

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James, Hon.	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>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 18—The Legislative Security Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), that Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill will strengthen security measures by designating a portion of Memorial Provincial Park as part of the legislative precinct. This amendment will enhance security at the Legislature and ensure that all the grounds in its immediate vicinity are under the jurisdiction of the chief legislative security officer.

This will also extend the Province's authority over regulated or prohibited activities at the park and legislative security officers to respond to the incidents at the park.

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

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 19—The Provincial Offences Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), that Bill 19, The Provincial Offences Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This particular bill will clarify that regarding tickets, the information contained in an appendix attached to a certificate of evidence signed by an enforcement officer or other authorized person is admissible as part of the proof of facts set out in the appendix as—is the information contained in the certificate of evidence.

It also clarifies that there are no interlocutory appeals or of decisions made on motions or other preliminary matters in proceedings under the act unless the act specifically allows for the appeal.

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

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 20—The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 20, The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) and Related Amendments Act received royal assent on May 20th, 2021, and establishes a new conflict of interest regime which will come into force one day after the election of the next general election—one day after election day.

This bill contains amendments that are largely administrative which will serve to clarify and enhance the new legislation before it comes into force. The amendments have been prepared based on recommendations provided by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Doug Mackie

Hon. Kevin E. Klein (Minister of Environment and Climate): Today, I'm proud to stand and recognize the outstanding contributions of Kirkfield Park resident Doug Mackie, who has been instrumental in supporting men's mental health in our community by establishing Men's Sheds in Manitoba.

Men's Sheds are community-based organizations that provide a safe and supportive space for men to connect, share their experiences and engage in a meaningful way through activities. Since 2007, chapters have been started worldwide with a shared mission to promote men's mental health and well-being through community engagement, Madam Speaker, and peer support.

Doug was the founder and organizer of the Woodhaven Men's Shed in Kirkfield Park in 2011, the first in Manitoba. Doug has provided a safe and welcoming space for men of all ages and backgrounds to connect. His tireless efforts to promote Men's Sheds throughout our province have helped establish five groups in Winnipeg and 51 organizations Manitoba.

Mental health is critical issue for men of all ages and backgrounds, and Men's Sheds are vital in supporting the well-being of men. We can all make a difference in the lives of those struggling by listening, by reaching out. Doug is making a huge difference in the lives of so many.

Mr. Mackie joins us in the gallery today along with other Men's Sheds members—Harold [*phonetic*], Robert [*phonetic*] and Allan [*phonetic*—and I encourage all members to please join me in acknowledging Doug Mackie and others' work, for his years of service in our province, for his leadership, passion and commitment that has helped men throughout our province. Let's honour his work and continue to support such organizations like Men's Sheds in their mission to promote mental health and well-being.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Addiction Treatment and Housing Supports

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Manitoba is currently undergoing addictions and housing crisis, but the PC government is refusing to act. We are

seeing record number high—record high numbers of opioid overdose deaths, a huge increase in meth-caused illnesses and violence and acute lack of affordable housing. Too many preventable deaths have occurred while this PC government has repeatedly refused to open a safe consumption site or properly invest in social housing.

This can't be an issue of different ideologies or political opinions. It's about life and death. It's about the Manitoban who froze to death in the bus shelter because they didn't have access to safe and secure housing. It's about the Manitoban being turned away from under-resourced, overwhelmed RAAM clinics while trying to access supports they need to overcome addictions. And it's about those who have lost their lives trying to overcome their addiction and the failure of this PC government to offer the resources necessary.

Instead of listening to experts, the PC government has repeatedly made things worse. They've sold off 1,700 social housing units. Under their watch, rent and cost of living increases have driven many into housing insecurities and homelessness. They've refused to open a safe consumption site, even though they have been proven to save lives.

* (13:40)

The addictions and housing crises go hand in hand, and we cannot address one without addressing also the other. We need a well-rounded approach of wrap-around supports to save lives and build meaningful, long-term solutions. Instead, we have years of inaction under this PC government.

We need a government that is compassionate and takes action to provide dignity for those struggling.

To those who are struggling today, you are our heroes as you fight each and every day to survive. We see you, we hear you, we support you and you are not alone.

Buzz Crowston

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Buzz Crowston has been participating in the annual Riding Mountain Christmas Bird Count, without fail, for 33 consecutive years.

Crowston's mother was a birder, so he became fascinated at a very young age. He finally became more serious about it in 1978, when he began to keep meticulous records.

Moving to Onanole in 1989, Crowston and his wife, Bev, lived in the area for 30 years while raising their son and daughter. Finally, in 1999, the couple moved to Brandon.

The move hasn't stopped Buzz from participating in the annual Christmas Bird Count and he continues to look forward to the event each year, often also volunteering for the Minnedosa and Brandon CBCs.

Each bird count area is a 22.5-kilometre circle that stays the same from year to year. Each participant is assigned a specific territory, which in Buzz's case has always been Whirlpool Lake and out toward Cowan Lake. Most years, he sees six or seven different species, with his very best year being 11.

Since 1900, the CBC has occurred between December 13th and January 5th across North America. It is touted as the longest running ornithology database, representing well over a century of uninterrupted data.

Crowston believes it's important to participate in a citizen science endeavour that contributes to such a useful body of knowledge. He is certainly not alone because, according to an Ontario birding blog, in 2021 there were 450 counts performed with roughly 15,000 volunteers in Canada alone.

Bird count data collects—supports management and conservation decisions regarding topics as diverse as climate change, pesticide use, habitat loss and hunting practices.

If the scientific contribution, camaraderie and his continuing contributions as a naturalist aren't enough, Buzz made this comment: The CBCs are a reason to be out in nature and are, in a way, partly spiritual for me, because being out in the forest surrounded by nature is absolutely my happy place.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Buzz Crowston for his 33 years of participation in the Christmas Bird Count.

Security System Rebate Program

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, now's the time for the provincial government to take a leadership role and work with municipalities to establish a province-wide tax rebate program to encourage residents and businesses to purchase approved home and business security protection systems. It's time, because everyone deserves to feel safe in their own home and these home protection systems should be within everyone's reach.

Our door-to-door canvassing in northeast Winnipeg last fall strongly confirmed that surveys which showed public safety was a major concern. These surveys showed Manitobans understood more than ever poverty, crime and public safety are connected, multi-dimensional issues with no quick fixes.

Probe Research and Angus Reid surveys also showed most Manitobans surveyed felt the city was less safe than three years ago.

We know from recent media reports Swan River municipality called on all levels of government for help with their public safety concerns.

Cities like Chicago; Washington, DC; and Orillia, Ontario are offering home security rebate programs that enhance public safety and allow for the more efficient use of their policing resources. We should do the same.

Chicago's rebate program is open to businesses, religious institutions and non-profit organizations. Renters can also apply. Their program rebates eligible costs of varying amounts for approved equipment such as cameras, lights and vehicle GPS tracking devices.

Home security protection systems deter burglaries, and whole neighbourhoods benefit when more homes and businesses have these systems.

Manitobans also support rebate programs like these as they help the most vulnerable in our community by removing financial barriers for personal protection.

Health-Care Services

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): The health-care services that our province provides are critical and there are many things we should be doing differently to improve bedside care and community-based services.

For example, we need to learn from our mistakes. My constituents have expressed great concern about the current state of our emergency services.

With respect to last week's emergency room tragedy, I reflect back to 2008, when the NDP were in government and an individual waited for 34 hours in emergency in our biggest hospital, only to have been found 12 hours after they had already passed away. It was a terrible tragedy, and allow me to table the story.

Madam Speaker, when this happened, an inquiry was called, and I do not understand why it would appear as though nothing has changed in 15 years.

In addition to this, Madam Speaker, we need to do way better at recognizing credentials and making pathways for those who are trained and wanting to work in health care.

We also need clarity. Constituents have told me that they don't know what hospital to go to for services. And those waiting for surgeries, Madam Speaker, and MRIs, there are people here in Manitoba right now who need an MRI on their brain, but because the wait-lists are so long, they can't even be provided a date for an appointment.

Madam Speaker, we need to be preventative. We need to talk about diabetes prevention, making sure that insulin and pumps are affordable, and mental health prevention by regulating psychotherapy. This would not only provide services people desperately need, but it will also save money in our health-care system.

Health care is evidently the biggest issue in our province right now and we need to be less partisan at the expense of Manitobans' health. That's all of us, whether in government or in opposition, and we need to focus on bringing forward tangible solutions that we can implement right now to fix a broken system.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to introduce to you our former member, Joy Smith, who is joining us and sitting in the loge to my left.

Welcome to Joy. It's nice to have you join us. Oh, and she's with the—she used to be with the constituency of Fort Garry.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Patient Death at Health Sciences Centre Government Knowledge of ER Conditions

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, a Manitoban died waiting for care in the emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre last Monday. I extend my condolences to this person's friends and family.

Front-line workers are now speaking out about the conditions in the emergency room that night. These nurses say that they warned this government months and months ago that something dire was about to take place. But their concerns were ignored.

Manitobans deserve to hear the answers and they deserve accountability. Can the Premier tell this House when her government first became aware of the crisis at the Health Sciences Centre emergency room?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to the family of the individual who lost their lives in the Health Sciences Centre.

Out of respect to the family, we want to ensure that the process takes place. The investigative process as to what transpired during this time and resulted in this is continuing to take place right now, Madam Speaker. We need to ensure that that process continues to take place out of respect for the family.

We, certainly, on this side of the House believe that that process needs to be taken out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Call for Independent Investigation

Mr. Kinew: And I quote, Madam Speaker: What we're having a hard time with is this man had no dignity. End quote. Those are the words of an emergency room nurse.

* (13:50)

That's because the concerns of these front-line workers was ignored by this government. I'll quote again: We've talked with the government. We have tried to bring to light all the issues and the 'patients'—patient safety concerns that we've had. End quote. That's what front-line workers are saying. And yet, their concerns have not been taken seriously by this government.

There's nothing preventing the Premier from telling this House when her government learned about the staffing issues at the Health Sciences Centre. There's nothing preventing the Premier from addressing the concerns brought forward by these nurses or the failure in communication by her government to respond to them in a timely fashion.

One way that we can get answers to these questions is by calling an independent investigation.

Will the Premier call such an investigation and start to answer these questions today?

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, there is an investigation under way right now with respect to this particular incident, and out of respect to the family, out of respect to the process and out of respect to the law—because we know that personal health information is very sacred in this province. It is ruled under the law in Manitoba. We respect those laws, too.

So we, on this side of the House, certainly will ensure that that investigative process has the time to take place. And, as I had said yesterday as well, Madam Speaker, we will make sure that the results of that are made public.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, nurses who work in the emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre are now speaking out. We should recognize their courage because they are doing so at the great risk of reprisal at the hands of this government, which we know has fired many nurses over their time in office.

We also know that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—nurses are speaking out because they're very upset about the conditions at the emergency room at Health Sciences Centre and at many of the other emergency departments across this province. That's why an independent investigation is needed because we see, day after day, from this Premier that she refuses to engage with the substantive issues and questions that they brought forward around staffing, about why their concerns were ignored, about what happened to the warnings brought forward by the nurses when they arrived at the table of this Health Minister and this Premier.

Will the Premier respond to these concerns by calling an independent investigation today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to the family with respect to this individual incident. We know that it's going through the investigative process. We respect that process.

But, again, the litany of false accusations from the Leader of the Opposition—he continues with that—along that path, Madam Speaker. It's unfortunate because it doesn't exemplify anywhere near the truth of what is transpiring in the province of Manitoba.

But we are making significant investments in nurses in the province of Manitoba. We want to thank all of our front-line nurses out there for the incredible work that they do. But we are investing more than \$200 million in health human resources, Madam Speaker. That includes nurses, and especially in the areas of recruitment, retention and training. And we're making significant investments in those areas.

And we will continue to respect the work of this investigative process as it moves forward.

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

Mr. Kinew: I would ask the Premier to say specifically, on the record, in the House today, what she takes exception to.

The nurses spoke out courageously, taking to a public forum to raise their concerns. They raised their concerns around the lack of dignity afforded to this patient. Was that untrue? They raised concerns about bringing their concerns forward to this government. Was that untrue? They brought forward their concerns about the staffing crisis in the Health Sciences Centre. Was that untrue?

Because from where I'm standing, the people of Manitoba believe nurses when it comes to health care. And the way that this government could begin to restore trust in the chaos and the system issues that they've caused would be to call an independent investigation.

Will they do so today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I thank the nurses who have come forward. I also—and that, of course, will be part of the investigative process that continues to move forward.

We also respect the doctors, the other health-care professionals and others that were—as part of this, Madam Speaker. And that's part of the investigative process, and we need to allow that process to move forward.

So I thank, you know, all of those people in the front line of our health-care system that do incredible work day in, day out to help Manitobans and vulnerable Manitobans who are sick in our hospitals, and I thank them every day, Madam Speaker.

We will continue to work with nurses. I know the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) has been out and helping and listening to front-line nurses that really were the ones who came forward with nine different areas on the retention side of things to help them do—be able to do their jobs.

And I know in a moment I'll be able to indicate to the House what those nine areas are, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I think we can all note the change in tone that the Premier just adopted in that answer to the question.

Again, nurses have been very clear that there are issues in the Health Sciences Centre emergency room with regard to staffing. The nurses have also been very clear that they brought forward these questions to this government and that no action was taken in response.

The Premier invokes physicians. Well, what have physicians said about this issue? Physicians are the ones who confirmed that this patient tragically died in a hallway at the HSC emergency room.

The type of investigative process which has been triggered here will not be made public, so I would like the Premier to explain by which process specifically these questions will be answered to the people of Manitoba.

Or, she could simply call an independent investigation today and start on the process of rebuilding trust with the people of Manitoba: Will she do so?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, it's through an investigative process that is taking place right now with respect to this incident that took place—and, again, our hearts go out to the family, this is a very difficult time for them—we want to respect that family to ensure that they get the answers that they need to this.

We need to allow that process to take place, Madam Speaker. We need to respect the process when it comes to this incident. And I will tell you, we have the respect for the family, respect for the process. We also have respect for the law; that the Chamber of the Manitoba Legislature is no place to be having discussions about individual cases.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that it is inappropriate to break the law when it comes to any incident, but particularly in this area when it comes to personal health information about an individual.

We have respect for the family. We will follow that process.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, no personal health information has been shared in this debate, and for the Premier to invoke that now suggests either (1) she doesn't understand PHIA or (2) perhaps she's invoking it to try and shield herself from accountability questions.

Madam Speaker, we know that the process which is under way will not yield public reporting of the

results. That's why we need an independent investigation.

Nurses brought these concerns to government, and nothing was followed up on by the PCs. This government ought to answer these questions, and they can easily do so in a way that doesn't reveal any personal health information. Physicians weighed in and they provided details without revealing any personal health information about this situation regarding this person's death.

There are many ways that this government could begin to restore trust in the health-care system under their watch, but they need to do so by calling an independent investigation; one whose results will yield public answers.

Will the Premier do so today?

Mrs. Stefanson: What the leader of the under—the opposition doesn't understand is respect, Madam Speaker, respect for the family that has just gone through a horrific, tragic event within their family.

What the Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —the law, Madam Speaker.

And, Madam Speaker, what I will say, though, is we know that we're having significant—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —challenges when it comes to health human resources in the province of Manitoba. Nothing unique to our province, it's something faced right across the country.

* (14:00)

What is unique is how we are dealing with that, Madam Speaker. We've been working with front-line nurses and we have heard loud and clear from them some of the things that they want to see from us.

And we've been acting: a new hourly premium for nurses who work weekend hours, a new annual payment for nurses who hold the equivalent of a full-time position—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —as this helps to build more stability into the workforce, reimbursing the costs of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: –nurses' professional licensing fees. And yet—Madam Speaker, the list goes on.

I know members opposite don't want to hear this good news. They don't want to hear how we're working very—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Northern Manitoba Health Care Travel to Winnipeg for Services

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): Access to health-care services is a real challenge to the daily lives of folks living in the North. This—the PC cuts to—have forced more and more people to travel as far as Winnipeg for care, and patients are being moved across the North far from family.

When will this government take responsibility for the mess it has caused to health care in northern Manitoba?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): We have taken responsibility for ensuring individuals in the North receive the care that they need close to home.

That is why our government has invested \$812 million in the clinical preventative services plan, Madam Speaker, to ensure services are provided to individuals living in the North close to home so that they're not having to travel far distances away from their support system—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: –something the members opposite never did during their time in government.

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

Mr. Redhead: This government has no regard for northerners. Their cuts are forcing more patients from Thompson, Flin Flon, The Pas and remote First Nations communities to travel to Winnipeg just to seek essential health-care services.

And once they arrive in Winnipeg, many of these people find out they can't even get care because the shifts aren't being filled by the health-care workers. This is costly, wasteful and cruel.

How is the minister ensuring Manitobans can get access to health care when they need it?

Ms. Gordon: Well, it was our government that sat down with 30 different stakeholders from across the North to talk about the challenges and the issues that

are facing individuals who live in the North. I didn't hear any comments during that summit or round-table discussion about members opposite ever sitting down with those 30 stakeholder groups, Madam Speaker.

It is our government that is offering incentives to ensure—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, every time I stand up in the House, members opposite shout me down. They don't want Manitobans to hear what our government is doing to assist Manitobans living in the North.

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

Mr. Redhead: The PC cuts are resulting in more northerners having to travel to Winnipeg for essential health-care services. This includes long-term-care patients that the PCs have sent out of their home communities without even notifying their families. This is just wrong. And to make matters worse, flight delays and cancellations regularly result in delayed services.

When will the minister finally prioritize health care—the health-care needs for northern Manitobans?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, members opposite seem to want to talk about health transportation services in the North, so let's look at their record.

Under their watch, six years ago, the northern patient transport program was crumbling and underutilized because it was terribly underfunded. So, even when—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: –individuals needed to travel for care—oops—no money was there under their watch.

Our government more than doubled the funding of the program to \$18 million. That are—that—those are the supports that our government is providing to individuals living in the North.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition Costs and Funding

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): We need to increase our investment at Manitoba universities and colleges during times of economic challenges to help prepare our workforce for recovery.

Sadly, this tired PC government instead cut funding by nearly 18 per cent. Thankfully, the minister has an opportunity and has the power to reverse these cuts.

The question is: Will he do so today?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I appreciate the opportunity to answer my first question in this new portfolio.

And I want to echo the member opposite's comments about really investing in our post-secondary institutes. And year over year, our government has worked collaboratively with post-secondary institutions and stakeholders and leaders to find out the areas that need more investments to respond to our labour market needs. They have been amazing partners to work with.

I think that the member opposite can hold on for a little bit longer. We're going to hear some amazing news in the next budget, and I look forward to the questions that follow the budget.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for—
[interjection] Order.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, the fact is that the PC government cuts and chronic underfunding to our universities and colleges mean that our students are not getting the support that they need.

While other provinces have taken steps to make tuition more affordable, here in Manitoba the PC government has raised tuition by 25 per cent.

How will this minister support our students and the added cost that this government has forced them 'winto' with their tuition increases year after year after year?

Mrs. Guillemard: I do want to remind the member opposite that we've gone through the last couple years of a pandemic. And I want to actually thank the post-secondary institutes for all of the hard work that they have done to continue education for students and so that their education wouldn't be interrupted.

There have been investments made year over year into every post-secondary institute, and we have worked very well with our stakeholders in every single corner of this province.

And we look forward to more good news to share with the member opposite after this budget.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, this mean-spirited PC government is making life more expensive for students. They've increased tuition by 25 per cent. That represents \$1,200 more a year that students

are paying since this government took office.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: And on top of that, they cut international student health care. It simply means that life is unaffordable for many students.

Will this government simply stop the cuts?

Mrs. Guillemard: I'll remind the member opposite that a lot of the investments we have made to make life more affordable for our students have kept tuition low, the lowest in western Canada, which is why we attract so many students.

Madam Speaker, we have made investments in opening up new seats for nurse training. We have made investments in opening up new seats for physician training. We are looking forward to filling in the member opposite with more details of good news coming in the very next budget.

Chronic Wasting Disease in Wildlife Population Testing Capacity and Spread Prevention

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Madam Speaker, another species of deer in Manitoba was recently found with chronic wasting disease.

CWD is incurable, fatal disease that has the potential to devastate 'cevid' populations such as elk, moose, deer and caribou. If the disease spreads, it could be here to stay forever.

Urgent action is needed to prevent CWD from becoming widespread in Manitoba.

* (14:10)

Can the minister tell us what he's doing to address this serious issue?

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Our government is certainly taking a proactive approach to combat chronic wasting disease in mule deer. We have implemented a hunting season for mule deer, increased monitoring efforts and invested in research to better understand the disease.

We're also working with experts to develop a comprehensive management plan to protect the health of our wildlife populations.

While fatal for deer, CWD is not known as a human risk, but meat from a CWD-infected animal is not recommended for consumption. That is why we are encouraging hunters to get their harvested animals

tested and practise safe carcass handling protocols. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Mr. Wasyliv: Chronic wasting disease was first detected in 2021 in mule deer. Now it's found in white-tailed deer. CWD has the potential to seriously threaten Manitoba's 'cevid' herd, which would impact our ecosystems, conservation efforts and hunting. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: More positive tests could be discovered as wait times are around 16 to 20 weeks, due to there being more submissions than capacity for testing. That's significant delay that could hamper CWD prevention efforts.

Can the minister tell us whether his government plans on bolstering testing capacity? *[interjection]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

I'm expecting a little bit better behaviour and civility from members here today when we have a full gallery of people. This should be a respectful debate, and I'm asking for members' co-operation, please.

Mr. Nesbitt: I certainly want to commend our hunters for taking chronic wasting disease seriously and their efforts in managing CWD.

However, submissions have exceeded the capacity to test samples at accredited labs and are leading to higher than expected wait times. That's why we have been taking action to outsource samples outside of the province, to try to catch up to the tremendous response from hunters.

And I urge the member to stay tuned this afternoon for further announcements.

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

Mr. Wasyliv: Madam Speaker, it's the same problems; it's the same failed responses. The government has underfunded our civil service. We can't provide basic services, so now we've got to privatize them and send them to another province. It's absolutely shameful.

It's clear that anyone that cares about wildlife and the environment, that urgent action needs to be taken

to prevent the further spread of CWD. Yet, the Province doesn't currently have enough testing capacity, keep up with the submissions.

Can the minister explain how this government is planning to prevent the spread of CWD without adequately testing capacity?

Mr. Nesbitt: That's pretty rich coming from that side of the House. They had a government that failed to take any action on CWD monitoring.

Our government is taking this issue very seriously, because we know if it's left unchecked, there could be serious devastation to our wildlife populations. Our government is committed to addressing this issue head-on by investing in targeted—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nesbitt:—surveillance, research and other science-based approaches to wildlife management, and work towards protecting the health of our wildlife populations for future generations.

Overdose Death Reporting Request for Support for Bill 221

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): We're now three months into 2023 and we still don't have the statistics for the number of overdose deaths here in Manitoba for 2022.

Madam Speaker, 2021 broke records for the number of overdose deaths, and we're worried that 2022 numbers will be even higher.

Accessibility, timely data and vital—is vitally important to help inform the response on the addiction crisis. Yet, this government is failing to provide the data. Bill 221 would change this by requiring the Province to provide monthly overdose death updates as well as outlining contributing drugs.

Will the PCs do the right thing and support Bill 221 today?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I want to begin by first offering condolences to the families who have lost members to overdose. Every death is a tragedy, and we will continue to work with community partners and governments to address this worldwide trend to help—provide Manitobans who need it.

Also, in December of 2022, our government launched a substance-related harm surveillance report central location to share data on overdose deaths, hospitalization and emergency room presentations.

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

Mrs. Smith: In 2020, Manitoba saw a record 372 overdose deaths here in our province. In 2021, we reached 407 overdose deaths.

These are people's loved ones. And people are working on the front lines, and they fear that the numbers this year or last year are even higher, yet we can't get—we don't know for certain because this Province won't give the numbers to the front-line workers so that they can do the work that they need to do.

Bill 221 would change this. This would give them the data that they need. It would require them to provide monthly overdose death updates as well as break down—a breakdown of which drug contributed to the death. This would help us respond to the addictions crisis and would ensure transparency—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Our government has put lots of supports in place to assist individuals on their—in their pursuit of recovery. And as we look at the recovery-oriented system of care, we have provided over \$760,000 for the take-home naloxone kits where 26,000 individuals have sought these kits at 200 different facilities.

We have invested money in RAAM clinics, six of which have opened, a seventh to open soon, which will be helping individuals in the Aboriginal health.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Smith: Simply providing those services isn't enough. We're seeing these numbers rise in this province under this government. A safe consumption site is what the experts are asking for, and this government is not listening.

We've heard RAAM clinic staff speak out against this government that they're not providing enough supports for those that are wanting to get treatment.

So I'll ask this minister again: Will they do the right thing? Will they support 221 and be transparent and tell the front-line workers how many deaths have happened monthly and what drugs that they're overdosing from, so that they can help and support Manitobans and save lives here?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Our government believes recovery is possible for all Manitobans. That's why we believe in the recovery-oriented system of care.

We have RAAM clinics which provide withdrawal medical services, mobile management services, opiate agonist treatment, short- and long-term residential addictions treatment, supportive recovery housing and outreach and 1,000 treatment spaces that we are dedicated to getting in place.

Patient Death at Health Sciences Centre Brian Sinclair Inquiry Recommendations

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yesterday, in the House, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) talked about an investigation into the tragic death of an individual in the hallway at HSC. She said she wanted to make sure it never happened again.

But this isn't the first time, while on the PCs' watch, an individual died in a hallway. Under the NDP, Brian Sinclair died right in the ER waiting room. And that wasn't the first time either.

As the documents I table show, the inquiry into Sinclair's death at HSC set out exactly how to avoid ER overcrowding. And last June, three HSC ER nurses cited Mr. Sinclair when they warned that it was only a matter of time 'til someone died.

Why didn't we learn from this? Did anyone from Shared Health or the WRHA warn the Premier or the PCs they were forgetting the lessons of Brian Sinclair tragedy when they closed ERs and deleted nurses?

* (14:20)

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to just rise and extend my deepest condolences to the family of the individual who passed away recently at the Health Sciences Centre.

Madam Speaker, our government has taken steps to listen to front-line workers. That is why I went to the Health Sciences Centre, right at the front line—at the hospital, Madam Speaker—to speak to front-line nurses. That's why I went to the St. Boniface Hospital, right to the hospital to speak to front-line nurses; Grace Hospital—because our government wants to be a listening government and a government that responds to the needs of front-line workers.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, when asked about the person who died in a hospital hallway at HSC,

the Health Minister walked away, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) refused to answer questions, which were taken up instead by Shared Health.

Now I quote: Ministers of the Crown are expected to be able to deliver both good news and bad news. It's unbecoming of a minister to only deliver the good news, while leaving all the dirty work for the administration to deliver to Manitobans. People should not have to die unnecessarily waiting for services that should be there for them when they need them. End quote.

If those words sound familiar, they're the Premier's own, from a debate about Brian Sinclair in 2008.

I ask—my question is not, how could you let this happen; it's, how could you let this happen again?

Ms. Gordon: What is really sad, and I apologize on behalf of the member for St. Boniface to the family who lost a loved one, that he is politicizing the death of their family member, Madam Speaker.

Our government cares very deeply for every Manitoban—where they receive care, and that they receive the care they need and that they deserve, Madam Speaker. That is why we are listening to front-line workers. That is why we've developed the \$200-million health human resource action plan to add more health professionals.

And that's why we're respecting a process that is under way in terms of that incident.

Health Care Labour Market Shortage PNP Occupations on In-Demand List

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): With over 2,500 nursing vacancies province-wide and over 400 physicians needed for Manitoba to reach the national average, there's a dire need for health-care professionals in our province.

Skilled applicants can use the Provincial Nominee Program to fill labour market shortages in Manitoba, and that is why there's confusion on why various nursing and physician positions are not listed on the MPNP's in-demand occupation list, which I table now.

Can the minister please explain why nurses and physicians are not listed as an in-demand occupation in Manitoba, despite a critical shortage of health-care workers in our province?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Madam Speaker, it's my first opportunity to stand in the House today and share with members the great work of our government.

Thanks to our Premier, I was proud to have led a nurse recruitment mission to the Philippines. The Manitoba delegation had one clear and positive message: Manitoba is a destination of choice for trained health-care providers from around the world.

Manitoba will provide nearly 350 letters of intent to already trained health-care professionals, including nearly 190 nurses, 50 licensed practical nurse equivalents and over 110 health-care aides. Filipino health-care professionals want to come to friendly Manitoba.

This recruit mission exceeds our goals and expectations, and I look forward to welcoming those health-care professionals into the Manitoba health-care system.

We are taking action. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Bail Restrictions for Violent Offenders Amendment to the Criminal Code

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): As we know, Manitobans have been very concerned about violent crime in both our cities and in our rural areas. Police forces are dealing with an increased use of knives, bear spray and various firearms. Oftentimes these criminals are known to the justice system, as they are out on bail from previous offences.

Can the Minister of Justice please tell us about the efforts being done to work with the federal government to amend the Criminal Code of Canada?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank my friend from Brandon East for that question.

Premiers and Attorney Generals from across Canada are united in calling on the federal Liberal government to make changes to the Criminal Code to make bail tougher for violent offenders.

In fact, just this week, municipalities from across Canada also joined in that call. Later this week, Attorney Generals from across Canada will be in Ottawa asking the federal Liberal government to make those important changes. We stand united looking for those changes.

There's only one political entity that doesn't want to see tougher bail restrictions, and that is the NDP government—NDP opposition in Manitoba; the only entity in the country that doesn't want to see tougher bail provisions.

We will go to Ottawa united with other provinces to try to get tougher bail provisions. The NDP will

stand isolated in not standing up for Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Northern Manitoba Communities Employment and Economic Development

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This PC government continues to leave the North behind. They've stood by as the North has lost hundreds of jobs. In my own community, mines shut down, hundreds of people laid off. They failed to take any initiative to restore or grow good-paying jobs in northern Manitoba. They've done nothing.

So, it's unclear whether this is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey:—either incompetence or a complete disregard for people in northern Manitoba.

Can the minister tell us why his government has failed to take action to bolster employment in northern Manitoba?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to update the House on a wonderful event in Toronto yesterday and the day before, and continuing this week. PDAC conference, the mining conference—the biggest mining conference in the world—was in Toronto.

And we were there, our government was there, and guess what we were talking about? Jobs in the North, Madam Speaker. Yes, something the NDP forgot about for decades.

I can tell you the news, Madam Speaker, coming out of that conference, is going to create wonderful jobs, big paying jobs and new mining to the North in our province.

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

MLA Lindsey: The PC government has actively harmed employment and business opportunities in the North. Since 2017 they've prevented the Communities Economic Development Fund from handing out business loans. That's millions of dollars every year that could be following entrepreneurs and existing businesses.

The PCs have prevented that. That's worse than incompetence, Madam Speaker; that's actively harming economic growth in northern Manitoba.

Can the minister explain why his government has actively hampered economic growth and good-paying jobs in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Wharton: This government is actively creating jobs in the North, Madam Speaker. We know that there are great jobs coming to the North.

We had the opportunity yesterday to speak to a number of mining companies, a number of wonderful announcements with growing jobs in the North. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: Madam Speaker, I know the member doesn't want to hear anything about the good jobs coming to the North, but I'm sure he'll hear more about it in about 30 minutes in Budget 2023.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Disability Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Currently, adults with specific or non-specific disabilities, or a combination of disabilities, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory or language processing disorders and/or non-verbal learning disabilities, will be denied access to services under the Province of Manitoba's community living and disability services if their IQ is above 80.

People with these or other borderline cognitive functional issues also have extremely low adaptive skills and are not able to live independently without supports.

Recently, it has become widely recognized that access to CLDS should not be based solely on IQ, which is only a measure of a person's ability to answer questions verbally or in writing in relation to mathematics, science or material which is read.

* (14:30)

Very often, persons with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities have specific needs related to their executive function for support when they are adults or are transitioning to adulthood, which are not necessarily connected to their IQ.

Executive function is a learned ability to do the normal activities of life, including being organized, being able to plan and to carry out plans and adapt to changing conditions.

Those who have major defects in executive function have a learning disability requiring assistance under CLDS to be able to make a contribution to society and be self-sustaining.

Provision of CLDS services to individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities or executive function disability, would free them from being dependent on Employment and Income Assistance and have the potential to make an important change in the person's life.

Newfoundland and Labrador have now recognized that access to services should be based on the nature of the disability and the person's needs, rather than on IQ.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to change the requirements for accessing community living and disability services so that these requirements are based on the needs of individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities, including executive function or a combination of disabilities, rather than solely on the basis of their IQ.

Signed by Julia Isaac, Jamie Redekopp, Delphin Matadala [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

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

Any further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Before proceeding to the budget speech, we're going to ask for a 10-minute recess of the House and then have the bells ring for two minutes prior to the House resuming. I understand they have to clear the gallery and do various other things before the budget speech.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that we—*is there leave of the House to have a 10-minute recess followed by a one-minute bell ringing to bring people back—oh, two-minute bell ringing? Is there leave?* [*Agreed*]

The House recessed at 2:33 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:44 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask everybody to please take their seats. I would ask for order, please. Can everybody quickly take their seats.

The House is now back in session.

And I will now recognize—[*interjection*] As I call for order, I'm asking for order at—in the public galleries, as well, so that we can—everybody can hear debate.

I will now recognize the honourable Minister of Finance.

BUDGET ADDRESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the First Minister, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker and the members of the Legislative Assembly, I am honoured and humbled to rise in the House today to deliver the 2023 Budget: Historic Help for Manitobans.

I stand here with the weight of responsibility and knowing how much Manitobans have suffered from the burden of rising costs due to inflation and the cost shock of the federally imposed Liberal-NDP carbon tax.

Unlike the budgets of my predecessors, where fiscal responsibility ruled the day, Budget 2023 fully reflects the Progressive Conservative roots of our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), where helping Manitobans make ends meet and historic new funding will lead to safer streets, stronger communities and the healing of our health-care system. This budget will create new opportunities for all Manitobans.

There is no greater evidence of this new and balanced approach than this: in the last year, the Manitoba economy emerged faster and stronger than anyone could have anticipated.

Benefiting from additional tax revenue, we are reinvesting every cent to help struggling families make ends meet and strengthen the programs and services Manitobans rely on. And we are doing it without mortgaging our children's future.

The target deficit in this budget is \$363 million. We remain on track to balance the budget just as we promised.

Our Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) balanced approach began in September, when affordability cheques began arriving in mailboxes to help families make ends meet.

It continued with historic help for our schools, which are receiving the largest funding increase in over a quarter century. Municipalities were also suffering, but are now benefiting from restored and significant operating funding increases, ensuring we can grow stronger communities together. And it continued last month with our Carbon Tax Relief Fund, which will help ease the cost shock of this largely hidden federal tax.

Budget 2023 returns us to the balance of our Progressive Conservative roots: progressive on social issues and conservative on fiscal issues.

This year's budget provides help when it is most needed. It provides historic help for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the thousands of Manitobans who participated in prebudget consultations. You are the lifeblood of our democracy, and this budget reflects your priorities.

This includes the many Indigenous leaders and communities we consulted on our whole-of-government commitment to advancing truth and reconciliation. Together, we will heal. And together, we will build a province of opportunity for all of us.

To help Manitobans make ends meet as they deal with the continuing pressure of rising costs and the federal carbon tax, Budget 2023 is providing historic help that will support Manitobans across all areas of family and community life, from historic investments in—to help better serve seniors, singles and families to historic tax changes that will help Manitobans make ends meet. This budget is about doing everything possible for Manitobans at a time when they need it most.

* (14:50)

Manitoba's economy may be recovering from the pandemic, but cost shock is making it harder for families, individuals and seniors to make ends meet.

The Liberal-NDP carbon tax is making that situation even worse. In a report last year, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated the average Manitoban household lost \$300 due to the carbon tax. That loss will rise in the coming years to over \$1,100 by 2030.

Our Premier has helped lead the fight to demand the Prime Minister pause the carbon tax immediately. But he has refused, but that isn't stopping her from fighting for Manitobans.

To offset the federal tax grab, our Carbon Tax Relief Fund is providing single people with \$225 and couples with \$375 in benefits. This puts \$200 million back in the pockets of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, our government is also taking action to keep electricity rates low. After we reduced payments charged to Manitoba Hydro, they adjusted their general rate application to the Public Utilities Board to just 2 per cent in each of the next two years. This change will save Manitoba Hydro and its rate-payers \$190 million this year and over \$4 billion in the next 20 years. Our electricity rates are among the lowest in Canada and they will stay that way under our government.

Madam Speaker, that is historic help in its own right, and we aren't done yet—not even close.

Our government promised we would phase out education property taxes, making home ownership more affordable for families. Madam Speaker, we are increasing the school tax rebate for residential and farm properties to 50 per cent this year, returning \$774 to the average homeowner. This lowers the tax burden on Manitobans while putting us on the path to fair and transparent education funding into the future.

Manitoba's historically high income tax rates have made it harder to attract the best and brightest to our province. They have also made it harder for middle-class families and seniors to make ends meet. Madam Speaker, we are taking action with the largest reduction in provincial income taxes in the history of our province.

Under this budget and effective this year, we are increasing the basic personal amount from just under \$11,000 to \$15,000. That means you won't pay a cent of tax on the first \$15,000 you earn. This measure will result in over 47,000 low-income Manitobans being removed from the tax rolls this year alone. This brings the total under our watch over 74,000 Manitobans off of the tax rolls. This will save the average two-income family over \$1,000 this year compared to last year. This is relief, Madam Speaker.

The lowest tax bracket will now apply to the first \$47,000 in 2024, while the second tax bracket will apply to income between \$47,000 and \$100,000. The highest tax bracket will now apply only on income over \$100,000. These changes will bring us in line with other provinces. It will put our first tax bracket within 10 per cent of British Columbia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan, and it will make our second tax bracket the fourth highest in Canada.

Madam Speaker, our income taxes help working and middle-class Manitobans the most.

A two-income family making \$50,000 each will save over \$1,250 of income tax in 2024 and every year going forward. They will make Manitoba a more affordable place to live, work and raise a family for generations to come. These tax changes are historic.

Madam Speaker, our Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) total tax and affordability measures are putting \$1.8 billion back in the pockets of Manitobans. By next year, we will have provided over \$5,500 to help the average family make ends meet.

On this side of the House, we will always fight for Manitoba families.

We all want to feel safe in our homes, on our streets and in our communities. To achieve this, Manitoba needs a balanced approach that addresses the root causes of crime while also getting tough on violent crime and violent criminals. Assaults and homicides have claimed too many victims.

Federal changes to the Criminal Code have made it easier for violent offenders to get bail, contributing to a revolving door in our criminal justice system.

Our government has been clear: enough is enough. We have joined every premier in Canada to call on the Prime Minister to reform bail laws to keep violent offenders in jail.

Members of the official opposition have been on the record opposing these bail reforms. They want to let violent criminals off the hook while defunding the police.

We are taking a much different approach. We are cracking down on crime and funding the police to protect our streets and neighbourhoods.

Madam Speaker, we are working with our front-line officers to invest over \$51 million in a new, two-year violent crime strategy. The strategy will build on our investments in new police units to track down criminals on outstanding warrants and keep offenders released on bail from victimizing our communities.

We are also working to make downtown Winnipeg a safe place for visitors and businesses, with over \$3.6 million to support the Downtown Community Safety Partnership. This innovative public-private partnership provides eyes and ears in downtown Winnipeg 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Their three patrol teams have responded to over 3,500 calls to date and made nearly 3,000 connections

between our most vulnerable citizens and the housing and other supports they need. They have done this while making—while walking side by side with Indigenous community organizations.

We thank them for helping make our streets safer so that downtown can, once again, become a safe destination for business, arts, culture and sport.

The success of the Downtown Community Safety Partnership shows us that cracking down on violent crime is just one part of the equation. Our society has changed and our understanding of the root causes of crime requires a balanced approach. Too many Manitobans fall into petty crime due to homelessness, loss of income and addiction challenges. We can do more to help them.

Our budget provides historic help with supports that will prevent crime and put more Manitobans on the road to recovery than ever before.

We are investing over \$51 million this year in our comprehensive homelessness strategy. This investment enhances funding for overnight shelters, transitional housing and rent subsidies that Manitobans need.

* (15:00)

Our collaborative and co-ordinated approach to homelessness is starting to work. The support provided to Thompson for their sobering centre and other initiatives has helped reduce homelessness and other challenges in northern Manitoba. And their success is being studied by communities like Brandon, which is also working to open a sobering centre with support from our government.

We are also providing low-income Manitobans with the help they need to prevent homelessness. Last year, we implemented the first increase to the employment and income basic—income assistant basic needs rate in nearly 20 years. We created the new disability support program to help Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities to lead lives of dignity in the community. And we increased Rent Assist benefits, subsidizing the housing costs of working families. Over the last year, we have helped 1,400 more Manitobans with Rent Assist. In addition, we have built 130 new social and affordable housing units. We are providing historic help for low-income Manitobans now and into the future.

Madam Speaker, there is no greater loss than the loss of a child. We have heard the stories of parents who have lost their children to drug addiction. We are

committed to preventing those tragedies through a strong focus on recovery.

In just five years, our government has opened six Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics: two in Winnipeg, one each in Brandon, Selkirk, Thompson and Portage la Prairie.

These RAAM clinics save lives. Since the first clinic opened in 2018, they have helped nearly 7,000 people get access to counselling, detox and long-term treatment, putting them on the road to recovery. This spring, we are opening a third RAAM clinic in Winnipeg, which will be Indigenous-led through our partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre. And we have expanded operating hours in Portage la Prairie and Thompson and added Saturday drop-in times in Winnipeg.

Our government is also increasing the number of treatment beds for Manitobans who need residential care. Over the last year, we have fulfilled our commitment to open 100 supportive recovery housing beds through community partnerships with organizations like Klinik Community Health Centre, Siloam Mission, Community Health and Housing Association, Men are Part of the Solution and Riverwood House. Madam Speaker, this year, we are opening an additional 1,000 new treatment spaces. We are getting the job done on behalf of Manitobans.

Our government recognized—recognizes the importance of culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous people, helping them heal from the impacts of intergenerational trauma. We are supporting the Indigenous-led Clan Mothers Healing Village and Knowledge Centre to build a healing lodge and residential units for women recovering from sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking.

We are also dedicating more resources to mental health support than ever before, with over \$17 million for year 2 of our five-year road map for Mental Health and Community Wellness.

Madam Speaker, our budget will provide hope, healing and recovery for thousands of Manitobans, and it will provide historic help for those in need.

We are healing health care in Manitoba. We are working to shorten wait times by recruiting, retaining and rebuilding our front line. We have secured additional funding from the federal government and we are making historic investments that put patients first.

The COVID-19 pandemic did untold damage to the health-care systems around the world. Here in Manitoba, it touched every health professional and every patient. It left nurses, doctors and health-care staff overworked. It left our seniors isolated. And it forced hospitals to redirect resources to care for COVID-19 patients, creating a backlog in surgeries and diagnostic tests.

These challenges are not unique to Manitoba, but Manitoba is truly unique in responding.

Our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has been leading the fight for more equitable health-care funding after years of inaction by the federal government. She has galvanized premiers across the country to finalize a deal adding over six—\$46 billion to Canadian health care over the next decade.

And our team is also taking action on health care here at home. This year, we are investing \$7.9 billion in our health-care system. Madam Speaker, that is over \$668 million more than last year to health care, an historic 9.2 per cent increase in health-care funding this year alone.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank the doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals who come to work each and every day to care for our most vulnerable citizens. You are heroes, and we will always stand with you.

Our No. 1 priority following the pandemic has been addressing the shortage of nurses, doctors and other health-care professionals in Manitoba. Our work is paying off. In collaboration with our colleges and universities, we will exceed our pledge to add 400 nursing seats to post-secondary institutions across the province.

Late last year, we announced a comprehensive \$200-million health human resource action plan with new incentives and recruitment resources to bring 2,000 health-care professions—professionals to Manitoba. This action plan will transform Manitoba into an international destination for health-care professions—professionals of all backgrounds, providing a sense of security for our aging population.

And thanks to this investment in this budget, the nurses we are recruiting today will be working in new and expanded hospitals tomorrow. We are providing a total multi-year capital investment of \$1.2 billion to continue health-care capital projects. This includes: a new hospital in Portage la Prairie; a new hospital in Neepawa; renovations to Brandon Regional Health Centre and the Western Manitoba Cancer Centre.

Winnipeggers will also benefit from multi-million-dollar renovations to the St. Boniface Hospital emergency department, the Grace Hospital intensive-care unit and CancerCare Manitoba.

We are also joining the Health Sciences Centre Foundation in the \$100-million Operation Excellence redevelopment, which will significantly expand surgical and diagnostic services at the Health Sciences Centre hospital. And, Madam Speaker, this historic effort is part of our commitment to redevelop the broader Health Sciences Centre campus in the coming years.

This is historic help for our health-care system and it doesn't end there. In December 2021, our government brought together leading health-care professionals to form a diagnostic and surgery–surgical recovery task force. Their expertise and administrative skills have generated real results for Manitobans. In just over a year, more than 22,000 people have received surgeries or diagnostic tests because of their work. Their 'innovative' approach has transformed lives, making it possible for parents to get back into the job market and seniors to play with their grandchildren after years of debilitating pain.

We thank each member of the task force for their dedication, and we thank all the health-care workers who answered the call to address this challenge.

* (15:10)

This year, we are investing \$130 million so that our Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force can continue this important work. Under our watch, Manitobans can stop waiting and start living. Together, we will work our hardest and do our best to reduce the pandemic backlog.

Many Manitobans with diabetes simply cannot live full lives without access to necessary medical technology. That is why, in 2011, our–2021–our government expanded eligibility for the advanced glucose monitor and insulin pump program to include all adults under the age of 25. Madam Speaker, today, we are expanding these programs to include all eligible adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes here in the province of Manitoba. We now have the strongest program in Canada.

We are also creating a new hearing aid program for Manitoba's seniors, enriching the lives of an estimated 6,200 Manitobans with hearing loss. In addition, our government is budgeting \$120 million towards our successful Manitoba Pharmacare program this year.

Manitoba seniors have worked hard, played by the rules and raised children and grandchildren to give back to our province. They deserve to age with dignity and independence. Over the last year, our government has consulted with more than 10,000 Manitobans to develop our seniors strategy. We are investing millions in that strategy this year so we can provide our seniors with the community and recreation services they deserve.

Two years ago, our government committed to implement all 17 recommendations of Dr. Lynn Stevenson's report on long-term care, and we are keeping our promise to Manitobans by investing \$55 million to implement those recommendations this year.

Madam Speaker, our government will always fight for seniors.

Growing a stronger Manitoba starts with vibrant and thriving communities, with the services, businesses, infrastructure and jobs that will attract new families, investment and growth. From the two-income family who relies on before-and-after-school child care, to the single mother of a special needs child in public school, to the retired parents caring for their adult child with disabilities, families need affordable and quality services close to home.

In 2021, we committed to create 23,000 affordable spaces in just five years under the Early Learning and Child Care agreement. This year, we are on track to create over 2,600 spaces in non-profit centres across our province, and we are expanding child care in schools, providing parents with critical before-and-after-school care.

We know the cost of child care makes it difficult for parents to make ends meet. That is why our government is investing \$76 million to make \$10-a-day care child–day–a-day child care a reality for all Manitobans this year, and we are three years ahead of schedule.

Madam Speaker, schools are the very core of every strong community and teachers the heart and soul of every school. We are helping our K-to-12 schools with a \$100-million funding increase, bringing our total investment to \$1.7 billion this year. This means more funding for special needs grants and more for schools who need it the most. We are also making \$77 million in funding permanent to support school divisions for teacher and staff wages.

In 2019, our government promised to build 20 new schools in the next decade, and, Madam Speaker, we are ahead of schedule. There are students learning in seven new schools already, with another one to be

opened next year in Waverley West, and we have six more schools in progress now and more on the way.

Madam Speaker, strong communities are only as strong as the support they provide for the most vulnerable. Historically, low wages in our disability programs have contributed to high turnover and staff burnout in this critically important sector. We have heard from Abilities Manitoba and other organizations that these historically low wages hurt the quality of care for people with intellectual disabilities.

We have heard the sector loud and clear and we are taking action with \$81 million to establish an average funded wage of \$19 per hour for all disability service workers funded by our government. We will be—~~are~~ investing over \$640 million in disability services this year. We are providing help for more Manitobans with disabilities than ever before.

We value the municipal and community services that contribute to the strength of our communities. From community centres to parks to reliable wastewater services, strong municipalities are the backbone of Manitoba.

We have heard from the Association of Manitoba Municipalities that their quality of service is at risk without significant increase in operating funding. To help municipalities reach their full potential, we are unlocking operating funding, as we acknowledge the important role their success plays in helping us grow stronger communities and a more vibrant Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, our government is investing \$47 million more in operating grants for municipalities, bringing total municipal operating funding to over \$217 million this year. That is the largest increase in a decade, and it is part of a new and more equitable funding formula. Our government will continue this for years to come.

In addition, we are providing millions more for transit, wastewater treatment and other municipal capital projects.

Strong communities also need to be lively and livable places with thriving sport, cultural and heritage activities. Last year, we doubled the Building Sustainable Communities fund to \$25 million to support local projects, including new playgrounds and community club upgrades. That funding continues for all non-profits and local governments this year.

Madam Speaker, we are also investing \$50 million in the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund to

support local programming and capital construction projects throughout our province.

Manitoba communities would not be the same without their connection to our pristine, natural environment. Madam Speaker, our fresh air and natural beauty is the envy of the world. As we respond to the impacts of climate change, our government is committed to creating a greener Manitoba for our children and grandchildren.

We are working with Indigenous communities, municipalities and stakeholders across the province to reduce emissions through Manitoba's Climate and Green Plan. Our Waste Reduction and Recycling Support program will divert more than 188,000 tons of waste from Manitoba landfills annually. Investments in the Efficient Trucking Program will retrofit our tractors and trailers with fuel-saving technologies. And Manitobans' water management strategy will help sustain our industries and protect our lakes, rivers and streams for generations to come.

Manitoba's 92 provincial parks and vast network of trails are the crown jewels of our province. We are protecting them and investing in a new parks capital plan to renew park infrastructure. We are also fixing the Parks Reservation Service, launching a new, modern system just in time for this year's summer camping.

Manitoba's conservation service is also getting a boost, with new training, equipment and technology for the front-line officers who keep us safe every day.

Madam Speaker, protecting our environment will help us create stronger communities and a greener Manitoba for all.

* (15:20)

Over the last year, we have seen unprecedented economic growth in our province and an influx of skilled immigration. Adding to this, as we look forward, we see tremendous opportunities ahead with continued improvement in our fiscal position as we work to create the right conditions for sustained economic growth.

Other positive signs include: Manitoba's gross domestic product increased by 3.6 per cent; our businesses created over 21,000 net new jobs last year; key industries such as manufacturing and agriculture showed record new growth; and the unemployment rate dropped to 4.6 per cent, among the lowest in Canada.

And last year, we welcomed more than 21,000 newcomers, including nearly 14,000 people through our

flagship Provincial Nominee Program. That is the highest number of nominees since Progressive Conservatives established this program in 1998. Thanks to the Provincial Nominee Program, 85 per cent of nominees have already secured employment here in Manitoba.

Behind each of these statistics is a story: a multi-generational family farm that is thriving, a mother who recently arrived in Manitoba and found new hope working at a local start-up, a young father who fought—who found a good-paying manufacturing job after years of unemployment. Many more opportunities lie ahead as we grow in confidence and build on our strengths and determination as a province.

Madam Speaker, this year's budget builds on the economic success of the last year while addressing the challenges of the future. Manitoba will have more than 114,000 job openings over the next five years, and nearly 60 per cent of those jobs will require some post-secondary education and training.

Last year, we stood with our universities and colleges to announce the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy to prepare students for the real jobs in the labour market. We are building on that strategy this year by investing more in the Sector Council Program, working with employers to deliver the training Manitobans need.

We are also supporting newcomers so they can have the credentials—their credentials recognized, creating new internationally educated professionals program to speed up certification. We want professionals from around the world to fulfill their dreams in Manitoba, not settle for something less just because they were educated abroad.

Manitoba's colleges and universities lead the world in research and skills training, preparing bright young minds to create opportunities as we build our economy. This year's budget invests over \$65 million more in post-secondary institutions. This is more historic help for students.

We also know that affordable tuition attracts students from across the country to our colleges and universities. It allows parents to contribute to the cost of their children's education, ensuring they get a good start as they leave home. Madam Speaker, we are capping university tuition increases at 2.75 per cent for all students in Manitoba this year.

For too many years, Manitoba was too slow to attract venture capital. Last year, our government responded with the new Venture Capital Fund, creating a much larger venture capital and—venture and growth

capital ecosystem for Manitoba businesses. We have doubled down on that success by adding \$50 million this year, bringing our total contribution to \$100 million. Nothing but opportunities lie ahead.

To enhance our competitiveness, we are—will be eliminating payroll taxes for 150 more employers by adjusting the exemption threshold to \$2.25 million. We will take further action on the payroll tax in the years to come.

Last year, we made it our mission to make Manitoba a world-class mining destination, and we're already seeing the results as opportunities unfold. We have seen a 95 per cent increase in mining exploration investments in 2021 and an estimated 28 per cent increase in 2022.

To maximize this unprecedented investment, we are creating 18 new positions across government. These new employees will have one job: speed up the permitting process so we can get mines up and running right here in Manitoba.

We are also committing \$10 million over three years to the Manitoba Mineral Development Fund. Tapping into our mining potential will also fuel jobs, growth and opportunities for Indigenous communities, advancing economic reconciliation. From zinc to nickel and copper to lithium and silica, Manitoba has the resources to create endless opportunities and power the world economy.

The members of the opposition want to keep our resources in the ground, costing thousands of jobs and billions of investment. Madam Speaker, we are on the cusp of having the first potash mine in Manitoba be operational within a matter of days. We will get our resources out of the ground and out to market in record time.

Madam Speaker, while the world is struggling with supply chain disruptions and growing geopolitical risk, businesses see Manitoba as a stable market for investment. They look to our trade and transportation infrastructure with unique access to North American and global markets to shorten their supply chains and reduce risk.

Our message to investors is simple: Manitoba is open for business.

Thanks to our work with the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, we are investing over \$2.5 billion in trade-enabling highway infrastructure over the next five years. That includes the Winnipeg one million perimeter freeway initiative, which will

create opportunities for improving trade and commerce in our capital city for decades to come.

We have also committed \$40 million to build infrastructure that will develop and expand CentrePort South, North America's largest inland port and foreign trade zone. Once complete, this development will bring over \$1 billion in investment to Manitoba.

Finally, we are working with northern business and community leaders to upgrade the rail line to the Port of Churchill. We are investing to enhance our export capacity at a critical time for the global economy. One day soon, western Canadian exporters from the Rocky Mountains to the Hudson Bay will have access to global markets right here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, Spruce Woods Provincial Park—the namesake of my constituency—possesses astounding natural beauty. Tucked away in western Manitoba almost two hours west of Winnipeg, the heart of the park includes the only naturally occurring desert in the province. It is called Spirit Sands in honour of its spiritual significance for early Indigenous peoples.

If you hike the trail through those sands, you will come to lookouts with views over a massive canopy of spruce trees that seem to stretch forever. Over those trees is the breathtaking expanse of our blue prairie sky. Looking out across that skyline and its endless vista, all I can feel is confident in the opportunities that lie ahead for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, as I prepare to depart public life later this year, I close this budget speech with the same sense of confidence and optimism when I began my public service.

* (15:30)

I am confident that our historic help for Manitobans will make their lives more affordable.

I am confident that we will make our streets safer and our communities stronger. I am confident that we will heal health care and create the boundless opportunities that we know lie ahead for Manitobans—today, tomorrow and into the future.

And, Madam Speaker, it all starts today—with historic help for Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Messages

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): I have the message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as well as the budget documents, which I would like to table.

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

The Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2024, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

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