

Disability Support Workers: Wage Enhancement

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Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Workers who support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not being supported by this government. Wage increases promised in the budget for this sector should have brought these workers well above minimum wage, but now the minimum wage has increased, so disability support professional wages are no longer competitive.

Minimum wage should lift workers up, including those with negotiated wage increases, rather than erase these increases altogether.

When will the minister pay disability support professionals a fair wage?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Accessibility): In this year's budget, we had an extra \$26 million for the sector for people who are living with disabilities and people who are working in that sector.

And I want to take the opportunity to say thank you to each and every person who went to work throughout the pandemic to care for our vulnerable Manitobans. We greatly appreciate their efforts in going to work every day. And we also did increase the budget.

And I'd like to ask the member opposite on why she voted against money for the sector for people with disabilities. It was their government that voted it down. Shame on them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, on a follow-up question.

Ms. Naylor: Workers who support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities do incredibly important work, and they deserve to be compensated fairly. A lack of a fair wage has led to major issues with recruitment and retention. There's already a major labour shortage in this field, and it will get worse.

The gap between minimum wage and starting salary for disability support professionals is now much smaller than it was.

Will the minister do the right thing and pay disability support professionals the wage they deserve?

Ms. Squires: Of course, our government is committed to building this sector and to ensuring that this sector remains vibrant by attracting talent and keeping that talent working in this sector to care for Manitobans' most vulnerable people. And I can assure the members opposite that, once again, in upcoming budget, there will be more dollars for people working with individuals with disabilities.

So, I have to ask: Will the members opposite finally do the right thing and vote in favour of a budget that will have more money for people with disabilities?

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