an opportunity to hike along the beautiful hiking trails, birdwatching, viewing native species to Manitoba or as many of us including myself enjoy spending time on the beaches of Falcon Lake, the great Whiteshell, Spruce Woods, among others.

Not only is our provincial parks a tourist draw for Manitobans, Ontarians and folks across our country, but the economic component that tourism draws in should not be ignored by this NDP government—to the small grocery stores, the local handmade markets, the bakeries and ice cream shops.

These regions are dependent on the tourism industry, and our provincial parks are something Manitobans are deeply proud of. And these parks need to be maintained with the necessary infrastructure, and a \$6-million cut is deeply concerning for what that impact will be. There is nothing in this Throne Speech earlier this week to support tourism in Manitoba, and it's disappointed—disappointing that there is no stated support for our provincial parks in the Throne Speech.

On top of that, there is no mention of fisheries, no plan for 'forestries', no plan to mitigate wildfires. My colleague from Swan River has repeatedly asked about the NDP's plans for supporting Manitoba conservation offers—officers, yet no mention in the Throne Speech.

This past summer, Manitoba was dealing with 58 active forest fires in July; 71 active forest fires in August. Yet there's no plan—there's no plan in the Throne Speech to mitigate wildfires in the future.

Earlier this year we also saw the 2024 budget include a \$4-million cut to The Green Team funding. Now, I have to say, my communities in Midland were deeply impacted by this poor decision by the minister. Green Team funding provides summer job opportunities for youth while supporting key organizations that our province relies on.

In my own constituency the NDP had cut funding to Youth for Christ in Carman and Morris, they cut Green Team funding to local museums, and they even went so far to cut funding to Manitoba's only professional rodeo, the Manitoba Stampede.

The Manitoba Stampede draws folks from all over the world into Manitoba. Many of us in this room, including on the other side of the House, have had the opportunity to attend the Manitoba Stampede, or Stampede-related events in Morris, yet the Valley Ag Society that runs the Manitoba Stampede had their Green Team funding cut earlier this year.

There was no commitment or even acknowledgment in the Throne Speech of the importance of The Green Team to our communities, not just in southern Manitoba but across the whole province. Many of my communities are small. They rely on these summer jobs that are available for youth. In addition, many of these organizations rely on seniors that are volunteering their time and don't have the physical capacity to maintain the landscaping in particular, as to what these Green Team funding jobs could provide for youth.

And as our Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, it was disappointing to see no mention of these necessary or critical community supports in the Throne Speech, and we certainly hope to see that in the budget this year.

So what have we seen? I—just over a year, 14 months, that the NDP has been in power, what have we seen? Under this NDP government, Manitobans are paying more, but they're getting less. As I mentioned, I spoke to all the cuts that we're seeing, yet I also spoke to all the tax increases that we're seeing, services that Manitobans desperately rely on and the NDP is cutting while their taxes are going up.

They fired the surgical and diagnostic task force, leaving thousand of Manitobans in pain. They cut nine

schools and hundreds of daycare spots that Manitoba parents desperately need. I am heavily reliant on a daycare for my son, and I really feel for the Manitoba parents that are struggling to get their children into daycare spots so they can go out and participate in the workforce.

And they cut infrastructure funding while our roads and bridges are crumbling around us. Yet, what did they do? They gave themselves sweeping, unprecedented powers by pushing through a \$24-billion omnibus bill. They blocked amendments we made to protect Manitoba families and small businesses from overnight hikes on fuel, income and property. However, the NDP voted those down, not surprisingly, and they decided to avoid public scrutiny and accountability and hide their agenda from Manitobans instead.

So, you know, what has the NDP done? The budget grants the NDP authority to raise taxes at the Cabinet table without legislative oversight. This isn't something that they said in the Throne Speech last year, but we saw it in the budget. So it'll certainly be interesting what we see in this year's budget, and I think Manitobans can all expect there will be increases to taxes and more hidden agendas by the NDP government.

They hiked taxes on income for skilled workers, taxes on doctors, engineers, small businesses, farmers, nurses, education; they're driving talent out of the province, making it more difficult for industries to recruit essential workers that we desperately need.

They also decided to use public funds for partisan use. The budget doubles taxpayer-funded rebates for political parties, funnelling more public money into partisan election advertising without voter consent, also something that wasn't in last year's Throne Speech, but that they threw into the omnibus bill. If this is the NDP's first crack at governance over this past 14 months, then Manitobans should be deeply concerned as to what's to come over the next couple of years.

* (17:00)

Last year's—

The Speaker: Order.

The hour being 5 o'clock, this—the honourable member will have two minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 21, 2024

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