

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. 30 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, April 4, 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
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Thompson	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 4, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

Introduction of New Member

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a letter indicating the election of Obby Khan as member for the constituency of Fort Whyte.

I hereby table the notice of the return of the member elected.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to present to you Obby Khan, the member for Fort Whyte. He has taken the oath as well as signed the roll and made the right to claim his seat here in the Manitoba Chamber.

Madam Speaker: On behalf of all honourable members, I wish to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and to wish you well in your parliamentary career.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 223—The Ukrainian Heritage Month Act**

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), that Bill 223, The Ukrainian Heritage Month Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Smook: I am pleased to introduce Bill 223, Ukrainian Heritage Month Act. The first Ukrainians came to Manitoba on September 7th, 1891, and today Manitoba is home to 180,000 people of Ukrainian descent. They have contributed much to our economic, political, social and cultural life in Manitoba. It is important to recognize and celebrate these contributions.

This bill proclaims the month of September in each year to be known as Ukrainian heritage month.

Thank you.

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

And in case I might've forgotten, routine proceedings has started with the introduction of bills.

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Sikh Heritage Month

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh. [*The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory belongs to God.*]

I rise today to recognize and celebrate Sikh Heritage Month in Manitoba.

I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to our visitors, particularly members of our province's Sikh community, who have joined us here in the House today.

Manitoba has a long and proud history of honouring the Sikh community. The government of Manitoba was one of the first provinces to raise the Sikh flag, one of the first provinces to allow an exemption for motorcycle helmets, and, in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa, a tree was planted right here, outside the Manitoba Legislative grounds.

April holds a historical significance for the Sikh community because it's when the Vaisakhi and Khalsa Day are celebrated by Sikh communities around the world. I, along with many of my colleagues, will be attending many Vaisakhi events.

For centuries, Vaisakhi, has been held in northern India. It is typically held on April 14 or 15 and marks the first day of the Sikh New Year.

It was during Vaisakhi celebrations in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh identified new practices for baptized Sikhs, a group known as the Khalsa.

The designation of April as Sikh Heritage Month, by both the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba, is a testament to the important role this community plays in our national and provincial identity.

* (13:40)

Nearly half a million people, or 1.5 per cent of the Canadian population, identify as Sikh. Whether it's artists, business owners, educators or community leaders, the Sikh community has helped diversify our culture and the Manitoba economy.

Alongside the many accomplishments of the Sikh community, there are some everyday contributions that I'd like to acknowledge. A core value within the Sikh faith are seva, self-service. An important aspect of this service includes volunteers who prepare and serve meals free of cost to visitors at Gurdwaras, regardless of religion, ethnicity, economic status or gender.

Madam Speaker, when the COVID-19 pandemic caused most of the world to shut down, Manitoba's Sikh community rose to the occasion. Not only were many of the Sikh community kitchens in Gurdwaras able to sustain a safe seva practice, but they expanded their efforts to provide meals for front-line service workers.

A strong commitment to the value of volunteerism mirrors the one held by many Manitobans. Volunteers lay a strong foundation by building community connections wherever they live, and the Sikh community has made many outstanding contributions to our province through many ways, including volunteerism.

My colleagues and I are committed to continue to work with the Sikh community across this province as we come out of the pandemic. Whether it be attending Gurdwaras, helping prepare langar and, most recently, issuing an official proclamation in recognition of Sikh Heritage Month, my colleagues and I are friends of the Sikh community.

As we kick off Sikh Heritage Month in Manitoba, I wish you all peaceful, 'joyceful' times. As Vaisakhi is quickly approaching, I wish everyone a happy Vaisakhi.

Thank you. Shukria.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh. [*The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory belongs to God.*]

Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak about Sikh Heritage Month. In 2019, our NDP team put forward bill 228, The Sikh Heritage Month Act, with the support of Sikh Heritage Manitoba, and it passed in the Chamber, proclaiming April as Sikh Heritage Month.

The month of April recognizes and emphasizes the important contributions that the Sikh community has made and will continue to make to Manitoba's social, economic, political and cultural heritage. At times of crisis, Sikhs are known to carry out public-welfare services on humanitarian grounds.

April is an important month for the Sikh community. This month, Sikhs around the world celebrate Vaisakhi, which marks the creation of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith, such as the turban.

While we recognize the essential contributions that Sikh Manitobans have made, it is also important to acknowledge that Sikhs often face intolerance and prejudice. Turban-wearing Sikhs continue to experience racist and xenophobic acts of discrimination. Such acts are not a thing of the past. Just yesterday, a 70-year-old Sikh man in New York became the victim of a hate crime as he was brutally assaulted for wearing a turban.

Madam Speaker, we must all raise our voices against acts of hateful violence and ensure that as

legislators we prioritize communities over partisanship.

The rich Sikh history in Canada and Manitoba is very personal to me because it is also reflective of my own 12 years in Canada and my personal journey and experience.

Lastly, I know that the month of April is also important for our Muslim and Hindu brothers and sisters. I would like to wish those celebrating Ramadan Kareem and a happy Navratri.

Thank you.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak a little bit about why it is we celebrate Sikh Heritage Month in April.

Madam Speaker, it is because of my father and many of my uncles like Gurtej, Pritam and Parminder that I have had the opportunity to learn a little bit about Sikhism through visiting India, attending Gurdwaras and getting to know people in the community, some of whom are here with us today in the Chambers. And they've all taught me a little bit about Sikhism here in the province of Manitoba and our country.

Sikh Heritage Month is an opportunity to reflect on the rich culture of our incredible Sikh community that continues to grow and prosper here in Manitoba. It is a time where people across Canada and members of the Sikh faith and others will be participating in Vaisakhi, a celebration highlighting Guru Gobind Singh who laid down the foundation of Khalsa Panth.

Madam Speaker, I want to share an issue that is held close to the hearts of many of my constituents in Tyndall Park regarding the Komagata Maru incident.

I've shared quite a bit about the Komagata Maru here in these Chambers over the years, but, in short, this 1914 incident saw the government of the day turn away a Vancouver-landed ship carrying hundreds of South Asian migrants. The reason I bring it up is because this ship that was turned away and sent back to Calcutta was comprised in large of people of Sikh faith.

Now, I have the honour of having a newer park in my constituency in the Waterford Green area where

residents of the houses nearby were promised a commemorative park in tribute to the Komagata Maru. I am tabling an article of this from when the residents came here to the Legislature this past July.

I table this in the hopes that the government will take the time to read the article and will commit to stepping up and assisting the City in making the park—a park that was promised to the community—a reality.

Madam Speaker, with these few words I want to wish everyone a happy Sikh Heritage Month and a happy Vaisakhi later this month.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Take Down Tobacco National Day of Action

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Madam Speaker, April 1st, 2022, marked the 27th annual Take Down Tobacco National Day of Action. It is also known as Kick Butts Day, a day to highlight the problems caused by tobacco use in communities everywhere and to urge elected officials to take action to protect youth from tobacco use.

We encourage youth to reject deceptive marketing from the tobacco industry and live tobacco-free, not only on the day, but every single day of the year.

The youth are faced with a new threat to their health, a harmful trend being sold as a way to relax and marketing itself as innocent fun called vaping. Vaping is putting a new generation at risk of nicotine addiction. Emerging research shows that vaping can lead to tobacco use. In order to reduce the number of smokers in our province, we cannot ignore the role vaping plays in creating them.

In 2019, 21.5 per cent of Manitoban youth in grades 7 to 12 reported vaping in the last 30 days, a 6 per cent increase from 2017.

Addressing youth vaping is a priority for our department. It was a key aspect of our recently launched five-year roadmap, A Pathway to Mental

Health and Community Wellness, which calls for the development of a provincial tobacco and vape reduction strategy.

This strategy's importance is without question: smoking kills more than 2,000 Manitobans every year. Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of premature death worldwide. Research shows that smoking harms nearly every single organ of the body. It causes heart and lung disease and complicates the effective treatment of other health conditions.

Quitting smoking can be very difficult, and I can attest to that with my own personal experience. By quitting you can add years to your lifespan and increase your quality of life. If any smoker is ready to quit, help is available and accessible.

Manitoba supports the Canadian Cancer Society's Smokers' Helpline, a free, confidential service offering support and information about quitting smoking or vaping by telephone, text or online. The Canadian Cancer Society also operates Talk Tobacco in Manitoba, a free and confidential service for Indigenous people that offers culturally appropriate cessation support.

I'm proud to share that in the spirit of Take Down Tobacco National Day of Action, my department launched a smoking cessation social impact bond on April 1st. Quit Smoking with Your Manitoba Pharmacist is a pharmacist-led intervention which delivers nicotine replacement therapy and counselling to individuals who wish to quit smoking. It was developed in collaboration with Pharmacists Manitoba and funded by Shoppers Drug Mart.

* (13:50)

In addition, Manitobans will soon be able to access the Tobacco Quit Card and Counselling Program, which offers accessible nicotine replacement therapy and cessation counselling to low-income individuals through their primary care provider.

With over 200,000 smokers in Manitoba, multiple programs are required to support various populations to quit smoking. Manitoba's tobacco and vape reduction efforts are multi-faceted and support broad population needs.

Mental Health and Community Wellness continues to work with key stakeholders such as the Manitoba Tobacco Reduction Alliance, the Manitoba Lung Association, Shared Health and regional health authorities on efforts to prevent and end smoking and vaping in our province.

In honour of Take Down Tobacco National Day of Action, I encourage all Manitobans to speak up on the harms of smoking, recognize the threat of vaping and utilize cessation supports available in their communities to improve their health and well-being.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Today we recognize Take Down Tobacco day and all the work that the advocates are doing to reduce smoking rates across our province and world.

When we talk about quitting smoking, we often do so in ways that centre on the individual smoker, implying that the decision to do so rests on them and them alone. But Take Down Tobacco day reminds all of us that advertising and the effects of the tobacco industry have a major effect on the rates of dependency in our country.

Smoking affects all of us, whether it's a friend or someone that we love, and it costs tens of millions dollars to the health-care system to treat smoking-related illness.

We also note the rising rates of alternative forms of smoking, especially e-cigarettes, used among Manitoban youth. There is uncertainty and about the long-term health impacts of the practice. And we know that vaping can lead to nicotine dependency.

In 2020, 14 per cent of Canadians between the age of 15 to 19 reported having vaped in the last 30 days. As we continue to advocate for more regulations of the tobacco industry, we also need to consider the pathways to addictions from all products.

Over 20 years ago, I made the decision to quit, mainly because I wanted to be a role model to my three children. And I'm happy to say that none of them smoke.

To all of the Manitobans trying to quit smoking: you can do it. We support your efforts. And to everyone who is thinking of quitting, don't forget that it's never too late to do so.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, today is Take Down Tobacco day, a day when we need to dedicate ourselves to reducing smoking and reducing 'vaking'—

vaping, particularly that using nicotine, in our province.

Let's look back for a moment. Manitoba took a major step forward in 2003 and 2004. This included the establishment of an all-party committee on environmental tobacco smoke. The committee found it was time to ban smoking in indoor public places. A bill to achieve this was passed June the 10th, 2004 and came into effect October 2004. The result of this has been a continuing decline in smoking in the years since then, and we thank all those who have helped in this effort to reduce smoking in our province.

The most recent estimate of the rate of smoking in Manitoba was found to be 14 and a half per cent of Manitobans. Interestingly, the rate of smoking is lower in Manitoba than that in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, even though the incidence of lung cancer is higher in Manitoba than in the other western provinces. This means we should be looking not only at cigarettes but also at other factors—as an example, the presence of radon gas in people's homes.

Radon gas can cause lung cancer and can act together with smoking to significantly increase the rate of lung cancer. Manitoba has a higher proportion of homes with high radon levels than the other western provinces. While the governments of Manitoba have focused for the last 20 years on smoking as the principal culprit in causing lung cancer, they've neglected the attention that is needed with respect to addressing the high radon levels in many Manitoba homes.

Manitoba Liberals strongly support reducing smoking and vaping in Manitoba, particularly among our youth. We also believe it is critical to address and reduce the high levels of radon in far too many Manitoba homes.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Introductory Acknowledgements

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I would like to start by acknowledging we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory, the lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations, the ancestral lands of the Inuit and the homeland of the Red River Métis.

Today I rise for the first time as MLA for the people of Fort Whyte to express my gratitude to them for placing their trust in me. I am humbled and honoured to be their representative in this Legislature.

I promise to work hard every day to be a strong voice for my community, a positive leader and an advocate for their priorities.

Madam Speaker, and to my MLA colleagues, I'd like to say, assalamu alaikum. Translation: peace and blessings be upon you.

It is a great honour for me to be the first Muslim in the history—MLA in Manitoba. I am privileged to start my journey here today in these glorious halls with the great words of peace be upon you all.

My hope is that this moment will stand out for the young, diverse children across this great province, saying I can do that as well, I matter, I am heard and I am seen.

Today we are making this Legislative Assembly a more inclusive, a more diverse, a more reflective tapestry of what we see all around us here in beautiful Manitoba and in our great country of Canada.

Madam Speaker, I would not be here today if it was not for my family. To my mom, I love you. To my siblings, Humara, Sohail, Amna and Qasim, thank you.

To my beautiful son, the love of my life, Sufiyan Henry Ahmed Morrish-Khan, I love you to the moon and back, bud. *[interjection]*

Sorry, Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to continue.

Madam Speaker: The member has leave.

Mr. Khan: I know my father's looking down on me from above. Dad, you came to Canada with a dream to give your kids a better life and opportunity, and now we have that. Now I can take that dream forward and try to make it better for everyone else. Thank you, Dad. I love you.

To all my family and my friends, my support system, my volunteers, my campaign team and all of the people of Fort Whyte, thank you.

Last, to my colleagues in the room, I look forward to working with you all, whether you're on this side or the other side of the House. Whether we agree or not, there will always be a respectful dialogue between you and I, moving Manitoba forward together, and that is why we are all here today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. May peace and blessings be upon you as well.

Papal Apology to Indigenous People for Residential Schools

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): In 1990, Phil Fontaine did a CBC interview disclosing the abuse he suffered at Indian residential schools. It was a pivotal moment in Canadian history, as it marked the first time a leader spoke publicly of the horrors occurring in these institutions. It certainly wouldn't be the last.

That interview, alongside all the work of courageous survivors, led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the 94 Calls to Action, Canada's official apology and, ultimately, to Friday's papal apology.

Why was an apology from the Pope so important to so many survivors? It is because of the denial that is Canada's colonial history: the denial of our humanity as Indigenous peoples; the denial of the torture and trauma bestowed on the state and the Church on the bodies of little children, including our little ones in unmarked graves; the denial of the intergenerational impacts of residential school; the denial of our languages, of our culture and of our land.

* (14:00)

While an apology to some may not seem very important, to many survivors it is. Quite obviously, the best apology is one married to action. The Catholic Church is worth billions of dollars. Pay the \$30 million owed to survivors now, not through fundraisers but through the church's own finances.

Five of us in the NDP caucus are the children and grandchildren of survivors. We are only here because they lived, and for that we are forever grateful and in awe.

Finally, a profound miigwech to my cousin, Phil Fontaine, and all survivors, including the member for Fort Rouge's (Mr. Kineu) father and uncle, and to all the matriarchs who led the delegations bringing forth this papal apology.

Miigwech.

Za Pizza Bistro

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): It gives me great pleasure to stand up and introduce Za Pizza Bistro restaurant, which opened a new location at 2188 McPhillips.

On March 19th of this year, I had the privilege to participate in the grand opening of Za Pizza Bistro at

their new location in the McPhillips constituency. They opened its first location in Manitoba just in 2015, in the St. Vital area. Since then, they've opened seven more franchises in different parts of the city of Winnipeg.

Franchising this new small business highlights the importance of self-employment as part of the success of our local economy. It's a time we pay tribute to over 120,000 small businesses established in our province who employ over 72 per cent of the Manitoba workforce.

While Za Pizza Bistro restaurant offers both dine-in and takeout options, they also provide catering to small and large events. Because this is a small, independent restaurant with a strong focus on casual, welcoming atmosphere and a friendly service, they have created a sense of community with the constituents.

And I quote, they've noted in a recent conversation that guests are responding very well because they like the intimate, casual atmosphere; plus, the small staff and open kitchen help create a place where they feel welcome and at home.

Small-business owners love what they do, and they play an important role in supporting our local communities. The owners put a great deal of emphasis on relationships they are building with all their customers. They're taking the time and enjoying letting the community know that they are there to serve.

Please help me in extending a sincere congratulations to the two women entrepreneurs, Maninder Kaur and Amarjeet Kaur Gill, on the grand opening of their second 'zabista' location. It is my hope that they and their families will be blessed with many years of success.

Thank you.

Internationally Educated Nurses

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, on Saturday I received a bittersweet call from a constituent named Gray, an internationally educated nurse who has been working as a health-care aide in a large Winnipeg personal-care home for the past eight years.

Gray called to tell me that he finally got his registered nursing designation and would be working as an RN for a personal-care home in Ontario. Instead of staying in Manitoba, where he's desperately needed, Gray will be working as a nurse at a

personal-care home in Kenora, Ontario. He chose Kenora because it's only two hours away from his home here in Winnipeg.

Gray was a Manitoba provincial nominee. He has strong family ties and wants to remain in Manitoba. Gray is just one of many internationally educated nurses that have been forced to leave the province in order to become licensed RNs.

For the last three years in a row, Manitoba has ranked eighth out of 10 provinces for our poor ability to attract and retain immigrants. For the past two years, we've had alarming negative growth rates due to out-migration, and recent data from the Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner shows that in a four-year span only 16 per cent of internationally educated professionals got full accreditation and got to work in their field of study and experience. Even worse, only 5 per cent of internationally educated nurses become fully registered here in Manitoba.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

Solutions have been laid at the feet of this government by its own IEN advisory group but the PCs remain unwilling to act. Internationally educated nurses have not asked to make this process easier; they have only ever asked to make this process fair. I am also repeating my calls for the government to uphold existing labour mobility laws and allow nurses licensed in other provinces in good standing to work here in Manitoba.

Removing unfair barriers is the first step.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Canadian Power Toboggan Championships

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): On March 6th, I was honoured to have the opportunity in my constituency to bring greetings on behalf of the Province of Manitoba and welcome all the participants and fans to the 60th annual Canadian Power Toboggan Championships, the greatest show on snow, in Beausejour. Congratulations to Gunnar Sterne from West Chicago, Illinois, on your victory, winning this year's 2022 Canadian Power Toboggan Championships.

Every year more than 100 racers of all ages and skill levels come from across North America to compete in the Canadian Power Toboggan Championships in Beausejour, Manitoba. The Canadian Power Toboggan Championships has the

world's fastest and safest one-half-mile ice oval track, where up to 18 racers compete at the same time.

The Canadian Power Toboggan Championships started in 1963, and it was the first formally organized snowmobile race in the sport's history. CPTC is a community-based non-profit organization with more than 200 volunteers for the longest running snowmobile race in the world. CPTC is recognized the leading snowmobile racing event in Canada.

I am pleased to highlight that since 2016, our government has provided over \$133,000 in funding through the Community Places and Building Sustainable Communities grant to the CPTC organization.

Thank you to Reid Baker, the president of the Canadian Power Toboggan Championships, and your board for all your hard work and dedication. I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to the racers, organizers, volunteers and everyone involved. All the best for continued success in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Although they have departed, I would like to acknowledge that we had guests in the Speaker's Gallery this afternoon, and they included family members of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan). And it included his mother, Rehanna Khan, his siblings, Humara, Rana, Sohail Khan and Amna Mirza, and his son, Sufiyan Morrish-Khan, and his constituency assistant, Laurel [*phonetic*] Hammond.

Also in the public gallery were family and friends of the honourable member for Fort Whyte, and to all the other members that are in our gallery today, it is very nice to have everybody back here being able to join us as we conduct our Assembly today, and it is very nice to have people in our gallery today; and on behalf of all of the members here in the Legislature, we want to welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Leader of the Opposition Acknowledgements

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I just want to add my appreciation and say that after two long years, it is very good to have people in the gallery once again. Along with those comments, I want to send my love to the residential

school survivors who had a very meaningful week, along with all of us as Canadians. And of course, I want to say Sat Sri Akal [*truth is God*] to everyone celebrating and observing Sikh Heritage Month during this month of April.

I want to take this opportunity also, in response to my colleague from Fort Whyte, to say wa-alaikum as-salaam [*and peace be upon you*]. Significance of having a member of the umma join us here in the Chamber is a milestone. And not only is it meaningful for young Muslim children, it's meaningful for all children, that they now can look to this place and say of course there should be a Muslim legislature-legislator in Manitoba's Chamber.

I do have a question about affordability, but I wanted to begin with those comments.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments, certainly welcome everyone back to the Manitoba Legislature and those in the gallery as well, Madam Speaker, and to those from our Sikh community who were here today.

* (14:10)

I want to thank the minister for his statement today and we wish them all the best and we thank them for being here. And obviously, want to say that this was a big week, I think, for residential schools and those survivors, Madam Speaker, and certainly the apology by the Pope. We welcome that as well. I think that is a step forward and, certainly, we recognize that.

I also want to recognize our new MLA for Fort Whyte to the Manitoba Chamber and to the Legislature for his first day and as the first Muslim MLA. We welcome him here as well.

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

Manitoba Hydro Rates Cost of Living Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, on with the show, then, eh, Madam Speaker.

Life is getting more and more expensive in Manitoba, and this government is doing nothing to help. We know that it costs more to fill up at the pump. It costs more to go the grocery store and, yes, your hydro bills keep going up and up and up because of

orders they have made at the Cabinet table and legislation that they've passed right here in the Chamber.

Now, with their new bill they want to raise rates even more: 5 per cent per year. The Premier has a choice to make.

Will she simply stop raising hydro rates on Manitobans? Yes or no?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I certainly welcome any question from the Leader of the Opposition when it comes to affordability for Manitobans. We know that under the previous NDP government they raised taxes—almost 13 or 14 times—they raised taxes on the backs of Manitobans to make life less affordable for Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

We have done many things to make life more affordable for Manitobans, Madam Speaker, and next week we will make life even more affordable for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, it's pretty clear that Manitobans don't like this Premier's approach and they don't like the approach of this government. And, really, it's very understandable to see why. It was only our team who was able to stop them from raising hydro rates yet again here in the Legislature.

But did they stop and listen to Manitobans? Did they learn the lesson from that experience? No, Madam Speaker. They left over the past year, held a leadership race and then came back to raise hydro rates through legislation once again. That's not making life more affordable. That's just repeating the mistakes of Brian Pallister.

Will the Premier continue, or will she simply stop raising hydro rates today?

Mrs. Stefanson: I also welcome any question from the NDP Leader of the Opposition when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. Certainly, under their watch—the NDP-Bipole III and Keeyask was \$3.7 billion over budget. The—Keeyask cost \$2.2 billion over budget; bipole 1.3 over budget, Madam Speaker.

The NDP mislead Manitobans on the escalating costs of these massive infrastructure programs, Madam Speaker, and now they've left Manitobans to clean up for their mess. We will continue to be on the side of Manitobans to make life more affordable for all of them.

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

**Publication of COVID-19 Data
Elimination of Public Notifications**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, you know that Brian Pallister said in 2020 that Manitobans have to look after themselves, and then the Premier went and said the very same thing this year. You know what makes that so much more difficult? When the government stops publishing COVID data.

And the reason why this decision makes no sense is because (1) it contradicts public health, but (2) it's the people of Manitoba who pay for that data. The people of Manitoba pay for this COVID data. They should be able to have access to it. It shouldn't be hidden from them by this Premier and the PC government.

Will the Premier reverse the decision to hide COVID data?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, once again, Madam Speaker, I'll address the litany of false accusations by the Leader of the Opposition. As usual, he knows that these issues are reported weekly, as are—as is this case in many other provinces. In fact, some provinces have moved to monthly reporting. So we are, in fact, ahead of them.

But, Madam Speaker, we will continue to 'mutter' the data through the waste-water system and also through other indicators, and we will continue to work with Public Health and other stakeholders in our health-care system to ensure that we will take the appropriate steps to keep Manitobans safe.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, careful observers will note that the Premier just referred to a form of data that is not shared publicly with Manitobans. This is something that has not been done throughout the pandemic, even though many experts have been calling for this information to be released to Manitobans.

Again, the people of Manitoba pay for this information to be collected. They pay for this data to be tabulated. They even pay for the salaries of these government ministers who hide this information at the Cabinet table. It's a simple ask: let Manitobans see the data on COVID so that they can understand the situation as it pertains to public health.

Will the Premier keep hiding COVID data or will she reverse her position today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition can continue to put false accusations on the record in this Chamber, but it doesn't make it any more true.

The fact is that we do publish this data weekly, Madam Speaker, as do other provinces. Of course, what I have said and what other health-care—what health-care professionals have also said is that we need to learn to live with COVID. And as we transition through this we will ensure that we take every 'precautions' to make sure that Manitobans are safe throughout this process.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the challenge is that not everyone gets to live with COVID. We have lost more than 1,700 Manitobans through this pandemic. One of the tools that can help save lives is to arm Manitobans with the public information collected by Public Health.

One of the mistakes that has been made by this government since the time of Brian Pallister and continuing to now is the concealment, the hiding of this data. We are simply asking for this government to stop. You can listen to the many public health experts speaking about this on the daily, saying that this government should publish this information.

Will the Premier release this information daily and stop hiding the truth from Manitobans?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the leader of the opposite—opposition is just wrong again. In fact, the very information that he is asking for is published on our website on a weekly basis, and that is available for all Manitobans, indeed for people all over the world, to look at. So that is hardly hiding from anything.

**Health-Care System Reform
Surgical Backlogs and Staff Vacancies**

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, hallway medicine is returning to Winnipeg hospitals.

Manitoba's busiest emergency room had a 10-hour wait for care last month. That's the longest wait on record. We've been telling this minister and this government for years that their cuts are causing very real harm.

There are some solutions, though: return the hospital beds that this government cut and address unacceptably high nurse vacancy rates of over 20 per cent.

Will the minister commit to doing so today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for Union Station for the question.

The members opposite wrote the book on wait times, Madam Speaker, and left us to clean up the mess that they left behind, and I want to say that we appreciate the efforts and commitment of our talented health-care staff and their dedication to providing compassionate patient care.

The—it has been a difficult two years for Manitobans. Many individuals are showing up in our access points, which is our emergency departments, and I want them to know that we are working diligently to ensure the services are available to them.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, 10 hours for care at Manitoba's busiest emergency room is beyond unacceptable.

I'll table the documents we received through FIPPA. Ten hours to wait at HSC is the longest ever wait on record. Cuts and consolidation have done lasting damage and we're seeing it at the emergency room at HSC. It's time to invest. It's time to replace the beds that this government cut.

* (14:20)

Why won't the minister address the 10-hour wait at HSC?

Ms. Gordon: I want to assure Manitobans that our sickest patients that show up in our emergency departments, that we are providing quality, safe care.

We know that less urgent patients, the levels are higher than we would like them to be, but we continue to work with our health-system leadership—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —to identify opportunities to increase medicine capacity, and there will be more news in the budget next week, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, it's not just 10 hours at emergency rooms. Many Manitobans are still waiting for surgeries.

We heard from Brenda Spearman, who is waiting for a spinal surgery she desperately needs. She's in extraordinary pain and has to wait until June for an MRI just to get the waiting process started. Her husband Wayne says she has zero quality of life.

Brenda and her husband watched the surgical update hoping for answers, but were disappointed that the minister failed to set any target dates.

Will the minister set targets for Manitobans waiting in pain—people like Brenda Spearman?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force for the incredible work they have been doing with the health-system leadership since December when they were appointed.

Perhaps the member for Union Station missed the update last week. Sanford hospital in North Dakota has successfully operated on nine patients. One patient was with us, sharing her story. And I know that there are many Manitobans that are looking to the task force to alleviate their pain and suffering and I want them to know that we are working very quickly to ensure they receive the care they need.

Health System Support Staff Union Contract and Wages

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, new funding for health support staff needs to be included in the upcoming budget.

Health support staff have worked the front lines of this pandemic. They showed up to work to keep us safe and when the ones we love got sick, these staff were at the bedside. They've been without a contract for far too long and they have been left out of pay top-ups.

Will the minister recognize these staff and ensure they have a contract?

An Honourable Member: We're not the employer, is that the answer?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, the members opposite seem to know the answer to the question. They're already shouting it out. Indeed, we are not the employer, Madam Speaker. Shared Health is the employer. *[interjection]*

They laugh at Shared Health, at the negotiation tactics, Madam Speaker.

We depend on the collective bargaining process. We know they are working hard at the table and we're looking forward to that outcome, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, health support workers, like those in the Brandon emergency room, took the same risks as other front-line workers but were not shown the support they deserved.

Thousands of workers in personal-care homes worked in facilities with outbreaks to care for our loved ones. They are doing so without a renewed contract. In fact, they have not seen a raise in many years. It's time to show these workers the respect they deserve.

Will the minister ensure COVID top-ups and a new contract in the upcoming budget?

Mr. Helwer: Well, the member opposite is asking me to interfere in contract negotiations, Madam Speaker. I will not do that.

Shared Health is the employer. They are negotiating in the collective bargaining process with the—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: —with the members that the opposite member refers to in the Brandon Regional Health Centre. They are negotiating with Shared Health. That's where those negotiations would take place, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, the minister needs to ensure that new funds are available for health support staff in this coming budget.

Inflation is now over 5 per cent. Many health support workers have had their wages frozen for years and they've put themselves at risk working in our hospitals, in home care and in personal-care homes with patients infected with COVID.

It's time for a fair deal for all health workers and that includes health support staff. They deserve new contracts and top-ups that recognize their service on the front lines of this pandemic.

Will the minister ensure that funding is in place in the upcoming budget?

Mr. Helwer: We were very happy when Shared Health came to a collective agreement with the nurses, and we expect they will do the same with the support services that are out there.

Madam Speaker, we thank everyone in health care that worked so hard throughout the 'pandemic' and continues to do so.

In terms of the budget: stay tuned. You'll hear next week.

Exchange Income Corporation Premier and Conflict of Interest Concerns

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) believes that there's one set of rules for her and one set for everyone else in Manitoba.

The conflict of interest law is clear: the Premier should recuse herself from any matters where her family has a financial interest. But we know she didn't do that when it comes to the Exchange Income Corporation.

Now, the Premier's election filings show that EIC executives and related lawyers donated over \$43,000 to her leadership campaign. That's nearly 8 per cent of her entire amount that she raised.

Will the Premier admit that she is in a—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —conflict when it comes to EIC?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): Well, Madam Speaker, here we go again. Here's what the NDP do best. They run a campaign of fear and slander against the Premier. Again, preamble's dishonest, obviously non-factual.

Madam Speaker, I know the NDP is probably jealous—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —probably jealous that we had so many fundraisers for the Premier's election campaign. That's probably what they're jealous about.

There's nothing to see here, Madam Speaker. This is all above board. This—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Cullen: I know the NDP are jealous of the money that the Premier was able to raise during the campaign. I know they're jealous. They're going to keep going down this rabbit hole day after day. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Over \$43,000 was contributed to the Premier's leadership campaign by executives and related lawyers of one company: EIC. That's the company where the Premier's family has a direct financial interest in and that's the company the Premier helped award a contract to. That's a conflict, Madam Speaker, and the Premier should recuse herself.

The Premier needs to be clear with the House: Will she recuse herself from awarding any more contracts to EIC? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, the NDP again making accusations without bringing anything to the table. I mean, this has been a history of the NDP: keep making accusations without bringing any facts to tie the information to the allegations.

Madam Speaker, I know the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —NDP is upset that the Premier happens to have friends that may happen to have money and want to contribute to her campaign. This is about democracy in action. I don't know—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —what the NDP has against democracy. This is democracy in action and, Madam Speaker, these were good Manitobans promoting and backing the Premier in a fair election campaign—

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

I'm having difficulty hearing when members are actually speaking in the House. So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please, so that I can hear what is being asked and answered.

The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: It's important for leaders in the highest positions to simply follow the rules. That's what the rest of us do here.

We learned one company alone contributed 8 per cent of all the money the Premier raised in her leadership. The Premier should step back from any dealings with that company. It's very simple, Madam Speaker. She should recuse herself.

So, it's a simple yes or a no. Will the Premier follow the rules and recuse herself from any dealings with EIC? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I need to be able to hear the answer, please.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, again, false accusations coming to the table without any basis for those accusations.

There is no conflict of interest here. What we have is Manitobans putting their money on the table, hard-working Manitobans supporting an individual for a leadership for the premier of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, if the opposition is—wants to continue on this witch hunt, they have nowhere further to look than across the aisle. Look in the mirror if they're after a witch hunt.

Minimum Wage Increase Request

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The government of New Brunswick has raised their province's minimum wage by over \$1 on Friday and will raise it again later this year by another dollar. Manitoba's minimum wage now sits a mere 14 cents from being the lowest minimum wage in Canada.

People need a living wage, and they need it now.

Why won't this government support a living wage?

Madam Speaker: The honourable—*[interjection]*
Order.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): We took the politics out of the—increasing the minimum wage, unlike the opposition, who played politics all the time with this, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: It's predictable. It's based on inflation as opposed to the political situation and solutions—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: —the NDP opposite had: zero per cent in the first year they were elected, then twice increased it just before an election, Madam Speaker.

We're making Manitoba more affordable, reducing taxes, removing—taking away the broadening of the PST they did, reducing it by 1 per cent. They wanted to increase taxes, and they'll continue to do so, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Lindsey: Madam Speaker, the minister should be ashamed of that answer. Working families are worried about rapidly rising costs, including the cost of fuel at the pumps, food at the grocery stores. Manitoba families deserve better than second last in this country.

We need a government that works for Manitoba families, not just the rich families.

Will the minister make announcements about plans to raise the minimum wage and make it a living wage, and will he do that today?

Mr. Helwer: Well, the member strays into politics that they just love; they can't get away from trying to promise things to Manitobans.

Well, here's a promise that the leader of opposition made. He wanted to shut down Maple Leaf, Madam Speaker. He led his party to shut down Maple Leaf during the pandemic, shut down all processing, throwing tens of thousands of people out of work.

How does that help workers in Manitoba? It doesn't, and that's what we're faced forth—faced with, with the NDP—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: —throwing people out of work.

Madam Speaker: I'm going to have to call the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) to order.

There is an incredible amount of heckling, if not yelling, and I am just having difficulty hearing.

So, a warning to everybody that I want to be able to hear, I have to be able to hear, questions and answers. So, please.

MLA Lindsey: And, once again, the minister should be ashamed of himself for standing up, saying that he shouldn't protect workers during a COVID pandemic and trying to tie that into the fact that this government is continuing to starve workers because they won't address their substandard minimum wage.

The price of everything is going up; we see that every day: price of food is up over 7.4 per cent; the cost of fuel: more than 50 cents a litre gone up.

Manitoba's minimum wage is a national embarrassment, and this minister should be ashamed of himself. It needs to be raised to a living wage and it needs to be raised immediately.

Will the minister finally commit to doing so and raising the minimum wage to a living wage today?

Mr. Helwer: It's a predictable increase for Manitobans, for Manitoba businesses, Madam Speaker.

We also reduced the minimum personal exemption, saving Manitobans hundreds of millions of dollars there, Madam Speaker, making sure that they had ability to live on their salaries, taking them off the tax roll.

This is not the political solution that the opposition would call for. That's what they're looking for now: all politics all day. Perhaps the member opposite was part of the group discussion that wanted to raise the PST not just once, but twice, Madam Speaker.

Publication of COVID-19 Data Elimination of Public Notifications

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): After tens of thousands of cases and over 1,700 deaths in Manitoba, the PCs have effectively given up tracking the pandemic. The daily COVID dashboard has been wiped off the government website and PCR tests are hard to come by.

Jurisdictions around the world are facing a new wave no different from the last one, an explosion of Omicron cases that put people in hospital, in ICU and in an early grave.

Hope is not a plan and denial is not an explanation.

Whose decision was it to take down that dashboard? What evidence is there to justify it when lives and workers are all at stake?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, we

worked closely with Public Health and all the advisors, Madam Speaker, on what information is made available to Manitobans.

They're looking at what's happening in the rest of the provinces and the rest of the world, and we're making sure that Manitobans have information to make decisions on. It's published weekly, so the information is readily available.

I know the member may not like it; he wants the doom and gloom, Madam Speaker. But we're working with Public Health to make sure Manitobans can make those decisions and get the information they need.

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

Mr. Lamont: I received a letter today from a concerned Manitoban about the being dark in the numbers. He said, quote: Having or not having this information will, bottom line, determine the rate of COVID in the province and the number of people who die from it. End quote.

Manitobans deserve to know whether the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), the Health Minister and their advisors are doing their own research on the Internet, or if they're just caving in to peer pressure from other Conservatives. We want names because Manitobans deserve to know who is responsible, so we can someday hold them to account for their negligence.

Whose idea was it to shut this down? Who signed off on it? And what evidence was it based on?

Mr. Helwer: Well, there were many questions and accusations there. There's so many, Madam Speaker, that are inaccurate that it's hard to discover which path the member opposite wants to go down, which conspiracy.

So, all I can say, Madam Speaker, is I'm so happy and thankful that Manitobans stepped up and got vaccinated. It was an exemplary, fastest, largest, most successful vaccination campaign in Manitoba history.

An enormous thank you to all the testing staff, the vaccinators, administrators and volunteers that made it all work, Madam Speaker. This just didn't happen overnight. A lot of planning went into that to make it done and make it done well.

* (14:40)

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitobans Waiting for Spinal Surgery Wait-List Information for Patients

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Brenda Spearman is waiting for spinal surgery. She has a lot of pain. Her current quality of life is zero. She's aware she might be able to go to Sanford Health in Fargo, North Dakota, for her surgery.

However, she doesn't know if there is a list for people to go to North Dakota. She doesn't know if she's on that list or not. And if she's not on the list, she's not sure how she can get on the list. And if there is somewhere a decision that's been made that she's not to be on the list, she needs to know how to appeal that decision.

I ask the Minister of Health: Will she provide answers to these questions that Brenda and others have about the government's list for people to go to North Dakota for spinal surgery?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for River Heights for bringing forward this case.

I do want to say that, as a result of personal health information, I cannot discuss individual cases on the floor of the Chamber. I invite the member to bring forward that case to my office. We would be happy to look into it.

For individuals who are interested in Sanford Health as an—hospital as an option for spine surgery, I encourage them to speak directly with their specialist about the program and to receive more information there.

Spring Flood Mitigation Water Control Structures

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): With the spring melt starting up, Manitobans will soon rely on a series of water control structures to ensure that water levels remain within acceptable 'levets'—levels.

Can the minister speak to these water control systems and explain the work he has been doing to prepare Manitoba for this spring season?

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I want to thank my colleague for such a great question.

As the member from the Portage la Prairie since 2011 knows, I don't have to educate him about the Portage Diversion. I want to—what I can say, recently I had a distinct pleasure of meeting with the Manitoba

Transportation and Infrastructure's staff, on site, of the Portage Diversion and Assiniboine control structure who assisted in the operations of these provincial flood mitigation assets.

Madam Speaker, for all-throughout Manitoba, we have these dedicated teams of professionals and to them, thank you. Their busy season is just beginning and Manitoba can rest assured knowing that these experts are there to make-watch over the control structures.

Thanks to our dedicated team of transportation-infrastructure staff, we are well equipped and prepared—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Management of Provincial Park Day Passes Revenue to Out-of-Province Company

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, it's springtime. Manitobans' minds have turned to visiting parks and—but that is another thing that is getting more expensive for Manitobans.

And yet, this government continues to use a company from Texas, which doubled the cost for a simple day pass—\$600,000 a year is being given to this private company.

Can the minister please explain why they continue to hand over hundreds of thousands of dollars to a US company instead of investing it in our parks?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Certainly, thank the member from Wolseley for that question. And really pleased today and understand that the online booking system is working very well.

As a matter of fact, bookings are up over 300 per cent for yurts and cabins, Madam Speaker, and we're certainly looking forward to continued bookings over the coming days for Manitobans to get out and enjoy our beautiful Manitoba parks.

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

Ms. Naylor: I'm really glad the online system is working well today for campers. But just so that the minister isn't confused, I'm actually talking about day passes and the day trips to provincial parks for families have—the cost has doubled.

Madam Speaker, \$600,000 a year is going to a private Texas company: hundreds of thousands of dollars per year that could have stayed in the province

and been invested in our parks. It could have made the parks more affordable or accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Why does the minister continue to send \$600,000 to Texas every year?

Mr. Wharton: Certainly, we know that Manitobans enjoy and will continue to enjoy some of the most reasonable rates across Canada, better yet, probably in North America, Madam Speaker, when it comes to visiting our parks. Whether it be a day pass, a three-day pass or an annual pass, we know that Manitobans are going to continue to enjoy and our parks at some of the most reasonable rates right across Canada. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Naylor: Manitobans have been clear. They want all aspects of their parks to remain public, but this government—or, sorry, this minister, this government, the previous minister have not listened. Instead, they continue to use a Texas-based company to charge Manitobans more.

Will the minister stop this privatization and commit today to not sending any more money to Texas?

Mr. Wharton: I'm sure the member, when she pulls out the history novel, she'll realize that under the NDP—the former NDP government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —that services were privatized under the NDP—that's correct, privatized under the former NDP government.

Madam Speaker, let's be clear—*[interjection]*—let's be clear—and the member—*[interjection]*—the Leader of the Opposition will understand this: our parks are not for sale.

Manitoba Métis Federation Government-Hydro Negotiations

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): We know the entire board of Manitoba Hydro resigned because they couldn't meet with Brian Pallister. But Brian Pallister didn't stop there. He blamed the Manitoba Métis Federation for his own failings and then he cancelled deals negotiated in good faith and that's just simply wrong.

The Premier has the chance through—with the budget to right these wrongs.

Will the Premier act and negotiate in good faith with the MMF on Hydro? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I want to thank the member opposite.

I've been talking about reconciliation and the importance of everyone being on board with reconciliation, and we had a good sidebar at the MMF assembly last week and agreed to work together on the reconciliation file.

With respect to the Red River Métis, we are in continual communication with the Red River Métis on matters that are important to their ministers, to the departments, to their government. I always look forward to having respectful conversations with President Chartrand. He has been in my office numerous, numerous times. We continue to have very a engaging dialogue and continue to work together on these files.

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

Mr. Bushie: If you can't acknowledge the mistakes of the past you can't fix them.

The Premier should be turning the page on Brian Pallister's attacks on the Manitoba Métis Federation, but we aren't seeing any concrete action here. Hydro is one of the biggest and most important files that we have.

Will the Premier commit to rectifying the wrongs done to the Manitoba Métis Federation and the people of the Red River Métis on Hydro in the budget today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I thank the member for the question.

And there was a very good AGM that the MMF had on Saturday. I was pleased, with many of my colleagues, to attend that event and had various good discussions with many of the members there that day, over 2,000 members. It was a great turnout, Madam Speaker—the first time in a couple of years, obviously, because of COVID, so it was a great turnout.

I've had several great, productive discussions with David Chartrand and, Madam Speaker, next week there'll be a budget where they'll be many more good new stories that come out of that when it comes to reconciliation in our province.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

* (14:50)

PETITIONS

Abortion Services

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons deserve to be safe and supported when accessing abortion services.

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to detrimental outcomes and consequences—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

(3) The provincial government's reckless health-care cuts have created inequity within the health-care system whereby access to the abortion pill, Mifegymiso, and surgical abortions are less accessible for northern and rural individuals than individuals in southern Manitoba, as they face travel barriers to access the handful of non-urban health-care professionals who are trained to provide medical abortions.

(4) For over five years, and over the administration of three failed Health ministers, the provincial government operated under the pretense that reproductive health was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and seniors care and shifted the responsibility to a secretariat with no policy, program or financial authority within the health-care system.

(5) And for over four years, the provincial government has refused to support bill 200, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, which will ensure the safety of Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons accessing abortion services, and the staff who provide such services, by establishing buffer zones for anti-choice Manitobans around clinics.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion

services for individuals, regardless of where they reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Cochlear Implant Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

People who suffer hearing loss due to aging, illness, employment or accident not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, relatives or colleagues; they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

A cochlear implant is a life-changing electronic device that allows deaf people to receive and process sounds and speech, and also can partially restore hearing in people who have severe hearing loss and who do not benefit from conventional hearing aids. A processor behind the ear captures and processes sound signals which are transmitted to a receiver implanted into the skull that relays the information to the inner ear.

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic, founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 45 devices per year.

There are no upfront costs to Manitoba residents who proceed with cochlear implant surgery, as Manitoba Health covers the surgical procedure, internal implant and the first external sound processor. Newfoundland and Manitoba have the highest estimated implantation costs of all provinces.

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount

of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available. The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than in other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

In Manitoba, pediatric patients under 18 years of age are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

It is unreasonable that this technology is inaccessible to many citizens of Manitoba who must choose between hearing and deafness due to financial constraints because the costs of maintaining the equipment are prohibitive for low-income earners or those on a fixed income, such as old age pension or Employment and Income Assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide financing for upgrades to the cochlear implant covered under medicare, or provide funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program to assist with the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

Signed by Sandra Neustaedter, Mark Neustaedter, Lukas Neustaedter and many other Manitobans.

Lead Water Pipes

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The United States government has identified lead water pipes as a clear and present danger to the American public health, and President Biden has announced a 100 per cent replacement of lead water pipes in 10 million US homes and 400,000 schools and child-care centres as part of the America's job plan.

(2) Two thousand seven hundred and fifty-five homes in the Elmwood-East Kildonan area have lead water pipes connecting their basements to the City-owned water pipes at their property line. Homes built before 1950 are likely to have lead water pipes running to this connection.

(3) New lead level guidelines issued by Health Canada in 2019 are in response to finding that lead concentration in drinking water should be kept as low as reasonably achievable, as lead exposures are inherently unsafe and have serious health consequences, especially for children and expectant mothers.

(4) Thirty one per cent of Winnipeg's 23,000 homes with lead water pipes connecting basements to the City-owned water pipes at the property line were found to have lead levels above the new Health Canada lead level guidelines.

(5) The City of Winnipeg has an inventory of which homes and public buildings, including schools and daycares, that have the lead water pipe connection to the City's water main and will only disclose this information to the homeowner or property owner. The cost of replacing the lead water pipe to individual homeowners is over \$4,000.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately contact all home and property owners in Manitoba with lead pipes—lead water pipes connecting to the City watermain and provide meaningful support to them for lead water pipe replacement and their access to clean water as assured and exposure to lead as healthy—health risks are eliminated.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Would there be leave of the House to accept the petition read by this member as written? *[Agreed]*

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

The background to this petition is as follows:

1. The U.S. Government has identified lead water pipes as a 'clear and present danger' to American public health and President Biden has announced a 100% replacement of lead water pipes in 10 million U.S. homes and 400,000 schools and childcare centres as part of the America's Job Plan.

2. 2,755 homes in the Elmwood-East Kildonan area have lead water pipes connecting their basements to the City owned water pipes at their property line. Homes built before 1950 are likely to have lead water pipes running to this connection.

3. New lead level guidelines issued by Health Canada in 2019 are a response to findings that lead concentrations in drinking water should be kept as low as reasonably achievable as lead exposures are inherently unsafe and have serious health consequences, especially for children and expectant mothers.

4. Thirty one percent of Winnipeg's 23,000 homes with lead water pipes connecting basements to the City owned water pipes at their property line were found to have lead levels above the new Health Canada lead level guidelines.

5. The City of Winnipeg has an inventory of which homes and public buildings, including schools and daycares, that have the lead water pipe connection to the City's water main and will only disclose this information to the homeowner or property owner. The cost of replacing the lead water pipe to individual homeowners is over \$4,000.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Provincial Government to immediately contact all home and property owners in Manitoba with lead water pipes connecting to the City watermain line, and provide full financial support to them for lead water pipe replacement so their access to clean water is assured and exposure to lead and its health risks are eliminated.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background—sorry, to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as follows:

An estimated 1 million people suffer from eating disorders in Canada.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses affecting one's physical, psychological and social function and have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

The development and treatment of eating disorders are influenced by the social determinants of

health, including food and income security, access to housing, health care and mental health supports.

* (15:00)

It is important to share the diverse experiences of people with eating disorders across all ages, genders and identities, including Indigenous, Black and racialized people; queer and gender-diverse people; people with disabilities; people with chronic illness; and people with co-occurring mental health conditions or addictions.

It is necessary to increase awareness and education about the impact of those living with, or affected by, eating disorders in order to dispel dangerous stereotypes and myths about these illnesses.

Setting aside one week each year to focus attention on eating disorders will heighten public understanding, increase awareness of culturally relevant resources and supports for those impacted by eating disorders and encourage Manitobans to develop healthier relationships with their bodies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support a declaration that the first week in February of each year be known as eating disorders awareness week.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Foot-Care Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, the N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Lamont: Oh, it's simply to say that I referred to a letter and I would like to table it in my questions earlier.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. We appreciate the member tabling what he read from earlier.

Does not have a point of order, but we appreciate the tabling.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I have a leave request for the House.

Due to the Cabinet shuffle that happened in January, sponsorship for Bill 7, The Police Services Amendment Act (Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit Operations), was automatically 'transferred' from the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) to myself, the member for Steinbach.

The second reading debate on this bill is concurrently—is currently standing in the name of the member for Morden-Winkler, who had just begun the minister's remarks on the bill when the House rose.

Given this change in sponsorship for Bill 7, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow the member for Steinbach, myself, to carry on with and conclude the minister's remarks on Bill 7 so the House can be informed, with the minister's unlimited time—although I'm sure I won't use it—and with the understanding that the member for Morden-Winkler will be listed as having spoken to the second reading motion for this bill and will not be allowed to speak on this ever again?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member for Steinbach to carry on with and conclude the minister's remarks on Bill 7, with the minister's unlimited time and with the understanding that the member for Morden-Winkler will be listed as having spoken to the second reading motion for this bill and will not be allowed to speak on this again?

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the House for that granting of the leave.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for this afternoon's business Bill 31, Bill 7, Bill 22 and Bill 16?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider the following this afternoon second reading of Bill 31, to be followed by debate on second readings of Bill 7, 22 and 16.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 31—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022

Madam Speaker: Therefore, I will call second reading of Bill 31, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care (Mr. Johnston), that Bill 31, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Thank you.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 31, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022. This bill is an annual bill. I think it used to be called SCAMA, if I'm correct. I don't remember exactly the acronym it stood for, but it didn't sound very good. So it's been changed to the minor amendments and corrections act. It's an annual bill that corrects typographical numbering and minor drafting and translation errors. The bill also will contain minor amendments to a variety of different acts.

From a procedure perspective what happens is that department officials will, over time, over the course of a year, notice things that are either not properly translated or small corrections that they feel need to be made to legislation, and then they bring that forward to the minister who's responsible for bringing forward the minor amendments and corrections act—and it's been myself for a while—and then they're compiled in this bill.

So most, if not all, of these corrections aren't specific to the Department of Justice, the department that I'm primarily responsible for as the minister. But they are from a compilation of different departments. So when there are questions from the critics, if there are any questions, I'll do my best to answer them, but recognizing a lot of these come from a variety of different departments. But I could always try to get those answers at second reading if I'm not able to provide them on the floor this afternoon.

But I do want to bring forward a couple of explanations about things that might be a little bit more substantive in the bill that are more than just minor typographical or translation errors.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The bill will modernize the title of the act, the coat of arms, emblems and Manitoba tartan act, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The act is retitled as The Manitoba Emblems Act and the provincial flag from The Provincial Flag Act is added as a schedule, because, currently, The Provincial Flag Act only contained the one provision dealing with Manitoba's flag, and that act is repealed.

So, for greater certainty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not repealing the flag, the provincial flag. It is simply moving under The Manitoba Emblems Act, and that's really so that, you know, over time, as emblems have been added, they've often gone under their own act, the flag being one. But those who are researching, perhaps, the legislation and looking at what Manitoba's emblems are—and we recently added

the polar bear as an emblem in Manitoba—they can go under the one act and not have to go through a number of different acts.

I want to do something similar when it comes to the different recognition days, and I've talked to the opposition about that, and we'll have more discussions. But it's just really about being able to make things a bit more orderly and easy to find for people who are looking for things specific about Manitoba in terms of the emblems.

The Health Care Directives Act is amended to extend a restriction and a benefit to common-law partners. Spouses are already accounted for in the affected provisions. The first instance concerns the execution of a health-care directive when someone is signing on behalf of the maker of the directive. Currently, neither the person signing on behalf of the maker nor the witness can be the proxy decision-maker or the proxy's spouse. And that would make sense, of course, so that there's not concern about the the motivation for a person who is signing in those capacities.

* (15:10)

The amendment extends this rule to also restrict the common-law spouse of a proxy from acting as either the signer or the witness because they would have the same kind of relationship, of course, as a spouse.

The second instance concerns gifts to signers, witnesses or proxies. Currently, the entitlement of a signer, witness or proxy or their spouse to a gift from the maker is not void simply because the person acted as the signer, witness or proxy for the maker. The amendment extends this entitlement to the common-law partners or signers, witnesses and proxies. So it just modernizes the language that we have in most other acts and the provisions that allow or restrict for those who are in a common-law relationship.

Minor changes are made to The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act with respect to the composition of the committee on poverty reduction and social inclusion. The requirement that one member be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council from the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship is removed. The number of people who are required to be appointed to the committee by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council based on recommendations from the minister after consultation with United Way and other community groups is increased from three to four. So it gives a bit more

flexibility in terms of who can be appointed, but, of course, the important provision of consultation still remains.

The recently proclaimed Public Service Act is amended by this bill to expand the category of government entities subject to part 6, conflict of interest and post-employment restrictions for senior public executives, by including prescribed reporting organizations. This defined term includes both government agencies and any other organization prescribed by regulation.

Prior to the amendment, the conflict of interest was only applied to government agencies, so reporting organizations such as Shared Health and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority were excluded from the restrictions. The restrictions will now apply to such organizations, and this is something that's been commented upon over the years by various individuals, that senior leaders in these outside reporting organizations and entities really function in as an important a role as those who are in Executive Council or within the core of government. So it's something I think that most Manitobans would look upon as making sense and favourably.

The bill amends The Red River College Act to reflect the institution's evolution into a polytechnic. The act is retitled as The Red River College Polytechnic Act, and all references to college within the act are updated to college polytechnic. Consequential amendments are made to a number of other acts to bring them up to date with the institution's new name, and I know all of us have an appreciation for the great work that that educational institution does.

Finally, I'll speak to the issue of repealing of bills. The bill repealed four inactive acts: the loan act of 1982, slightly before I was elected, and the loan act of 1989, which were recently discovered to still be on the statute books, though no new loan guarantees are being issued under either of the acts from 1982 or 1989. Those acts are repealed to clean up the statute books. Any outstanding loans are unaffected by the repeals of these acts.

A private act, The Deer Lodge Curling Club Limited Incorporation Act, is repealed and it is being repealed at the request of the club itself, and so it, of course, is something that they are seeking. It is no longer functioning and it will continue under The Corporations Act.

The Sanatorium Board of Manitoba Act is also repealed. It continues as the Lung Association under

The Corporations Act. That's something that had been requested for a long time from the Lung Association.

And that concludes my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the many provisions under the minor amendments and corrections act, the historical and annual bill that is well-anticipated by this House every year, and I look forward, given the opportunity, to not only seeing it pass but introducing the minor amendments and corrections act, 2023, next year, if given the opportunity.

Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question shall—or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'd ask my colleague that this bill removes references to exceptional fines during the pandemic, why is that?

And can the minister explain why so little of the fines that were levied during the pandemic—that they were not actually paid?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): While it might have been a more appropriate question for question period itself, I do think it's an important question.

So there are both federal fines, of course, under the federal Quarantine Act, and there are the provincial fines that were levied under the pandemic—fines from under the health orders. There was a number of different reasons. And so part of it is that because many of the people who got fined are contesting those fines, and so it goes through the court process, and that's a relatively slow process. There's been about a half a million dollars that's been collected, and the balance goes to collections itself, like all other fines that aren't collected.

And there's further 'penories' that can happen from that collection process. But nothing in this act changes the fact that those fines are still on the books and going through the process, depending which—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I just would ask the minister a little bit of the background on the switch to the polytechnic. It seems to me that this probably could have been done about 20 years ago or more, and why is this the time that it's being done?

Mr. Goertzen: If I understood the member correctly, he was asking about the name change for Red River College and then adding the polytechnic act. So this is something that probably would be better directed to the Minister of Advanced Education and, of course, the board of Red River College who has decided to change their name.

I suspect that they, you know, like a lot of different colleges, Providence College decided to use—add university to their name. I think that as they're doing recruiting around the country, they probably see the different names are more reflective of what they're actually offering in terms of education. But I think it's probably a question better directed to Red River itself.

Ms. Fontaine: So this act introduces the flag of Manitoba under the coat of arms, emblems and Manitoba tartan act and repeals The Provincial Flag Act.

Can the minister explain why this is?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes. And I mentioned in my comments and I want to re-emphasize this, so I'm glad the member asked. They need to stop the news release in their caucuses saying that we're repealing the provincial flag. We simply are—of course, are not.

It moves where the flag is housed in terms of statues from its own act where it's the only thing under an act, under the general provincial emblems, you know, all the other emblems of Manitoba. Anybody who is looking at Manitoba and wants to see the emblems would likely go to the emblems act and then be able to easily access all those.

So the flag will continue to fly free and fairly in Manitoba, and will live for many more years, I'm sure.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister is changing the poverty act to increase the number of people appointed by the minister responsible, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) has said that this is because they want to broaden the representation.

There—it seems to me that the representation could have been broadened by having a—in other ways, having people elected by organizations involved with trying to reduce poverty, but, certainly,

the question that I would have is, specifically what types of representation is the minister looking for—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

* (15:20)

Mr. Goertzen: I thank my friend for the question.

While the act doesn't rest in the Department of Justice, I'm familiar with the committee having—I've seen its work in—when I was the minister of Education.

I think that—of course, there's consultation that happens with the United Way, and so there's already a determination that there needs to be outside consultation about the kind of people who should be appointed to the committee.

I think it's important, though, to have flexibility. Poverty, I think, has been, you know, a challenge for many years. Unfortunately, it'll be a challenge probably for many, many more years, but the nature of it sometimes changes and it's important to have flexibility in who can be appointed.

But it is done with consultation, and I think that that is at the heart of the member's questions and comments.

Ms. Fontaine: To follow up on the member for River Heights's question, who will be doing this outside consultation to kind of determine who these new folks are going to be?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and they may not all be new folks necessarily appointed. There are people who are currently on the task force or on the committee, but it does allow for an additional person to be appointed through the consultation with the United Way.

Obviously, the minister, ultimately, I believe, has the order-in-council authority in terms of the appointment, but that would be done with—in consultation with community members, United Way specifically cited, but I believe that there's broad community consultation that is done before those appointments are made.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. The minister has said that he wants four government-appointed people.

Can the minister give us the backgrounds of four representative areas which would be important to have on this board?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, again, by the nature of this act, where it compiles a number of changes to a variety

of acts from different departments, it's not the Department of Justice that is making the appointments, but from my experience on the—on that particular committee of Cabinet, there are, you know, representatives from the Indigenous community; there are often people from, I believe, communities aligned with social planning and different sorts of areas in rural and urban Manitoba who are dealing with poverty; those who are connected sometimes to food security through food banks and others.

It's not prescribed that it has to be a certain kind of individual, but, obviously, it is those who are most closely aligned and seeing the challenges and problems in the community.

Ms. Fontaine: This bill amends The Early Learning and Child Care Act, that legislation that passed last year. It allows for lower training standards in the mix of care provided to our kids.

Would the minister be open to addressing our concerns in that legislation?

Mr. Goertzen: I think because that gets a little bit very specific in terms of the operation of Early Childhood Learning and the act itself—this bill will go to committee.

I can endeavour to seek out an answer from the Department of Families—or, sorry, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning to get a response to that, but it could also be brought up in committee as well, either by the member or by stakeholders who might come and present at committee.

Mr. Gerrard: I just wondered if the minister would provide a little bit of an explanation for the changes to The Transportation Infrastructure Act.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable—oh—honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen).

Mr. Goertzen: It feels like, you know, rapid-fire tests on all the different parts of government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can provide, I think, a little bit of information, but I think I will probably run out of time.

But The Transportation Infrastructure Act is amended to create an obligation for third parties to maintain an access to a departmental road. If the access to—is to land, the obligation is placed on the adjacent landowner. If the access is to a non-departmental road, the obligation is on the traffic authority in charge of that road.

A similar provision existed in the highway transportation act, which was repealed and replaced by this act.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, well, this bill removes the appointment to the poverty reduction committee from the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) own advisory council on education, poverty and citizenship, and as my colleague knows, that's because the advisory council no longer exists.

So, I would ask the minister: Why isn't education and reducing poverty a priority for his government?

Mr. Goertzen: It certainly is a priority for the government, and I think that that's been borne out by some of the results in Manitoba, as we've seen Manitoba's ranking when it comes to child poverty improve comparative to other provinces.

Now, that doesn't mean, of course, that there's not more work to do and that there aren't more things that this government wants to achieve on that file, but there's been a number of things already achieved.

The reality is that, you know, committees in and of themselves and their composition are part of the answer, but they are not the full answer. And so while I appreciate the member opposite's question, she'll also know that there's been good results achieved, but much more to do because anybody who has a child—any time there's a child in poverty, there's more work to do. *[interjection]*

Ms. Fontaine: I thought my colleague had more questions.

Just a couple more questions. Last year the—your government—or the minister's government changed the act so that the poverty reduction committee did not have to meet four times a year and did not have to face a standing committee.

So why isn't, again, education and reducing a priority—reducing poverty a priority for his government?

Mr. Goertzen: I know in different departments, I've seen sometimes these minimum requirements for meeting, and I've often thought that they—what they ended up doing was that there would never be more meetings than the minimum standard because people tried to move toward the minimum standard and often it would be scheduled that way in the department. I often favoured removing those minimum standards because I found that we were meeting way more, and that we shouldn't be setting the bar so low.

So when it comes to the number of meetings that happen, of course opposition has a role and they can hold government to account, but I don't know that quantity always equals quality, and sometimes there are just reasons to have more meetings and we shouldn't set the bar so low.

Ms. Fontaine: And my final question this afternoon: This bill removes references to the exceptional powers of government put in place in 2020. Has the minister done any analysis on these powers, and what has the government learned and might do differently?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not sure if the member's specifically referring to emergency orders or the pandemic orders that were put into place. I think it's a good question, though, and there's probably learning to be had when it comes to the declaration of emergency. It was—it operated differently in Manitoba than in other provinces and we had to maintain ours longer than sometimes was necessary, and people I think got confused between the emergency order and the public health orders, and they thought they were the same.

But the emergency orders often allowed things like marriage licences not to expire. It often gave more discretion, not more restrictions, but other provinces operated their emergency orders in different ways.

But it's probably a good point for analysis, and I'm happy to take a follow-up question on that.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Fontaine: Oh, sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are there any further questions?

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The floor is now open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I am so excited to put some words on the record in respect of Bill 31, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022. I know that the minister probably wanted to speak longer to this, but he was very gracious in giving me some time here.

So, as we know, Acting Deputy Speaker, the bill makes minor amendments to several statutes. Our concerns with the previous amendments to these bills are just as relevant today. The bill also repeals some leftover provisions that relate to emergency powers during the pandemic. This is an opportunity to reflect

on the government's performance as it relates to these statutory powers.

So for instance, deputy—or Acting Deputy Speaker, The Emergency Measures Act—so Bill 31 repeals references to section 12.3 in The Emergency Measures Act, which were new emergency powers during the pandemic. Certainly, these powers have been since rescinded. Section 12.3 of the act has been repealed; however, there are still remaining references to section 12.3 that are leftovers that Bill 31 now intends to repeal those provisions.

Amongst the leftover provisions repealed is section 20(5) which allowed the courts to set higher than maximum fines for offences that contravene emergency orders, which have also since been repealed.

* (15:30)

Certainly, Bill 31 is an opportunity to consider the PC government's approach to penalties during the pandemic as well as their performance during the pandemic overall. I think that even my colleague would agree that there are certainly lots of lessons to be learned in respect of how to respond to a pandemic, how to handle a pandemic, the measures that should be put in place to support and protect citizens and Manitobans.

And, certainly, I think one of the areas of concern that should be—at some point, there should be some systemic analysis—is in respect of fines. We know that, you know, millions of dollars of fines were given to Manitobans who broke public health measures.

And the flip side of that is that we know that these same Manitobans who so blatantly and willingly broke—and very methodically, actually, in some cases—broke Manitoba's public health measures which were, again, meant to protect Manitobans, have not paid one single cent of their fines. And so it—and we know that it's been reported well many, many times in the media that those fines have not been paid and still, to date, have not been paid.

So, certainly, I think, moving forward, it is an opportunity for this government and any government afterwards to look at, you know, why people didn't pay their fines, how folks can be held accountable for breaking public health measures that put Manitobans at risk. So, certainly, there's a lot of work that can be done there.

And then, again, we know that according to provincial data only 13 per cent of fines handed out during

the state of emergency have actually been paid. So about 87 per cent remain outstanding, and these go back as far as April of 2020. That's not a good record for enforcement on behalf of this PC government.

And I—you know—we will—I will say it again, and it's no—it should be no surprise in this House that, you know, we on this side of the House understand and know alongside, you know, thousands of other Manitobans, that the PCs response to the pandemic was an absolute failure and, actually, quite sad to watch on behalf of the lives of Manitobans.

You know, during the summer of 2020, they launched the misguided Ready. Safe. Grow. PR campaign for about \$425,000. Meanwhile, we know that small businesses in Manitoba were struggling to get dollars that some other folks had access—easy access—to but others did not.

And that PR, which then, you know, gave the false impression to Manitobans that everything was hunky-dory and there's no more pandemic led the way to our second, third, fourth waves, and that's an utter failure on the part of this government, including the—what we saw in our PCHs; including all of the Manitobans in PCHs who, you know, were infected with COVID-19 and then ultimately ended up passing from COVID-19, and because of the restrictions, passed alone without family members there present.

That's the record of the individuals opposite, every single one of those members.

We know that they closed the health incident command centre in the summer. Again, rather than prepare for the second wave, they closed it. And what did we see? We saw an utter disaster in the second and third waves.

To that end, Chuck Sanderson, who was the former EMO director, says, and I quote, Acting Deputy Speaker: To have closed the centre after the first wave with no forward contingency planning for the second wave that was sure to come was a stunning act of stupidity and short-sightedness. End quote.

That is something that I don't think any member opposite should be proud of. When you have folks who are the experts in their field, experts in protecting citizens and protecting Manitobans—when they say that this PC government, the way that they handled the pandemic—or again, didn't even handle the pandemic, the lack thereof—when they call it—somebody with that level of expertise says that the PC government handled the pandemic, it was a stunning act of stupidity and short-sightedness, that's a really sad

commentary of all of the work or lack thereof that those members opposite chose not to do.

They didn't do adequate testing to identify and isolate the virus. The PC government promised 3,000 tests per day by the end of summer—summer, a target that was rarely achieved, Deputy Speaker. Lines were filling up as soon as sites opened, forcing people to wait over four hours with no washings. I myself recorded the line of cars in St. Johns at the North End MPI testing site, and that was only one of many, many, many days where the lines went as far as Atlantic down—you know, Atlantic and Main, to get to Mountain. People were waiting for hours in their cars to be able to get a simple test that would have provided safety for Manitobans and help isolate the virus.

But again—and I've said this many, many times, I've said it many times in this House, and I've certainly said it many, many times publicly—this government tried to do the pandemic on the cheap. They tried to ensure that they didn't have to spend one single cent more than they thought they needed to—and, you know, they have failed miserably in everything else, but Acting Deputy Speaker, I will say they succeeded in that. They succeeded in not paying one penny more than they needed to in a global pandemic.

And that's not something to be proud of. That's not something to write home about and celebrate, that they valued Manitobans' lives so little that they tried to do a global pandemic on the cheap. A once-in-a-100-lifetime—100-year-lifetime event, they chose to put money before Manitobans.

And again, not all Manitobans—because some Manitobans got a lot of money for their businesses and all kinds of things—only some of them. Only some of them got a lot of money while the rest of small businesses did not. And, in fact, Acting Deputy Speaker, I myself—and I know several member—several of our colleagues have received so many emails and, you know, messages on social media from predominantly women, women small-business owners who got nothing, who got nothing from this government to help support their small business in what was, again, the crisis of a lifetime.

So, again, you know, this government has a way of, you know, supporting those that they deem should get that support, or that in some way helps them, ultimately, and then other ones like women didn't get any supports.

And again, on the line of women, you know, the—my colleague from Union Station and my colleague

from Notre Dame talk about how we still have Manitobans that don't have a contract. They are going on, like, year 4, 5, with no contract, and yet it was these Manitobans—predominantly women and predominantly BIPOC women—that put their lives on the line day in and day out working at personal-care homes, working on the front lines of emergency rooms. And with little appreciation, with little regard, with little dollars—again, because this government chose to put money before the well-being and health of Manitobans, including those that were working in the front lines of our health-care system. That is just a sad, sad commentary.

And so when we look at Bill 31 and, you know, repealing and rescinding some of these emergency measures acts, it is an important moment to also be doing that analysis on where they utterly failed, which, again, I will also, for the record, again, say that we are calling on this government to call—and they can easily do it—for a public inquiry so that all Manitobans can understand the decisions that were made that utterly failed Manitobans. And Manitobans have a right to that information.

* (15:40)

I know that I brought this up, I think, in November of 2020, under The Fatality Inquiries Act, that they have a responsibility under that act to call an inquest when there are deaths at PCHs. And so we still haven't heard anything to that end about the deaths that have occurred in PCHs.

Again, you know, I don't—you know, we have Manitobans who died by themselves in absolute chaos, in crisis because this government failed to call in the military, failed to give the supports that PCHs and hospitals needed, and so Manitobans who, I mean, I still, you know, I mean, there's been so many things that have occurred over this—these last two years in respect of the pandemic that will haunt me for the rest of my public life. And one of them is, Acting Deputy Speaker, the seniors and elders who died alone in PCHs because of this—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

I'm sure the member is just about to bring her comments back to the contents of the bill. I know this bill, which makes changes to many existing statutes, but even with the broad scope of the member's remarks, should be relevant to the bill. So I would ask the member to ensure that her comments remain relevant to the bill.

Thank you.

Ms. Fontaine: I would submit to the House that my comments are relevant to the bill because it is The Emergency Measures Act in which a lot of these decisions that the government undertook in their governance or lack thereof during the pandemic, these are what we're amending and appealing.

And so it's important that as we're appealing these measures that were put in place, again, to aid citizens and take care of citizens and take care of the whole province, we're appealing that. But I don't think that the government has done an analysis on how important, or the lack thereof, the work that they've done to ensure that those measures they put in place actually worked. They didn't work because the government utterly failed.

So I—oops—I have so much more to say on that, Acting Deputy Speaker, but out of—and I know the members would like to hear me continue that, but I'll go on because there's actually quite a bit in Bill 31.

So let me move on to The Early Learning and Child Care Act. Bill 31 proposes minor amendments to The Early Learning and Child Care Act. The PC government, the Brian Pallister and Stefanson governments, have missed an opportunity to undo some of the harmful changes that they made to child care last year, right? Like, sometimes in this House it's so hard to keep up with all of these, like, harmful bills that they keep introducing year after year after year. It's, kind of—you get dizzy with all of the bad decisions that this government is making on behalf of Manitobans.

And so I'll remind the House that last year the PCs passed bill 47, The Early Learning and Child Care Act, which allowed public funds to be handed over to private for-profit daycare. We know that, you know, every study of for-profit child care shows that the for-profit motive in this care means worse quality for our children, and there's—there can't—there's not a debate on this, Acting Deputy Speaker, I'm sure. Well, I don't know if these folks here would actually agree with it, but it's in studies, it's in research that I would encourage them to read.

We know that for-profit daycare centres put downward pressure on the wages of early-child-care educators and many early-child-care educators struggle to make a living wage to pay for the necessities of full life. And, you know, I would hope and they, you know, when they go door to door, and I know, certainly, I've heard it in, you know, from—since I've been elected in 2016, but I certainly heard it in 2019 when I went to doors and folks talking about

the child-care infrastructure here in Manitoba. And I had so many folks that are working in the child-care infrastructure telling me that they're leaving, that they can barely make ends meet and that they're leaving because of the decisions that this government, these folks here, have made year after year after year since 2016 when they got elected.

And, you know, it's a pretty sad commentary when a government which is charged with—all governments, doesn't matter what party you are, all governments are charged with doing what's in the best interest of their citizens, the citizens of the province that they represent. It's a sad commentary that year after year after year, this PC government has attacked the child-care infrastructure to the point that people are leaving it. People love their jobs and they're very gifted at taking care of people's children.

I've said it many, many times here: if it were not for the amazing child-care centre that I had for both of my sons, I wouldn't be where I am today. It allowed me to go to university. It allowed to get one degree, it allowed me to get two degrees, it allowed me to almost get my third degree, it allowed me to work. I wouldn't be here. Like, thank the gods for the folks that worked at the daycare that took such great care of my sons that I am forever grateful for.

Every Manitoban deserves to have child care for their children. They deserve to have the best child care for their children that, when they drop them off in the morning, they know that they're being taken care of and they have the peace of mind to go get that training, go to university, go back to school, go to the job; whatever they need to do.

And, again, I've said this many times over the years, you know, it is a special kind of government, to put it lightly, that would attack child-care workers and attack child-care centres and attack—ultimately, Acting Deputy Speaker, ultimately attacking children.

And, you know, it's not the only time that this government has attacked children in legislation and policies, you know. We saw them attack them when they got rid of the—what was that formula, the baby formula? What was it called again?

You know, when they took away the dollars for milk and—

An Honourable Member: Milk for babies.

Ms. Fontaine: Milk for babies, yes.

So, the PC government, Acting Deputy Speaker, took money away from babies for milk. Like, milk

subsidies. Like, who takes away milk subsidies from babies?

And then, again, this is a—it's a, you know, a special kind of government to have a member of their caucus who publicly says they don't want to feed children. Like, it's mind-blowing that these folks here, who are elected and supposed to represent Manitobans—all Manitobans—and do it in a good way, don't want to give kids milk, don't want to feed children, want to attack the infrastructure of child care.

Like, it is absolutely mind-blowing. And anybody that's watching this, and, of course, anybody that's going to read this for years to come is going to know that the Brian Pallister and Stefanson governments took milk—took milk—away from kids. Like, that's not something to be proud of it.

But it leads me into my next discussion, Acting Deputy Speaker, on Bill 31 in respect of The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act. We know since 2016, and the member—the minister knows this as well, that this government and the Brian Pallister government have done absolutely nothing in tackling poverty. Absolutely nothing.

And so, we have some of the highest levels of poverty that affect, again, Manitoba children. And again, I want to remind them the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) doesn't want to feed these children, doesn't want to feed the children who, you know, their parents are struggling. And they don't want to make sure that when they go to school that they get something.

I remember going to school and having a breakfast program. It was sometimes the only meal that I ate that day. I remember that. And, you know, it's pretty disgusting that they have a member that doesn't want to do that—doesn't want to feed kids.

And so, you know, to that end it's not then surprising, Acting Deputy Speaker, that the—we haven't really seen anything in respect of the All Aboard Committee or that we haven't seen any poverty reduction strategy since 2016. Because, again, when you're a conservative, you've kind of got that, like, all pick-yourself-up-from-your-bootstraps and da-da-da, don't expect anybody to help you, you've got to do it on your own, which is what we heard during the pandemic.

* (15:50)

We heard it from Brian Pallister, we heard it from this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), that the government can't help you. Then why are you there? Why did all these folks run for government if you're not willing to help the people of whom you're elected to help—to help?

I don't understand why any of them are even here. Like, they should just go to their mansions and go get contracts and jobs with all their rich friends.

Yes—yeppers. Yes, absolutely. *[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Could we bring the conversation—order. Order.

Could we bring the conversation back to the bill at hand, please?

Ms. Fontaine: Acting Deputy Speaker, miigwech for that. I am bringing it to the bill at hand. It's not my fault that I'm pointing out that some of these PC members are millionaires.

Some of these PC members, including the Premier, forgets about \$31 million. Like, who forgets \$31 million? And so it is relevant to the conversation. I know they're getting upset because they want to pretend that they're of the people, by the people—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —for the people. They have no clue what the people are. They're so rich they don't need to worry—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order. Order.

I will remind the member again from St. Johns, please put some relevance into the conversation, and the honourable member for St. Johns, if we could have a little bit of quiet in here, please.

Ms. Fontaine: The Acting Deputy Speaker is asking for quiet so that we can hear my speech about how many millions of dollars that the members opposite have.

And so when you have a Premier that forgets about \$31 million, coupled with—juxtaposed to a member of their caucus who doesn't want to feed kids, it's a sad, sad commentary, Acting Deputy Speaker.

So, I mean, I could go on and on and on about how much money and connection and privilege the folks opposite have, but I'll move on to another part of the bill.

I mean, unless the minister wants me to continue on about the millions of dollars, I can—I certainly can.

So, the other part of Bill 31 is The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act. And so Bill 31 proposes an amendment to The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act.

Credit unions offer, as you know, Acting Deputy Speaker, a co-operative model of banking and provide many benefits to their users. There are 23 credit unions with 178 combined locations in Manitoba; and in many communities, a credit union is the only financial institution serving its residents, small businesses and producers.

So it's important to ensure that credit unions can continue to serve these communities. To that end, we must be careful that these changes to the governance and oversight of credit unions does not negatively impact for Manitobans so that all Manitobans might have equitable access to finance services.

And I think on that note, Acting Deputy Speaker—there's so much more to say about Bill 31, the minor amendments and corrections act. I know that the minister responsible for the bill is very proud of it. He only put a couple of minutes of words on the record, but that's okay. He forgot some stuff that I put on the record.

Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order, please.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put a few words on the record on this bill, which deals with a number of and varied, different acts. And I'd say a few words on a number of these.

I think that there are some of these which are reasonable changes. Having common-law partners treated the same as spouses in the health-care directives makes sense. Getting rid of the loan acts of 1982 and 1989 is certainly reasonable because we don't really want the government to be borrowing money on loan acts from many, many years ago.

The getting rid of The Sanatorium Board and, you know, making sure that the lung association is fully responsible makes sense.

The—there are still—I think, in 2020, there were 160 cases of tuberculosis in Manitoba. It is not a condition which is gone, but it is certainly a condition which we treat very differently from what we did when we had a sanatorium in Manitoba, as we did at

Ninette. And so we should not neglect tuberculosis. We should make sure that we're being active and vigorous in being on top of any cases and doing what we can to prevent any new cases of tuberculosis. But we no longer need the approach using a—sanatoria, which was—a sanatorium, which which was popular many, many years ago.

The change of the name of the Red River College to Red River College Polytechnic is a welcome change. It brings the name of the college up to date and more clearly describes the nature of the Red River College.

It's interesting that perhaps the first polytechnic in Canada, I suspect, was the École polytechnique in Montreal. It was founded in 1873 and it was called a science institute or something like that. The name was changed to polytechnique in 1876 and that was, you know, on the order of 150 years ago, and so it is certainly good that we're keeping up with the times, as it were.

But I think the fact that we're moving to have the Red River College's polytechnic say something about the maturity of the Red River College and about the importance and the variety of the programs that it now runs and the important that it has to providing technical and other expertise not only to individual Manitobans, but provides access, then, to—for local businesses and others to the expertise which is generated as a result of the teaching at the Red River College.

The poverty reduction act—you know, the change in the number of people who can appoint—be appointed by the minister from three to four is a small change, but it would be more meaningful if the government had made another change, and that is to bring back the requirement to report to a standing committee. In fact, a standing committee provides accountability. It provides an opportunity for the members of government to focus and make sure that when they come to committee that they're actually doing something and have done something instead of, as the current government is seeming to do when it comes to policy—poverty—just kind of drifting along and not producing, in fact, substantial results. They have been gliding along, probably, on the benefits of the federal changes to the child tax credit, which have had a substantial impact, as many agree, to reduce poverty. But we clearly need a more vigorous effort in Manitoba to reduce poverty, and this—it doesn't cut it in terms of the changes that are needed in order to make sure that

we have the emphasis on poverty reduction that we need in this province.

I also want to talk about one other act which I would recommend that the Minister of Justice look at if he's still Minister of Justice next year and bringing forward this legislation. *[interjection]* That's a big question, but maybe if he's not he can pass this on to whoever is.

* (16:00)

I believe that some minor amendments would be a good idea to The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act. This is an important act and it plays an important function in making sure that there's attention to endangered species and to ecosystems in Manitoba.

Manitoba has a committee tasked with assessing species, but there's no requirement of the government to follow through on the recommendations of the committee. So that would be one suggestion, a minor amendment requiring the government to actually pay attention to the recommendations of the committee on species at risk.

Indeed, the last time that at-risk species were added to the list of species under The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act was 2015, which was before this government was in-elected for the first time in 2016.

So the government has been very delinquent in not paying attention to The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act and, indeed, there are dozens of species at risk that remain unlisted in this Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act because of the neglect by the current government.

Second, the law, as it now stands, The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act, doesn't require recovery planning and implementation. The government is not held accountable for recovering endangered species. This could've been included in a minor amendment but it wasn't, and so I'm recommending this for the government next year to consider.

And, lastly, I see that The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act prohibits harm to the habitat of listed species, but there's no requirement to identify habitat in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

I know it's a change of shift, but it's getting a little loud in here, and I'm having difficulty hearing the

speaker, so if we could just keep it down a little bit, please.

Mr. Gerrard: I know the law—I mean, the problem is that the law doesn't require recovery planning and implementation, and no recovery strategies have been produced except for the boreal woodland 'catigo'—caribou. And there was a draft action plan produced under the former government 11 years ago, but it was never finalized.

And so, there would be an opportunity for this government to pay some attention to this important act, The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act, and make some important improvements to the act in order to make it more functional and to be able to hold the government to be at greater accountability.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments on this act; that there are some things primarily which are—should have been there but which were not. Clearly, there should have been more attention to doing something more meaningful when it comes to poverty reduction and better attention to doing something more meaningful when it comes to changes to The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci. Miigwech. Dyakuyu.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are there any further speakers to Bill 31?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is second reading of Bill 31, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2022.

All those—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

I declare the motion carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Police Services Amendment Act (Enhancing Independent Investigation Unit Operations)

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Resuming debate on Bill 7, remaining in the minister—in the name of the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's great to speak again on this

monumental day for Manitoba as the minor amendments bill passes another hurdle on its way to becoming legislation in the province.

But there's another important piece of legislation I'd like to speak to today, and that's Bill 7 and The Police Services Amendment Act, IIU. And before I begin, I want to acknowledge the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), the—my predecessor in this role, who was involved in the consultations on this legislation and who I know took it very, very seriously and saw the importance of it.

And, of course, this is a bill that has a lot of history. Not the particular iteration of this bill, but the IIU has a lot of history in Manitoba, as it does in many other provinces in Canada. In fact, I know, you know, there are still some jurisdictions in Canada that don't have an IIU and who are struggling to establish one and who have talked to Manitoba about their experience. But it is important because there is a need for an independent investigation unit to be involved when there are very serious matters in—revolving around police.

And we know that law enforcement—the men and women involved in law enforcement do an exceptional job in difficult circumstances, but that doesn't mean that there aren't problems, challenges. And sometimes things that rise to the level of criminal behaviour. Fortunately, those are not many, but when they come up, they're impactful and they need to be dealt with in the right way.

It's been six years since the Independent Investigation Unit, known as IIU, was established by the NDP government. I remember, I think I was Justice critic at the time, speaking with Dave Chomiak who—I'm sorry, I was Justice critic at the time, speaking with Dave Chomiak who was the Justice minister at the time, about changes to The Police Services Act, many of which came out of the Taman Inquiry, a difficult part in Manitoba history, and some of the tragic circumstances around that. But the report itself was about moving things forward and bettering policing in Manitoba, which benefits everybody and I think is supported widely by law enforcement in Manitoba. And at that time, I know the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), I believe, was involved in the previous government, I think supported changes to the IIU.

But I know, when talking with Dave Chomiak when he was the minister of Justice and probably had discussions with Gord Mackintosh and some of the successor AGs, the ministers of Justice from the NDP,

this was always a difficult file because, you know, there's a desire to be able to make change; there's a desire for accountability; there's a desire to ensure that when there are things that rise to the criminal level within justice, that they are properly investigated, but it be done independently and be seen to be done independently.

And at the time I remember talking—I think it was to Mr. Chomiak—about, you know, how do we ensure that individuals who are doing the investigations are seen to be independent. And one of the great challenges are that those investigation skills are largely held by police. The ability to do an investigation and do it right and do it in a way that conforms to matters of evidence takes significant training and that training, almost entirely, is held by police officers. And yet, there's an understandable concern about having police officers, active police officers, involved in the investigation of matters that are police-related.

And so the IIU, I think, was always going to be a bit of an evolution. You know, it started and the police services changes after the Taman Inquiry started, and I remember saying, I think—I hope I was fair in my assessment as the Justice critic at the time, that this would be a starting point and that there would have to be changes as we learnt and went along this path. And I think that the minister of Justice at the time, under the NDP, probably reflected that in his comments at second reading on the various iterations of the bill leading to this point.

But The Police Services Act requires a statutory and regulated review of the act. That has now been conducted and we are phasing in a variety of the different changes, IIU being one, led by my friend Morden-Winkler when he was in the role, other police services amendments that have come forward when it comes to standards, both codes of conduct and training standards, policing standards, a bill that's before the Legislature. So we're moving in an iterative process to move along those changes after the statutory review.

* (16:10)

One of the important things about this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, is that there's going to be more of a role for Indigenous leadership, and there needed to be and there's been good consultation with Indigenous leadership in Manitoba around how to ensure that there is a built-in part of the process for those voices as well.

So, this particular bill will establish a director of Indigenous and community relations, a full-time employee of the IIU who will work directly with Manitoba First Nations and Métis and Inuit and marginalized communities to address their questions and concerns. So it's a broad base; this is not simply First Nations, Métis and marginalized, but other—or, sorry—Métis and Inuit, but other marginalized communities as well—but a dedicated individual within the IIU to work with those communities.

We also know that every individual who dies or is seriously injured in a police use-of-force incident has a family member at home or somewhere in the community who cared about them. That is why we're establishing a community liaison program that will allow individuals who are respected in a community organization to work with the IIU to provide a direct connection between the investigation and the community and ensure that the investigation is conducted with respect and with sensitivity. That's important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that there is not only real connection between the investigation and flow of information, but also be seen to be independent and seen to be respectful.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

While respecting the confidentiality of investigations, these community liaisons will keep families and communities engaged in the status of investigations to ensure that they have confidence in the independence and impartiality of the process.

We recognize the need to strengthen the independence of the IIU and ensure compliance with investigations and ensure that no current police officer can serve as an IIU investigator, and empowers the IIU to compel co-operation from all police officers and other designated individuals.

And this goes back to the point I was making earlier, Madam Speaker. In those early discussions with Dave Chomiak, I believe it was, when he was the minister of Justice, making changes to The Police Services Act, that discussion about who could do the investigations on the IIU was a difficult discussion. But I came to believe what the government was saying at the time, that it was difficult to get individuals who are not trained as police officers to do that investigation. So, often, individuals might be seconded into doing the investigation.

Now we're moving into a different place because we believe that there is enough individuals to be able to do the investigations who are not currently serving

as police officers. So it's—again, it's an important step in the evolution of this bill.

It imposes strict penalties for refusing to co-operate with the IIU investigations, including up to \$5,000 fine and one-year imprisonment for a first offence and a \$10,000 fine and one-year imprisonment for a second offence. That's in line with other bills, Madam Speaker, in the country of Canada.

So, just in conclusion, Madam Speaker, I want to just make some overarching comments. First of all, the need for an IIU is important. It's important because we need to ensure that there's a process that is independent, that's seen to be independent when there's a police-involved incident that resulted in a death and injury, something that goes to a criminal matter. It's important that that be seen to be independent within the broader community. But it's important, of course, that it actually is independent. So this bill moves closer, I think, in an important step. But we also recognize that for our Indigenous—for the Indigenous community—Métis, Inuit, other marginalized populations—they need to have a connection point with the investigation as well, and that's also within this bill.

Having said all of that, I want to commend those who are working in law enforcement because I know that the vast, vast majority of those who are serving in municipal police forces, who are serving on First Nations, police—as police officers—those who are in our provincial RCMP police force do so with all of the skills and ability and the intentions of protecting the communities that they serve.

I want to just, as part of those comments, acknowledge Commander Jane MacLatchy, who announced last week that she would be retiring from the role as commander of D Division in Manitoba. I believe she'll have served for about three years when she wraps up her service at the beginning of June, but has served, I think, 35 years in the RCMP in positions across Canada, last three being in Manitoba.

And when I had the opportunity to speak to her last week, when the RCMP were announcing the record drug seizure from operation divergent, she indicated that this has been the most enjoyable part of her career, the last three years working in Manitoba, that the connectedness of the communities, the ability to work together with law enforcement across the province, has been a highlight for her in her 35 years.

So, I think that I'll have an opportunity, I hope, in this House to again thank her for her service to the province of Manitoba and to the country of Canada,

but I will use this opportunity to do an initial thank you and serve other—save other comments for another time.

So, thank you again for this opportunity. I hope that members opposite will see this bill pass in relatively short order. I know it's a serious bill so there'll be serious questions and debate, and it should be, but I also know it's important to see it pass in a relatively timely manner.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Would the minister be so kind as to say—or, advise the House, which legal experts did he consult with in preparation for the changes of this bill?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, I can provide at committee a full list of those who were consulted with. The member will know that this is a statutory requirement to review The Police Services Act, and so this fulfilled the statutory requirement.

And then, within the context of that, there was significant consultation with Indigenous partnership, with those within the legal community, those within the law community, and of course, looking at past experiences that are happening in other provinces as well. But I can provide at second reading a detailed list of those—or, at committee.

Ms. Fontaine: Bill 7 leaves out cadets and community safety officers from IIU oversight. Can the minister advise why?

Mr. Goertzen: The member's correct.

I mean, at this point, it doesn't include those who are serving within the cadets or the community safety officers program. The IIU was always intended to deal with those who are uniformed police officers and not to move into the cadet program.

Of course, it's true that the cadet program didn't exist at the time that the IIU, I think, was contemplated initially, but that doesn't mean that there can't be changes and that there might not be iterations that includes those, although they are compelled to co-operate, I believe, with the IIU, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Fontaine: So the minister obviously is correct in respect of, like, statutory requirements to the police act. But here was an opportunity that the minister and his government could have taken to strengthen the IIU, which would've included including the cadets and community safety officers.

So I want to know why the—if the minister can explain why that opportunity wasn't taken under this particular review?

Mr. Goertzen: I mean, I don't want to dismiss the question because I actually think it's an important question.

But I also know that, when it comes to changes when it relates to the IIU and the expansion and the extension of it, that it's important to understand what the consequences of those might be, where the statutory authority lies, how broad the net gets cast.

Again, there are requirements for those to work with the civilian directors in the IIU, but I'm not closed to the idea that, as there continues to be changes to the IIU in the future, that the net—the net might not widen further. But this is the step that is being proposed at this time.

* (16:20)

Ms. Fontaine: We know that the community liaisons are currently not paid under this legislation.

Can the minister confirm that? And would he consider compensation for them?

Mr. Goertzen: So, the act doesn't direct compensation. It wouldn't be normal necessarily for there to be—for these kinds of positions for there to be compensation directed within the act. But the community liaisons will play an important part of the process going forward, and they will serve under the Indigenous director. And so there will be, at that point, a decision made whether—what kind of compensation would be appropriate.

I think that they want to ensure, and we want to ensure, there's flexibility at first to ensure that it's done properly and in respectfully in the way the community wants, but certainly, compensation is something that may be considered.

Ms. Fontaine: I can assure the minister, having worked in our communities, particularly in restorative justice, who—the minister will know that actually a lot of the restorative justice programs are also filled with volunteers. So, I can actually assure the minister that in respect of, you know, compensation and what the communities want, people want to be paid. People want to be paid for their labour.

There's always this expectation on First Nation communities and First Nation citizens that we do this labour for free. So, you know, I'm a little worried to hear the minister say that they're going to be looking, you know, with the community. And respectfully, people want to be paid.

And so I want to know in this statutory review why compensation was not considered.

Mr. Goertzen: So, I think it's important to recognize the role of the liaisons.

So they're not employees per se, but they will be working with the director of Indigenous and community relations, who will be responsible for the engagement of these community liaisons, and it might be, you know, on individual cases, it might be something that's longer term, but I think it's important to provide flexibility for that director to ensure that they're structuring it in a way that's the most meaningful to the community.

That doesn't mean that there can't be compensation, but I think the flexibility is important.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Just a quick question.

In terms of the model, it's a model for the IIU that covers the entire province, but clearly that they are their employers; you know, where there's the Winnipeg Police Service and other police services.

What's the rationale for having it be for the entire province, and was there any thought to having—allowing individual municipalities, sort of, if they wanted to have even stricter regulations or be able to direct—you know, not direct police activities, but set policy for their own—is there a role for civilian oversight at the municipal level in order to be able to set policy for police?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes. It's a good discussion that—probably doesn't fit as well under the IIU. I think that, you know, we've got the IIU piece in this bill and then there's another bill before the Assembly on standards and on codes of conduct.

But there will be another bill coming forward because there's a number of different steps to this that deal with governance. And so I've spoken with, you know, city councillors who might be concerned about the role of civilian oversight and wanting to have more input into it. That doesn't fit into this bill as easily as it might into another bill.

But I take the member's point. It's not an unhelpful point, but that discussion will come as part of another bill.

Mr. Lamont: And just to be clear, there is an introduction of an Indigenous director, is it—under the MMIWG report, as I understand it, there was a recommendation that in order to have police reform it would actually be Indigenous-led.

So, is that it—would that be an Indigenous-led program, or would it simply be—is it simply there's an officer in terms of Indigenous relations who is dealing with people who are Indigenous?

Mr. Goertzen: If I understood the member's question correctly, so the director of Indigenous and community relations, which certainly is mandated to engage with the Indigenous community, the Inuit community, Métis community, but also the LGBTQ community, the BIPOC community, other marginalized communities; there isn't a requirement for the individual to be Indigenous, but there will be a preferential contest.

So, when they're hiring the individual, there'll be a preference to hiring somebody who is Indigenous.

Ms. Fontaine: So that was actually my follow-up question to my last question.

In respect of the director of Indigenous and community relations, there's actually nothing in there that guarantees—right, like preference in hiring wards doesn't necessarily mean that an Indigenous person will be hired for this position.

And so, as the minister said in his opening comments, this has been something that's been asked for in the community for many, many years, and specifically from the Indigenous community.

So I'm curious as to why that was not placed in here, safeguarding that a non-Indigenous person would be hired as the director for community Indigenous relations.

Mr. Goertzen: So, you know, again, while the position is a director of Indigenous and community relations, the mandate does extend beyond the

Indigenous community. But there will be a preference for those who are applying who are Indigenous.

And I get the member's point. I think it's sometimes difficult to be too prescriptive sometimes in who is hired, but I'm—I certainly understand there will be critics who will be watching who is hired. There will be those in the community who'll be watching who is hired.

And any government, whether it's this government or a future government, will be held accountable for the individual who is hired into those positions, and I think that's probably—is a stronger motivation than legislation.

Mr. Lamont: I know that a lot of this—a lot of the work towards police oversight was the result of the Crystal Taman Inquiry. I was wondering, was Robert Taman consulted as part of this—with the Taman family?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, you know, I don't want to give the wrong information. I committed to the member opposite—the critic—official opposition critic that I will get a list of those who were consulted and provide it at committee.

I do know that, you know, Robert Taman, in terms of the advice that he's given over the years coming out of the Taman Inquiry, the various boards that he's served on after—I met with him several times in my time as elected official. His advice finds its way into many things in terms of law reform, and unfortunately, the experience that his family experienced, but it does colour its way into many of the reforms that have happened in policing in Manitoba over the last 15 years.

Ms. Fontaine: I do want to just put a couple of clarifying 'clomments'. I do want to point out that yes, the police act was reformed in respect of—coming out of the Crystal Taman inquest or inquiry.

But actually, prior to that, it also was born out of the police shooting deaths of Matthew Dumas and Craig McDougall. Often, they are left out of the discussion when we talk about police reform. So I want to put it in this House today and put those facts on the record because they are often left out of this discussion.

I would ask the minister: What is the consequences of an officer's refusal to promptly pay the fine that's recorded there?

Mr. Goertzen: You know, I do appreciate the member opposite raising that point. And we could go back further than that, I know.

And there's been many situations in Manitoba where there's been significant things that have happened between law enforcement and the Indigenous population and others, where it's caused there to be introspection and caused there to be changes.

And so it's true that the Taman Inquiry, because of its structure and its nature, did provide a lot of direction and advice. It is very true that there were challenges before that we have also learned from.

Ms. Fontaine: And I thank my colleague for putting those words on the record because, you know, to the families of Matthew and Craig and other individuals—my colleague is absolutely one hundred per cent right. You know, often, when that history is kind of left out, it feels disrespectful to the families, so I appreciate him putting those words on.

This bill doesn't address many recommendations laid out in the review, including one to include duty for officers to complete their incidence notes as soon as possible.

Why were these excluded from this bill?

* (16:30)

Mr. Goertzen: I mean, there are some things that find their way well into legislation. There are other things that find their way better into policy. And so, you know, the absence of things in legislation doesn't mean that they won't find their way into best practices or policies. That's also part of what we see in the other bill that's before the Legislature on changes to The Police Services Act.

So the member's, you know, comment and other suggestions, just because they don't show up in a legislated framework doesn't mean they won't show up in a way that's equally as effective.

Ms. Fontaine: In my final question, in respect of Bill 7 is we've—for the last couple of years now, there's been a call by the family of Eishia Hudson for a public inquiry, supported by community stakeholders, including Southern Chiefs Organization, MKO, AMC.

Will the minister call a public inquiry or an inquest into the shooting death of Eishia Hudson?

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for the question. While this might not be the appropriate place for that discussion and that debate, I understand why she's raising it at this time. And certainly for the family of

Eishia Hudson and all those who were friends, you know, these sorts of tragedies leave a lasting impact and cause all of us to take a step back and wonder how things could be done better or differently.

That doesn't always require an inquest to do that, it doesn't always require an inquiry to do that, but I think that there are lessons learned in terms of processes and connecting communities that might not always change the result but, I think, will better the process for the future, and that might be part of that legacy.

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

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Miiigwech deput—or, Madam Speaker—I apologize.

I do want to just put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 7, The Police Services Amendment Act, enhancing independent investigative unit operations. There's so much that I'd like to put on the record today. Certainly, I'll have more time during third reading.

I do want to just go back to a public inquiry in respect of the shooting death of Eishia Hudson, 16-year-old Eishia Hudson. I know that the minister just said that, you know, those are not always the only tools that are available to, you know, assess and figure out what happened in a particular incident.

I do want to remind the House that many years back, when I was the director of justice for the Southern Chiefs Organization, a young 18-year-old young man, an Indigenous young man by the name of Matthew Dumas, was actually walking to work and it was his first day of work. And in the span of five minutes after coming into contact with the WPS, Matthew was shot and killed. And five minutes: that's all it took for this young Indigenous man to lose his life at the hands of the Winnipeg Police Service.

Less than 24 hours after that, I was—met with the family and supporting the family and for years supported the family, including during their inquest. And there was an inquest called into the shooting death of Matthew Dumas and, at the time, the minister was Dave Chomiak. And, again, I was the director of justice at Southern Chiefs Organization so I was always a part of these meetings, coming to this building, being in his office, and was able, at that time, to help negotiate for the family to have the Province

help pay for their legal fees because a lot of people don't realize that when there's an inquest called, the government will appoint inquest counsel and that inquest counsel is supposed to represent, you know, Manitoba, is supposed to also represent the family.

And, luckily, we had a phenomenal lawyer by the name of Don Worme, who was actually one of the first Indigenous lawyers in Saskatchewan, who—I absolutely love him, he is so smart, so intelligent, just so amazing at what he does. And he was the family's lawyer.

And on the first day of the inquest at the Law Courts Building, in the opening comments—the inquest counsel was Robert Tapper and in his opening comments to the sitting inquest judge—who I can't remember his name, so I apologize for that—but Robert Tapper's opening comments to the judge was something along the lines of: you will see, your Honour, that there are claims that this was racially motivated and that this has to do with systemic racism, but you will see that this is not the case.

And I remember sitting in the court and looking at the family, and the family and I are looking at each other—so there was inquest counsel already providing the court with the outcome of the inquest, and I remember being incredibly disappointed and upset that Robert Tapper did this, who, in my mind, had no business already determining the outcome of an inquest. And so, luckily, the family had their own inquest lawyer, again, Don Worme, who unpacked it and dismantled what Robert Tapper attempted to do in his opening comments and also dismantled the police narrative on behalf of the family.

Why do I share all of that? Because Matthew Dumas was just an 18-year-old child going to his first job and who was mistakenly identified by the WPS and in that mistake lost his life within five minutes and his family was forever changed.

And—so when we talk about Eishia Hudson, there is lots to be learned and lots to be gained and lots to be prevented and lots to be recommended that would come out of a public inquiry into this child's death. I think that—and I know that Eishia Hudson's life was worthy. Eishia Hudson's life was valuable. Eishia Hudson's life means something to her family and means something to the greater community.

And, you know, Eishia Hudson as an Indigenous young girl who—again, I shouldn't have to explain the history of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited in this country, but, you know, only a couple of years

ago with the national inquiry, it was determined that there is an ongoing genocide of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

And why is that? Because Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited's lives are deemed not as worthy as other women's lives. Eishia Hudson's life is worthy of an inquiry. Her family is worthy of an inquiry to find out what happened in its entirety and how it could have been avoided.

To that end, I just want just take a quick moment to lift up Eishia's parents, William and Christie and Eishia's stepmom, Cheyenne, and her siblings that she has. You know, Eishia was and is loved by her family.

And so, in the same way that, you know, there were other public inquiries, again, not the least, the Crystal Taman Inquiry, which, again, is one hundred per cent needed and was warranted, in the same way, there is a case before Manitoba and its collective that is worthy of an inquiry, and I suggest and I submit to the Chamber today that the life of Eishia Hudson deserves a public inquiry.

So I really do call on the minister to take that consideration seriously and—so that we can understand that situation and what occurred in its entirety better.

* (16:40)

The minister brought some facts in his opening statement, you know—and, again I think that—I don't know if the minister knows that it's—in its entirety, but I was part of the advisory group back in whatever year that would have been, '09 or '07, in respect of the development of an IIU and the changes to The Police Services Act. In fact, even well before that when, again, as the special advisor on—or, not the special advisor, the director of justice for the Southern Chiefs Organization—that was primarily my file: Indigenous—police relations.

And I started working there, I think, in 2002 and, you know, slowly have come to know all of the different files that I worked on, including those moments, again, of when our folks come into conflict with the law, or come into contact with the police, and how quickly those situations can go from, you know, zero to 60 in which our people are—don't fare very well out of those situations.

And so long before even the discussions on—the official discussions of the police act and IIU, I was part of those discussions in respect of our Indigenous community. In fact—and I don't know what year it would have been, but I remember it was really, really

cold—we had brought in the special investigators unit from Ontario—and for the life of me, I'm getting really old, Madam Speaker, I can't remember his name. But I brought him to Manitoba so that he could share with us—because they had a special investigations unit, and he was the one that had kind of established it from Ontario, and it was a really good model and so we brought him in. I remember we had so many people attend that meeting and he shared how Manitoba could do—have a, you know, a special investigations unit.

And, you know, there's been lots of discussions across the country on how to strengthen police accountability and police complaint mechanisms. And, certainly, you know, I agree with my colleague along the way that, you know, there are ways to strengthen and in many respects, you know, these things evolve and change over the years. So I do agree with him with that.

You know, Bill 7 was an opportunity to strengthen it and go a little bit further, and I alluded to some of that in my questions. You know, Bill 7 could have included cadets and community safety officers. It was an opportunity to be able to do so, but we know that they're not included in Bill 7. So I would have liked to have seen some of those changes as well.

And, again, you know, I remember when we were having these discussions about, you know, this IIU that was going to be set up. I remember talking about having a position that was specifically about, you know, a director of, you know, whatever it would be, a director of Indigenous affairs or Indigenous investigations, whatever.

But I also remember that we talked about having a—civilians. Civilians that would be part of this, like, new IIU that would work alongside police officers because, as the minister said—and he's absolutely right—there is an inherent distrust of only former police officers investigating current sitting police officers. Inherently, there's a distrust there because, again, they come from the same training. They come from the same crop of officers across the country and everybody knows that there is a bond among police officers. And so, you know, it is, you know, not uncommon that people would not trust that police officers or former police officers can do a fair and unbiased investigation of a police officer.

That still exists. There are still concerns with IIU in respect of the investigators that do those investigations. Now, I don't want anybody to say, oh, you know, the member for St. Johns is, you know, saying

this or that. I do agree that, you know, former officers can do a good job as well. I'm not saying that they're not. I don't want anybody to put words into my mouth. But I think that there is something to be said about marrying and—marrying former police officers with civilian investigators.

And people will often say, well, you know, we can't have civilians do investigations because they don't know, you know, the ins and outs of policing and da-da-da.

Well, we have civilian investigators that investigate sexual assault of children for CFS. We currently have that infrastructure where we have civilian individuals that go for training to undertake investigations in respect of sexual assault or abuse. We have those civilians.

So, I would submit to the House that we can marry—have the opportunity to marry former police officers and civilians to be under—to undertake those investigations and give some semblance of confidence to the public that when an incident occurs that is referred to the IIU, that it's an actual unbiased, comprehensive, robust investigation. And that currently doesn't exist. And, you know, that's just the reality that there's that distrust there.

I want to say—I want to go a little bit in respect of the director for—let's see, where's my bill—the director for Indigenous relations—I don't know what it's called here. I do want to say that, you know, as I asked in my question about, you know, whether or not there's a mechanism to ensure—and why it wasn't put in there—that this director would be Indigenous.

It's important that we recognize—so the director of Indigenous and community relations is created. It would have been really important to include in the legislation that this individual must be Indigenous. And the reason why this individual must be Indigenous, despite this individual also potentially working with, you know, the LGBTTTQ2S community or other marginalized Manitobans—it's okay to have an Indigenous person in that position. That position was born out of the recommendations of the Indigenous communities.

Either it's the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that comes out of that, or the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, or the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, or the RCAP, there are a variety—or the Ipperwash Inquiry, like, there's all kinds of reports across the country that talk about this concept of a director of

Indigenous and community relations. That idea was born in our communities. It was born in our communities from our experiences with police.

So, you know, I think it would have been nice to have seen that entrenched in the legislation because, as I said in my questions, not—it's not a guarantee that when somebody puts out a job posting and it says preference given to Indigenous peoples, or preference given to, you know, women or whatever, it's not a guarantee that that individual, those—that community will actually get the job.

And so, I find it disheartening that a concept, an idea, a recommendation that comes from our experiences as Indigenous peoples, there's still the possibility—the open possibility—that you could have a non-Indigenous person that is in that position.

And so, I find that very disappointing. I think that there's an opportunity for the minister to make some amendments and to ensure that this director of Indigenous and community relations is Indigenous.

We have the expertise within our community. There are phenomenal Indigenous community members in Manitoba that have been working on policing for years and years and years, and that have that expertise and that direct knowledge. And so, the labour's there, the people are there. You have to ensure that there's the commitment from the government to actually hire an Indigenous person.

I want to talk about—a little bit about—in respect of a gendered analysis for the IIU, you know, which, again, we could have—could have been strengthened in Bill 7 to the fact that, you know, the vast majority of the folks that work in IIU are men.

And, you know, in every single position, every single space and place, we should be working towards gender equality, which includes, obviously, women and gender non-conforming folks. And we're not—we don't see that in the IIU. And so I would have liked to have seen Bill 7 strengthen the IIU moving towards more gender equity.

* (16:50)

And, more specifically, Madam Speaker, let me be explicitly clear: when I say gender equality, I am also talking about ensuring that there's equity in respect of hiring BIPOC and employing BIPOC women and gender-diverse folks. And so we don't really see that in the bill, as well, and that's a missed opportunity on the part of the 'goverment' to strengthen IIU.

And then finally, Madam Speaker, you know, I think that there's a—several things that we need to be looking at when we're looking at IIU, right? And so, you know, I just want to pose some questions that I think that we could have looked at in respect to Bill 7. And those are, you know, how can the Attorney General ensure that any amendments will increase trust with IIU decisions? And further, how will the attorney govern—the AG work to change the bias within the Justice Department as a whole in respect to BIPOC?

So, you know, there's a lot of things that we need to be considering when we're looking at policing. You know, there's IIU, that's one component to it. But we still have LERA, and I know there's been—you know, there's another bill that's before the House that looks at LERA and actually just did the bare minimum. Those changes just, you know, move it from 30 days to 90 days. That's literally the bare minimum.

Manitoba doesn't have a great record in respect of police complaints processes and police accountability. We need to go further at enhancing the infrastructure for police accountability in this province because there is a lot of distrust for the police, there's a lot of distrust for the complaints processes that are currently available, including the RCMP complaints processes which can take months and people don't even get their results. We know that LERA for, you know—takes a long time to get any semblance of results or investigation, and we also know that LERA doesn't have a great track record on actually finding any police officers culpable in any of the things that they've done.

So, you know, it's not surprising that Manitobans don't have faith or trust in the complaints processes here in Manitoba, and this is a missed opportunity. The other bill that's before the House is a missed opportunity on to strengthen police accountability in respect of interactions with citizens.

And so let me just say this, my final couple of words. Again, I want to go back to how I started this. I started this debate in respect of looking at Matthew Dumas, an 18-year-old boy that was shot and killed. And in my questions I talked about Craig McDougall, who was also shot and killed by the WPS within mere minutes of coming into contact with the WPS, who was simply holding a phone and was shot and killed.

And I end with acknowledging them, and acknowledging their families because, you know, unless you were involved in those cases, nobody really knows about them. You know, they're not talked about in the same way as the Crystal Taman inquiry, but the

shooting deaths of Matthew Dumas and Craig McDougall and Michael—I should look up his name—but he was a 17-year-old boy, Métis boy, who was also, within minutes of coming into contact with the WPS, he was tasered.

And I don't know if anybody remembers any of this, but this was actually at the time when WPS members actually got tasered—tasers because there was a time—obviously, WPS members didn't carry tasers on them. And I remember being asked by the media, like, what do you think about police officers now carrying tasers? And I said to whoever I did the interview with, I said, you know, mark my words, I said somebody is going to die from being tasered incorrectly by the WPS. It was mere months later that this young boy, Michael, who was 17, a Métis boy, came into contact with the WPS and within minutes was tasered to death.

You know, and those are just some of the incidents that we've had. You know, when we look at Eishia Hudson, in the span of three weeks, I believe it is—less than three weeks, there were three other Indigenous peoples, three other Indigenous citizens who were shot and killed by the WPS.

Each of those individuals are deserving of an inquest. Each of those individuals are deserving of a system—a complaints system, are deserving of an IIU that fully investigates and fully—in a comprehensive, unbiased way—to ensure that families and citizens get justice when there are these incidents of coming into contact with the WPS.

And so, you know, I end my comments by again lifting up the families of these Manitoba citizens, of these Indigenous peoples that we've lost after coming into contact with the WPS. And I know that for these families, that work at trying to get justice will not and does not end, even to this very moment, still does not end. And so I lift them up today in my comments.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Just on my list, I have the member for Brandon East, I believe, is next to speak.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): As always, it is a pleasure to rise in the House, put words on the record when we talk about the future of Manitoba.

When we talk about Bill 7 and The Police Services Amendment Act, gives us a real good opportunity to look into our communities, to work with law enforcement throughout our communities, whether it

be a city police force, whether it be the RCMP in rural Manitoba.

There are plenty of examples, Madam Speaker, that I could stand here and talk about. I was—and I say that because I was very fortunate in my career prior to politics in working in safety, security in health care. And going back, I'm going to say 30 years, I had the opportunity to go on a ride-along with the Brandon Police Service. And you really get to see what they go through on a daily basis.

I can honestly say that nowadays, it is more severe, what the police have to deal with out in public. And we look at what some of the ideas of the bill will do when police officers need that backing, when they need to know that they're doing their jobs to the best of their ability, that they're doing their job the way they were trained, that they have backing of their fellow police officers, they have backing of the community and when things go awry, they have the backing of their education. And we look at some of the amendments that happen with investigations, that happen within the organization, within the police bill itself, there are many opportunities to learn, to grow.

And again, when I was on that ride-along, Madam Speaker, it was the dead of winter, it was November,

it was cold, it was snowing. And I chose, when I filled out an application to go on the ride-along so I could really get a better understanding, I chose a night shift on a weekend. And let me tell you, Madam Speaker, it was an eye-opener. So, everybody's well aware, when things happened at the RHA, as the regional director or regional manager for security, I dealt—worked close, pardon me—I worked really close with the police and both the RCMP and the Brandon city police.

So to actually go on a ride-along with the Brandon Police Service and be in the vehicle, be outside the vehicle, when they were dealing with issues, it gave them a better opportunity to say, here's another set of eyes on what we're doing.

One incident, Madam Speaker, as we were coming down on 6th Street—and in Brandon, when you get to the bottom of 6th Street and Patricia Avenue—or Pacific Avenue, you could look to the left at the time and you could see the bridge—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 4, 2022

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