

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 19, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 239—The Ecological Reserves
Amendment Act
(Ecological Corridors)**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 239, The Ecological Reserves Amendment Act (Ecological Corridors); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les réserves écologiques (corridors écologiques), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, Bill 239 recognizes that we need to act now to help save our planet.

The bill recognizes that there needs to be a fundamental shift in how we think of 'ecological' stewardship. We need to move beyond protecting islands of habitat toward protecting ecological corridors, and we need to move beyond the view that governments can act alone and toward the view that private sector landowners, Indigenous people and governments need to work together to provide effective stewardship of wildlife corridors.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Vyshyvanka Day

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Dobry den. [*Good day.*]

I rise today to recognize and celebrate international Vyshyvanka Day, also known as Ukrainian embroidered shirt day, which is observed on the third Thursday of May each year.

I proudly stand in the House with my traditional vyshyvanka shirt. This occasion dates back to 2006, when Lesia Vroniuk, who was at the time a student at the Chernivsti university, suggested to her colleagues that they all wear the vyshyvanka shirt to celebrate Ukrainian culture. At first, only a few dozen students and faculty members wore the shirt. However, it soon turned into an international movement, and by 2011 more than 4,000 people gathered on the Chervinisti [*phonetic*] central square as they wore their vyshyvanka shirts.

While traditionally a day for celebration, this year's occasion is a solemn one. As we await the news of the most recent relief efforts from Ukraine, we think of our Ukrainian families here in Manitoba and offer our sincerest expression of support. Our Ukrainian community has played an important role in making Manitoba the place we know and love, with their perseverance, hard work, skills and leadership contributing to our province's collective success.

The outpouring of support Manitobans have shown in response to the war in Ukraine is inspiring and demonstrates how much we can achieve if we work together as a community. Over the past few months, the Manitoba government has announced a plan to aid Ukrainian newcomers with the Ukrainian Refugee Task Force. Through this task force, a refugee reception centre has been established, providing essential services to Ukrainian newcomers and co-ordinating with Ukrainian community groups to support resettlement.

Madam Speaker, the roots of Manitoba's Ukrainian community run deep, with the initial settlement of Ukrainians dating back to 1895. Today, an estimated one in seven Manitobans are of Ukrainian descent. As artists, activists, educators, business owners, Ukrainian Manitobans continue to make great contributions to the economic success and cultural vibrancy of our province.

Like many other Ukrainian immigrants, Madam Speaker, my grandparents left their homeland of Ukraine, escaping a situation similar to what is

happening today. While we lost my grandmother in 2020, at the time, she was one of Winnipeg's few remaining survivors of the Holodomor famine. The famine left an indelible mark on the Ukrainian people both at home and abroad.

Here in Canada and Manitoba, we share strong connections with Ukraine and its people. In 1991, Canada was the first Western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. Today, Canada is one of the 50 countries where Ukrainian communities participate in Vyshyvanka Day.

Since its inception in Chernivsti, Ukraine, Vyshyvanka Day has been celebrated by those who embrace and support Ukraine's cultural identity. The embroidery of vyshyvanka garments is steeped in traditions and carries historic significance. Archeological research in Ukraine has shown that the special embroidery dates back to antiquity, with the technique employed by the Trypillians, the Sarmaritans [*phonetic*] and the Scythians.

By wearing these traditional embroidered garments, the Ukrainian community pays tribute to its culture and heritage while recognizing the contributions of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada. Ukrainians at home and abroad wear vyshyvankas to demonstrate their sense of pride in their heritage and national identity, regardless of gender, social status, religious beliefs or political opinions.

Madam Speaker, on Vyshyvanka Day 2022, many Manitobans will participate in this cultural celebration, and our government is proud to show support for this very important and symbolic initiative. It is an initiative that raises awareness of the tremendous pride Ukrainians have in their community and culture. On this day, I encourage all Manitobans to reach out to the Ukrainian community and express their well wishes.

On behalf of the people of the province of Manitoba, I extend my best wishes to our Ukrainian community in these trying times and the hope that peace, prosperity and growth will 'sern' return to Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini. [*Glory to Ukraine.*] Thank you. Dyakuyu. [*Thank you.*]

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Madam Speaker, as the Ukrainian people continue to fight day in and day out to stop the vile Russian invasion, it's more important than ever to come together in support of the Ukrainian community, both here in Manitoba and around the world. Vyshyvanka Day is an opportunity

to do just that: to stand in solidarity with Ukrainian Canadian communities and the numerous Ukrainian communities around the world. The vyshyvanka is the traditional attire to the Ukrainian celebrations, worn by people regardless of their gender, social status and religious beliefs.

The traditional vyshyvanka is a piece of artistic cultural expression. Masterful hands embroider colourful patterns and designs specific to regions of Ukraine into the traditional white frock. With the clothing's increasing popularity in contemporary fashion across the world, a day has been dedicated to the vyshyvanka to acknowledge the Ukrainian heritage these garments represent, and promote Ukrainian cultural awareness worldwide.

The artistry behind a traditional vyshyvanka was inspired by the power of protective symbols, which are much needed this year. Meanings behind the embroidered symbols and patterns range from circles that represent the sun and harmony, grape bunches that symbolize happiness and horses that symbolize aspiration.

Today is an opportunity for Ukrainians as well as their descendants and supporters to wear a vyshyvanka and to show their Ukrainian pride. At 5:30 this afternoon, the Manitoba branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress will gather by the Taras Shevchenko Monument to celebrate Vyshyvanka Day. We commend them and hope that this day can allow them to celebrate our heritage and nationality in a time marked by so much grief.

Thank you, dyakuyu [*thank you*] and Slava Ukraini. [*Glory to Ukraine.*]

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: I rise to join my colleagues in the Legislature today to celebrate Vyshyvanka Day.

This day is very important to Ukrainians, descendants from Ukraine and the larger community, and I wanted to begin by sharing a text that my friend sent me this morning and gave me permission to share here in the House.

Orysa, who is a teacher at Sisler High and a strong advocate for the Ukrainian community, said, May 19th every year is national Vyshyvanka Day, and she explained how Ukrainian embroidered shirts,

blouses are the protection of the soul of the Ukrainian people.

Madam Speaker, I reflected upon this, as we all are here today, and a few thoughts came to mind.

We have a strong presence of Ukrainian people here in Manitoba who have made tremendous contributions to our province in virtually all areas of life, from agriculture to science to health care. We also, in the North End, have the only surviving labour hall associated with the 1919 General Strike, the Ukrainian Labour Temple. This temple continues to be a great source of pride and a gathering place for the community.

Madam Speaker, we know the country of Ukraine, and those who have already begun arriving in Manitoba, need us more now than ever.

* (13:40)

Ukrainians will survive and outlast Putin in this unwarranted act of aggression the same way they have survived oppression and famine, but we need to do our part provincially, and that means making the transition as easy as possible, by ensuring we have accommodations in place, making sure people have access to health care, mental-health care, education, jobs and food.

Madam Speaker, we can always do more.

In wrapping up this afternoon's comments, I just wanted to close with what my friend ended her text with. Orysya said, happy Vyshyvanka Day, Ukraine. On this day in the world we wear an embroidered vyshyvanka shirt as our Ukrainian amulet and symbol.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I hope to see you later at the flash mob.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Winnipeg Bruins U17 Hockey Champions

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize hockey excellence in my community. The team is the U17 AAA Winnipeg Bruins, who captured the 2021-2022 U17 city champions this past March. A very good season saw them finish second in regular season play; they had an unbelievable playoff run, finishing with a perfect 7-nothing record.

The team is made up of hockey players from St. Boniface, St. Vital, south Winnipeg and Transcona areas, who were all born between 2005 and

2006. Of those players on the team, including coaching staff, there are five key individuals who hail from the Lagimodière neighbourhood.

I start with Tyler Riel, head coach of the U17 AAA Winnipeg Bruins. He coached this award-winning team to an outstanding '21-22 season. He was a head coach for the Bantam Winnipeg Warriors in the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 seasons with city champion wins. I commend him for his great work and talented young players on his team.

Next, there is Dylan Bauknecht, defenceman and team captain for the U17 AAA Winnipeg Bruins. He knows how to work with his teammates and mobilize them, and he was a major reason why they won this season. He played against the other team's top players, handily shutting them down with his intelligence, keen instincts and work ethic. Dylan is also listed as a Selkirk Steelers of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League and is also a skilled competitive golfer. Since childhood, he has also learned to work with, and overcome, the obstacles of his type 1 diabetes.

Then there is Alex Domenico, who was one of the best goalies in the league this year. He greatly increased the team's confidence by making big saves at the most critical moments. He has been recognized for his efforts by being named the second team all-star as well as being nominated for goalie of the year. He has also had three previous AA champion wins with the Railcats, and two with the warriors.

Finally, we have defenceman Matthew Sawchyn and forward Lukas Mager. They also played key roles in the championship victory by blocking shots—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to complete his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Smith: They also played key roles in championships victory by blocking shots, delivering big hits and shutting down the opposing teams' power plays with their excellent penalty-killing abilities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Duncan Mercredi

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Today I rise to recognize Cree Métis poet and storyteller, Duncan Mercredi. Mr. Mercredi was born in Misipawistik, also known as Grand Rapids, and he is a long-time resident of the Wolseley constituency. And I am so pleased to tell you about him today.

Duncan Mercredi has published five poetry collections. The first, *Spirit of the Wolf: Raise Your Voice*, was published over 30 years ago, and his work has been published in many anthologies. Members of this Legislature may recall that Duncan's participation in our Legislature holiday video in December 2000, when he read his poem: nights were always quiet.

Duncan is a founding member of the Winnipeg Indigenous Writers Collective, where he is known as an encouraging mentor to young writers.

In the winter of 2019, Duncan, was the writer-in-residence at the Centre for Creative Writing and Oral Culture at the University of Manitoba.

And, in 2000, the Winnipeg Arts Council selected him to serve as the Poet Laureate of Winnipeg through to the end of this year. Winnipeg's Poet Laureate creates works that reflects the life of the city, commemorate at official functions and develop their own body of writing. Duncan is only the second person to have had the honour to serve in this role.

Duncan Mercredi's most recent publication is a collection of 40 poems called 215. This publication was inspired by the children who died while incarcerated in residential schools and by the stories of the survivors, including his mother.

The Winnipeg Art Council said of this body of work: He traces a line between the injustices of the past and the ills of the present. Amid this heaviness are moments of hope and joy, yet with the realization that these can only be realized when we acknowledge the harms of both yesterday and today.

I'm so grateful to Duncan Mercredi for his role in our community and his contribution to reconciliation education through the arts.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mennonite Peace Trail

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Mennonites have had a long and storied history in Manitoba. The first wave of 7,000 Mennonites arrived between 1874 and 1880. At the time, the province of Manitoba had approximately 13,000 people. They came by way of steamboat on the Red River, then travelled to southeast Manitoba, settling down and forming communities such as the town of Niverville, to name one such example.

This historic route taken by the first Mennonite settlers here in Manitoba is being immortalized with the Mennonite Peace Trail.

Starting at Mennonite landing, at the confluence of the Rat and Red Rivers, it will make its way to the Mennonite Heritage Village, making stops in Niverville, Kleefeld and Randolph.

This trail was created as a way to highlight the history of the early Mennonite settlers who came to Manitoba. It was designed by the EastMenn Historical Committee, and they will be putting up signs and historical cairns along the way that detail the history of those early Mennonite immigrants. One such cairn was just unveiled on May 12th, describing the Shantz immigration sheds, located a few kilometres south of Niverville, where arriving Mennonites were able to find shelter as they made their way east.

The Mennonite Heritage Village is planning a fundraiser this summer for the trail called the peace trek. It is always great to see the history of our communities being celebrated. I hope that future generations will be able to use this trail to understand the history of the Mennonites arriving in southeast Manitoba.

Thank you.

Jamboree on the Trail

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the good work of Scouts Canada and the annual Jamboree on the Trail event.

Scouts Canada is the country's leading co-ed youth organization, offering programming for children and youth aged five to 26. With over 50,000 youth participating across the country, in multiple languages and reflecting Canada's diverse landscape, kids and youth in Scouts chart their own path of discovery. Through a variety of fun experiences, outdoor adventures and contributions to their community, Scouts builds resilience and skills that set them up for life.

On May 14th, I was honoured to participate in the 25th annual Jamboree on the Trail, a day for the world Scout Movement to gather and hike together. All Scouts, whatever their age and wherever they may be in the world, are invited to participate in their communities in any way they can.

As we set out for a hike that took us from the Exchange District into Elmwood and then East Kildonan and ending in Concordia, we were part of a larger movement of Scouts around the world doing the same in their home communities. It truly was a great way to spend a Saturday, connecting with over

150 young leaders and engaged community members while enjoying the great outdoors.

Scouts Canada does invaluable work in teaching our kids about civic engagement through a variety of programs. Scouting allows kids to develop into capable, confident and well-rounded individuals who contribute positively as engaged citizens and members of their local, provincial and national communities.

Even during COVID, when in-person participation was limited, Scouts across the province continued to meet and instill a strong sense of civic responsibility and environmental awareness, albeit virtually. That's why this year's jamboree felt so important, as people are seeking new and familiar ways to reconnect with their communities.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the organizers of the Jamboree on the Trail event this year: co-chairs Richard Puttenham, who joins us here in the gallery today, and Claire Bérubé from Scouts du Canada and all the leaders and volunteers on a successful community-building event.

Political Violence and Racism

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Last week there was a terrible shooting in Buffalo, New York, where 10 people were murdered by a white young man who wrote a lengthy manifesto based on a racist and deep-seated conspiracy theory.

* (13:50)

You know, people have talked about how when these mass murders by white men happen, they are treated as lone wolves or their behaviour is blamed on mental health. This is not about mental health. This is political violence, driven by racist propaganda of white supremacy, as terrorism, and it has happened in Canada, as well.

The Internet is awash with these ideas and what we are seeing is a terrifying return to an age of mainstream hate and totalitarian oppression, pushed by Fox News in the US and the Rebel News here in Canada. And I say a return because these old, poisonous and persistent prejudices that were held and promoted around the world by Nazis in Europe and the Ku Klux Klan in the US and Canada often found much broader acceptance.

Racism and prejudice is not just defined by hate; it is defined by the entire idea that some people are less-than, especially less than human. And so we're seeing the same people targeted again. We're seeing

Indigenous people, people of colour, 2SLGBTQ, women, disabled people and people of religious minorities.

In Canada, these poisonous laws were enshrined in eugenics sterilization laws in Alberta and British Columbia for decades—until the 1970s—and there are still cases recently where people are being sterilized against their will.

Now, we almost had sterilization laws here in Manitoba, when three Conservative MLAs brought forward a bill in 1940. It was opposed by a then-Manitoba Liberal MLA for Iberville, a Scots Presbyterian lawyer and First World War veteran. He told the House the obvious: an idiot may be born in a royal palace and a Lincoln in a log cabin, and said this is still a democracy, and 51 per cent of the people are not entitled to govern the remaining 49 per cent. The element of individual freedom still counts for something.

That Manitoba Liberal MLA from Iberville was my grandfather, John S. Lamont. And what he said was true then and it is true today. The answer to the brutal inhumanity we are witnessing is to resist and dismantle the myths of racial supremacy; to respect, defend and promote democracy and individual freedoms—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Is there leave to allow the member to complete his statement? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

Mr. Lamont: The answer to the brutal inhumanity we are witnessing is to resist and dismantle the myths of racial supremacy; to respect, defend and promote democracy and individual freedoms, and above all, our common humanity, which is deeper and more transcendent than any ideology.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have some guests that I would like to introduce to you.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today the 2022 summer tour guides: Emilie Derbowka, Emily Gray, Leia Patterson, Marit Stokke; and they are accompanied by our tour program manager, Clare Normandeau, and tour program officer, Daisy Giesbrecht.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care System Neurology Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, there are too many crises in our health-care system right now and it does not appear that the government is responding.

Dr. Dan Roberts, the head of neurology at the University of Manitoba, called a news conference today, and I quote, out of desperation. There is a severe shortage of neurologists and technologists in Manitoba. That means patients suffering from stroke and epilepsy can't get the care that they need and a multiple sclerosis clinic may soon have to close as a result.

Why has the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) done nothing to fix the crisis when it comes to neurology in Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): We recognize there are challenges in health care. That's why, through our Throne Speech and our budget, we've committed to making record investments in health care in Manitoba.

We've heard from Manitobans health care is a priority for them. As a result, our government is focused on strengthening health care here in Manitoba. To that, we've invested \$7.2 billion in this year's budget, a record investment in health care: \$1 billion more than when we came into office, Madam Speaker.

This is to support investments in health care, this is to support people in health care and this is to support Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, Dan Roberts is an expert in this field. Experts like him have been warning the province for some two years, even longer, that neurology was in need of urgent attention.

Services for epilepsy patients and others in need required urgent attention. We've raised these concerns in the House many, many times. There has not been the needed response from this government. Even as we speak, the government refuses to pay attention to this urgent issue.

Dan Roberts spoke publicly today. I'm sure he did not take the decision to do so lightly. This is something that the government needs to devote attention to, and needs to show the proper consideration and respect for.

Why has the Premier failed to address this crisis for neurology in Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we take the health and well-being of Manitobans very seriously.

We have three departments now looking after health and well-being of Manitobans from all ages, Madam Speaker. Record investments in health care in Manitoba—\$7.2 billion.

The issues that the member raises are not unique to Manitoba. Every jurisdiction across the country is facing similar challenges in terms of recruiting and retaining doctors and nurses.

Madam Speaker, this is not new, but we have made investments. We have a plan to strengthen health care in Manitoba. We have a plan based on a \$7.2-billion investment to protect the health and safety of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to correct the Deputy Premier: the situation is unique to Manitoba. Manitoba is the only province that is at risk of losing accreditation for its neurology program. Manitoba is the only province that is seeing an exodus of neurologists.

Dr. Roberts has laid out the case today. The reason's plain and simple: the Province is not providing a competitive environment for these specialists, and it is not rewarding their dedication with the commensurate respect. Dr. Roberts was very clear today, and I quote: This is a slow, evolving train wreck, and they will only respond after the crash has already occurred.

These are the words of an expert. These are the words of somebody who is part of a community of experts that have been sounding the alarm for years. There has been no action to date.

When will we see a response on neurology from this government?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we recognize there's challenges in health care, not just here in Manitoba but across our country.

We certainly have made the record investments in health care to try to attract, retain professionals within health care here in Manitoba. We certainly want to set the parameters for recruiting and retraining those very important and qualified individuals, Madam Speaker.

We do take the health care of Manitobans seriously, and that's why we're making record investments in health care.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans have told us health care is our priority. Our government has responded to that with record investments. Health care and the well-being of Manitobans is a priority for our government.

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

Construction of WPS Headquarters Request for Public Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, each day we seem to learn more and more about the problems with the construction of the City of Winnipeg police headquarters. And what we're learning certainly is not good. There's allegations of bribes, invoices for work that wasn't done and schemes to defraud the City. These are all very, very concerning.

Now, we know that Winnipeggers and Manitobans deserve to know the truth. City of Winnipeg has said clearly—their council has voted in favour of a public inquiry, arguing that this would help to understand—help the people of Winnipeg to understand what has taken place.

On this side of the House, we think Manitobans deserve answers.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) call an inquiry into the City of Winnipeg police headquarters project today?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member knows that there are many civil litigations that are under way in regards to this matter. He knows that there is more information almost every day being provided through those civil litigations.

I read yesterday that the chief administrative officer for the City of Winnipeg indicated that, that as litigation proceeds, they continue to make their way through literally millions of documents, and each of those documents provides more information.

We believe that the civil litigation needs to continue, and we won't do anything that would jeopardize that litigation.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, for years the City of Winnipeg has called on the provincial government to take action and to call an inquiry. The City of Winnipeg has communicated equally clearly that calling an inquiry now would help them proceed with the other matters to which the member for Steinbach refers.

* (14:00)

We know that Mr. Pallister, the previous PC premier, refused to call an inquiry. It would appear that the current PC government, the Stefanson government, is intent on being just like Brian Pallister.

But the people of Manitoba, the people of Winnipeg, demand otherwise. The City Council has voted clearly to ask for a public inquiry.

Why is it that the PC government refuses to oblige?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, as I tried to explain to the member in the first answer, there continues to be information provided through the civil litigation—dozens of civil litigations working their way through the courts. The CAO of the City of Winnipeg yesterday said we're getting more information as we go through the discovery process as well, and even though there are more documents coming and more to be yielded, we continue to get more information. And that is what the civil litigation and the discovery process is about: getting more information.

We won't do anything that might disrupt the civil litigation where there is accountability being held. Following civil litigation there can be considerations about other procedures.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier and her government should stop avoiding the substantive question here.

What the minister is providing are excuses, and he knows it. There is nothing preventing this government from calling an inquiry. They have the ability to do so and, in fact, the City of Winnipeg has said that calling an inquiry now would help them get to the

bottom of what happened and help them arrive at the truth of what has taken place here.

So, even if you were to accept the PC government's argument here around civil litigation, let's move it a step forward.

Will they commit to calling an inquiry after those proceedings have wrapped up?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member opposite may have spent lots of time with lawyers, but he is not a lawyer. And we have looked for legal advice and what is the best way to proceed. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Through civil litigation, there is much information that is coming forward. That's been acknowledged by the City of Winnipeg. There'll continue to be more discovery. There'll be—continue to be more information provided, and we will not do anything that might cause a disruption to that civil litigation, as has happened in other cases where public inquiries have been called.

We will let that civil litigation play out, and then we will consider further options.

Health System Support Workers New Contract and Pandemic Pay

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, just like Brian Pallister, the Stefanson government is still pursuing his failed policies. He and his Health minister, now Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), ran health care into the ground here in Manitoba.

Brian Pallister refused to bargain with health support staff for five years; far too many of them were left out of health top-ups for their service during this pandemic. This is just one more mess that Brian Pallister made.

When will the minister and this government stop following Pallister's playbook and negotiate a new contract for overworked health workers in our hospitals across Manitoba?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, it's a special day, Madam Speaker. Today, a baker's dozen of questions and requests from the opposition for the government to intervene in contract talks. And we don't do that.

The employer is Shared Health. They're at the bargaining 'taber'—table with the two unions. We expect to see a good outcome there, but we're not going to intervene like the opposition asks—is asking us to.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, Manitobans are living with Brian Pallister's legacy. It's been five years since the cuts began across our hospitals. The PCs have outright broken trust with Manitobans on health care. And now they've broken trust with health-care support staff, many of whom have been without a contract for five years. Their wages have been frozen and they were left out of COVID's pay top-ups.

It's time to show these workers the respect that they deserve.

Madam Speaker, when will the minister and this government ensure COVID top-ups and a new contract for the very hard-working Manitoba front-line health-care staff and support staff?

Mr. Helwer: So, on one hand, we have Shared Health as the employer. On the other hand, we have the unions representing the workers. In between, they have their professional negotiators.

Madam Speaker, there's no space there for the government to intervene, and we do not do so.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the minister and his government were perfectly happy to intervene and freeze the wages of these very workers and deny them COVID top-up pay. It's—Brian Pallister—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —may be gone, but it's clear his legacy still lives on and in the plans of the members opposite.

Inflation is now running over 7 per cent. Many health support workers have had their wages frozen for years, Madam Speaker, and they've put themselves at risk providing direct care to those infected with COVID-19. It's long past for a time for a fair deal for these health-care workers. They deserve new contracts and top-ups of COVID pay that recognizes their dedication to Manitobans throughout this pandemic.

When will the minister and this government have a new contract for front-line health-care workers?

Mr. Helwer: Well, request numbering 15 for the government to intervene, Madam Speaker. We don't do that.

We're very happy that Shared Health came to a very successful contract negotiation with the nurses. We expect those negotiations to continue with the other unions that the member references, and we'll see what that outcome is, Madam Speaker.

We, as a government, do not intervene.

Public Sector Employees Collective Bargaining Negotiations

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Brian Pallister picked a fight with front-line workers. His Finance minister illegally tried to block arbitration. They fought against fair collective bargaining all the time.

And what do they have to show for it? Absolutely nothing, as the recent arbitration ruling clearly shows us. This is just one more mess that Brian Pallister left behind, but every member on that side fully supported Brian Pallister in creating that mess.

So, will the Stefanson government renounce Brian Pallister's approach, allow bargaining to take place fairly, in good faith, going forward?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Sometimes arbitrations occur. It's a natural process, Madam Speaker, and in this case it did occur at the request of the union. The—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: Obviously, the members opposite don't want to hear the facts, Madam Speaker. So we will—we'll listen to the facts on our side and they can make their own analysis up, as they often do. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: In this circumstance, the government's position was validated. The award from the courts was similar to what we expected to come out of negotiation, and we're very happy with how this ended up, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

MLA Lindsey: Madam Speaker, Brian Pallister legislated the right to public workers to—public workers' fair negotiation, he tried to legislate that away. Then he tried to get rid of their right to go to arbitration.

Now, what did all this mistrust and fighting get us? Absolutely nothing but more attacks on front-line workers. He refused to bargain in good faith. His government refused to bargain in good faith.

Will this government now reject the legacy of Brian Pallister and commit to fair negotiations, without the government interference, going forward for public sector workers? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Helwer: Well, the previous question was asking me to intervene in negotiations. This question is asking us not to intervene in negotiations, Madam Speaker.

We've clearly stated that we do not intervene in negotiations between Shared Health and other unions. That's their job. When the courts intervened on—in this part, you know, very pleased to see that government public servants have a new collective agreement with retroactive pay. It was always contemplated in the negotiations and never in doubt, matter—Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

* (14:10)

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

MLA Lindsey: The fact that this minister can say what he just said with a straight face is just mind-boggling.

For years this government has disrespected workers. They've fired workers, and years of mistrust and fighting with public sector workers, frivolous lawsuits achieved absolutely nothing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —except to hurt the services Manitobans depend on.

Manitoba needs a new government, not a bad repeat of the Pallister mess.

Will this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) reject Brian Pallister's approach, commit to fair negotiations with public sector workers and abandon all their appeals of court cases?

Mr. Helwer: Well, the opposition party several—seems to have several positions on this, Madam Speaker, and maybe it'll become clear once we vote on Bill 2—Bill 2, to repeal legislation. So, they have a

choice. They have a choice to vote in favour of repealing that legislation or—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer:—if they vote against repealing that legislation, then that means they want that bill, the previous act, to continue. Which is it, Madam Speaker? They need to make a choice.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Vital.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition and Funding

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): It's a different leader, but the same policies. Brian Pallister's legacy lives on in this government's approach to post-secondary education. And just like Brian Pallister, this government continues to increase tuition and cut funding for post-secondary institutions.

New data shows that the government has cut funding by nearly 18 per cent since 2016—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses:—and at the same time, students are paying 16.3 per cent more.

Tuition hikes and funding cuts hurt students and our institutions.

Will the minister reverse these trends, and will he do so today?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, this morning, as the minister responsible for post-secondary education, I was honoured to attend the University of Manitoba convocation to recognize the achievements of the class of 2022's doctor of medicine program.

This was the first in-person celebration—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reyes:—in over two years, and I was overjoyed to see them walk across the stage amongst their families and friends.

I was impressed to hear that of the 113 graduates, 84 will remain in Manitoba to complete their medical residency, with 26 having a rural connection. They will make great health-care professionals in our province for generations to come.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of all those who will be graduating from our Manitoba post-secondary institutions this month and next. I know all the members of the House wish them well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

UMFA Labour Dispute Appeal of Provincial Court Ruling

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, just like Brian Pallister, this can't—this government can't give a straight answer. They don't know when it's wrong and they don't know when to reverse course.

After interfering in salary negotiations in 2016, a judge recently ruled that the Province owes the University of Manitoba Faculty Association \$19.3 million in damages. This amount makes up for lost wages due to the strike and for salary negotiations. And rather than accept this ruling and rather than accept their own wrongdoing and learn from their mistakes and move on and change from the error of their ways, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) appeals the decision.

So why does the Premier insist on following the path of her predecessor, Brian Pallister, and challenge this court decision?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, when it comes to courts, Madam Speaker, we, like everyone else, take legal advice. And we listen to that legal advice, just like the other parties have in this case. So, we are seeking further clarity.

The issues—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer:—the main issues have been ruled on, and there's a very narrow issue regarding the UMFA issues. So, we respect the integrity of the court's process to now let that unfold.

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

Post-Secondary Education Tuition and Funding

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Make no mistake, they've changed their leader, but nothing else has changed.

They still hike tuition at post-secondary, they still cut funding for post-secondary—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —and they're still fighting UMFA in court. And just like Brian Pallister, the government refuses to listen to students and faculty. They—can they refuse—they refuse to remit—admit their wrongdoing.

Will the minister admit what they've done wrong, reverse course, listen to students? And will he do that today?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, unlike the NDP, who never had a plan for our post-secondary institution, our government is delivering on the objectives of the skills—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reyes: —talent and knowledge that focuses on anticipating skills needed of the future; aligning post-secondary education and training and immigration to labour market needs and help students and newcomers succeed now and into the future; fostering entrepreneurial and innovative skills; growing, attracting and retraining talent, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we have a strong plan for our students to get quality education, good employment and an opportunity to stay in Manitoba, unlike the NDP. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Funds for Indigenous Children in CFS Care Appeal of Provincial Court Ruling

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): When Brian Pallister was premier, he clawed back millions of dollars earmarked for Indigenous children in care. This continued when the member from Tuxedo was the minister of Families, and then the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) voted to try and make this clawback illegal through legislation.

The courts have ruled against this government. It's clear their legislation was unconstitutional. However, we're aware the Premier will appear—will appeal this decision.

Will the Premier commit to not appealing this decision and to acknowledge her government's legislation was unconstitutional?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I would like to thank Justice Edmond for his ruling, and this ruling will undoubtedly be a component in the

sweeping transformation of child welfare and reconciliation in this country and in this province.

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

Mr. Bushie: To be clear, they were caught trying to legislate themselves immunity. Just like Brian Pallister, this Premier tried to legislate her problems away.

The courts have clearly ruled that her bill was unconstitutional, and now we're worried that her government will appeal this decision. The Premier can end this issue today by committing to not fighting Indigenous children in court. This will be a step forward in reconciliation.

Will she commit to not fighting Indigenous children in court?

Ms. Squires: For this member's awareness, I would like to table a letter, it's dated July 6th of 2006, which is mandating, retroactively, that all agencies need to remit the allowances that they received on behalf of the children: The authority will now be remitted—your mandated agencies, payable to the minister of Finance. This includes the children's special allowance, the children disability benefit, the orphan benefit and this—the Universal Child Care Benefit. It should be payable to all—to the minister of Finance unless otherwise arrangements have been made.

This is the NDP legacy; they instituted this practice. We ended this practice in our first mandate, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Bushie: Let's be clear: it is this government that legislated that right of those Indigenous children to go to court and fight for their rights.

Brian Pallister's legacy lives on in this government's relationship with Indigenous people. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie: They refused to release the money earmarked for Indigenous children in care. Every single member opposite had—has voted in favour of this, including the Premier. And now the courts have ruled against them, calling it unconstitutional and discriminatory.

The Premier should stop trying to silence Indigenous children's voices and allow these children to have their day in court. Will she do so today?

Ms. Squires: In addition to ending this practice in this government's first mandate, I'm also very proud that this government responded to the calls from Indigenous leaders and the report of the national committee on murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, and cancelled the long-standing practice of issuing birth alerts, something that the NDP did for every year that they were in office.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker, in 2015, the last year that that member was—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —that members opposite was in government, there were nearly 500 babies that were apprehended in the province of Manitoba. We took action. We are following—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —the recommendations of the leaders in the community, and we ended that practice of issuing birth alerts. And we believe in reconciliation and family unification.

And our government recognizes that there's a long way to go, but we're going to keep fighting for vulnerable children in the province. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Funds for Indigenous Children in CFS Care Government Adherence to Court Ruling

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yesterday, the Court of Queen's Bench ruled that more—for more than a decade, Manitoba NDP and PC governments violated the constitutional rights of First Nations children by taking \$338 million in federal children's benefits from them.

The NDP doubled the number of children in care to over 11,000. No jurisdiction on the planet was taking more children from their families, and to make it worse they confiscated their federal benefits.

In opposition, the PCs called it illegal and immoral, and they were right. But they kept doing it anyway, put a clause in the 2020 budget to keep every penny of the \$338 million and block anyone from ever being sued. And every MLA voted for it.

Will this government respect the court's decision, return the stolen money, or will they continue to perpetuate this travesty of justice?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Something that I thought I could state with confidence the—is that it is a shared goal of this entire Chamber to support reconciliation, and that there is no greater act of reconciliation than taking care of our vulnerable children and youth in care.

And to that end, I would like to state that I thank Justice Edmond for his ruling and that this ruling will undoubtedly be a component of sweeping transformation on child welfare and reconciliation in this province. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: I'd like to ask members—I am going to call members to order.

There is absolutely no—there is to be more respect in here, and while we don't maybe like the answers to the questions, that doesn't give people the right to incessant heckling; that makes it very, very difficult for me to hear what is being said.

And I'm asking for everybody's co-operation.

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

Reimbursement of Funds

Mr. Lamont: Manitobans and Canadians should understand that Canadian governments, especially the Manitoba government, have never stopped tearing Indigenous families apart. They are still doing it now.

Residential schools, the '60s scoop, CFS and mass incarceration are all part of the same thread, and it has been impossible for First Nations children to get justice because of the complicity of both the PCs and the NDP, who together for decades treated First Nations and people living in poverty worse than any other province.

EIA, housing, justice, CFS, child poverty—every single one a provincial jurisdiction where pleas from activists and progressives were ignored—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —and betrayed for a generation.

Will this government make it right, apologize and return the \$338 million to the First Nation children? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: And prior to recognizing the minister, I am going to have call the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) to order.

Ms. Squires: While it's obvious that the—this Liberal member has a lot to say, I don't recall him using his voice when Ottawa was appealing a decision that discriminated against First Nations children across this entire country. I don't remember him raising that in this House.

And so he has—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —a lot to say today, but I certainly wish that he had used his voice and had this passion for advocating for children when his Liberal Party was discriminating against children in this country in the child-welfare system.

Low-Income Manitobans Receiving CERB Rent Assist Reduction and Pharmacare Costs

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Over the pandemic, many low-income Manitobans were relieved to be able to receive CERB as a federal assistance to help them get by. One such person is a single parent of two with a disability who relies heavily on Rent Assist and Pharmacare to be able to support their family.

Unfortunately, the provincial government has policies that have determined the federal benefit to be considered an income. This is immoral, as CERB was never an annual income and has been discontinued for some time now.

What will this government do to ensure low-income Manitobans won't lose hundreds of dollars from their Rent Assist benefit and have significantly higher Pharmacare deductibles?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I thank the member for a poignant question on affordability for Manitoba families.

The member asked, what is the government prepared to do? We know that all Manitoba households need financial relief now due to hyperinflation, rising costs of groceries and fuel and other things.

Economists continue to point out that the impact of the rebate that this government is bringing is greater

in low-income households, where there is less discretionary income and where basic household costs take up more of their paycheque. It matters more. And so, today is the day for the NDP and the Liberal parties to support our Bill 39 to bring tax relief to Manitobans. Will they?

Education Funding Budget for 2022-23

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Our government's 2022 budget includes record investments into our education system, yet members opposite consistently put false information on the record when it comes to education funding in our province.

So, would the honourable Minister of Education, early childhood—and Early Childhood Learning put some facts on the record and inform the public of all the vital funding that the NDP voted against?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'd like to thank my honourable member from Borderland for that great question, Madam Speaker, on education funding.

Madam Speaker, this coming school year, '22-23, is going see \$120 million more in education funding. On top of that, \$7 million to students with special needs.

Madam Speaker, this is a \$1.62-billion budget for this coming school year, '22-23. That's \$230 million more than the NDP ever put into education. That doesn't include the capital costs of COVID, the Safe Schools spending, more good news.

They voted it all—voted against it all, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Education Property Tax Corporate Rebate

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Madam Speaker, just like Brian Pallister, this government is putting wealthy corporations ahead of regular people. Rather than helping regular people, they're borrowing tens of millions of dollars to hand out cheques to out-of-province—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —corporate landlords.

Now, Manitobans know Conservatives are reckless with taxpayer dollars, and these members are just a bad repeat of Brian Pallister.

Why are they giving—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: —tens of millions of dollars to railways, to oil companies and out-of-province landlords, instead of helping regular Manitobans? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I regret to inform the NDP leader that the member for Fort Garry is publicly endorsing our education property tax rebate.

On March the 14th, 2016, he said, in the Winnipeg Free Press, there's got to be a better way, and went on to say, the provincial government really ought to cap and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —phase out school board taxes and assume full responsibility for education.

Who said that? The member for Fort Garry.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (14:30)

An Honourable Member: Call them out to order.

Madam Speaker: I'm standing, which is calling everybody to order.

The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wasyliv: Yes, Madam Speaker, it's just like Brian Pallister.

This government is cutting health and education in the midst of a crisis. Now they're borrowing tens of millions of dollars for—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: —railroads, oil companies and out-of-province corporate landlords. It's wrong. We all know it's wrong, and these members are just repeating the same mistakes as Brian Pallister.

So, why are they giving tens of millions of dollars to railroads, oil companies and out-of-province corporate landlords instead of supporting our schools and health care?

Mr. Friesen: I welcome the opportunity to table the article to remind the member that he actually called for a totally different funding model, which we are achieving through our rebates to Manitobans.

More importantly, yesterday we debunked the member's ridiculous notion that somehow this is corporately going out. That member knows that the cornerstone of any commercial lease—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —is the idea of triple net, whereby the tenant—who is his constituent—pays the full freight on their education property tax bill and gets the rebate back.

When will that member and that party stop deliberately misleading Manitobans and support our plan to put more tax relief in the pockets of hard-working Manitoba families?

Madam Speaker: As it is unparliamentary in this House to accuse somebody of deliberately misleading, I'm going to have to ask the minister to withdraw those comments that were just made.

We can say misleading, but not deliberately misleading.

Mr. Friesen: I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: Thank—I thank the minister for that.

The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wasyliv: You know, Madam Speaker, the Stefanson government is the only government in-world that thinks sending \$40 million to Toronto shareholders of large corporations and cutting schools is the way to improve education.

So, that's just wrong, and we know it's wrong. And we have an amendment before this House to fix their mistake, to stop \$40 million going to big oil, railroads and out-of-province landlords.

Will this government come to its senses, stop the cuts to health and education, support our amendment today?

Mr. Friesen: The member actually said yesterday, about this tax relief package, we are looking at something that nobody has asked for; no one has asked for this tax break.

That member is completely out of touch. That party is completely out of touch. An Angus Reid poll suggests that half of Manitobans are concerned that they will not be able to keep up with costs—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –of living. This tax relief comes at a critical time for Manitoba families. They're shouting down the low-income families that—they are standing between them—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –and getting that tax relief.

Our government will continue to fight for affordability for all Manitobans. Will they join the fight today?

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Youth Consent for Mental Health Treatment

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, 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 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC, as ratified by the federal government in 1991, recognizes each child as a full person having rights of their own and in need of appropriate safeguards, but the implementation of this convention is very limited.

(2) In accordance to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to play, rest and to enjoy their life, including children of divorced parents who have the right to be protected, to express their opinion and be heard by adults.

(3) The presumed assumption that divorced parents always put the needs and the rights of a child first in decision making can be dangerous.

(4) Article 3 of the CRC outlines that all appropriate legal, legislative and administrative bodies must also ensure the child the protection and care that is necessary for their well-being.

(5) Children must be afforded the supports and services that guarantee a child's right to access mental health services to benefit the overall well-being of all children and families.

(6) Divorce proceedings must not prevent a child from seeking necessary mental health care if both parents are unable to come to an agreement about treatment in a joint custody arrangement.

(7) Children should not be automatically deprived of their right to make decisions affecting their psychological treatment and must be entitled to a degree of decision-making autonomy that is reflective of their evolving understanding.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to amend the necessary legislation to allow for a mature minor the autonomous right to access mental health services and provide adequate informed consent on their own behalf to proceed with therapeutic services.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

(6) The current barriers between the South Perimeter Highway and the homes of the River Park South residents are a berm and a wooden fence, neither of which are effective at reducing traffic noise.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Drug Overdose Reporting

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

The background of this petition is as—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith:—follows:

(1) Across the province many Manitobans continue to struggle with addictions, and the pandemic has led to even more deaths and worsened the ongoing public health crisis of opioid overdoses.

(2) Three hundred and seventy two Manitobans died from an overdose in 2020. That's over one a day, and 87 per cent higher than in 2019.

(3) Manitoba is expected to exceed over 400 overdose deaths in 2021, but the data is not available—or publicly available since the last public reporting of opioid deaths was published in 2019.

(4) The data for drug overdose deaths from 2021 and 2022 was compiled through media inquiries and this needs to change.

(5) Access to timely data on the harms of drugs helps to inform both government and stakeholders on where to take action and target resources needed in various communities.

* (14:40)

(6) Manitoba is the only province not providing regular, timely data to the federal government opioid information portal.

(7) Manitobans deserve a government that takes the growing drug crisis seriously and will report the data publicly in a timely manner to target actions and allow for accountability.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to enact Bill 217, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), to require the Province to publish the number of drug overdose deaths, as well as the type of drug, on a government website in a timely fashion.

This is signed by Betty Joan Lynxleg, Michael Hutchinson, Ellen Spence and many other Manitobans.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

To the Assembly of Manitoba:

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the '60s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and has been home to the JRL for 48 years.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value of the JRL—provides to the student population of École Heritage school, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

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

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

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

This petition is signed by Cecile Gentes, Rita Catellier and Claudette Remillard and many more Manitobans.

Speed Reduction on PR 392

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) On October 26, 2020, a 51-year-old driver was killed when a cement truck overturned on provincial road PR 392 just outside of the town of Snow Lake, Manitoba.

(2) The HudBay company will be trucking gold ore in 40-ton B-trains from its Lalor deposit into the town of Snow Lake for processing, starting next year.

(3) This large-truck traffic will be competing with local vehicle traffic between the turnoff to the Lalor mine on PR 395 and the town of Snow Lake on PR 392.

(4) Similar vehicle traffic already competes with these 40-ton trucks between the turnoff at Lalor and PR 395 and the turnoff to the Stall Mill at PR 393.

(5) Residents of Snow Lake have suggested that the speed limit on PR 392 between Snow Lake and the intersection of provincial road, PR 393, be lowered from 90 kilometres an hour to 70 kilometres an hour.

(6) Residents also propose that on PR 392, from Berry Bay-Taylor Bay entrance to the Wekusko Falls park north entrance, speeds be reduced to 70 kilometres an hour; Wekusko Falls park north entrance to the helitac base entrance, speeds reduced to 50 kilometres an hour; and from the helitac base entrance to the entrance of the fish dump, speeds be reduced to 70 kilometres an hour.

(7) Reducing speed limits on dangerous stretches of highways is a simple and effective measure to protect the safety of all drivers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to adopt the proposed speed reductions on Provincial Road 392 set out above.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Scrap Metal Legislation—Consumer Protection

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The spike in catalytic converter thefts occurring across North America has hit Winnipeg. The price of precious metals in catalytic converters, like rhodium, palladium and platinum, are worth thousands of dollars an ounce. Scrap-metal recyclers have catalytic converters priced to the vehicle, with some catalytic converters worth \$800.

(2) Organized groups of criminals are climbing under vehicles and cutting catalytic converters and selling them to scrap-metal recyclers for cash without any record of these transactions.

(3) Catalytic converter thefts cost consumers about \$2,000 for each replacement. Manitoba Public Insurance charges a betterment fee for new replacements, so insurance doesn't cover the full cost.

(4) Currently, sellers do not have to provide government issued photo ID and recyclers do not need to record and retain the information, or record details of the transaction.

(5) Scrap-metal recyclers do not report to police any transactions involving catalytic converters.

(6) Provinces like BC and Alberta have scrap-metal-recycler legislation requiring businesses to keep proper records.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to bring in consumer protection legislation requiring scrap-metal recyclers to keep proper records so only legitimate sales are allowed and criminals can be caught.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

(1) La Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library a été avisée par la division scolaire vallée de la rivière Rouge, DSVRR, de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de l'École Héritage school ici le 31 mars 2023.

(2) L'auditorium a été construit dans les années 1960 par le célèbre architecte manitobain Étienne Gaboury et y est installé depuis 48 ans.

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

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

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

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

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

(1) De demander au ministre du Travail, de la Protection du consommateur et des Services

gouvernementaux d'envisager de concéder l'auditorium à la B-R-G d'ici le 1er mars 2023.

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

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

* (14:50)

(4) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et son statut au sein de la communauté.

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

Cette pétition était signée par Mélanie Lemoine, Dadi Jaures et Jean-Nicholas Akolo.

Translation

I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The context for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

This petition was signed by Mélanie Lemoine, Dadi Jaures and Jean-Nicholas Akolo.

Madam Speaker: Any other petitions?

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madame la Présidente, je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

(1) La Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, G-B-R-G, a été avisée par la division scolaire vallée de la rivière Rouge, DSVRR, de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de l'École Héritage school, ÉHS, d'ici le 31 mars 2023.

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

(3) Une photo de l'auditorium intitulée la bibliothèque régionale est publiée dans un document de 2008 intitulé « Bâtiments patrimoniaux des MR De Salaberry et Saint-Pierre-Jolys ». Il est indiqué

qu'il s'agit d'un bâtiment moderne important qui pourrait atteindre le statut de site patrimonial.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(4) Demander au ministre du Sport, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et son statut au sein de la communauté.

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

Cette pétition est signée par Rochelle Catellier, Darcy Catellier, Tristan Catellier.

Merci.

Translation

Madam Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The context for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

This petition was signed by Rochelle Catellier, Darcy Catellier, Tristan Catellier.

Thank you

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

If there are no further petitions, then, I will move on to—grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): A few matters of House business.

First, I'd like to table the revised Estimates order that'll be in place for tomorrow, May 20th, 2022.

Madam Speaker: Thank the minister for that tabling.

Mr. Goertzen: I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 24th, 2022, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 16, The Financial Administration Amendment Act; Bill 29, The Mennonite College Federation Amendment Act; Bill 33, The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Municipal Board Amendment Act; Bill 34, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act; and Bill 228, The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 24th, 2022, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 16, The Financial Administration Amendment Act; Bill 29, the Mennonite College Federation Amendment Act; Bill 33, The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Municipal Board Amendment Act; Bill 34, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act; and Bill 228, The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm seeking leave of the House—and if you could please canvass the House to waive rule 138(4), 138(12) and 138(13) for Bill 228, The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act, which will be reported back from standing committee on May 25th, 2022, to allow the bill to be debated at concurrence and third reading during private members' business on Thursday, May 26th, 2022.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to waive rules 138(4), 138(12) and 138(13) for Bill 228, The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act to allow the bill to be debated at concurrence and third reading during private members' business on Thursday, May 26th, 2022?

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for consideration this afternoon: Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate), which I believe is in the Committee of the Whole.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Committee of the Whole for the appropriation—for The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate).

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

* (15:00)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 39—The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate)

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order. We will now resume consideration of Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate).

When the committee last met, we were considering the bill clause by clause. Specifically, we were in the midst of debating an amendment to clause 2, moved by the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv). Accordingly, we shall resume consideration of that amendment.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I certainly have some questions for this minister.

On—end of March, we passed an interim appropriation act, Bill 25. This authorized the government to spend up to 75 per cent of last year's budgeted appropriations in the current fiscal year, so that gives this government authority to spend 75 per cent of each appropriation.

Last year's school tax rebate was budgeted at \$310,600,000. As a result, the government can spend

up to \$232,950,000 on this particular program, given the authority 'granterned' in interim supply.

Now, Bill 39 requests an amount of \$349,800,000 to spend. That leaves a difference of about \$116,850,000 that the government apparently believes it doesn't have the authority to access in order to issue these cheques.

However, we know that the government budgeted \$1.3 billion in internal service adjustments under enabling appropriation, 75 per cent of which have already been granted to this government, giving this government a cushion of \$975 million.

So, I want to ask the minister: Does he believe the government lacks legal authority to issue the education 'prockety' tax rebate cheques in June without the passage of this bill?

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other members wishing to—oh, the honourable minister.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): So, the member is, indeed, mistaken; it would not be the first time. I want to clarify the record for that member and indicate—and remind him that last year's education property tax rebate, that was designed to return 25 per cent of that rebate to households and farmland and 10 per cent to commercial categories and classifications of property, was actually voted through a statutory appropriation. It was not a voted appropriation.

Therefore, I will remind that member the process in this House when he refers to the interim appropriation. It would vote 75 per cent of operating amounts, but it would not have referenced the education property tax.

That member will also understand that the rules of the Legislature would not allow the government to spend money on a new program. This is a new program for all intents and purposes because, of course, this program has expanded the credit to 37.5 per cent of a rebate to households and farmland. These are rebates and tax relief that the NDP members all oppose.

Right now, we have hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland under water in Manitoba, and the obscenity is that the NDP is opposing relief. And that member for Fort Garry has actually put on the record that no one is looking for this tax relief, while he knows that there are hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland that would, in a normal year, have been planted and now remain unseeded. I would love for that member to actually go and do a farm survey and

meet with hard-working farm families who cannot get onto the land, who cannot work that land, who cannot plant a crop, who cannot contribute to growing food in this province.

But let me be very clear to the member's question: If he understands the rules of this House, he will understand that the government has no authority in the interim appropriation act to return those rebates to Manitobans. It is this bill that will provide that authority because this is a voted appropriation. Why? Because that is the way the Legislature should, in conventional ways, debate and consider proposals like this one.

The debate has been clearly defined. While all Canadians and, indeed, Manitobans are focused on affordability—because of rising prices, hyperinflation, grocery bills that are up 10 and 15 per cent, the cost of a tank of gas up 50 per cent—the NDP alone stands by themselves and says, no one wants tax relief.

In fact, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), only yesterday, went on the record and said that this was something we were debating that no one was looking for. Hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland under water, hundreds of thousands of Manitoba households, where a new Angus Reid poll just indicated that 53 per cent of respondents on a new survey said they are not being able to keep up with the rising cost of living. When it comes to emergency expenses, 51 per cent reported they would be unable to cover an unexpected \$1,000 bill. Then how important would a \$600 average-sized tax rebate be to that family? That member says, unimportant in every respect.

Our government disagrees. The NDP will always say it is not the time for tax relief, the NDP will always say it is the time to jack up taxes. We respectfully—and in policy—disagree, and we will be there for the many Manitoba families who are eagerly waiting for the conclusion of this debate, the royal assent to this bill that we hope will come later this afternoon, and allow those rebates to flow in a way that will be concurrent with their tax bill.

Manitobans need tax relief. They need it now; our government is delivering.

Mr. Wasyliv: What the NDP oppose is borrowing taxpayers money for corporate welfare, for out-of-province corporations that never asked for it, never requested it, absolutely don't need it. And this won't make our schools better, it certainly won't help our

economy and this is about as fiscally irresponsible as a government could get.

But, you know, you've been at this dance before; we did this last year. The exact same thing happened last year. This government was disorganized and didn't, you know, dot their i's and cross their t's, and we had this panicky false crisis at the end of May that we needed to pass this bill or people won't get their cheques.

So, if what the minister says is true, if—that they are so disorganized, so incompetent of a government, that they could do this two years in a row—or, would he just finally admit what everybody in this Chamber knows, is that this government has the absolute legal authority right now to issue cheques, that this is just some cheesy political theatre, and that this government has basically wasted Manitobans' time for the last two weeks.

Mr. Friesen: Let the record show that the member for Fort Garry has called the largest tax-relief package in Manitoba history cheesy political theatre.

I'm looking at the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), who represents hard-working farm families. We know how hard hit that area of the province has been and is even now. We know that there are hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland that are submerged right now. We know that there are farm families who can't get a crop in the ground, who are weeks behind. I'm looking for the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), who represents hard-working farm families.

I know that that member may never get outside of the Perimeter, but that is some crass, crass language to the hundreds of thousands of Manitobans that he is standing between them and this form of relief, so I want to be clear on that.

On process, we can also be clear. The member may misunderstand the rules of this Legislature, but there is a difference between the way this—the statutory appropriation passed last year and the voted appropriation that will pass today if the NDP stop blocking tax relief for Manitobans. Those are the rules of the House.

We believe, as a government, that the appropriate place to house debate conventionally is in a voted appropriation. That is why this bill at this time. But I also want to be clear to that member that—and I'm pleased that he brings up this issue—that he talked about borrowing to give relief.

* (15:10)

And the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) will want to pay attention, because the member for Concordia had a difficult assignment in 2016. *[interjection]* And he would be wise to not heckle me during this part because he'll like this.

In 2016, I'll remind the House—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —that the member for Concordia was the critic for Education after the NDP lost government.

Now, here's what the NDP had done in 2016. They ran a billion-dollar deficit, but it got better. Desperate to get re-elected with a billion-dollar deficit, that member ran on a plan to take the modest seniors' education property tax rebate—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —of 235—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —\$435. And he said, if elected—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —we will borrow money to quintuple it. We will give every senior, if elected, a cheque for \$2,300. And that member day after day had to stand in the Legislature and deliver the message.

And we said—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —but member for Concordia, you don't have any money because you're \$1 billion in debt, and he said, never mind that.

So I would remind the member for Concordia that's called vote buying and Manitobans delivered their verdict on his attempt to buy their votes, and they sent the NDP to the opposition benches.

So I would just task the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) if he wants to talk about borrowing to operate. I would love to table 17 budgets of the NDP and 17 volumes of the Public Accounts—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Friesen: —that showed that for every year except three—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

There is heckling and there is chaos. What I'm hearing is chaos. I call all members to order. Quiet down.

The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has the floor; let him speak. You'll get your turn if you want to speak afterwards.

Mr. Friesen: I seem to have an alacrity for producing a certain kind of reaction in the members of the opposition. I will endeavour to incur a different response.

I would just say let the member remember that their government had a long path of borrowing to operate. It's why Standard & Poor's said about their budgets: continues to disappoint. Moody's said about their budgets: same results as before. And I could read headlines that indicated that both taxpayers, rate-payers and rating agencies had lost patience with the NDP.

Our government has a demonstrable plan to eliminate the deficit. We've shown it in the budget. We eliminated the deficit last time four years earlier than planned. We will do it again. I would remind the member that only earlier this week Standard & Poor's just returned their A-plus rating on Manitoba's credit worthiness.

Mr. Wasyliv: So, I wonder if the minister can explain, then, why two years in a row the appropriation bill for this rebate was not presented before the designated bill deadline date, and can we expect next year a new appropriation bill for the latest, you know, version of this rebate also to come after the designated bill date.

Mr. Friesen: It's interesting that the member is choosing to quarrel so much with legislative rules. That member knows that there are statutory appropriations. There are voted appropriations and there are non-voted appropriations, things like the government's credit plan in markets through the Treasury division.

And so he knows that last year, Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, was introduced to establish the rebate program. He knows that that was a statutory appropriation process. He knows that that bill received royal assent in May of 2021, exactly a year ago. It's our expectation that Bill 39 will similarly be passed through the House before this House rises for summer. We're hoping today.

But this is now a voted appropriation. If the member is taking issue with the idea of a democratic

legislature debating a money bill, he should say so. But I would have thought that he and his party would have been thrilled by the process that has been enshrined into the parliamentary traditions through the Westminster model that gives very extensive powers to opposition parties to debate these bills, to be able to bring them to committee, to hear the bills clause by clause and ask questions at those clauses exactly as is being done today. If the member would prefer a process by which there was a statutory appropriation, we could've done that, but we believe this is more in the spirit of democracy.

So we're pleased that the bill has proceeded to the committee stage. We'll be even more pleased to be able to pass this bill today, if it's the will of this House, as the members represent their constituencies and give their votes.

And we will be confused if the members of the opposition choose to try to additionally block the passage of this bill that the families in their constituencies, that the farmers in their constituencies, that the small businesses in their constituencies are waiting for and hoping for. Good luck to those NDP members as they answer their constituency correspondence and try to squirm and struggle to answer the question of why they did not permit tax measures to provide relief when all Manitobans were focused on affordability.

Mr. Wasyliw: I always enjoy the minister's lectures and diversions into democratic philosophy. But what I also enjoy is accountability and transparency. And as my role as official Finance critic, I'm not here asking questions for me; I'm asking questions on behalf of the people of Manitoba, and I think that warrants a certain amount of respect and seriousness from the minister. And coming before this Chamber and throwing up straw man arguments, I think does a disservice to us all.

It's a serious question, and the minister refused to answer it. I'm going to give him, because I believe that, you know, I'll appeal to his better angels and that he is a serious person—he wants to be taken serious as a Finance Minister—I'll give him another opportunity to actually answer the question and not disrespect Manitobans.

So will the minister explain why this bill wasn't introduced prior to the designated bill deadline?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the member knows the chronology of events in this Legislature. He knows when the budget was delivered. He knows when the budget

debate concluded. Now he seems to be quarrelling with the timing of the introduction of the bill.

The bill is being introduced to be able to allow rebate cheques to be issued concurrent with their tax bill, not the issuance of their tax bill but the deadline for receive–receipt of their education property tax. So I'm not exactly sure what issue the member thinks I'm avoiding answering, but essentially this bill is coming now because it correlates to the timing of the issuance of tax bills.

I will also go further. The member did ask a question before. I think he was asking a question on why does the number in this bill not perfectly align with what would be considered the full cost of the rebate. That's a good question. It's because we will not require the entire authority for the payment of rebates. Part of this, we're anticipating when the bill—when the budget passes and the government has, then, its proper authority for—expenditure authority for the year, we will be able to, according to some municipal tax years, be able to use that authority. So that's why the difference.

And, finally, to the question the member asked earlier: he said, well, what about next year? What will be the treatment of this next year?

I would just summarize for the member to say we will be hard at work to determine what is the most efficient way in future, once this bill is passed, to be able to enshrine this kind of annual rebate and to be able to adjust it, as might be the case in the future, according to the government prerogative. So we will cross that bridge when we come to it, but I assure the member there is contemplation, even now, of what this would look like for next year, but I could assure him it would not be a statutory appropriation.

Mr. Wasyliw: Wondering if the Finance Minister has a legal opinion stating he cannot issue education property rebate cheques in June of this year without the passage of Bill 39.

* (15:20)

Mr. Friesen: Could the member repeat the question, please?

Mr. Wasyliw: Gladly. Does the Finance Minister have a legal opinion stating he cannot issue education property rebate cheques in June of this year without the passage of this Bill 39?

Mr. Friesen: Well, we are fortunate in the Province of Manitoba to have Legislative Counsel—some of those members of Leg. Counsel join us here today in the Chamber—and we are thankful for their service.

And when government has questions and clarifications, we can go a couple of places. We can go to Leg. Counsel; we can also go to the Clerk, and the Clerk of the Legislature offers advice to the government and to opposition parties on the appropriateness of certain things. It tells us about process, it reminds us what the rules say. So that is exactly the process—oh, and of course, I would be remiss if I didn't state—and then also, in our own departments, ministers have department officials who know the rules and who work to understand the history between the way appropriations have been voted, and they offer advice as well.

So to the member's question, I would say, yes, the government has availed itself of the in-house counsel and expertise that advises government. The member says, were we advised that we do not have authority to deliver the rebate without this bill? Yes, we do not have authority as a government, with an interim appropriation at 75 per cent, because there is no reference in the interim appropriation to this rebate.

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, I'm certainly, you know, heartened by the minister's comments.

So I think it should be a very small thing for him to now agree to an undertaking to formally table to this Legislature the legal memorandum that gives him this opinion.

Mr. Friesen: I'm confused at what the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) is trying to get at, but it's starting to sound like he does not have confidence in the civil service that I indicated, at the Clerk's table and in Leg. Counsel and in departments that provide advice to government. And I know he would want to correct the record because we are well served by the clerks, by Leg. Counsel and by department officials.

He refers to a memorandum; I've referred to no memorandum. Could he be more explicit about where he thinks a memorandum exists?

There is advice to the government. The vice—the advice consists of this: Government does not have authority until the passage of the budget or the passage of specific legislation that would enact this money and action it for the ability for government to spend it out in the form of rebates to the 450,000 households, small businesses and farm families who, right now, that member is blocking from receiving their property tax rebate.

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, being a lawyer myself and having practised 22 years, I can tell the minister that, should he ask the government lawyers who are giving

him advice to reduce their legal opinion into writing, they absolutely will do that, and they will submit it to the Legislature for scrutiny. And, of course, any independent legal advice that a lawyer gives, they will stand by it, and they will reduce it to writing, and that is their professional duty, and the government just needs to ask.

So, in the spirit of accountability and 'transparency' and to build trust in this exercise with the Manitoba people, because this government certainly doesn't have it, will this minister undertake to get one of those formal legal opinions in writing and to submit it to this Legislature?

Mr. Friesen: I'm happy to answer the question. The member continues to seem to reflect on the capability of the civil servants, so I just want to express our strong confidence in Legislative Counsel at the Legislature. I've had the privilege, as the Justice minister and Attorney General, to be able to work closely with Leg. Counsel.

I still recall my first deliberate, kind of, interaction with Leg. Counsel face to face when I sponsored my first private member's bill, a pleasure and a privilege that many members in this Chamber have had. And it was a very interesting—I'm sure a torturous exercise for them because I did not understand the process, so they had to explain both process issues and content issues to me. But they were very helpful. I benefited greatly from the process.

That's the same kind of interaction that we've had now. As a minister, I have inquired about what my capability, what our government's capability, was to pass these measures. And I can assure that member that the advice from Legislative Counsel—and we developed this approach in concert with Legislative Counsel advice—was that it would take either the passage of the budget or the passage of explicit legislation to enable the rebate cheques.

So there is a workaround here. If the member agrees to simply go into the Committee of Supply to pass the 100 hours, to move through concurrence, to return to full debate and pass Budget 2022 by June the 1st, we will not need this bill because we will have, as a Legislature, the authority by which we can send this rebate without this exceptional mechanism. Why do we bring this mechanism? Because the NDP has been blocking Budget 2022.

Let us be clear: the NDP is making a decision today. They could be in the Committee of Supply. They could be holding three ministers, including the

First Minister, accountable all afternoon. They are choosing to do this instead of returning to their work.

Now, I won't give the NDP strategy on House because we've heard their strategy, and it doesn't amount to much. But, be that as it may, they choose their strategy. The opposition parties have powerful tools to be able to direct the activities of this House. But the member's making a choice today, and his choice is to hold up tax relief and hold up passage of the bill. If the member wants to, we can pass the bill within weeks, and perhaps sooner, and then we can have full authority.

But I want to return to one thing that the member said. The member said, being a lawyer himself—being a lawyer himself—and, indeed, he is. And it triggered a memory for me, it triggered a memory that I think that the member may have been a little more than disingenuous with the House, because he has been advancing a terribly torturous narrative over the last week that somehow the education property tax rebate for businesses is going to these large, large commercial landlords. And it strikes me that, probably, as a lawyer, he rents property, and it strikes me that the member probably rents commercial property. And the member may actually rent commercial property as a lawyer, for his firm, part of the consortium or group with which he works. And I bet that that member, last year, received the education property tax rebate of 10 per cent at his business place.

And as I think about it further, I would think that the member would be able to correct the record and perhaps voluntarily submit his contract with his landlord that would show, I believe, that that member may be in possession of an education property tax rebate. But it does call into question his genuineness, because he has argued that the landlord keeps the cheque—*[interjection]*—but wait, I say to the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), but wait, there's more. He has argued that the landlord keeps the cheque, but he may know first-hand that he actually received the cheque.

Will the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), today, set the record straight and indicate whether he did, indeed, as a tenant, receive the Education Property Tax Credit?

Mr. Wasyliv: You know, I enjoy political grandstanding as much as the next person, but this is a serious matter and I thought we were being serious until, you know—that.

And so, I want to get the minister back, maybe a little focus, maybe take this seriously. Maybe, you

know, centre the people of Manitoba in this conversation, if he could, you know, indulge us for a moment and do that.

And I'm wondering if the minister, in that dodge, never agreed to actually file a formal legal opinion backing up the government's position.

* (15:30)

And I think he can confirm for us the reason why he can't do that is because he knows it's not true. He knows that this is a pretext, and the government basically is creating this silly theatre that we're enduring today instead of talking about something that probably should be more consequential.

So, hopefully, the minister has been able to sort of get himself under control, and I'm wondering if he can now confirm that he will undertake to provide a formal written legal opinion to this Legislature which supports what he's saying here today.

Mr. Friesen: First, I do want to insist that these are genuine responses that I'm giving. The member is asking questions, and I'm endeavouring to the best of my ability to answer them.

I've asked a fair question of him. He has advanced arguments in this House that I believe have misled Manitobans. Those arguments have said that rich landlords keep the money and don't pass it on to renters. He has advanced these arguments. He has put these arguments on the record. And today, I'm asking if he'll correct the record.

If he has, indeed, as a renter in a commercial space, received a property tax rebate because he was renting last year for a commercial space that he and his fellow lawyers and their firm received, then I would suggest he owes the Legislature an explanation of that. He could set the record straight. Because if he was actually arguing the opposite and knew the alternate to be true, I think he needs to disclose that to the Legislature and to Manitobans and to his constituents.

And, likewise, if he is a landlord, if he is—and, indeed, I know the member in the back row—for Elmwood—is a landlord. And he has numerous commercial properties, and I know he understands these basic, you know, ideas of business. And as a landlord, and as a senior member of their caucus—*[interjection]* Well, I assume he has properties. And if he is, he would know that the rebate cheques actually do flow to the tenant.

So, the NDP could take this opportunity this afternoon and correct the record.

I do want to correct one thing I said earlier, and that is—so, I want to be clear that the government has not yet decided the mechanism for next year. It would be premature. We have not even passed this bill. So, the member is asking me to stare into a crystal ball and say, what will happen next year. I don't know what the NDP will do next year, but I can tell him, we will contemplate the means by which we bring tax relief in the form of the education property tax to Manitobans.

In the past we've said it was a statutory appropriation. This year is it a—it is a voted appropriation. And going forward, we will determine that best, and we hope, most efficient and transparent mechanism to continue to return this—these monies to Manitobans who need it.

But on the member's question, suffice it to be said: the Legislature and the government do not have authority to be able to send rebate cheques to Manitobans without a bill, without permission that this bill would provide. Without an appropriation, you cannot spend money.

When the government introduces a budget, they cannot spend the budget's money. When introduced after March 1st, the government must pass an interim appropriation act in order to get partial authority. But I remind the members of this House, that authority is not based on Budget 2022 this year. That authority must reference the last budget that was debated and passed. That is the reason why new programs can't have spending authority. They have—that authority must be derived somewhere.

And so, to the member's question, he's asking to say, do we have documents that prove on paper. I want to say to the member that unequivocally, we accept advice every single day from the civil service, from Legislative Counsel, from the deputy minister, from assistant deputy ministers, from executive directors in our departments, from the Clerk's office; and we have confidence in that advice.

And the advice to us is this: A government's ability to send these rebate cheques is derived from passing this bill or passing Budget 2022. And we are committed to passing both this bill and Budget 2022. Why? Because the NDP will always argue that now is not the time for tax relief, but we know better and, more importantly, Manitobans know better.

Mr. Wasyliv: You know, honestly, I—in my legal career, I have cross-examined crime bosses who were more, you know, forthright.

But getting back to this—to answer the minister's question of me. We all rent as constituency offices. None of us have received a rebate from last year. And I can tell you in my own commercial practice, we did not receive a rebate last year.

So I know that very much from personal experience that this corporate welfare that the minister has brought to Manitobans that he's borrowing \$40 million of taxpayers' dollars—that they're going to have to pay interest on for years—doesn't get trickled down to small business. It trickles up to Toronto shareholders.

But the question remains, and I will ask it yet again because I am always hopeful in this minister. Why won't he—what is he trying to hide, why is he refusing to table a legal opinion from independent counsel that support what he's trying to say here today? What is he scared of? Why won't he table this?

Mr. Friesen: I'm trying to think of the most efficient way to resolve this issue—which is not an issue—for the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv). He seems to lack confidence in the opinion that we have received from our senior civil servants, including Legislative Counsel and my deputy minister and the Department of Finance.

I would recommend to the member that he seek his own opinion. He could corroborate what I'm saying today by seeking an opinion. I would direct him to the Law Officer of the House. The Law Officer of the House could provide that member an opinion probably this afternoon, probably before 5 p.m. I know they're working hard, but probably it would not take much to get that member to the level of satisfaction that he seems to lack at this point.

We have—we issue no challenge with the advice that we have been given, that the government needs authority to spend. I was a Finance minister from 2016, '17 and '18. The government needs authority to spend. I was a Finance critic in the opposition benches. I went to the Committee of Supply and faced off against the Finance minister at the time during a process which was designed to test the Estimates of expenditure.

Oh, I faced off against a lot of Finance ministers because the NDP kept trading them out so often at the end there. They were kind of running out of them after a while. As a matter of fact, they got so short of Finance ministers that their last one that was the previous member for Gimli actually didn't deliver a budget. We thought he was delivering a budget, and

he said, well, I actually don't have a budget. I only have an update. *[interjection]* And—oh, sorry, and it was the member for Selkirk. And he said I don't have a budget, and there was a lot of writing about the fact that he said he was bringing a budget and then brought an update.

But I want to deal with one more issue because the member has invited it. I'm actually unsure how to debate with the member the concept of triple net. I really can't believe that we are debating a fundamental concept like triple net, whereby a commercial landlord assigns and apports that part of cost to the tenant: net of utilities, net of square footage and net of property tax.

This man is a lawyer. Could he please avail himself of the opportunity to phone Cadillac Fairview this afternoon and ask them to show him one lease. I want to assure the member. I want to assure the member that I have availed myself of the opportunity to look at masked leases that disclosed no names. I corroborated this. The education property tax flows back to the tenant from the landlord.

I spoke to a senior executive at a commercial real estate firm in Winnipeg who said that when he heard what the Leader of the Opposition and the member Fort Garry said about the treatment of property tax by tenants in a large commercial space, he said, I almost spit my coffee out; it was so dumb. And that was a direct quote. It was a direct quote. It was a direct quote from a telephone conversation. I'm unsure how I would table for the member of Concordia a direct quote from a telephone conversation, which I did not record.

* (15:40)

So—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —I feel like it's tantamount to trying to argue that you shouldn't put fuel in the fuel tank of a car.

So, let the member continue to say that the rebate doesn't go, somehow, to the tenant when we have experts, including one who wrote to the Free Press and said the Leader of the Opposition is wrong, dot, dot, dot, again; and only five days ago, completely refuted these straw man arguments that the NDP has been putting up for days.

So, if faced with the conundrum of who we should believe, commercial experts in property tax and real

estate or the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), I choose the experts.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm enjoying the entertainment this afternoon from the minister. I can see he misses his days in the theatre. But I can tell you, as somebody who's been in business for a long time and who has dealt with commercial leases, that's just not how business works.

But the question I have for the minister is, under what legal authority—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: And I'll repeat because I may have been, you know, misheard. Under what legal authority did this government issue \$200 cheques to every senior in Manitoba in 2020, which amounted to, interestingly enough, \$45 million?

So, how do—how were we able to do that without one of these bills?

Mr. Friesen: Explanation to the member: He asks on what authority did the government send relief to Manitoba families during COVID-19, and, indeed, I would just want to preamble and say our government was very pleased to be among the most generous provinces in all of Canada; helping families, helping health-care workers, helping employers and small businesses, billions of dollars of relief to individuals, families, households and businesses.

But the authority for that was derived in the internal service adjustment that the government voted. And he saw, in the appropriations, central amounts that were held centrally and not distributed to departments, to be able to give governments manoeuvrability to respond and to be able to pay as things arose. And that is the purpose of ISA in part—to provide authority to spend when there are exigent and arising circumstances.

Now, the member's next question, I will actually be able to interpret already now. He's going to say, then why did you not use ISA to send the rebate cheques? Tell me if I'm getting warm.

And I would say to the member, the reason we don't is because this tax relief package is in the Estimates of expenditure. On that day in April, when we delivered the budget, we conveyed to Manitobans our government's plan to provide tax relief, and that tax relief stated in the budget and then the Estimates

of expenditure now needs authority to be able to action.

That authority could come if the NDP support Budget 2022. Indeed, if the NDP gives commitments today through their House leaders that they will pass the budget by June the 1st, we won't require this bill at all.

But, short of those assurances, we do require, in this Legislature—*[interjection]*—just ask for the Leader of the Opposition's attention to finish the answer—we do require—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —we do require authority to pass these tax measures, authority that we are seeking in Bill 39, a bill that we hope will pass at the Legislature later this afternoon.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions? Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clause 2—the question before the committee is the amendment moved by the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) to clause 2.

Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of pass—*[interjection]*.

Order.

All those in favour of passing the amendment to clause 2, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed to passing the amendment to clause 2, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

* * *

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: There are no points of order while putting the question.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Wiebe: So, I'd like to call for a recorded vote.

Mr. Chairperson: The member for Concordia has requested a recorded vote. A recorded vote having been requested by two members, call in the members.

* (15:50)

Order, please. The question before the committee is the amendment to clause 2, moved by the honourable member for Fort Garry.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Naylor, Sala, Smith (Point Douglas), Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Khan, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 17, Nays 32.

Mr. Chairperson: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business before the committee.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

* (16:00)

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate), and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), that the report of committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 39—The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate)

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Natural Resources and Northern Development, that Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

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

Are there members wishing to debate?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Does the honourable minister have a—some comments?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, our government is pleased that Bill 39, our government's tax relief plan for Manitobans has proceeded to third reading. We are looking forward to third reading and passage of this bill this afternoon at the Manitoba Legislature, to provide Manitobans the right tax relief at this point in time when Manitobans, indeed, are focused on affordability.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Madam Speaker, this has never been about the children or schools or the education system.

A year ago, we had a failing government that saw their poll numbers crash and, in desperation, this was a political Hail Mary that they sent out there, in desperate hopes to try to save this failing government. And not once has this ever been about—not once has there ever been a discussion, is this making our school system better, is this making our schools more sustainable? Because the answer, Madam Speaker, is absolutely not.

You know, there was a time in this province that 80 per cent of the funding for schools was paid for by general revenue, by income taxes and corporate taxes, and about 20 per cent was property tax. That's now

flipped, and when this government took office, there was a—60 per cent provided by the Province and about 40 per cent in property taxes.

Under their watch, that has gotten worse, and property taxes now account for almost, you know, 58 per cent of the revenue and climbing. And in some school districts, people pay more in property taxes to fund their schools than they do from general revenue. And this government has no solution for that. In fact, they have no interest in that. And they have frozen funding for our schools for the past six years, and with inflation, that has amounted as a cut.

Now, school boards trying to protect their schools have had to raise education property taxes to backfill the cuts. So this government didn't like that, and they put an end to that practice. Now school boards are faced with declining shares of revenue from this government and the inability to backfill those cuts, which we're seeing harsh consequences and harsh cuts to our school systems. We are seeing less teachers employed today in Manitoba than before this government was elected, and that's with a rising population and a rising school population.

We are seeing valuable programs—like full-day kindergarten, something that other provinces just take for granted—getting dismantled and cut. These programs help the most vulnerable citizens in Manitoba, but this government isn't interested in that. This government doesn't want to talk about that. This government doesn't want to talk about the achievement gap in this province between the very poor students and the very rich. They're not interested in improving our schools. They have brought in no new measures to help our students succeed.

So what we have is a tax cut, which disproportionately benefits the wealthiest in society, those who are benefiting already from our economy, those who are winning in our economic system, and it puts the tax burden on people who don't have money. Forty per cent of Manitobans are renters, and they saw a tax increase from this government. There is absolutely no caps here for how many properties you own or how big your estate is or if you are a Manitoba corporation or a Toronto large corporation or if you're a big multi-national corporation that makes billions of dollars of revenue in a year. This bill doesn't distinguish between any of them. And we know the result: that those at the top get four times the benefit than those at the bottom.

So it is absolutely disingenuous for this government to say that this is somehow making life more

affordable. It is doing the opposite because the cuts to the schools mean that parents are more out of pocket for all kinds of new school fees they never had to pay. It means that renters and working people have to bear a larger burden of the tax system than they have ever before. And it means that we are borrowing money so corporations like Apple and Cadillac Fairview can get a tax break.

And that money is leaving the province. It is not in our economy. It's not creating jobs. It's not generating any new economic activity, and it is not going to pay for our schools and for our health-care system. And, of course, we need that right now. We are straining. We have a hospital system that is collapsing, and we have a school system that is cramming children into classrooms, cutting valuable programs and not providing the level of education that our students deserve and Manitobans expect.

And this government could've made this a little better. They could have said, you know what, yes, we agree. We shouldn't do corporate welfare. We can't afford it, and we can't borrow money to do that. But they stood up today in this House, and they stood up for the Cadillac Fairviews instead of standing up for Manitobans. This government cannot go door to door and look Manitobans in the eye and say that they fought for them. In fact, they're going to say we fought against you.

* (16:10)

But with our vote today, and on this side of the House, we can hold our heads up high knowing that we are on the right side of this issue and that we will always be there for Manitobans, and that we will fight for the actual affordability of Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, yes, we've spoken against this bill. You know, it's fiscally reckless. I said it, I've called it immoral.

I mean, right now, we just had a court decision that this government is supposed to be—was found to be illegally keeping \$338 million. They violated the rights of First Nations students—and children in care, forgive me—and we can find \$350 million for this oligarch-friendly bill, but we can't find \$350 million for children, First Nations children, whose rights have been violated for years, some of whom are homeless, some of whom are in jail, who have been stranded and

who are owed—thousands and thousands of children who are owed millions of dollars by this government, but instead we're going to be doing this.

And we can talk a bit briefly just about the flow through. And I say it's oligarch-friendly because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has said, well, you know, who is this money—we're going to be returning this money to tenants.

So let's just talk about—talk briefly about Cadillac Fairview. Cadillac Fairview is owned by the Ontario teachers pension fund. So that money is actually going—and nobody wants—the NDP, apparently, doesn't want to talk about that because we have a huge problem, quite frankly, with what's called pension fund capitalism in Canada, which is a huge obstacle to us actually dealing with inequality because pension funds own malls and malls are filled with people who pay—or paid minimum wage, and stores—multinational stores—where people sell products made in countries with terrible human rights records.

So we're kind of—we're in a trap. But this is not getting out of this trap. But if you look at—well, who owns Shoppers Drug Mart or who owns Loblaws? Well, it's the Weston family. They're billionaires. Who owns the Richardson building? Well, it's the Richardsons. They're billionaire—and some of these people are very—they're nice, nice people. Not all billionaires are Elon Musk; they're not all Bond villains.

But the fact is this is a terrible, terrible bill that's going to be—we're borrowing money. Little Manitoba is going to be borrowing \$350 million and we're going to be sending cheques to CN. Who's the biggest shareholder in CN, is Bill Gates. He's one of the richest people in the world. He's a multi, multi-billionaire. These are people whose personal wealth exceeds the GDP of Manitoba—and we're borrowing money to help them out?

And the same is true of the Ontario teachers fund. It's a trillion-dollar fund. It makes 10 per cent year over year over year, and the reason it does that is because it depends on owning all sorts of stuff that's been privatized all over the world, including land in Manitoba.

So this is a terrible, terrible bill. There's nothing fiscally responsible about it. There's nothing fiscally Conservative about it, because what this government is doing is borrowing. We are borrowing to subsidize

tax cuts. We are borrowing money to write cheques to some of the wealthiest people on the planet.

How does that make sense, especially given the news that this government violated the constitutional rights of thousands and thousands of First Nations children who are the most vulnerable and poorest people in this province and we know that they've been suffering for years and for decades.

This is an immoral bill. It shouldn't pass.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

* (16:20)

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 39, The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate).

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Khan, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Mickelfield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Nays

Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Naylor, Sala, Smith (Point Douglas), Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 17.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly passed.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The House will now prepare for royal assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cam Steel): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Honour Janice C. Filmon, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

At this sitting, The Legislative Assembly has passed a certain bill that I ask Your Honour to give assent to.

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Vanessa Gregg):

Bill 39 – The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School Tax Rebate); Loi de 2022 portant affectation de crédits (remboursement de taxes scolaires)

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In Her Majesty's name, Her Honour assents to this bill.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker: I'm noting for the House that on April 8th, 2022, I received a letter from the House leaders—oh.

The House may be seated.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): Will you canvass the House to see if there's a willingness to call it 5 o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is there a willingness of the House to call it 5 o'clock, agreed? *[Agreed]*

I'm noting for the House that on April 8th, 2022, I received a letter from the House leaders advising of their agreement that the Committee of Supply will sit on May 13th, May 20th and May 27th.

Accordingly, in order to comply with this direction, I will be recessing the House at 5 p.m. today with the understanding that the three sections of the Committee of Supply will be meeting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

Therefore, the hour being 5 p.m., the House is now in recess.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 19, 2022

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		UMFA Labour Dispute	
		Moses	2196
		Helwer	2196
Bill 239–The Ecological Reserves Amendment Act (Ecological Corridors)		Post-Secondary Education	
Gerrard	2187	Moses	2196
		Reyes	2197
Ministerial Statements		Funds for Indigenous Children in CFS Care	
Vyshyvanka Day		Bushie	2197
A. Smith	2187	Squires	2197
Wasyliw	2188	Funds for Indigenous Children in CFS Care	
Lamoureux	2188	Lamont	2198
		Squires	2198
Members' Statements		Low-Income Manitobans Receiving CERB	
Winnipeg Bruins U17 Hockey Champions		Lamoureux	2199
A. Smith	2189	Friesen	2199
Duncan Mercredi		Education Funding	
Naylor	2189	Guenter	2199
Mennonite Peace Trail		Ewasko	2199
Schuler	2190	Education Property Tax	
Jamboree on the Trail		Wasyliw	2199
Wiebe	2190	Friesen	2200
Political Violence and Racism		Petitions	
Lamont	2191	Youth Consent for Mental Health Treatment	
Oral Questions		Asagwara	2201
Health-Care System		South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier	
Kinew	2192	Wiebe	2201
Cullen	2192	Drug Overdose Reporting	
Construction of WPS Headquarters		B. Smith	2202
Kinew	2193	Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library	
Goertzen	2193	Altomare	2202
Health System Support Workers		Speed Reduction on PR 392	
Asagwara	2194	Lindsey	2203
Helwer	2194	Scrap Metal Legislation–Consumer Protection	
Public Sector Employees		Maloway	2203
Lindsey	2195	Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library	
Helwer	2195	Sala	2204
Post-Secondary Education		Marcelino	2205
Moses	2196		
Reyes	2196		

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Committee of the Whole

Bill 39–The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School
Tax Rebate)

Wasyliw

2207

Friesen

2207

Committee Report

Micklefield

2215

Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 39–The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School
Tax Rebate)

Friesen

2216

Wasyliw

2216

Lamont

2217

Royal Assent

Bill 39 – The Appropriation Act, 2022 (School
Tax Rebate)

2218

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