

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXVI No. 81A - 10 a.m., Thursday, November 3, 2022

ISSN 0542-5492

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
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
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TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 3, 2022

The House met at 10 a.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 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 morning, everybody. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Would you call for second reading debate Bill 229, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider this morning second reading of Bill 229, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 229—The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from The Pas-Kameesak, that The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon, seconded by the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin), that Bill 229, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

MLA Lindsey: I first introduced this bill, I believe it was last year, recognizing how short-staffed the northern portion of the highways maintenance department was then, recognizing that the snow is not being removed from major routes throughout the North in a timely fashion.

Since that time, there was a petition presented by quite a number of folks talking about Highway 6 in particular, and the absence of snowplowing and maintenance. Certainly, I'm glad that the member from The Pas-Kameesak seconded this bill, because she travels over the same roads that I do. She travels over the same roads that so many northern Manitobans travel over, and we recognize that the maintenance of those roads is substandard, to say the least. It doesn't come close to meeting the rather slim requirements that are in place today.

I table for the minister some pictures from yesterday. The first one was taken at 11 o'clock in the morning and it shows a portion of No. 10 Highway just south of Flin Flon. As can be clearly seen, there's been no plows at 11 o'clock in the morning. The second picture I table is of the roads to and from Flin Flon and Snow Lake are icy, snowy and as of 8 o'clock this morning, have only one lane plowed.

Now, Madam Speaker, maybe the minister isn't aware that that road between Flin Flon and Snow Lake is a major travel road now that the operation in Flin Flon is shut down and so many people from Flin Flon travel that road daily getting to and from work. And the maintenance of that road is not being done properly, it's not being maintained safely.

I know yesterday I spoke about—or maybe it wasn't yesterday, the other day anyway—I spoke about the government's bill to try and fine people who go past roadblocks, and I implored the minister to make sure that his answer to not plowing snow was merely to put up roadblocks because travel in the North would cease if that was the case.

We know that the shortage of staff in that northern region alone is running close to 50 per cent and that's after 60-some positions were actually cut from the staff. Now, the minister said yesterday that he'd hired some retired people back. So the question is, what has he done to make sure that sufficient numbers of people and equipment are available to actually maintain the roads in a safe condition?

I know, having spoke to the snowplow operator who used to be employed in Snow Lake, the last one, to make one pass was a 12-hour day. That position is empty, as far as I know. It was last winter. So that meant somebody from Cranberry Portage had to try and maintain that road in addition to maintaining the road from The Pas Airport all the way to Flin Flon. They now had to also travel up No. 39 Highway and go all the way to Ponton, an impossible task to expect any human being to do that in the course of a day. So, without sufficient number of people, those roads are not being maintained safely.

And, certainly, seeing things like sand and gravel, we very seldom ever see that on the roads. At best, you'll see a little bit sprinkled on the corners. We know that this is leaving our roads unsafe. People in the North have come to accept the fact that our roads are never going to be maintained to the same standard as they are in the south. But that doesn't mean that they shouldn't be maintained to a standard. It doesn't mean that people's lives should be put at risk every time it snows in northern Manitoba. And that is presently the situation.

I know the member from The Pas-Kameesak travels No. 60 Highway to come to work, as do I. And while we've heard a lot about No. 6, 60 is, by far, worse. I've been on that road in the middle of the day and there has never been a snowplow and it quit snowing hours and hours ago. The road is in bad shape to begin with, with the shoulders non-existent and the edge of the pavement all chewed up from big trucks. There's a number of logging trucks use that road constantly.

* (10:10)

Well, in the winter, Madam Speaker, those trucks tend to stick to the middle of the highway, because they're very concerned that if they get over too far, one of their rear tires on the trailer will catch that edge of the pavement that's all broken up and flip their truck into the ditch.

So by the act of them trying to maintain their livelihood, keep themselves safe, they then put other

people at risk because when you meet one of those trucks, they don't like to pull over too far. And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when those roads aren't plowed and in the winter, those become even more major transportation routes because some of those highways, like No. 6, No. 391, are used to try and get as many truckloads of material as possible to so many of our Indigenous communities that only have winter road access.

When this government drops the ball and allows those roads to be left in an unsafe condition, it puts everyone who travels in the North life at risk. We asked the minister the other day what he'd done to try and rectify this situation, and I hope he'll answer that again today, but hiring back 60 retired people to fill 120-some vacant positions after they cut 60 positions, is not sufficient.

When people show up in Snow Lake, they don't want to start working at the base rate that this government provides snowplow operators, when they can go across the street to the mining operation and make two or three times as much money.

So the question is, what will the minister do to attract, retain, train and make sure that there's sufficient people working to maintain the roads? And while we're talking about it, VEMA, which is the vehicle maintenance operation that looks after all the snowplow and highway maintenance equipment, there's absolutely no employees left working in the VEMA garage in Thompson. None.

If a piece of equipment has to be repaired from that jurisdiction now, if it's a relatively minor repair, they can take it to The Pas. Other than that, it gets loaded on a truck or driven to Winnipeg, taking one more piece of equipment out of the puzzle.

Which means that places like Norway House, that have snowplow operators, may be without equipment for days, weeks, months. And yet, this minister has refused to acknowledge the problem and is refusing to address the problem.

The people in the North matter. The people in the North pay taxes. The people in the North are Manitobans, the same as people in the rest of the province, and they deserve to be treated with respect and ensure that those roads are safe.

The number of people that have to travel now as we see the reduction in health services in so many communities in the North, forcing more people who are already in ill health to be on the highways, on highways that aren't being maintained. And

I implore this government, this minister, to address this problem as soon as possible.

Northern Manitobans deserve to be treated with respect. They deserve to have their roads maintained in a safe condition. They deserve to be able to travel those roads and not think that they're going to die on any given day because those roads are not maintained properly, the snow is left to build up as can be seen from the pictures I tabled—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I'm wondering if the member opposite can expand on what he means when, in the legislation, he refers to after the end of a storm. Is there an agreed-upon definition that would trigger this time?

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Yes. In the current act, there is a definition that talks about how long after the end of a storm the snowplows should be out. I can tell the member that for many years that I've lived in the North, those snowplows were out in a timely fashion. And I can tell the member that today, they are not because they simply cannot be because there's nobody there to operate the plows.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I just want to thank the member from Flin Flon for putting forth this very important bill, which truly affects all of us, including myself and my family.

I want to ask the member, how will this bill keep Manitobans safe, including us who travel the road frequently?

MLA Lindsey: That's a good question, and I thank the member for that question.

The minimum standard should always be met, keeping in mind that the current minimum standard is not sufficient to begin with. And then not meeting that standard leaves travel in the North unsafe. There's been any number of fatalities directly related to the absence of snow clearing. People in the North have to travel. There's been people that say, well, just stay

home. You can't. You have to get to work. You have to get to medical appointments. So it's important that those roads are maintained to keep people safe.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I'd like to ask the member a specific question about Highway 513, which is to Dauphin River. Under the standards at the moment, snows are supposed to be plowed on 513 within 48 hours after the end of a storm. But if a storm lasts a day or two days, that 48 hours then becomes three or four days or five days, depending on how long before the road is open.

But there's an additional problem. They've been told that the crews are not working on weekends. So what would have been one-day storm and two days, 48 hours now becomes five days or if it's a long weekend, six days before the road is open. It's just untenable. I would like the member to comment.

MLA Lindsey: I thank the member from River Heights for that very important question.

What we've seen from this government is they don't like to pay overtime for snowplow operators. So the roads don't get done. They've made rules to make it safer for snowplow operators that they're not supposed to operate in the hours of darkness, which, with sufficient lighting, could be done safely. If they are leaving that particular highway, sometimes for six days, we know that that's unsafe. Even the existing guideline that they have to be plowed so many hours after the end of a storm; they need to be plowed during that storm sometimes. People are still travelling.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Winter storms are often unpredictable. What would happen if these standards are not met due to a change or unpredictability of a storm similar to what the member from River Heights was talking about?

MLA Lindsey: Well, what happens now is the roads don't get plowed. And I agree, winter storms are unpredictable, which is why the minimum standard that's there needs to be stepped up—needs to at least be maintained and this government—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: Seems that the member of—or the Minister of Infrastructure has a lot to say, but what he doesn't have to say is what he's going to do to make sure roads are maintained in a safe condition for people in the North.

Ms. Lathlin: As somebody who frequents Highway 10, Highway 60, Highway 6—Highway 60 is truly, truly treacherous road to travel on—barely see a snow removal.

So how has this government failed Manitobans by privatizing infrastructure?

MLA Lindsey: Well, I thank the member from The Pas-Kameesak for that question.

What they've done is sold off pieces of equipment. What they've done is shut down vehicle maintenance shops. *[interjection]*

* (10:20)

Oh, the minister seems to have lots to say again. Except when it's time for him to actually do something; then he remains awfully silent. So maybe the minister would like to tell us what he's going to do, but I'm sure he won't.

So, it's very important that those roads get maintained, and they're not being maintained—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —to the very minimal standard that's in place now. And they cannot be, when equipment has been sold off to private enterprise, when the vehicle maintenance shop in Thompson has been allowed to go to private enterprise to look after their equipment, not highway equipment.

Madam Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the member from Flin Flon for bringing this forward, and the passion he is showing today.

When I look at the bill, I'm curious to how this differs than current provincial government snow-clearing policy. Seem to roughly lay out—or if not exactly, the same timelines that are currently in place.

MLA Lindsey: Well, I thank the member from Fort Whyte and recognize that he's relatively new here, and has probably never driven on a highway in the North in his life.

So, now—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —the problem with—*[interjection]*—the problem with entering a bill from the opposition side—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —is we're not allowed to introduce a bill that costs money. So we have to try and introduce things to draw attention to a problem and ask the government to address the problem. If it was left entirely up to me, this bill would be quite a bit different and would actually hold the government to account, but with the current rules in place in this Legislative Assembly, we're not allowed to do that.

Ms. Lathlin: The PC government is increasingly reliant on private, for-profit operators rather than in-house capacity for highway maintenance.

What reporting have you seen to show the level of service both before and after these arrangements were made?

MLA Lindsey: Thank the member from The Pas-Kameesak for that important question.

Set aside the winter snowplow operations, which, some of those have been privatized as well. Highway maintenance—this summer when I was on the roads, every vehicle that was doing major maintenance had an Alberta plate on it. Manitobans aren't even being given the opportunity to get those jobs; they're contracted to out-of-province people.

But what we know is, for-profit private enterprise has to make a profit. How do they make that profit? They don't plow as often, they don't apply as much sand; everything they do is designed to cut costs so that they can make more money on their contract—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Guenter: It's all fine and well to have legislation in place on this, but I'm wondering if the member can explain what the penalties are if the department is not able to meet these standards. What teeth does this legislation really have?

MLA Lindsey: Thank the member from Borderlands for that very important question.

The consequences of the roads not being plowed, I'm sure the member will understand, the major consequence is people are going to die. People have already died. So, is there something in this bill that lays out a fine or something that would cause somebody to do something? No.

What needs to be set out in this bill is the minimum standard that has to be met to maintain those roads. That minimum standard is not being met. The minister has the power to ensure that those standards are met and he can do that—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Lathlin: If snow clearing was fully privatized, what would be the potential consequences for Manitobans?

MLA Lindsey: The potential consequences, of course, would be what the government has introduced with their bill to fine people who go past roadblocks, and their answer will be to put up more roadblocks to shut highways down, rather than maintaining those roads in a safe, operable condition.

The consequence for people, particularly in the North, is people are going to die. People have died. The minister needs to recognize that, and he needs to ensure that those operations are sufficiently funded and sufficiently resourced with people and equipment to maintain those roads in a safe condition at all times.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I just want to educate the member from Flin Flon to say that, you know, it was actually his NDP government that actually reduced the snow clearing on weekends.

We've actually met with our trucking association when we met with the bill, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —and our goal right now with our department is making sure that these rules that they put forward on their own—this bill that they're talking about is exactly what we have in our—when it comes to our guidelines, when it comes to road clearing. Our guidelines is basically after a storm when it's safe—but I'm not quite sure why the member who advocates for employees, you know, their rights and their safety, all of a sudden wants them to—our staff to go out and plow roads when it's not safe to do so, Madam Speaker.

There's a snowstorm still happening in Flin Flon, Madam Speaker. He sends pictures of these pictures here. The storm's still happening. Is it safe for anybody in there? So I'm not quite sure. Like, he's sort of flip-flopping on safety for his—for employees. He advocates for employees but he wants our employees from—our MPI employees to go out on unsafe roads. So when it's safe to do so, our employees will go out, four hours—make sure that they're out there

within the four-hour period of the—of major arteries—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker, let me have a chance to talk, here. I let him talk.

And so when it comes to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: So when it comes to Flin Flon, Highway 10 to Highway 6, those plows are out within four hours. They're major routes, Madam Speaker. They're RTAC highways that we need—you know the importance of hauling goods and services.

We believe in economic development. And what's happening right now, the challenges that we have, Madam Speaker, right now in northern Manitoba is that we've actually opened up for mining and exploration. We're actually getting more mines put into Manitoba. Snow Lake—he talks about Snow Lake. Our challenge in Snow Lake is that there's good jobs out there in Snow Lake now.

The member from Flin Flon along with his leader of—the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) want to keep the minerals in the ground. And we're actually here for the North and he wants to stop the progress in the North, Madam Speaker. And you know, when it comes to what's happening right now in Snow Lake, is that mining companies are taking a lot of staff. They're hiring right now. They're hiring First Nation peoples, they're hiring staff from RMs, they're actually—RMs are having our staff.

There is a challenge up there. We know the challenge, we're working towards that challenge. I had an opportunity—I've even actually went to Flin Flon and actually invited the member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey) to sit down and have some discussions about the North. And we discussed about what the challenges are, what the opportunities are, and we want to listen from what—from that region. We know how important Flin Flon is. There is mining happening on the other side of Saskatchewan; we want to see it more happening in Manitoba's side. And we will continue doing that type of work. But there—we're going to have challenges.

Don't forget, Madam Speaker, the member has to realize that there's a baby-boom generation that's about to retire and drive—and retire in droves right now. I—when I was in the financial industry, I really studied on demographics and demographics right now is that every baby boomer is over 56 years of age. That is our challenge in every department of government.

It's happening in every industry in the world is our population's aging.

But the opportunity that we have, Madam Speaker, when it came to that tour that we had, I had an opportunity to meet with a lot of First Nation communities, with chiefs and councils. And one thing that they want to see is that right now they have their own roads that they look after and they want—they need better equipment.

Here's our opportunity to help work with First Nation communities in the North. This is our solution is work with First Nation communities, allow them to get contracts with our government to making sure that secondary highways can be looked after, our secondary highways, by First Nation communities and companies within that First Nation community.

Here's their opportunity for employment opportunities. When I met with the chiefs and a lot of First Nation communities, with Chief Hudson and Chief Crate up in Fisher River, I met with Chief Anderson in—and couple times, once in Thompson, once right in Norway House. And we talked about having service contracts, much like we have with municipalities in the North.

* (10:30)

We want—there's an opportunity, and, like, I look at even the town of Virden. It's better to have the—you know, the town has their own equipment, but the main street is still ours. But why not we have a service contract so that they can clear these roads up much faster and more efficient because they're there?

They have the staff there. We want to do the same thing with First Nations communities up North, Madam Speaker. And here's the opportunity. We have—the fastest growing population in the North is First Nations communities. We will now work with First Nations communities to work with together to make sure that they can get the secondary roads; maybe once they get better experience and better equipment, that we can work with them to maybe look at our primary highways.

Because right now, demographics are changing. People are aging. And there's good jobs up North. This is the challenge that we have, Madam Speaker, up North. And this is a good problem to have. But we are dedicated to making sure that we're looking for snowplow operators. And most of our snow operators, for the education to the member from Flin Flon, are seasonal employees. They like that type of work because they come during the winter when they're

maybe doing some landscaping, maybe they're arborists during the summer, maybe they work for the parks in the summertime. But then they want some—they want to make money in the wintertime.

And a lot of our snow-clearing operators are now working seasonal, Madam Speaker. And I—and right now, when we had a lot of retirees happening, and as a financial planner I know the situation, because I had a lot of clients like this. They retire at age 55 when they can, at first, and they realize hey, you know what, I used to make more money, but no time. Now I got a lot of time, and I'm making less money as a retiree.

So we're seeing them—35 new employees, retired employees from the Province of Manitoba, with the—our MTI employees, now are taking on some of those contracts, Madam Speaker. That is good news. They also worry about, too, that when they're retired, inflation is increasing lots. So they want—this is opportunity for them, when time is—when we need them to go and do snowplowing, they're going to be available.

So this is our solution right now is working together with our retirees because our demographics are changing; working with—making sure that we have, we actually recruit. My deputy minister actually put it out there on her social media, that we're hiring. When we go to the First Nations communities, we're also saying that we're hiring too—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would just ask the minister to bring his comments back to what the act is all about, and that's adding a requirement that the minister establish standards for clearing snow from provincial roads. So if he could sort of tie what he's saying into that.

Mr. Piwniuk: Okay. The reason I was saying that because the member says what is our—what are our solutions are. This is our solutions that I'm talking about here. About making sure that these guidelines—there are guidelines in MTI—are met by having—within eight hours, having our snowplowers. And these are my solutions—our solutions that we're working with.

So we are working with First Nations communities to recruit, and I—every time I met with chiefs, we need employees to make sure that we can maintain the standard, Madam Speaker, this policy that we sent out there. And this is why I'm going on with the communications with First Nations communities, towns and villages in the North. We see the opportunity; we see the tourism up there, the opportunity.

We spend money in Churchill, the Churchill railway, Madam Speaker, making sure that we see the

opportunity, the needs up there in northern Manitoba. Highway 6-I had an opportunity to travel both Highway 6 and Highway 10, and I see that some of the stuff that can be improved. I saw that, you know, right now we're doing 21 kilometres of highway up there. And every time we do a new stretch of highway, if it's in the south or in the North, we are putting shoulders on that highway to make it safer.

We're also going to actually—where especially when we get closer to Thompson, when there's higher traffic, the traffic counts are there—we are going to do the same thing that we did on Highway 3. We're going to add some passing lanes. With the amount of traffic that comes from Winkler, Morden, Carman, we are adding passing lanes. And we'll do that also too when we start designing more stuff.

We did it in southern parts, we're doing passing lanes, but I believe when I was up there in Thompson, Madam Speaker, we needed—we need some passing lanes when there's little bit more curves in the highway. And if there—and there's a little bit more traffic, when traffic from 39 meet up with Highway 6, there's a little bit more traffic going up to Thompson.

So this is what we're doing, Madam Speaker: we are investing. We're investing \$1.5 billion in infrastructure; \$500 million a year just on highways. And we also are dedicated to making sure that these highways are clear so that economic development happens, that we grow this province, every corner of this province like our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) always says, we're here to show that we're open for business. And that includes our highways.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): As always—it's always an honour to stand here as the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, somebody who grew up and raised in The Pas, Manitoba, Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

I have probably clocked many, many, many, many hours going down Highway 10, Highway 60 and Highway 6 to report to work here every week. And I can tell you that I have had many—what do you call that?—white-knuckle moments on those highways when you sometimes have no choice. Sometimes you perhaps risk your life just to get home on time, travelling at night alone on a road that needs snow clearing when you're trying to make it home for your daughter's grade 9 super student award for the very next morning. So those are risks that some of us take

when we do head home, especially when reporting to a very important job like this.

So in regards to travelling on this highway, I can tell you that Northern Patient Transportation Program, many of us are at our own risk, at our own pocket, have to travel to Winnipeg in order to seek medical attention, to see a specialist, to see a doctor for even just 10 minutes. You know, and we have to take time off work. Also too, look at the weather and see how the road is, and sometimes many of us have to cancel that travel or many of us take a risk and continue on that journey in order to access medical services. And with that, that has effects on our health.

I can tell you that in particular with Highway 60, seeing a snowplow on that road is like, you know, you probably have a greater chance on seeing Bigfoot on that road. And I'm not being sarcastic. There's been several times where I had to step out on Highway 60 and slid right underneath my door and back on the highway. I did that just to see how icy it was. And it was, like, thick. You know, it felt like you could go ice fishing on that road. And just to have somebody, just to—the common courtesy, you know, for safety, to put gravel on that road. A lot of us hit that highway, you know, in order to access, you know, get to our meetings, our conferences, our health appointments, training, you know, what you will. It's part of our lifeline.

And that's all we're asking from this government, to at least minimum, take care of us on that road. Have more snowplows on there. I've seen—I'm not exaggerating either—on one trip, I was on the Interlake. It was in the spring and yes, the roads further up North needed to be scraped, right? I see two snowplows scraping slush, not off the road, but off the shoulders. And I was like, holy, as a—where were these—we need these where I'm coming from. You know, what were these guys doing? Scraping cement, right?

So our resources need to be better sourced out, if you will. And I'm also talking about, you know, the petition. There's a petition that's going around with over 5,000 signatures. You know, there's a lot of people to talk to right there, since our minister likes to talk to, you know, to people. There's your chance: 5,000 petitions for the minister to address. You know, where's he defending those people? Where's he defending that petition? You know, those 5,000 people, including myself, you know, are asking, please pay more attention.

We need better snow removal. I've had actual, actual conversations with folks at Grand Rapids. We were talking about snow clearing. And the fact was, there was lack of people. There was no staffing in place to get these roads cleared.

* (10:40)

And I found this out because I was calling on an entire different matter. That's when I found out there's nobody out there to operate these snowplows, so that scares me. That scares me when—especially when I'm travelling with my children, especially when I'm travelling by myself.

You know like, we all cannot forget my late friend Danielle. She entered—she travelled on that road, and if anyone had seen pictures, one side was cleared, the other side wasn't, it was absolutely snow-packed. Now, my good friend, she was, you know, advised by family and friends not to travel that day. And she—but left, because guess what? She had case work in Ashern. I just found that recently. That's why she was so determined to get on that road, you know, and report for work in here, in Winnipeg.

You know, and there's just many, many times where I go, gee, you know, I—here I am saying, gee, girl, you know, you should have checked the roads, you know. I am just as guilty. I sometimes just pack up my vehicle and hit the road because stuff has to get done, right? Stuff has to get done. Whether it's, you know, a six-hour ride, will turn out to be—shoot, it took me nine hours to get home one time.

And, you know, the audacity of this minister to educate us on these realities of this highway that I live on week after week after week. I have my little areas, too, for rest stops. By the way, there's still no rest stops, you know, but that's—whatever.

What is more important is the snow removal, and the amount of garbage waste, too, I may as well bring up to the Minister of Infrastructure, you know; our medical vans, you know, with patients. You should see what is dumped out, you know; we need more better care, you know, some areas there, where our medical patients can at least, you know, dispose of medical equipment that have to be changed during a six-hour, or a nine-hour trip, right?

So, the audacity of this minister to educate Tom and I—oh, the member of Flin Flon and I, on this road that is part of our lives, you know. And he's talking about mines. These trucks are wrecking the highways, you know, mines, talking about Snow Lake, they're wrecking the highways, you know, try travelling

No. 60, Madam Speaker, you'd be white-knuckling it. Shoulders crumbling, you know, with little patchwork here and there, you know, even I don't even—you know, like, my 19-year-old now daughter to travel on that road, you know. I go, let mom take over, let mom take over.

So, here's the minister talking about mines, you know, which, you know, in the end those trucks are ruining our roads. Mines, okay, you know, let's not get into resource sharing that should be done with our First Nations on our traditional lands, a conversation we can have another time, you know. And we're here too.

Contract out First Nation communities? You know, it's hard to believe that because, you know, their department that used to be called Aboriginal northern affairs, you know, they can barely deal with the lack of infrastructure within these communities.

You know, and here they are, you know, trying to offset these services to First Nations communities again, you know. And I should know because I am part of these First Nations communities. I know how it is to be a have-not. I know how it is to have to stand up and yell, you know, and demand what we need, just like any other Manitoban, you know. We deserve better snow clearing, you know, processes up in north, you know. I want to see, you know, more snowplows on Highway 60, you know; as somebody from The Pas, that's the No. 1, you know, treacherous road.

So people take the time and go all the way No. 10, like back in, I don't know when was that highway built, in the '60s or something or—but anyway, the whole point is, we matter. That highway is part of our lifeline. I don't need to be educated by the minister across about what happens and what not happens on this highway, because I know what happens and what not happens on this highway.

So with that, it's an honour to be here as the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, and I will continue my journey back and forth on these highways and visit my communities and take my family back and forth, you know, in order to access health-care services.

Ekosi.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, this is an important bill and it's important to recognize that there are clearly some major issues with snow clearing in northern Manitoba. And I gave an example of Highway 513, which goes to Dauphin River. It's a community where people live and work and have businesses.

I appreciate the minister confirming that the policy was implemented under the NDP that highway workers wouldn't be working on weekends for this class of road. I think that's a mistake. And the minister has been in government for six years, maybe it's time to revise that and make sure that communities like Dauphin River get their roads cleared within 48 hours. It's important for that community; it's important for the people living there; it's important for people who are running businesses or want to start businesses there. Because it's tough if things get delayed and people can't get into the community. It's also important for people who need to get out for health care or for other reasons.

So I appreciate that minister, you know, nodding in agreement that this is a serious issue which I'm hopeful he will look into. And the intent of the standards as I read them—snowplowed within—plowed from roads within 48 hours after the end of a storm. It doesn't say that there's an exemption for weekends, and I would hope that things can change so there will no longer be an exemption for weekends. And I appreciate the minister looking into that.

That applies to Dauphin River, I suspect that from what I'm hearing and from what I know, that there are other roads which need particular attention and, I mean, we all know what happened to the former MLA Danielle Adams from Thompson. And I'm not saying that that was necessarily—it was in the middle of a storm. It wasn't necessarily a major snow-clearing problem, but was clearly a problem with how that highway has been operating and that it's a dangerous highway.

I've travelled on northern gravel roads at times when there's a lot of dust and wondered at times whether I was safe. And I know—I remember going into Norway House one spring when the melt had started and going across the ice and there was a lake of water on the ice and having to go through the lake over the ice was a little bit nerve-racking.

There are lots of situations in the North where it can be a concern, a major concern, and hopefully bringing forward this bill will bring more attention to the needs in the North, and hopefully the minister will be able to have his department take away the ability to not clear significant roads like that of Highway 15 on weekends, when people need to be in and out. It's just not appropriate that on a long weekend it could go for six days, right, without people being able to get in or out of the community.

* (10:50)

So we will support this bill. I thank the member for bringing this forward and hope that it will pass. And at the very least, the minister has heard a lot of the concerns and hopefully he will address them.

Thank you.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I appreciate—thank you, Madam Speaker. There's not many jobs in the world where you show up to work and you get a standing ovation, so I thank my colleagues. But I do appreciate—*[interjection]* Right, applause; not a standing ovation. But I do thank the—my colleague across the way for bringing this bill forward. I do think it is important, and I, let me just say, I don't agree with—or, I don't disagree with a lot of what he put forward and what the minister put forward.

Manitobans expect their roads to be cleared in a timely fashion and that the roadways be safe, especially during the wintertime. We live in an area where in the winter, you know, weather can be very unpredictable, and you can be driving home—and I happen to live about an hour and a half south of here, the member lives several hours north of here—and so for us rural members, we understand what it's like when you're heading home and you run into adverse weather.

And so you're on a road that probably people shouldn't be travelling on, but you have to get home. And so when the member says he understands that roads can't just be closed and, I mean, people have to go places, I fully understand that. I just think, Madam Speaker, that a lot of what he says strains credibility, because as the minister said, it was the NDP who stopped allowing snowplow operators to work on weekends.

And so that's—that has an impact on service standards, Madam Speaker. It was the party opposite, the NDP, who at the same time that they overspent by over \$5 billion on their mismanaged hydro projects, underspent the infrastructure budget by a whopping \$1 billion. And so I'd question for 17 years, you know, the NDP did absolutely nothing on this issue, and suddenly in opposition they're purists and they're demanding these standards.

Well Madam Speaker, it's clear that today is the last day of this session, and the member has simply thrown this resolution forward as fodder to eat up their private members' hour. Because not only don't they have a plan, they don't, they can't even properly put forward a private member's bill and have a proper debate on something. Because the reality is, as the

minister also pointed out, that everything in this bill is being done by the department under the leadership of this minister.

These are the standards that they subscribe to. So this bill does absolutely nothing. And so, Madam Speaker, I just think, as someone who—and I am very proud to be someone who holds a class 1 licence, I got it at an early age; it was never something I wanted to do. *[interjection]* Minister says I was 10 years old. I might've been. But I never planned on it. But at that time I knew I was going to be getting married soon, and I'd provide for my family, and so I got my class 1 licence.

And the reality is, Madam Speaker, many of my aunts and uncles are truck drivers, and so it was just something that I was able to step into quite naturally. But, of course, as a truck driver, this is, the issue of snowplowing is something that you, hits you very personally. Because there are times where, you know, you haven't showered in two or three days, you're hungry, you know, you're tired and you're just trying to get home, and then, you know, you're driving through a snowstorm and—at 40 or 50 kilometres an hour.

And the real pressure comes from the little computer in the truck, the e-log that tells you how much time you have left on your workday. And so that computer doesn't recognize that you're driving through a snowstorm, and the likely, you know, if you get pulled over the DOT officer also won't recognize that you were driving through the snowstorm. He simply looks at your computer and the fact that it's ringing up all these infractions because you're forced to keep on driving past your workday.

And so it's important that we ensure that our roads are kept clear. Of course, truck drivers is one aspect of it, and the safety around all of that. You know, these 80,000-pound loaded missiles on our highways need to be respected, but also Manitoba motorists who are, as I said, are just trying to get home or seek medical attention or whatever the need may be. So, the importance of roads being kept clear, I think, can't be understated.

Madam Speaker, I appreciated the minister talking about the opportunities for First Nations up North to get involved in some of this. I appreciate his leadership on that, and I also appreciate his leadership in trying to prepare for this upcoming winter season by hiring back many of these retired snowplow operators.

And as I understand, 35 have been brought back out of a targeted 40, and so I think that's significant, and that'll help the department meet these standards that are—that they're already abiding by and that this legislation talks about.

Madam Speaker, I, as I said, was a truck driver and I can recall, you know, at difficult times going through snowstorms, you know, instances where you'd crest a hill at 40 or 50 kilometres an hour. You're already going very slow, and at the bottom of the hill you have a driver who, for all intents and purposes, is stopped on the highway and you have to then apply the brakes.

And the difficult thing with that is that the second you do that your trailer swings out, and you begin to jackknife your truck. And so, there's many situations where, I think, truck drivers have found their hearts in their throat trying to not get themselves killed, not kill anybody else, to get their load delivered on time, to not jackknife their truck.

And so these are, as I said, reasons why clear roads in the wintertime are so important. But, Madam Speaker, as I said, I appreciate the leadership of the Minister of Infrastructure in his department in ensuring that we meet these standards.

I know my constituents at home care very much about clear roads in the wintertime. The October storm that hit us in 2019 impacted my constituents very, very deeply. I live in an area that seems to be—southern Manitoba seems to be very underserved by cellphone providers, and so Canada's telecommunications cartel, Bell, Rogers and TELUS, seem to pay us scant attention in southern Manitoba. I'm not sure why that is.

And yet we pay these bills every month, but where that becomes an issue is when you have a big storm like we had that October and roads are closed. You can't reach anyone on your cellphone, and the hydro is out, the power is out.

And so the community of Plum Coulee is one area where I can't imagine, if someone was in medical distress, you know, was pregnant and went into labour or had a heart attack or needed medical attention, how in the world would you get to help?

And so, thankfully, Madam Speaker, you had a local—we have a local heavy equipment operator out there, JKW Construction, Jack Wiebe, got his operators out there, got his guys out there, and used their pay loaders and maintainers and things like that to clear the highways, and helped MI out.

And so, I know that, as the minister has indicated, MI has these—does—is flexible enough to be creative and allow these types of contracts and things like that to go forward. As I said as they're pursuing with the First Nations up North.

There's great opportunities there, and I think an opportunity for the member across the way to engage in that and dialogue with communities to see that advance. But the reality is, is that the minister, as he's indicated, the department has hired a significant chunk of their targeted 40 staff that they want to bring back, and they've purchased an additional 17 new pieces of equipment.

And all of this, you know, at the same time that we're spending \$500 million a year, over the next three years in infrastructure investments so this government is getting things done. That's why Manitobans sent us here, Madam Speaker. They wanted real results.

And, Madam Speaker, the reality is this: is that the NDP is a natural extension of the bureaucracy, of the government, and so Manitobans know that if you want more ineptitude, incompetence, inefficiency, then you vote for those guys.

But we got sent here to—we got sent here, Madam Speaker, to deliver real results for Manitobans, and that's exactly what we're doing. So, with that—

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: Order please. When this matter is again before the House—when this matter is before the—again before the House, the honourable member will have one minute remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 28—Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Cutting Education Funding

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Cutting Education Funding, brought forward by the honourable member for Keewatinook.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I move, seconded by the member from Transcona,

WHEREAS adequately funded education supports the development of Manitoba's children and has the potential to break cycles of poverty, close the gap in social inequality, create a more inclusive society and much more; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has cut core operating funding for education by \$36 million since 2019; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government underspent education by \$112 million in 2021-2022 alone; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government underspent strategic infrastructure investments in Education by \$108 million in 2021-2022; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has spent millions on consultants for Bill 64, a curriculum evaluation and an education funding review rather than investing in education; and

WHEREAS the province's share of education funding has fallen from 62.4% to just 56.4%, forcing school divisions to make cuts to programs and staff; and

WHEREAS school divisions have been forced to make cuts to programs that students rely upon such as all-day kindergarten, speech-language pathology, psychology and reading recovery; and

WHEREAS Brandon School Division and Seven Oaks School Division have been forced to cut 11 and 28 educators respectively; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has failed to listen to the concerns of Manitobans surrounding education funding cuts, and has continued to make cut after cut; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has failed to adequately support students and educators in the province, particularly in northern and rural Manitoba; and

WHEREAS these cuts put the quality of education in the province at risk.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to stop cutting funding for education and to invest in Manitoba's students.

Motion presented.

Mr. Bushie: It feels good to be able to stand up here and speak as an advocate for the education system, because that truly does not exist members opposite. So to stand here as a parent to school-aged children, to children that have gone through the process, now graduated, children that are in school, a lot of family and friends that are educators here in the province.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So to be able to stand up here and request, ask and demand that the government stop cutting education funding is—I want to call it an honour, but it's something that we shouldn't have to be doing here. We shouldn't have to be standing up here and saying, why don't you invest more? At the end of the day, it's a net loss, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the government comes out and they announce that they've done this and they've done that, that's just making up for cuts. And again, it's still not making up for the cuts. So it—at the end of the day, it's a net loss.

And I do want to, before I get further into my comments, thank the educators, thank the students, thank the parents of those school-aged children, those children that are been in school, for their dedication over the course of this pandemic, their dedication that it's taken for them to, in a lot of cases, not send their children to school, to educate their children at home. So we need to show that appreciation to those families, to those educators and to those students, because they are doing their part and every day they do their part. So as legislators here in this Chamber and in this room and in this government, we also need to do our part and then some. Nothing should ever be just the bare minimum, let alone less than the bare minimum or taking away something that was already there, something that's—that a family, a child, an educator expects from their government.

So when we have those kinds of programs in place—and in cases they have existed for the entire school life of a child, right from nursery to kindergarten to graduating high school. So they've had certain things in place and now all of a sudden they're not there anymore, or it's less. And I can sit here and speak specifically to an—couple of issues that affect the schools in my home community. And it's a matter of the cuts that this government has, having that real-time effect in the classroom. There's broad cuts. And you've heard, oh we're investing this and we're going to do this, we're going to announce that we're going to do this. But that doesn't hit home in the classroom. That doesn't hit home in the school, that doesn't hit home at the home life for those children. Because that cut is something that's glowing every day.

So in my own community—and whatever the ratio may be, whatever the ideal ratio, I—obviously, the ideal ratio for an educator to a student should be one to one. That should be something. Will we ever achieve that? Now, realistically, we're not going to get there. But at the same time, if government is going to then propose that that ratio now is going to be, ah, let's call it 13 to one, let's call it 17 to one, the reality in a

lot of schools is now 40 to one, 30 to one because of cuts of this government. And it ends up being the net loss and we're feeling that every day. We're going to see that in the course of generations to come.

So, now, the students that are going to be graduating high school today that have been now, you know, grade 7, grade 8, grade 9 under this government now, they're going to be graduating this year. You're going to see those impacts, those negative impacts of those cuts. And the negative outcomes that are going to come because they just didn't have those supports. They didn't have those supports in school that they should have, due to cuts of this government.

Instead, they're seeing—being shamed by that. Teachers are being shamed by that. Teachers are being asked to always do more with less. Teachers are being asked to, oh, buy your own supplies, maybe we'll reimburse you, maybe we'll pay you back. So again, just going and taking for granted the fact that teachers and parents are dedicated to the education of their children and their students, and this government is not.

They don't have that same dedication. They're not sharing that same dedication. Instead, they're shaming those parents, shaming those teachers, shaming those students. So when that student comes, says, well, where's my support from this government? It's just non-existent. Well, what else are you doing? Oh, we're going to do a bill 64, you know, that's going to be a review of the system, and it's going to change everything because members opposite were all in support of it.

You know, this is the be-all-end-all saviour of the education system. Well, that's until we get a new leader, then we're going to scrap that, including the 1 and a half million dollars of advertising that was spent on that. Do you know how far that would've went in a school, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What that would've meant for a school, a classroom? That means a lot.

So those little impacts—and it may be just a program for a school, it may be something more significant for one school, maybe a little bit less for another school, but overall, those investments in the school system and in education are broad. And they affect everybody. It could affect in a positive way, or it could affect in a negative way. And albeit, I dare this government to stand up and say, oh, the cuts to education are great for you. The cuts in education will better your outcomes. The cuts in education will make life better for you: in school, after school.

That's just non-existent. And I do want to welcome—so, there's students that are going to watch this debate, that are going to watch debate over the House, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they listen to these questions and they listen to those concerns, they know, they absolutely know that members on this side of the House are raising their concerns, are raising their voices, are hearing their voices. They're bringing those forward.

And I'd like to welcome, we do have students in the gallery today. So I welcome them to come in and share this discussion with us, and listen to the discussion with us, and hear exactly what goes on in terms of things and issues that are decided in this Chamber, how they affect you, how they negatively affect you or positively affect you.

But at the end of the day, cuts to the education system have a negative impact. They contribute to negative outcomes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a lot of issues in the school that—when I was a student, you know, things have changed obviously, in the years since people have come and gone in school. Generations as parents and grandparents, when they were in school versus students and grandchildren in school today.

But a lot of things stay the same: the education and the dedication from those teachers; programs that those teachers are able to implement, and able to share with the students to help educate, to help create that better life and that better school experience.

Because the goal—and I've shared this many, many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker—my goal as a parent, and I know even members opposite, their goal is for their children to be smarter than them, my children to be smarter than me. And that means we're moving in a positive way. But that requires these investments also. That requires these investments in education, these investments to create that better outcome.

Because they are not only the future, but they are the now. Nursery, kindergarten, high school students, they are the now. So we look—by the time we have potentially a next election cycle—and it was decided yesterday, I guess, we're not going to see another election for another year—but if we look at, you know, two terms from now, five years from now, those voters and those potential candidates are in grade 7, are in grade 8 today.

So let's them be involved in this. But also, let's show that support. And by investing in education, it truly will show that support. Because at the end of the

day, what's happening now is a net loss. The government's going to announce, oh, we're going to invest 50 cents on a dollar more into education. Well, you've cut that dollar already, so you're not really investing. You're just trying to make up ground for cuts you've made.

* (11:10)

And that doesn't get us anywhere. That doesn't get students ahead. That doesn't get parents ahead. That doesn't show support for the education system. That, in fact, is a way to help drag that back, and that's what this government is doing.

They're not investing the way it should, they're not listening to teachers, they're not listening to parents, they're not even listening to students. But we'll come into this Chamber, we'll go out and make announcements in the press and in the media, say, oh, we've heard this, we've heard that.

Perhaps that was the same supposed minority that opposed bill 64, because it was mentioned then there was just a small vocal minority to bill 64. But we know it was a significant, significant—a majority that agreed that bill 64 was bad for students, was bad for teachers, was bad for parents, was bad for the province.

So, that investment and that lack of investment that this government is not doing is having those impacts, and we're going to feel that. Then there's a lot of undoing of this to happen, and it's going to be significant, and we're going to call in those teachers, call in those parents, and call in those students to support that investment.

And members on this side of the Chamber will absolutely encourage and greatly invest in that system to have better outcomes for our—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to ask the member, during the 17 years that the NDP were

looking after education in Manitoba, we went from about fourth, on terms of numeracy and literacy scores, to dead last.

Does he consider this the kind of performance that his government would like to propose to Manitobans?

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I appreciate the question about talking in the past.

Let's talk about today. Let's talk about the lack of investments today, the lack of investments that're existing today, the shaming of teachers that are existing today, the shaming of students, of parents, and the lack of investment today in the government, from this government in education.

That's what we're here to address today. I know members opposite do not want to have that conversation about their impacts today, what they're doing today, their lack of investments today, their cuts today. But we're discussing today, and it's clear, it's absolutely clear that this government is attempting to hoard money at the expense of the education system, the health-care system, and it's having that impact.

I know members opposite, again, do not want to talk about what they're doing today—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I want to thank my colleague for bringing this very important private member's resolution forward.

Students are important, these are our future leaders and, you know, we have a government that refuses to invest in them. They continually cut.

So I want to ask the member, what have we been hearing from teachers about the impact of funding cuts on their classrooms?

Mr. Bushie: I thank my member from Point Douglas for that fantastic question as to what we're hearing.

And I think that maybe that's almost the keyword—we're hearing because we're listening. So, we're hearing exactly those impacts and those negative impacts from these cuts that are having in the classroom today, the lack of resources, lack of being able to have programming.

And again, that affects the outcomes. So if we don't have that investment in the students today, and we're hearing that from the teachers and the parents, and over the course of the pandemic that was even

exasperated even more to how much that investment needed to happen.

So we're hearing from parents and teachers and educators that these cuts are having that impact in the classroom, and having impact on those outcomes of those students when they now leave school, leave the education system.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Since the member opposite doesn't want to talk about the past, can he perhaps give us an idea of what he thinks would be the ideal dollar figure to invest in the education system?

Mr. Bushie: Well, it's, for one thing it's not to waste 1 and a half million dollars investing in an education review that's going to just kind of dictate the terms and conditions that you want.

So, the dollar amount, do we—there a fine-line dollar amount today? But let's have those conversations, let's have those conversations with educators, with school divisions, with parents, with students, to see exactly what that is.

I know the government is just nothing but concerned about exactly what the bottom line may be. We're going to do this at all costs, we're going to have tunnel vision and we're going to say, here's the dollar, you work with this, or you don't work with it. Well, we're willing to have those conversations, have those discussions with educators, with the people of Manitoba, to see what a true investment in the education system should look like.

Mrs. Smith: Again, I just want to reiterate, you know, what the member is saying. Teachers, educators, parents, kids, even students are telling us the cuts are affecting them. The quality of education that they're receiving in classrooms, due to the cuts, you know, whether it's educational assistants or physiotherapists or occupational therapists; even, you know, being able to have field trips.

Programs are being cut. So I'm wondering if the member can talk about how that is affecting the students in the classroom and the quality of education that they're receiving.

Mr. Bushie: Again, I appreciate the question from the member from Point Douglas. And, of course, coming from an educational background herself, she first-hand can see and attest to what those investments in that system, in the education system, should be.

And it's not just an investment in one program. There are speech pathologists, occupational therapists, educational assistants, teachers themselves,

parents themselves, and you'll see that positive outcome when you truly have that investment in that system, and all those resources that for many, many years the education system was dependant on. Was—knew that it was there as a way to assist, as a way to help, as a way to help create that system and a better environment for students to create better outcomes.

So what that, in fact, will—

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

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): In 17 dark days of NDP government, they only closed schools.

Why did they not have the foresight to start building new schools, as this government has in the last six years?

Mr. Bushie: I realize the member for Midland is on his way out, so, I mean, he doesn't have to answer for anything that's going to come forth from this government. He's not going to really have to answer those announcements. So the—when he refers to the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie:—past, again, I know he's referring to the past because he does not want to be part of the future here.

So those investments that need to happen in schools, those investments that need to happen, again—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie:—Mr. Deputy Speaker, ends up from this government being a net loss. So they talk about these investments, they talk about doing this and doing that. New this, new that. But at the end of the day it's a net loss due to those cuts that they've consistently, consistently given over their term in government.

So the dark days of the 'paress' Conservatives over the last few years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what we're talking about today—

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

Mrs. Smith: We knew we just went through a pandemic, you know, the last two years. My kids had to learn remotely, teachers had to adapt, we know that there's been some learning loss. And, you know, cuts from this government has really impacted kids being able to catch up on some of that, including my own grandchildren.

So, can the member talk about just how reinvesting in the education system helps schools recover from the last two years of learning loss in the pandemic—due to the pandemic?

Mr. Bushie: So, again, to be able to bring up to speed where we were at; you know, where we were at in quote, unquote normal times pre-pandemic. I mean, those still were not ideal. They were not ideal because of this government. So this government existed before the pandemic, they existed at the beginning of the pandemic, they exist here while we're in this phase of the pandemic.

So those cuts that they've had have had that negative impact. So there is a lot of investment that needs to happen so that we can catch up to where we were, but also to help the—exceed. We do want higher expectations. We do want higher outcomes. We do want better outcomes.

So that investment that we need to do and this government needs to do not only gets us to where we were pre-pandemic, or pre-PC government, but get us to a better place.

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

* (11:20)

Mr. Wishart: I know the member represents a northern constituency and he's very concerned about his constituents and their students in the school. And in many northern constituencies, there's a cost share between the Province and the federal government.

I wonder if the member would comment on whether he thinks the federal government is pulling their weight in funding First Nations students.

Mr. Bushie: Well, there we go, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The same old argument: federal responsibility for First Nations students. Again, that's the cop-out answer for this government.

So let's do this: let's have this government come to the table, do their part and then some, not do the bare minimum, not try pick up the slack that somebody else may or may not come in their shortcomings.

But again, this provincial government, students in Manitoba, whether they reside on a reserve or not, are still Canadians and they're still Manitobans so we looking for that investment from this government today.

No matter where you are—and that lack of connectivity this government could have done. This government could have helped with connectivity for northern communities but did nothing to do that, did nothing to help alleviate that issue and that concern.

Mr. Lagassé: The member talks about listening. How would he answer constituents' concern that under the NDP we went from third and fourth in the country in numeracy, literacy and science down to 10? Can he elaborate?

Mr. Bushie: Again, when we talk about listening, what I'm hearing from this—these students, these teachers, these parents: Let's vote out that Conservative government, let's vote an NDP government so they can speak for us today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There was an error in the rotation. I'll allow the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) a final question.

Mrs. Smith: I know on this side of the House, you know, we're very passionate about education. We have many educators on our team. We—we're listening to educators, we're listening to parents, we're certainly listening to students and post-secondary students as well, something that members opposite is not doing.

So I wonder if the member can tell us, what would an NDP government do to reinvest in the education system and support our educators and students?

Mr. Bushie: I thank the member for Point Douglas for that question.

And again, it's about communication, have communications with those parents, with those communities, with those teachers, those educators and even those students to show and ask, what's the need? What is the need? Not what's the bare minimum, but what is the need. What do you need to exceed? What do you need to excel?

So those investments and those discussions will happen under this NDP government and those investments will sufficiently, again, address the needs, wants, concerns of all Manitoban students, teachers and educators.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I thank the member for bringing this forward, because I always

appreciate the opportunity to talk about education here in Manitoba.

First off, I'd like to make a couple of comments about the K-to-12 review, which I had the pleasure of being part of, and thank the many very fine educators that participated in that, not only as members of the review committee itself but also making presentations.

We heard from 15,000 people across the province, which is an unheard-of level of consultation, and also had presentations from a number of organizations, including many teacher organizations and parent organizations who had a lot to say about the education system.

And many, many very worthwhile recommendations are in the K-to-12 review, and I encourage everyone in this House to have a look at it and remind themselves what is there. And it's certainly a—provides a lot of information moving forward into the future. It's been many, many years since there'd been a detailed review done of the education system. There'd been a lot of patchwork done in the meantime and it was time to have a very focused approach to where we want to be in education in the future.

Now, there are so many things—and I know that the minister's going to want to put a few things on the record here, too. But just for a few facts. Funding for schools in '21-22 was \$1.27 billion, and funding in—for schools in '22-23 is \$1.3 billion. That was an increase of \$34.5 million in funding, and another \$19 million have been given to strengthening student support.

And then there's the Teachers' Idea Fund, which frankly is very popular with teachers. And it provides an additional \$11 million. So our government is investing \$460 million in K to 12—an additional \$460 million in K-to-12 review—in the education in this year.

Now we can talk about all of the different programs, and I think perhaps the minister's probably better equipped to do that than I am in regards to all of the details of the program. But I did want to talk a little bit about schools and the building of schools because one of the things that our government discovered when we came in is how far behind we were in the infrastructure that we needed for our education system.

A that point in time, the NDP government of the day had a record number of portables, or temporary classrooms; they had over 500 scattered across the

province. And the maintenance on these and the replacement costs associated with these was pretty nearly enough to build a school a year. And they weren't doing that. They were actually averaging less than a school a year, in terms of building.

And our government looked at several options in regards to this, including P3s, and I know the members opposite just don't like the P3 model base. And we didn't end up using it. But we did end—we did learn an awful lot by looking at their approach as to how they built schools. And that gave us a window and some techniques that they use to build schools much more cost effectively.

So we have made a commitment to build 22 new schools, and we're well into that, working our way across the province based on need in each of the communities. And the need was huge. And during that process we're, of course, we're eliminating a lot of these portables that were costing an awful lot of money to do maintenance and the necessary replacement on.

So we learned the techniques from the P3 people as to how they build efficiently, and the first two schools actually we built as a government came in ahead of schedule and under budget. And I know that's unheard of for government to have that kind of efficiency.

Now, then, of course, we ran into the COVID time and some supply chain disruptions, but we're back on schedule now, moving out of COVID. And while I mention COVID, I would like to thank the minister for having kept schools open as much as he did during the whole COVID crisis. Keeping kids in classrooms is important, and as a province we did very well when you compare across the country. And that, I think, was significant.

It provides kids and the families a level of stability. A lot of things had to change to keep the kids in—the classrooms. Different types of practices in the schools, different sanitation, hand clatter—cleansers, masking, ventilation issues, and we continue to make improvements in regards to ventilation as we move forward because that's actually something that we learned as part of that whole process.

So I am very pleased to get up and say a few words about this. I do hope we have the opportunity to move forward with some of the great recommendations that came out of the K-to-12 review. It was a very worthwhile process, and I know that there are—been many educators that'll be very disappointed if we

don't move—get moving forward on that in the future. And we will continue to push to do that.

I did want to talk a little bit about some of the construction because some of them were kind of new and different. In the fall of 2022, construction has begun on two new schools in Pembina Trails School Division. That's a K to 8 and a 9 to 12 in Waverley West. And this is a new approach to schools. It's a campus style, which will be hopefully in association with some recreation facilities that the City of Winnipeg has committed to. And that will be very positively received.

* (11:30)

It's sort of a new model that is used in many other provinces across the country, and has worked very well, and provides a centre for the community. And I know that this will be very well received in an area that historically has been wanting for recreation facilities as well as for education facilities. And I know the member from Waverley West will be very pleased when these things are—and I understand—I went out there one day to see how construction was coming along, moving along very quickly, looks like they're getting very close to being open based on schedule.

But the list of schools that we have built, not only here in Winnipeg but across the province—Maryland Park School, that was in Brandon and very badly needed school that the previous government had promised and promised and promised and never actually got around to. Pine Ridge Elementary School in Garden Valley School Division, that was the one that I was actually in that community when we made that announcement, talked to some students who were now going into high school and had never gone to school in anything but a portable, not any part of the first eight years. And in fact, never been in a school that had a proper gym.

So certainly, you can see that we had infrastructure issues moving forward. Niverville High School, which very well received by that rapidly growing community. They're very excited and of course they're in and using it. École Templeton school in Seven Oaks—very badly needed and had took some of the pressure off crowding there and probably eliminated a dozen portables.

An Honourable Member: Wonderful teachers.

Mr. Wishart: Yes. And the minister says great teachers there, too, and it's certainly the case. There's a long, long list. I'm only touching on a few of them

but it does drive home the fact that we had huge infrastructure deficit. I know there are some members in the House here that were on Winnipeg one school division and kept talking to me when I was minister about how desperately they needed new schools, how desperately they needed maintenance and we have done that. We have met the needs for them that had not been handled in the—by the previous government and allowed to accumulate.

Now, when you get up to speak to something like this that you feel strongly about, time always goes really quickly. So I certainly appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on record, but I know our government cares about students, about teachers. We care about getting results. As a government, we fund education at the second highest level on a per-student basis of any province in Canada. And in return, we do not get the best results. So, we need—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: —to see the dollars that we invest in education to get the best results that are possible. I know we have great teachers and we have good students. There's really no reason we cannot get better results in education.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I want to thank my colleague, the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie), for bringing this PMR to the floor of the Manitoba Legislature.

It's important to debate these very important issues that are facing our province right now. There are many challenges that we have, not the least of which is the funding—the proper funding—of the top two responsibilities of provincial government, Deputy Speaker: public health, public education. And what we've seen is a divestment, an underfunding that has been going on since 2016 and that has been clearly articulated in not only the documents that we have here in front of us today, but also by the people that work in these systems and the incredible stress that they're feeling right now due to underfunding of these important services.

So I just wanted to get into a few pieces regarding this PMR. We know how important education is. I mean, we're not debating that. We know that it's a pathway out of poverty, a pathway to prosperity and in many ways helps build a very inclusive society. We

talk about that all the time in our schools and it's something that's really important and it has to be reflected through funding by the No. 1 funder, being the provincial government.

We've seen, Deputy Speaker, that since 2016, the funding line for regular instruction has been going down consistently. What used to be 62.4 per cent is now 56.4 per cent of regular instruction. And what that means is that that is the day-to-day operation of a school, Deputy Speaker, and it's beginning to really impact, after six—now we're going to be moving on to seven years of this underfunding and how it impacts.

So, how—what does that look like in a school? Well, at early years, Deputy Speaker, the underfunding has resulted in an increase, and a steady increase, in the class size for students at K to 3. An important, obviously, when you're first experiencing schools—these little people need to have the attention and the care of adults at a ratio that best benefits them. And what we're seeing is we're seeing that ratio now go up and up and up, and it's having a detrimental effect.

The other piece, at middle years, is it also affects the ability we have to provide extra supports for kids, especially when we determine through either psych assessments or other clinical assessments, what they need to succeed at school.

At senior years, what we're seeing is a lot of the core subject areas now have class sizes that have increased, increased higher and higher and higher. What we're also seeing, Deputy Speaker, too, at senior years, is less optional courses available for students so that they can explore what their interests are.

And these are the day-to-day impacts of what happens when regular instruction isn't funded at the level that it needs to be. So that's how it impacts.

I do want to respond to a couple of things the member from Portage la Prairie said that, with regarding to per pupil expense. It's well known that in Manitoba, Manitoba Education covers the entire costs of a student's occupational therapy and physical therapy pieces. And other provinces, that's covered by the department of health, not the department of education or the education system.

The other part that I also want to put on the record, Deputy Speaker, is that when we transition students out of justice and back into regular school, that cost is borne by the school division. In other jurisdictions outside of Manitoba, that's borne by their department of justices.

So, we have to ensure that when we make that comment, that we understand truly what school divisions cover, the cost, the entire cost that's associated with that.

And that's an important distinction to make and one that has to be made here on the floor of this House, because people need to know exactly what the department and what school divisions do cover, and that's one of them. And in Manitoba, it is the responsibility of the education system to cover that cost.

The other piece that I'd like to bring up to the floor of the Leg. here today, Deputy Speaker, is there is been an underfunding, as well, to adult education. And we know that adult education is one of those untapped resources that we have to ensure we become, here—understanding of how important it can be to lift a person out of poverty.

With adult education, when you create these adult education learning hubs, and when investment is made in that area, what you're doing is you're providing services that allow a person to get back into an education system to—in order to improve their lives and livelihoods.

These adult ed. hub centres also have child-care centres, they have career counselling, a real piece that can really take some, of course, important dollars that the Province dedicate and really put them to use and get a multiplier effect, in so far as a return on that investment.

And what we have now and what the pandemic has shown, is that we have a large portion of our population that is really underemployed because of their education level. So by providing more investment in adult education, we can begin to tackle that deficit, Deputy Speaker, and it's an important point.

An important point because adult education has been shown through research, Deputy Speaker, that it can not only lift people out of poverty, but give them a renewed purpose. And so here's an opportunity right now, coming out of the pandemic, for government to really increase their investment in adult education and create these learning hubs, alongside and with child-care centres.

Because now that we have child care in the Department of Ed, Deputy Speaker, there is an opportunity here where we can create these spaces and have them service people that require those services. It's something that's really quite important.

* (11:40)

The other piece I'd like to bring up is with the pandemic. I do know we did have a K-to-12 review, and a lot of people did present, absolutely, and had a lot of good pieces to bring forward to government to ensure that they're doing their part in being an active partner in public education.

That was pre-pandemic; there have been some things that, obviously, the pandemic has shown it to be really important for schools to invest in. And one of the real gaps that became evident, Deputy Speaker, was that—with technology. We knew that students that were outside the city of Winnipeg and in rural areas had difficulty connecting, had difficulty accessing technology and other pieces to make that easier.

And so I know you're riveted by this debate, Deputy Speaker, and I will continue. I will ensure that we get to the main point here, being that the pandemic did expose some gaps. And right now, I do know that many educators are coming to the department and bringing what needs—what their needs are right now, and what the gaps that were exposed.

Not the least of which was technology and access to high-speed Internet. That's one of the pieces that many schools are asking for, and one of the things that certainly the Province can be involved in providing. Some of the other pieces, too, is with new immigration, with an influx of newcomers into Manitoba. I know a lot of our school divisions are struggling to meet that need and demand created by EAL students. English as additional language, Deputy Speaker.

And we had, and—hundreds of new kids that have EAL requirements and that require support. When you underfund, Deputy Speaker, especially that regular instruction line, school divisions don't have the necessary resources to meet that demand that EAL kids are bringing in. And now, with the announcement of even more immigration coming into Canada, we're going to have to be nimble and be able to do that.

Because this is a service that's going to be required. We know how important public education is to getting not only these students a great start, but also the support that they need so that they can function well and with the proper tools ahead.

But, in closing, Deputy Speaker, I do want to say this. When it comes to public education, just like in public health, we can't underfund. It's as simple as that. What we have to do is we have to have targeted supports in place: supports for kids, supports for families, supports for communities. Because right

now we're relying on the good will not only of teachers, but also of families. We're putting a lot of strain right now on not only the system, but also our kids.

And so to alleviate that, we need to ensure that the Province is a true partner in public education and increasing their funding for schools.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to stand up and put a few factual words. [*interjection*] Yes, I'm getting there, Mr. Clerk, thank you for that. It gives me a great opportunity to stand up and put some factual information on the record.

I know over the last few months since we've entered the late part of the '21-22 session, I know that there's been very little questions coming from the opposition side in regards to education, and it gives me great pleasure to be able to stand up for 10 minutes to put a few factual pieces of information.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I've been finding over the last 10-plus months as I've been appointed the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, is that the opposition, the NDP, as you heard the member from Keewatinook—who was the champion of this resolution, so, not the actual critic of Education, or the advocate as I used to call it when I was in opposition, the advocate for Education—he stood up and put this resolution on the table. And I guess really the member from Transcona really didn't want to attach his name to this, because he knows that there's definitely some holes in the resolution.

So, it's my job in our side, on the government side, to put some factual information on the record. The member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) started talking about many different departments throughout government as he had his opportunity to put some information on the record and unfortunately it wasn't all factual, but we're going to clear some of that up.

I definitely applaud our government for the collaboration and the consultations that we do, not only within government but with all of our education partners across this great province of ours. So we do—I do work closely with my colleagues and that being said, our adult education is actually under the Advanced Ed, Skills and Immigration and the immigration piece that the member from Transcona points out is also in that other department. But we do

work collaboratively and we make sure that our education here in Manitoba is going to grow and to get stronger, as opposed to the 17 years, the dark days, the dark years under the NDP government, which we did see.

I know that the member from Transcona doesn't want to hear this, I know that the member from Keewatinook refuses to talk about history, but we do have to put it out there. So we do fund education in the province of Manitoba, the second most per pupil all across the country.

And it's undeniable—and I know the member from Transcona didn't want to put this on the record—but it's undeniable that numeracy, literacy and science, we were third and fourth in the country. Under the NDP, they took it from third and fourth in the country to dead last, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's unacceptable.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government partnering with our education partners all across this great province, including the member from Transcona because I know that we've had a few meetings together in my office as well about how do we move forward, how do we get better results for our students, how do we start addressing some of those poverty issues which, under the NDP, they had failed. They had absolutely failed our students here in the province of Manitoba.

So, going through the resolution was an interesting read and I know I've only got another six minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'd like to ask for leave for an additional 10, 20 minutes but I guess we'll see if that is granted to me.

So we had—we have created a Poverty and Education Task Force, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unlike the NDP. They didn't feel it was important. So we wanted to address child poverty and absenteeism rates so we have formed the education task force.

We know that—and he knows—the members opposite know that we, alongside the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), I—we went out and announced an agreement and a partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart to supply and they donated over 3 million—almost 3,400,000 menstrual products per year for three years at approximately one—just about one point—or just about \$2 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This was donated and we got together in September and made that great announcement.

We're also supporting organizations so I also went out and joined the Minister for Mental Health and we also announced that we're investing another

\$1.3 million to support the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba in delivering school nourishment programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our work is not done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but for the NDP to stand up today and put false information on the record is deplorable and they should stand in this House as soon as they can and apologize for that. Because, in fact, that Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba received \$1.2 million in 2006 when it first was created, had not received another dime until our government more than doubled the investment.

Why did we do that? Because it's important and it's the right thing to do. And as a teacher and a guidance councillor myself, I know, we know, my colleagues on the government side of the House know how important it is to make sure that those students that have access to nutrition at schools. And again, we have more work to do.

* (11:50)

I know that the member from Transcona, he wants to stand up and he wants to also ask for leave to put more information on the record; because obviously he hasn't put more—enough false information on the record today. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as my good friend and colleague the member from Portage la Prairie had mentioned, K-to-12 commission was the first deep dive into education since 1959.

Under the NDP, did they want to talk to Manitobans? No. Did they want to listen to Manitobans? No. What are we doing? We are listening to Manitobans, we are creating plans with them as good education partners in this great province of ours and we are taking action.

Speaking of action, from the K-to-12 commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the member from Keewatinook maybe should pick up a copy of the K-to-12 action plan, which is a road map in response to the recommendations of the commission on K-to-12 education. *[interjection]*

And I know that the member from Flin Flon is still heckling from his seats; I'm trying to think of a parliamentary-proper word. But he will have his opportunity to stand up and talk about education, I'm sure.

Because again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the last day, last day of our fall sitting of the session from '21 to '22, and this is the day that they decide to bring this piece of legislation—resolution to the floor. I have to take a few minutes and talk about these funding: the

funding to education, historic funding in education to province of Manitoba.

This year alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$460 million in the K-to-12 education system. This includes \$51 million in operating funding, which includes an additional \$7 million for students with special needs. Never been done under the NDP. Never been done; \$77 million in one-time funding to help school divisions with financial pressures, \$22 million to strengthen student supports and learning.

This is a response from two, two and a half years of COVID, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we're not done there. We have so much more to talk about and continue to do.

I do have to put another piece of information to correct the record from the members opposite. Member from Transcona says, wants to put correct information on, well, he fails to do some—maybe that literacy testing needs to be done in—for the MLA from Transcona.

Page 4 on the FRAME report, it's—*[interjection]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's actually inappropriate that the member from St. Johns is putting swear words from heckling from her side of the Chamber. It's unfortunate, but—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko:—I've only got 20 seconds left, so I'd like to complete my statement. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: On page 4, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the FRAME report, it actually says, if the member read it correctly, 67 and a half per cent. In addition to that, the property education tax credit brings us to a government-funded 75 per cent—

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

The honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux).

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

The—*[interjection]* Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member for Flin Flon, on a point of order.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I rise on a point of order. Every rule and procedure of this House demands that we put factual information on the

record. This morning during the Minister of Infrastructure's discussion of the bill I put forward, he did not put factual information on the record about where I stand on mining.

We know that this government has done absolutely nothing to help—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I'm interrupting the member. A point of order is not a dispute of the facts; the member clearly is disputing the facts. No rule has been cited, and the member does not have a point of order.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park—
[interjection]

The member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey).

MLA Lindsey: Just like to finish my point of order before you actually rule on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Then the member needs to cite the rule, explain briefly what his point of order is and I'll give him 30 seconds to do so.

MLA Lindsey: The rule is putting factual information on the record. The member—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That's not a rule.

MLA Lindsey: That's not a rule? Good to know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I said 30 seconds, so I'm—you've got, you know, a few left.

MLA Lindsey: [inaudible] put incorrect information on the record suggesting that I had said something that I have never once in my entire life said, that I was against mining, and I am certainly not, and nobody on this side of the House is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, that's not a point of order. The member does not have a point of order.

And just for clarity, when any Speaker, or Deputy Speaker talks about the rules, we're referring to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba rules of the House, and for points of order there are rules. Members are free to look them up, and points of order cannot be used to extend debate or dispute the facts, and it seems to me that is what that member was doing at that time.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So I'm now going to give the floor to the member for Tyndall Park.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, please go ahead.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise, and I actually had a lot to share on this piece of legislation.

And it's frustrating to me that because of all of the heckling and hypocrisy, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, going back and forth, I now only get to speak for three minutes unless the legislation gets held up. And I do, I find that incredibly frustrating because the constituents of Tyndall Park have the opportunity, by having someone who was elected into these Chambers, represent them just as much as all of the other members in these Chambers.

And we need to make sure that we are doing a better job here, in the Chambers, of allowing all MLAs the opportunity to use their time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So a few thoughts that I wanted to talk about was making reference to students here in Manitoba, post-secondary students. Mr. Deputy Speaker, six years ago this government took away the tuition rebates.

We know these tuition rebates were used in many, many ways that post-secondary students really benefited from them. Often times they were down payments on houses, ways to pay off student loans, and they were completely taken away.

We can talk about health care for international students, and how now they have to pay in addition to international student rates to attend our post-secondary schools, which we need them to be able to do. Furthermore, now they have to pay for their health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's disappointing that the member didn't actually mention that in this resolution. It's extremely important.

International students have been doing their diligence. They've been lobbying and talking to each one of us MLAs about the importance of health care for international students, and yet this NDP member won't even include it in his resolution, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I can make reference to primary education and how teachers have to buy their own school supplies because they do not have enough funding from this government. We heard that there's not enough teachers in our school systems because we're not investing in our education system, and Manitoba education is falling behind.

We need to be doing a better job. We need to be investing in education in all levels, post-secondary and primary education, and we need to do a better job

at valuing our teachers, all of those who work in our education system and our international students.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to start out today by thanking the member of the opposition for bringing this most important topic, the education of our children, to the House today.

As a father of five, my kids having attended and graduated from the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, and two still currently in the Hanover

School Division, I understand how critical it is that our children have the best education possible.

Whether it be their early, late, or post-secondary studies, this PC government understands and recognizes the imperative role that good education—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Dawson Trail will have nine minutes remaining.

The time being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 3, 2022

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