

Fourth Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Man.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	Ind.
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 6, 2019

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.

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome back from constituency week.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Madam Speaker: Are there any introductions of bills?

**Bill 224—The Workers Compensation
Amendment Act**

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Yes. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Minto, that Bill 224, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lindsey: It's my pleasure to introduce this bill at this particular point in time. Many Manitobans are faced with stressors and traumatic events daily in their workplaces. In light of Mental Health Week, which just happens to be this week, I'm proud to bring forward to this House Bill 224, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

Bill 224 would expand coverage for stress-induced mental disorders. This is a very progressive and necessary bill at this time when society has begun to realize the importance of mental health.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Asian Heritage Month

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I am very proud to rise in the House today to recognize and celebrate Asian Heritage Month in Canada.

I would like to commend the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba for their role in organizing Asian Heritage Month celebrations for the past 17 years and for their efforts to protect, preserve and celebrate Asian heritage in this wonderful province.

As many of you are aware, both the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba have designated May as Asian Heritage Month. This designation serves as a very special acknowledgment of the very long history and significant contributions of Asian Canadians to the growth and development of our province and our nation.

Madam Speaker, Asian and South Asian heritage encompasses people from more than 30 countries, resulting in Asian Canadians being one of the most culturally diverse groups in all of Canada.

Our national and provincial story would be incomplete without the voices of countless Asians and South Asian Canadians who have called the land we all love home.

As artists and activists, educators and elected officials, servicemen and women and business owners, Asian Manitobans have helped to grow our province and make it the very special and culturally diverse place it is today.

This month, we honour the important roles Asian Canadians have played in the past, and we recommit to ensuring that opportunities exist for generations to come, Madam Speaker.

I encourage all Manitobans to engage in various programs and activities during this very important month of May offered by the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba.

And, Madam Speaker, we have a few members of the Asian Heritage Society—Manitoba here in the gallery with us today, and I ask all members to recognize them for their enormous efforts in acknowledging this very special month.

Thank you.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): All—wrong one.

May is Asian Heritage Month, and it is an opportunity to reflect and thank Asian Canadians for their presence and contributions to the country. The Government of Canada has designated this year's theme as Asian Canadian Youth: Shaping Canada's Future to recognize all the youth making huge strides in their communities.

Asian Canadians have been a part of our heritage since many arrived in the 19th century to help with the construction of the railway. Today, Asian Canadians are involved in all sectors of society, from government to technology to the sciences.

We have so many prominent Canadian figures of Asian heritage, including former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson; Patrick Chan, the Olympic medalist; and Jagmeet Singh, the leader of our federal NDP party.

I encourage all members to participate in one of the many events being put on by the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba, including the Asian Art and Film Night on the 17th or the Asian Canadian Writers Showcase at the Millennium Library on the 23rd.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise this morning and speak to the minister's statement recognizing Asian Heritage Month. Canada has been recognizing the month of May as Asian Heritage Month since 2002, and I'm proud that Manitoba made it official and did the same in 2017.

This past weekend I, along with my colleagues from St. Boniface and St. Norbert, had the pleasure of attending the community leadership awards fundraising gala that was hosted by the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba. This gala recognized

Manitobans of Asian descent for their roles as community leaders and active volunteers in our communities.

Madam Speaker, Asian Heritage Month provides an opportunity for us to really reflect upon the impact that Asian heritage has had on our province. Whether it be the building up of our economy, the proud diversity that makes us who we are or the good food, traditions and fellowship between all of us, I know we are all proud to stand in recognition of Asian Heritage Month.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, before I wrap up I just want to share with the House that over the course of the month, the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba will be hosting many events. There is an Asian Heritage High School Symposium on Monday, May 13th; an Asian Art and Film Night on Friday, May 17th; FOOD TRIP—which is my favourite, every year—on Saturday, May 18th; an Asian Heritage Rural Showcase on Sunday, May 19th; an Asian Canadian Festival on Saturday, May 25th; and the closing ceremonies will be on Wednesday, May 29th.

Madam Speaker, if people are interested in the details of the events, they can find them online at asianheritagemanitoba.com. And I, too, just want to thank those who have joined us in the gallery—I know I see my Tita Julie up there—and wish everyone a very happy Asian Heritage Month.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

High Steppers Seniors Club

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): High Steppers Seniors Club is a fixture in the Winakwa Community Centre in Windsor Park. It provides an opportunity for social interaction in a safe environment for elderly persons, especially those no longer able to be more physically active. It also provides respite to the caregivers of some of its members by relieving them of their responsibilities for a few hours each week.

The club meets every Wednesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. 'til 2:30 p.m., providing a fun day of playing cards, shuffleboard, bocce, music, dominoes, friendship, conversation, coffee, tea, refreshments and a light lunch.

High Steppers Seniors Club would not exist if it were not for a dedicated cadre of volunteers, many of whom come from the nearby Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Perhaps the most vital member of

that volunteer team is the fundraising co-ordinator, Liz Chammartin.

Liz is a seemingly tireless volunteer who gives generously of her time and talents to helping seniors in our community. When I asked for nominations from the community of who might deserve a distinguished service award for community service, I received a full 7 letters of support recommending Liz, including many from her fellow committee members, some of whom have joined us in the gallery today.

For over 10 years, Liz has taken the lead in applying for grants to support the staff at High Steppers Seniors Club. She's also organized countless fundraising activities including garage sales, bake sales and the always memorable annual High Steppers tea.

By all accounts, Liz is gracious and generous, committed, caring and compassionate. She is also incredibly persistent and never lets an obstacle dampen her resolve. She is fun-loving and always has a smile on her face. Liz is a loving mother and grandmother and enjoys involving her grandchildren in her volunteer efforts too. She leads by example and is always willing to go the extra mile.

Sometimes fundraising can be a thankless task. So, today, our community is trying to change that by saying thank you, thank you, thank you to Liz Chammartin for all you do and for how you do it.

So please join me—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

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

Mr. Teitsma: Sorry.

Please join me in saying thank you to volunteer extraordinaire Liz Chammartin.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Radisson.

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, I ask leave to include the names of Liz's guests in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Dre Chammartin, Liz Chammartin, Raena Chammartin, Herb Doering, Marilyn Doering, Pat Doering, Steffie Doering, Walter Doering,

Glen Endler, Janice Endler, Bruce Hallmuth, Joanne Hallmuth, Bert Johnson, Joan Johnson, Ed Lehmann, Krystall Lesveque, Wendy Morier, Bob Phillips, Leslie Slaney, Jay Spicer, John Templeton, Ann Thoroughgood, Flo Olson, Charlie Olson.

Madox's Warriors

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I have the great honour of acknowledging the loving work of Madox's Warriors, born out of the death of Madox Suzio, who passed on August 8th, 2014, from DIPG, a rare brain tumour.

Madox's parents, Susan and Marco, alongside Madox's older brother Valin, work tirelessly each year to put on two events: a Kids Dance Party and the superhero run to fight DIPG, raising funds to find a cure. Additionally, Suzanne and Marco also personally support many childhood cancer foundations, including Dream Factory.

I've been honoured to support many of Madox's Warriors' events, including yesterday's 5th Annual Kids Dance Party, witnessing first-hand the joy of bringing families and children together who are living through a journey no parent or child should ever have to go through. To date, Madox's Warriors has raised over \$120,000.

Additionally, Suzanne applied to MPI to create a special licence plate in honour of children fighting cancer or those who have died of cancer, and recently received word MPI will be moving forward with said partnership.

Yesterday, May 5th, marked 30 years, we lost my little sister, Katerina, to childhood leukemia. We spent three years at Sainte-Justine's hospital pursuing everything possible to save Katerina. It's a journey you never forget with a pain you never fully recover from. The loss of a child literally changes you at a cellular level, forcing you to depths within that you didn't even know existed.

So today as I honour Madox's Warriors and my own little beloved Katerina, I say to Manitoba families journeying through childhood cancer, know that you are in my thoughts and I walk with you.

Suzanne and Marco, I lift you up today, and I am so proud to call them family and I ask my colleagues to help in congratulating them.

Darlene Wirth

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, it is

my pleasure to draw the attention of this House to grade 2 teacher Darlene Wirth, who is in the gallery today along with her 19 students from Minnewasta School in Morden.

In 1990, Darlene started her teaching career instructing grades 4 to 6 at Brant-Argyle School in Interlake School Division, specializing in music, French and phys. ed. Interested in sharing her students' talents outside the classroom, Darlene enrolled her classes in the Festival of the Arts each and every year, performing speech, vocal and even line dancing, where her class took home the championship three years in a row. Not only did Darlene teach, but she ran the intramural program, coached volleyball, badminton and track and field.

Fourteen years later, Darlene took a position with Western School Division in Morden where she continued her career at Minnewasta School teaching grade 2.

Students love being in her class. In fact, Darlene was nominated from her students last fall for—by a radio station contest and was named teacher of the month, which included a pizza party for the kids, which I believe may be a conflict of interest.

Madam Speaker, as you know, the city of Morden continues to attract significant newcomers to the community, including new students. Looking to make that transition easier, Darlene and her class created and published a Welcome to Morden book where every student contributed with sections including places to eat, activities, landmarks, celebrations, jokes and, of course, Canadianisms like toques, poutine, maple syrup and the expression eh.

I have enjoyed my visits to Darlene's class for I Love to Read Month. I was very glad to be present on the main stair earlier today when the grade 2s recited a poem entitled A second is a hiccup, which talks about the passage of time.

Madam Speaker, Darlene is retiring, and her absence will be felt by all the teaching staff, the children and parents that have come across her path.

It is my pleasure to recognize Darlene for her excellence in teaching, her many contributions of time, patience and commitment. Darlene is with her husband, Al, and other parents from the community in the gallery today.

Please join me in welcoming Darlene and thank her for 34 years of teaching.

ER Closures

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): All Manitobans have a right to quality, accessible health care. But the minister's refusal to provide updates on the proposed closure of Concordia ER is throwing that right into jeopardy. Nurses and front-line workers are left in a state of uncertainty over the future of their jobs. Families don't know if they will continue to have access to health care in their communities, and they don't have the information they need to plan accordingly.

Last week, hundreds of nurses and front-line workers rallied at the Legislature to express their frustration with the changes. Despite being on the front lines, providing quality patient care in the midst of this disastrous overhaul, no one from the government has consulted with them.

Instead, the PCs have decided to spend upwards of \$100,000 bringing back Dr. Peachey to tell them their health-care overhaul is a disaster. They are using this upcoming report to hide from Manitobans and further delay telling them their plans for our health-care system.

* (13:50)

The minister needs to stop playing games and be straight with Manitobans. Are the PCs still planning to close Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs, and if yes, when?

Dr. Neil Burnet

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize an outstanding commitment from an Interlake constituent. This particular individual has dedicated 45 years of his life to making the Interlake a better place to raise your family and call home.

Completing his education in Sydney, Australia, Dr. Neil Burnet first came to Eriksdale hospital in July of 1974 to relieve Dr. Baffsky for a three-month vacation. On September 21st in 1975, Dr. Burnet moved to Canada to become our local physician. This was by invitation from the community of Lunder, who, at the time, had made a commitment to establish a new medical clinic, and Dr. Burnet proudly began his new practice.

My father and Doc, as everybody called him, very quickly became friends. I remember many house calls, mostly of the social kind, but one in particular was business. It was about 28 years ago, and I had just had my appendix removed. Doc had

made a house call, a 30-mile round trip, to ensure my recovery was what he had expected.

Over the years, Dr. Burnet has gone above and beyond in the service that he has provided not only to Lundar but to the residents of St. Laurent, Eriksdale, Lake Manitoba First Nation and my home town of Oak Point.

His dedication and commitment to the health and welfare of so many, not just in his clinic but uncountable hours in the emergency–Eriksdale emergency room hospital. We will be a few of the most–this will be a few of his most remembered traits.

Doc is a valued member of our community and appreciated more than words can say. On behalf of everyone from the Interlake, I would like to thank you for your service and dedication to everyone in the area.

We all wish you a delightful retirement with many healthy years to enjoy a warm winter.

Thank you, Doc.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the public gallery from Glenlawn Collegiate we have 33 students under the direction of Faye Barsy. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Crown Services (Mrs. Mayer).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Families, patients, nurses, for years have been telling the Premier to cancel his plans to close emergency rooms and to cut health care in Manitoba. And yet the Premier has refused to listen every step of the way. Instead, he closed the emergency room at Victoria; he closed the urgent care at Misericordia; he closed the family medical clinic; and he cut millions of dollars from CancerCare.

Now the Premier is so desperate to distract from his failing record on emergency rooms that he's

hiring a consultant who is only going to talk to management, Madam Speaker.

The families I speak with, the nurses I met on the front steps of the Legislature last week and patients all have the same message: don't close our emergency rooms.

Will the Premier listen?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, we are listening, Madam Speaker. That is something that I think is very important in terms of how we're going about improving a system that was failing patients for so many years under the NDP. We're listening and we're actually acting on the advice we're receiving, not only from front-line workers in the system but also from experts like Dr. Peachey.

So, yes, we'll continue to listen, and we'll make sure that we do our very best to heal a system that was broken under the previous government.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the further you get from the bedside, the worse the health-care decision making gets, and we see the results of that centralization under this Premier.

Emergency room wait times are going up. That's according to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Patients are waiting longer and longer for surgeries. That's according to CIHI. Nurses are exhausted and they're working massive amounts of overtime. That's according to nurses, Madam Speaker.

Those are the facts, and the Premier is desperately trying to distract from them. He's now hired a consultant to come here. The consultant is only going to talk to management. He won't speak to nurses, to patients or people working on the front line of our health-care system. All those folks are telling him to keep the emergency rooms open.

So will the Premier commit today that he won't close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia hospitals?

Mr. Pallister: I think the member is caught in a bit of a contradiction. He's as far from the bedside, in terms of the relevance of his comments, as he could possibly be.

Dr. Peachey was retained by the previous NDP government. He filed a report. He was paid

\$1 million to do so, and the NDP government ignored his recommendations.

His recommendations were that we would shorten our wait times—which were the longest in Canada under the NDP—that we would shorten our wait times by consolidating our resources in fewer emergency rooms, as every other major centre in the country had already done.

So, Madam Speaker, they sought the advice. They took a million taxpayer dollars and paid for it, and then they let it gather dust like the dust gathered on the shoulders of people waiting in Concordia waiting room. That wasn't the way to get the system to work better for patients.

Listening to the advice of experts is what we're doing. We're going to continue to do that. We're going to work with our front-line workers, and we're going to heal the system they broke.

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

Mr. Kinew: The problem the Premier has is that none of that's true and no one believes him on health care, Madam Speaker.

We know that he's only concerned about—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —one thing when it comes to health care: that's the money. He wants to cut back on health care because he's only concerned with the money. He's not looking out for patients and families. He's not looking out for health care. He's not looking out for seniors right across the province.

We know that this plan is failing, that all the results are moving in the wrong direction, Madam Speaker. And so the Premier now, at the eleventh hour, before he plans to break the fixed election date law, is trying to desperately distract, and so he goes to retain a consultant: a consultant who will only speak to management, nobody on the front lines.

Will the Premier simply listen to the voices of the people of Manitoba and announce that he is backing off his plan to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia hospitals?

Mr. Pallister: Let's get this straight. The NDP spent \$1 million on a report from Dr. Peachey which recommended consolidating emergency rooms so that we could reduce wait times. They didn't have

the courage to do it, so they left it under a desk somewhere and did nothing about it.

Now the member says we're not listening, when the previous government refused to listen to the million-dollar report that they themselves commissioned.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't make any sense. The fact is the wait times were the longest in Canada, and the member speaks like we should go back and have them even longer. That doesn't make sense either.

What makes sense is this: investing \$400 million more in health care this year—which this government is doing—than the NDP ever did, and having the courage to pursue the reforms to make the system work better for patients, which it will.

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

Health-Care Reform ER Closures

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I think the reason the Premier is so angry is because he only listens to the consultants, but what we're telling him to do is to listen to the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

And we know he's not listening because we have obtained—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —through freedom of information documents that I'll table for the benefit of the Premier: public opinion polling that this government conducted through the Winnipeg health region about how Manitobans are feeling about these changes, cuts and closures that are taking in place in health care.

Now, year over year, from 2016-17 to 2017-18, the number of people who felt health care was getting worse doubled, Madam Speaker. There's been a dramatic increase, particularly among those who attended Winnipeg hospital emergency departments over the past nine months. That's a direct quote from the sampling of Manitobans that this government commissioned.

Why is the Premier ignoring the voices of Manitobans, and why is he intent on closing these emergency rooms?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, it appears that we have a federal government that believes

budgets balance themselves, which they never do, and now we have a provincial Liberal—or NDP opposition, I'm sorry, that believe the system will heal itself, which it will not do.

* (14:00)

They commissioned advice. They refused to act on the advice. They remained 10th in terms of emergency room waits—the longest in the country; seven hours-plus at Concordia. People looking to get help, going to an emergency room, waiting seven hours and, increasingly, just giving up and going back home in pain.

Madam Speaker, that's the system the member is arguing we should go back to. We're not going to go back to that system. We're going to heal the system they allowed to break.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, we know that the Premier is not listening to nurses; we know that he's not listening to people who are working on the front lines. And because he just threw that survey on the ground, we know that he's not listening to Manitobans either, Madam Speaker.

So who is the Premier listening to? Well, I will table another document that we've obtained, for the benefit of the Premier. It would appear that he is listening only to consultants.

The Premier installed in the Department of Health a consultant to oversee this plan to cut health care. This consultant has been paid more than \$700,000 since 2016, Madam Speaker—\$700,000 for a consultant to close emergency rooms in Winnipeg. That's a transformation that everyone agrees is making the system worse.

Why has the Premier hired this consultant to make health care worse in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: My consultant was hired by the NDP, Madam Speaker. So was David Peachey—hired by the NDP. And the member's personal record and the record of his party is pretty deplorable when it comes to resolving conflict with anything but measures other than listening.

Polls got this party in trouble. They all reacted and had a rebellion because they were scared about poll results. Now the member uses poll results to try to appraise changes that are necessary and take courage to implement, Madam Speaker.

This government has the courage to implement changes to make the system better and to help it heal. That member and that party never had that courage. They don't have it now. And that's why, Madam Speaker, the one poll that matters most saw that party rejected to the little rump they are today.

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

Mr. Kinew: So just to clarify for the record, Madam Speaker, the poll that the Premier just threw on the ground is one that he commissioned, right?

So presumably they commissioned that poll to figure out how Manitobans were feeling about their health-care system. The Premier received that poll—today, perhaps—decided to toss it on the ground. It shows you the amount of disrespect that he holds for the real views of people in Manitoba and how they're feeling about health care and the cavalier attitude with which he will dismiss the evidence that experts provide his government for our health-care system.

That simple action is a condemnation of this Premier's entire approach to health care. We know that our team can fix health care and make it better for people in Manitoba.

Will the Premier simply stop the damage, keep—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the emergency rooms open and make way for a new government who can do better for the people of Manitoba?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I've already read the report the member has given me. But I would want the member to understand that I accept his premise about having expertise in throwing things on the ground. I don't think it's important, though, for us to do anything but understand that we have to heal the system.

We have to heal the system to make it better for the people who depend upon it. And ignoring the expert advice that the previous government was given is what they were good at. We're good at acting on that advice, Madam Speaker.

We'll heal the system they broke.

Concordia Hospital Timeline for ER Closure

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Time and time again, this government avoids being transparent with Manitobans about the fate of Concordia ER.

For weeks now, we've stood up in this House and asked this minister to be transparent and tell Manitobans exactly when he's planning to close the ER. Last week, reporters asked if the Concordia ER will even shut down as planned. The minister wouldn't even give them a straight yes or no answer.

The minister needs to stop playing games with Manitobans. He needs to stand up in this House today and tell Manitobans when and if he plans to close Concordia's ER.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, the member has exactly what she asked for.

Last week, it was exactly an exercise in transparency that we undertook to engage all Manitobans and let them know that we've engaged Dr. Peachey to come back and conduct a quality assurance exercise. Dr. Peachey tells us that a number of things in the transformation are going very well, including anesthesia, surgery, mental health and addictions and other areas.

But it doesn't mean we shouldn't ask questions about those areas that might need additional resources.

It's assurance of accountability that that member seeks; it is assurance of accountability that we provide.

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

Mrs. Smith: Nurses and other front-line workers are being left in a state of uncertainty over the future of their jobs because of this government. Residents are being left in the dark about whether they will continue to receive services at Concordia's ER.

But no one knows, Madam Speaker, because this minister cannot get up in this House and be transparent and do his job and tell Manitobans exactly when he's planning to close Concordia's ER. This is unacceptable.

Madam Speaker, why is the minister delaying telling Manitobans? Will he get up in this House today and tell us exactly when he is going to close Concordia ER?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, last week, we went further. We engaged Manitobans and let them know where we were at in terms of this engagement we've brought in. We assured them, as well, that we'll return very quickly to update them exactly on what will those next steps be.

This is important work that's being conducted: interviews, refreshing of the data. That member says she wants answers, but we're saying to her, there's a process—a process that has urgency, a process that we will return to Manitobans very soon and update them.

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

Mrs. Smith: What Manitobans want is for this government to stop their cutting in health care.

In the government's news release last week, the Minister of Health stated, and I'll quote: Our plan to modernize our health-care system and improve outcomes for patients is working, end quote.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: Yet Manitobans—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —have been telling them that their plan is not working. And are they listening? No.

This is what they've decided to do: they've decided to bring back Dr. Peachey and pay him up to \$100,000 to again do a quality assurance exercise.

Will the minister admit that his plan is failing and keep Concordia open—Concordia emergency room open? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, Manitobans know that the former NDP government had 16 and a half years to demonstrate competency when it came to running a health-care system, and they couldn't do it. Year after year, the worst results in Canada, including the wait times at Concordia and Seven Oaks and Grace and Victoria hospitals.

Madam Speaker, what Manitobans want are results. They want a health-care system that works, that provides access, that gets better results. Better care sooner for Manitobans is the pledge we have made. It is the journey that we are on. And it is the future for Manitobans under this government.

Seven Oaks General Hospital Timeline for ER Closure

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, the Pallister government is listening exclusively to accountants and consultants, and they only care about the bottom line.

My constituents have told me, over and over, keep the emergency room at Seven Oaks open.

When is this minister going to close the ER at Seven Oaks General Hospital?

* (14:10)

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, Manitobans continue to tell our government over and over and over that they want better health-care services. And after 16 and a half years of failed NDP 'proaches', what is their advice to Manitobans? Go back.

Their advice is to go back, go back to longer wait times, go back to longer wait times for surgeries and ERs and getting treatment. And, Madam Speaker, we will decline to take their advice.

Manitobans expect us to get them better care. We are working to get them better care. We are seeing the results of that hard work.

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

Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Marcelino: My question was very, very simple, and I'll ask it again.

Emergency rooms at Concordia and Seven Oaks are set to close in just weeks. The minister has called back a consultant to do a management review when he should be talking with front-line health providers. Am I pronouncing it wrong?

They are telling him, don't close these emergency rooms.

Will the minister listen? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, we know that for years and years Manitoba used to have some of the longest ER wait times, not just in the province, but in the nation, year after year. The advice of expert opinion was to say, if you consolidate services, you actually give the opportunity for medical providers to

work more 'collaborately' together, and the evidence shows that the wait times fall.

Now, that member doesn't rely on evidence. He says go back. He says go back to the higher wait times.

We won't go back. We will rely on expertise. We've made the commitment to update Manitobans very soon. Dr. Peachey understands the urgency of this engagement, and we'll have updates for Manitobans in short order.

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

Mr. Marcelino: Still no answer from this minister.

The nurses and their patients see through this government's plans for cuts and closures. They understand that the government is focused on the money, not on patient care. They say that the late call for another review is evidence that the government's plan is not working, and they're calling for government to back down on their plans for closing Seven Oaks emergency room.

Will this government listen?

Mr. Friesen: I remind the member that we did make the commitment in the hallway last week that we would return at the outset in two weeks to inform all Manitobans of that next step for Concordia, which is important because people deserve to know. That's why we have attached urgency to this engagement.

I would remind that member as well, though, who's so interested in money, he should also be aware that this Conservative government has invested \$414 million more in health care than an NDP government ever spent.

It's not just about the money. It's about better health care sooner for Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Before proceeding with oral questions we have some guests that just joined us in the gallery, and I would like to introduce them to you.

We have seated in the public gallery, from South Dakota State University, 10 university students under the direction of David Wiltse, and on behalf of all members here we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

Public-Private Sectors Government Approach

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): The recent mandate letters sent out to provincial Crown corporations show an incredible double standard in the way that this government treats different sectors of the economy. Basically, the public sector is expected to operate by free-market rules, but the private sector is somehow being supported by PC socialism.

The Premier's asking the Centennial Centre, a public cultural facility, to turn a profit in five years. The Bombers' stadium gets \$200 million—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —horse racing gets \$20 million, but when it comes to MPI, the Premier and his minister are actually ordering that Crown corporation to pay extra for insurance brokers.

Does the Premier know how much more Manitobans can expect to pay in car insurance because he's ordering MPI to provide handouts to his friends?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We're not big, as a government, on handouts to friends, Madam Speaker. We like to earn our friends. We know that we won't get real friends by buying them. This is as opposed to the federal Liberal government's approach, of course.

Now I know the member's a little defensive about that, but he needs to be because he has linked himself so closely to the Trudeau government. But I understand that the Trudeau government just handed out literally hundreds of millions of dollars to one particular company that is a major donor to them.

This is the kind of practice we frown upon here. We don't do that here. We've said no to subsidizing major companies and, as a result, we find that there is the ability to give greater support to all those companies who really want to do business in Manitoba, not just those who want to be, well, bribed to come here, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamont: It's important to be clear about how MPI, Hydro and MLLC are supposed to work. They're supposed to act in the public interest. They're supposed to provide high-quality, universal, safe,

affordable services to all Manitobans. And, but what is more, they've been ordered to tighten their belts, but every single one of them is already profitable.

MLLC net income was \$610 million in 2017-18, which was a growth rate of 4.1 per cent over the previous year. Manitoba Public Insurance earned a \$91-million profit. Hydro was also profitable. None of them are in deficit; they're all highly in surplus.

Is the Premier expecting them to hike their prices to cover his own deficit, which is basically a tax by any other name?

Mr. Pallister: Well, just a couple of things, Madam Speaker. There are pretty few government monopolies who don't have to compete with anyone else, who don't post ostensible profits. So we'll leave that where it is. But the member is caught in his own contradictions.

He speaks about a deficit being a delayed tax—and, of course, it is—but he, on the other hand, has advocated that we should spend more money by borrowing more money. He's also said that the only problem the previous government had—the—under the NDP, of course, they doubled our debt in the last six years of their mandate—he said the only problem they had was they didn't borrow more and run larger deficits, Madam Speaker.

Thirdly, he's also said that the way to progress in this province is to have the taxes go up. He's advocating for a higher carbon tax, for example. He's advocating for a higher PST as another example.

So the member's caught in his own contradiction, Madam Speaker. We're going to concern ourselves with what's in the best public interest. The member can continue to concern himself with spending more and borrowing more as long as he likes, but he's at sharp odds with the common sense of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Lamont: Well, the Premier's at sharp odds with the truth on that one I'm afraid, Madam Speaker. I don't think anything he said is actually accurate.

So I ran for leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party because for years life for Manitobans has been getting harder. And one of the promises—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: –I ran on was no privatizations. The PCs privatized MTS; the NDP privatized the Land Titles Office. And it's crystal clear, Madam Speaker, the way this government chooses to punish its opponents—the people who work at Crown corporations—and reward its friends who want a piece of the action.

A director at MPI said they worked extremely hard for three years to improve an organization that was, quote, brutally manipulated by political interests in the NDP regime. And then they had to go get a legal opinion to see how they could resist this government.

Has the Premier already drawn up a list of people of likely—who are likely absents—applicants for the privatization of Liquor & Lotteries?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, if truth was an island, it would be an island uninhabited by that member.

The member—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: The member has said that he wants a higher carbon tax. If he wants to disagree with his own previous statements, go out in the hall and disagree, but he has said publicly he wants a higher carbon tax to be charged to Manitoba families. He says he opposes us lowering the provincial sales tax. That means he's advocating for, Madam Speaker, a higher sales tax on Manitobans. He says he wants a larger subsidy for his political party.

These are added to the list previously outlined by me—quite accurately—of requests for the government to spend more money not for Manitobans' good, but for him. And this goes on the list with his request, the first and foremost he advanced, that he should have more office space.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker, this is not a gentleman who understands the priorities of Manitobans, but this is a government that does.

Madam Speaker: Just a caution to members that we need to be very careful that we're not moving into the language of—inflammatory language. So a caution about making references about truth or not truth is walking a fine line here.

So just—if all members could just heed that, please.

Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Provincial Funding Contribution

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): In 1971, Helen Betty Osborne, age 19, was brutally murdered. She was stabbed over 50 times.

It took 16 years for the justice system to take action. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry concluded the events surrounding Helen's murder were marked by racism, sexism and indifference.

As legislators and representatives, on behalf of all Manitobans, we should do everything within our power to honour and keep Helen Betty Osborne's memory.

Does the Premier agree?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Absolutely, Madam Speaker. And that's why, as opposed to the member opposite, I stood for indigenous women's equal rights for over a decade and found success, finally, in that battle. But more continues; more battles in front of us that we can pursue together, as opposed to in a partisan manner, as some might advocate.

That's why we're pursuing reconciliation strategies that can work to advance the lives of indigenous people: treaty land entitlement settlements, which the previous government forgot to engage in, which have got tens of thousands of acres into the hands of First Nations bands; duty-to-consult framework; Northern Healthy Food Initiative; Operation Return Home; Look North strategy; investments to support Internet services so that northern children can get access to educational material and advanced skill development.

All of these things on a practical level are assisting to advance the cause of indigenous women and indigenous children in our province. We'll continue to focus on these things. The Golden Boy looks north for a reason.

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

Ms. Fontaine: In 2000, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly unanimously passed the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act, establishing a foundation in honour of Helen Betty Osborne, remembering her name and the injustices that she faced and that many indigenous peoples still face in this province today.

Yet, in recent years, Madam Speaker, the activity of the foundation has disappeared. No reports have been filed and the Province's contribution to the foundation stopped in 2016.

Why is the Premier refusing to support the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I'd like to acknowledge to the member opposite that I personally met with the Osborne family on three separate occasions in their community.

They've shared a lot of information in regard to Betty Osborne, and they're definitely keeping her memory alive. And they're doing a lot, as many other individuals in the province of Manitoba are, in regard to murdered and missing indigenous women.

And we'll continue to have those conversations and work on behalf all these families across Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: According to the last annual report available, the foundation was providing nearly \$200,000 to indigenous post-secondary students annually, and its endowment held hundreds of thousands of dollars in trust. Yet since then, the activity of the foundation has disappeared, Madam Speaker, and records show the Province stopped contributing to the foundation.

All parties in this Legislature voted to establish the foundation and pledged their support to it.

Why now is the Premier abandoning the memory of Helen Betty Osborne?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, in fact, I do remember the Legislature supporting the act. Unfortunately, while the government of the day, the NDP, supported the act, it didn't actually put the 'infrastructure' in place to support the scholarship.

As a result of mismanagement by the NDP and a lack of attention to the Helen Betty Osborne scholarship, it was in danger of losing its charitable status under the NDP, Madam Speaker. So we have ensured that there is stability for the fund. We'll ensure an organization, perhaps the UCN, continues to support and provide a name under Heley [phonetic]—or, a scholarship under the name of

Helen Betty Osborne and to fix what the NDP broke, Madam Speaker.

Lake Winnipeg Fishery Quota Buyback Program

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, maintaining the health and sustainability of Lake Winnipeg is a priority for my constituents and all Manitobans. Lake Winnipeg is a provincial treasure, and our government recognizes the need to protect it for future generations.

Recently, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Sustainable Development announced a voluntary quota buyback for commercial fishers to relieve pressure on fish stocks on Lake Winnipeg.

Can the minister please update the House on the status of this effort to preserve the health of our lake?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'd like to thank my colleague from Selkirk for that excellent question about our government's initiatives to ensure the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg.

We have completed our first successful voluntary quota buyback program, where we were able to engage with 126 individual quota entitlements which—from 90 fishers to reduce nearly half a million kilograms of quota from Lake Winnipeg. This is going to ensure that Lake Winnipeg fish stocks are sustainable now and into the future.

We are very pleased with the outcome of the first tranche of our quota buyback program that also put five—more than \$5.5 million in fishers' pockets.

Health-Care Reform Service Delivery Concerns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, last week, a man with meth addiction and psychosis waited 24 hours in an emergency room before getting help.

Last week exposed a precarious situation in food services, with 20 per cent of positions for health inspectors not filled.

Last week, hundreds of nurses told us about their negative experiences with the government cuts, consolidation, chaos and crushing workload.

Today, while eight new graduate midwives are unemployed, 50 per cent of those who want a midwife can't access one, and all the minister can do is call 1-800-Mr. Peachey.

When is the Minister of Health going to actually address the serious problems his government has created?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I was pleased to meet with the College of Midwives in my office less than a month ago. We had an excellent conversation about how to expand the model of midwifery in Manitoba.

They acknowledged that the previous government was ineffective, actually trying three and four times and still not managing to graduate midwives in our jurisdiction. It was the member of Portage la-Prairie, who was the minister at the time, who found a way to help those midwives at the time graduate.

We continue to look to the future and know that this is a very important—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Friesen: We continue to believe that this is a very important part of our health-care system going forward.

If the members wanted the answer, I would assume they'd be listening.

Madam Speaker: I just want to indicate that heckling, on both sides of the House, serves us no purpose in moving forward with the debate that is before us. So I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

The honourable member for River Heights, on a supplementary question.

Methamphetamine Addiction Treatment Plan Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, it's pretty clear that the Conservative mascot—the poster person for the impact of the poor management on health care—was the meth addict with the psychosis who couldn't get any help for 24 hours at the Health Sciences Centre except for the offer of a bus pass.

It took 10 hours to see a doctor and 14 more to decide how to help him, thanks to the chaotic state of the government's approach to meth psychosis.

Is the government going to call 1-800-Dr. Peachey, or will the minister, after two years of a meth crisis, finally bring forward a coherent and comprehensive approach to meth addiction and meth psychosis?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Last week, there was a community meeting just down the block from this Legislature where there was a broad number of community members and leaders who all agree that there are no easy answers when it comes to methamphetamines.

* (14:30)

We've heard that over and over in other jurisdictions. We've heard it in Canada across the provinces. We've heard it from our counterparts in the Midwest in the United States. And yet members of this Legislature somehow pretend that there are easy answers to what is facing us. There aren't.

I can tell that member that I am pleased to see with the initial preliminary numbers for the month of April that it looks like the flu season and the ER times are beginning to decline now. That's a hopeful sign. Nevertheless, there's lots of work to do in our communities when it comes to dealing with methamphetamines.

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

HIV/AIDS Medication Coverage Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, last Friday, Dr. Ken Kasper, on receiving the Doctors Manitoba's health or safety promotion award, together with Dr. Laurie Ireland, said he has been trying for 13 years to get full coverage of drugs for individuals with HIV/AIDS. I, too, have been calling for years for this treatment-is-prevention approach to help those with HIV/AIDS and to decrease transmission of this disease. British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan all have full coverage for HIV/AIDS drugs for this reason.

Is the government going to call 1-800-Dr. Peachey, or will it use common-sense prevention and fully cover HIV/AIDS drugs starting now?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): That member's cynicism aside, it was the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and I who were in Ottawa in 2016 when the federal government announced that they were going to cut their health transfers to all the Canadian provinces and territories, a cut that will cost Manitoba, in the space of 10 years, \$1 billion.

If that member truly cared about any of the issues that he just represented in this House today, why did he not phone 1-800-Ottawa and demand a better, more sustainable, long-term arrangement for the betterment of health care right across this country?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Food Inspection Services Position Vacancies

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Manitobans want to feel safe when they go out to eat with their families.

Health inspections are an important part of Manitobans feeling safe and being safe when they go out to eat. Preventative approaches, like inspections, are critical, yet we see that this government has left eight positions for those inspectors vacant.

Can the government please inform us when they plan to fill those positions and actually do the inspections that are required?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): The member couldn't be more wrong. Safety is paramount for any government, and for this government in particular.

And we'll continue to do that no matter where it's demanded.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Those words are pretty empty when we know that there's eight positions sitting empty.

So, we know that 3,000 establishments are waiting for an inspection; 2,000 food establishments currently have no assigned inspector; 355 high-risk establishments are overdue for an inspection. And yet this minister refuses to tell us when he's going to fill those empty inspector positions. This is unacceptable.

Will the minister stand up today and tell us when he plans to fill those inspector positions to keep Manitobans safe?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Appreciate any question from the NDP on protecting workers, Madam Speaker. They couldn't even protect their own political staffers, when they were in government, from being sexually harassed by ministers in their government. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: They developed a culture, Madam Speaker, that told their own people, just suck it up, tough it out and put up with it. They refuse to participate in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —employee coaching and counselling. They refuse to participate in the workplace harassment strategies that we've developed. They refuse to demonstrate they understand the importance of keeping their own staff safe. So when they ask questions about other workers' safety, it just lacks credibility, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is there should be no wrong door. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: People should be able to go and get protection. But even when a prominent female labour leader in our province goes to the NDP for help, not once, but five times, she gets the door slammed in her face.

The NDP can't stand up to protect their own staffers. They have no sincerity when it comes to protecting the safety of workers.

They mess it up, Madam Speaker, but we're working to change things here, and we're taking the lead across the country in protecting workers against harassment in our province.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: And I have a ruling for the House.

Following the prayer on March 18th, 2019, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) raised a matter of privilege regarding the introduction of Bill 21, The Legislative Building Centennial Restoration and Preservation Act.

While the bill was introduced in the House on March 15th, 2019, it was not distributed to members on that day due to other procedural circumstances. The member alleged that, despite the bill not being distributed to the House, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) discussed the bill with the media at a press conference that same day.

The honourable member for Concordia stated that the dissemination of a bill to the media prior to

the House receiving copies constitutes a breach of privilege. He concluded by moving, and I quote, that this issue be immediately referred to a committee of this House. End quote.

The honourable House leader for the second opposition party, the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), and the honourable members for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) all spoke to the matter before I took it under advisement to consult the procedural authorities.

As the House knows, in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege, members must demonstrate both that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity and also provide sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached.

On the condition of timeliness, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) indicated that he was raising the issue at his first opportunity since the incident occurred. As this was the first sitting day since the introduction of the bill and the ensuing events, and as the member raised it immediately following the prayer, I would rule that he did meet the condition of timeliness in this case.

Regarding the second condition of whether a prima facie case has been demonstrated, on page 224 of the Second Edition of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, Joseph Maingot advises that, and I quote: "A complaint that a minister of the Crown has made a statement outside the House rather than in the House or that the government provides information only to its supporters in the House may well amount to a grievance against the government, but in the absence of an order in the House forbidding such activity, there is no personal or corporate privilege that has been breached in the doing and neither does it constitute contempt of the House in the 'privilege' sense." End quote.

Looking at Manitoba precedents, Speakers from the last several decades have consistently found in similar circumstances that, as Speaker Walding ruled on June 2nd, 1983, such a complaint, and I quote, may be a matter of discourtesy but it is not a matter of privilege. End quote. Manitoba Speakers Phillips, Rocan, Hickes, and Reid have all supported this sentiment in subsequent rulings.

I will also observe that the underlying principle here is the primacy and authority of the Assembly. As elected representatives, it is our duty to carefully

consider the business before us so that we may make informed decisions.

Any matter destined for consideration by this body, including legislation, should be introduced and explained here first before it is shared with the public or the media. This has been the practice of this place for almost 150 years.

As I have noted previously, however, in recent years we have seen this practice evolve. It has become common for members on all sides of the House to discuss, in general or conceptual terms, potential legislation outside of the House in advance of introduction. These discussions have occurred in the form of consultations with stakeholders and also through interactions with the media.

From the perspective of the Speaker's Chair, as long as such discussions do not reveal or relate any detailed provisions of upcoming legislation, the primacy and authority of the Assembly was not seen as being infringed upon.

In the current circumstance, I must note that no evidence was provided to the Chair to demonstrate that specific provisions of the bill in question were shared with the media or anyone else prior to the distribution of the bill in the House.

* (14:40)

While the bill in question was not distributed to members, the minister did have the opportunity to explain the purpose of the bill to the House in his remarks at first reading on March 15th.

As I was not at the press briefing on this bill, I have no way of knowing if the minister shared many more details about the bill at that time, but if his remarks outside the House were general in nature, he would not have crossed any lines according to our current practice. This is a crucial point. In the absence of such proof, as your Speaker, I have no basis to rule that any privileges were breached.

Accordingly, after careful consideration of all that I have related to the House, I must find that a prima facie case of privilege has not been established in this matter.

However, I would strongly urge all members to reflect on the information I have presented today. I would echo Speaker Walding's sentiments and note that while this circumstance does not constitute a breach of privilege, it could be considered discourteous to the Assembly. Should a similar situation occur in the future, as your Speaker, I would remain

obligated to carefully consider all of the evidence presented and deliver a ruling.

I would also like to note once more for the House that we live in an era when human communications have experienced unprecedented growth and evolution. The modes of communication available to us and the pace and manner of our interactions move at a speed unimaginable to our predecessors. With that in mind, I would repeat a suggestion I made to the House last year in a similar ruling that the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House may want to meet to consider whether or not disclosure of bill contents prior to the introduction and distribution of the bill should be allowed.

I am not stating a preference—I will start that again. I am not stating a preference on this question. I am simply suggesting that the committee could either confirm the traditional practice or re-evaluate it in light of modern communication methods. This discussion could also be extended to consider other potential modernizations of our processes and practices.

Finally, as is evident from this ruling, the issue of members sharing information about pending legislation outside of the House prior to the distribution of bills to members is not new. As I have noted, there have been many Speakers' rulings from the last several decades dealing with such matters. Even in my time as your Speaker, both sides of the House have levelled similar accusations against the other side as both sides have indeed shared some information about pending legislation outside of the House prior to the introduction and distribution of a bill. While such circumstances may not necessarily constitute a breach of privilege, as noted, they could be regarded as a discourtesy to the House.

As Speaker, I have little control over members' actions outside of the Chamber, but if members feel aggrieved when a member follows this path, I would urge you all to reconsider your actions. Simply put, it is within your individual and collective ability to not discuss a bill in public until it is properly introduced and distributed to all members in the House.

I hope that members will reflect on this ruling when pondering future actions, and I thank members for their attention to this important matter.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Respectfully, I challenge the decision.

Madam Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Fontaine: A recorded vote, please.

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

* (15:40)

Order. The one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing that the division bells be turned off and the House proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 32, Nays 12.

Madam Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

PETITIONS

Daylight Saving Time

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The loss of sleep associated with the beginning of daylight saving time has serious consequences for physical and mental health and has been linked to increases in traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

(2) According to the Manitoba Public Insurance news release, collision data collected on—in 2014 showed that there was a 20 per cent increase in collisions on Manitoba roadways following the spring daylight savings time change when compared to all other Mondays in 2014.

(3) Daylight saving time is associated with a decrease in productivity the day after the clocks are turned forward with no corresponding increase in productivity when the clocks are turned back.

(4) There is no conclusive evidence that daylight saving time is effective in reducing energy consumption.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to amend The Official Time Act to abolish daylight saving time in Manitoba, effective November 4th, 2019, resulting in Manitoba remaining on Central Standard Time throughout the year and in perpetuity.

And this petition has been signed by Lisa Hudson [*phonetic*], Jim McLachlan, Rick Taylor and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to read the—present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition this as follows:

Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

*(15:50)

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by Teresa Burgess, Thomas Wittebolle, Ashley Fergusson and many others.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility

of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding to licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This is signed by Lori Abraham, Adam Panilda [*phonetic*], Karley Abraham and many, many other Manitobans.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by Morris Bruder, Meliwa Zevaogly, Jeff Fraser and many other Manitobans.

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) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by Curtis Klassen, Vic Savino and Wendy Lindblad and many more Manitobans.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed Marian Wernham, Gregory Wernham and Thomas Wernham and many others.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating

funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

* (16:00)

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition's signed by many Manitobans.

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Access to quality health care is a fundamental right of all Manitobans, no matter where they live.

(2) The Premier has slashed budgets and cancelled projects for northern communities, making it harder for families to get the primary health care they need.

(3) The budget of the northern regional health authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the northern patient transport program.

(4) With limited services in the North, the Premier is forcing families and seniors to travel further for the health care they need.

(5) On November 6th, 2018, a northern regional health authority announced that obstetric delivery services at the Flin Flon General Hospital would be suspended, with no discussion regarding when they will be reinstated.

(6) The result of this decision is that mothers in Flin Flon and the surrounding area will have to travel at least an hour and a half to The Pas, creating unnecessary risk for mothers and babies.

(7) The people of Flin Flon are concerned for the health and safety of mothers-to-be and their babies, including the extra physical and financial stress that will be placed upon them by this decision of the provincial government.

(8) There has been no commitment from this provincial government that mothers and their escorts who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the northern patient transport program.

(9) Flin Flon General Hospital is a regional hub that serves several communities on both sides of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

(10) Because this provincial government has refused to invest in much-needed health-care services in The Pas, the hospital in The Pas may not be able to handle the extra workload created by this decision.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reinstate obstetric delivery services at Flin Flon General Hospital and work with the government of Saskatchewan and the federal government to ensure obstetric services continue to be available on a regional basis.

Madam Speaker, this petition has been signed by Jennifer Spalliccy [*phonetic*], Shannon Gilfillan and Lisa Squires.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible and affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition was signed by Danielle Fulford, Jessica Pushka and Chimwemwe Undi, and many more.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons—or, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And, Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by Leah McBride, Dustin Vosper, Leanne Thompson and many other Manitobans.

* (16:10)

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

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting and positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase;

quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by A.J. Rands, Jacqui Kendnek and Linda McKenzie and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: And I have a statement regarding a selected bill. I am advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader indicating that the government caucus has identified Bill 207, The Manitoba Conservation Officers Recognition Day Act, as the first of their three selected bills for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 24 permits each recognized party to select up to three private member's bills per session to proceed to a second reading vote and requires the House leader to provide written notice as to the date and time of the vote.

The Government House Leader has therefore advised that the question will be put on Bill 207 on May 7th, 2019, at 10:55 a.m. Should a recorded vote be requested as per rule 23(7), this will take place on May 9th, 2019, at 11:55 a.m.

And, in case I forgot to say it, we are on orders of the day, government business.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in camera on Monday, May 6th, 2019, at 6 p.m., for professional development purposes.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in camera on Monday, May 6th, 2019, at 6 p.m., for professional development purposes.

Mr. Goertzen: On further House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Wednesday, May 8th, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 2, The Municipal Amendment Act (Strengthening Codes of Conduct for Council Members); Bill 13, The Private Vocational Institutions Act; Bill 14, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2019; and Bill 21, The Legislative Building Centennial Restoration and Preservation Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Wednesday, May 8th, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 2, The Municipal Amendment Act (Strengthening Codes of Conduct for Council Members); Bill 13, The Private Vocational Institutions Act; Bill 14, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2019; and Bill 21, The Legislative Building Centennial Restoration and Preservation Act.

Mr. Goertzen: On further House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Wednesday, May 8th, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 7, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Immediate Roadside Prohibitions); Bill 11, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cider and Cooler Sales at Beer Vendors); Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Possession Restrictions); Bill 17, The Police Services Amendment Act (Institutional Safety Officers); and Bill 19, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Wednesday, May 8th, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 7, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, immediately roadside prohibitions; Bill 11, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cider and Cooler Sales at Beer Vendors); Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Possession Restrictions); Bill 17, The Police Services Amendment Act (Institutional Safety Officers); and Bill 19, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

Mr. Goertzen: On further House business, Madam Speaker, I'd like to announce the Standing

Committee on Justice will meet on Thursday, May 9th, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 5, The Mental Health Amendment and Personal Health Information Amendment Act; Bill 6, The Statutes Corrections and Minor Amendments Act, 2018; Bill 8, The Referendum Act; Bill 9, The Family Law Modernization Act; and Bill 20, The Courts Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended).

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Thursday, May 9th, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 5, The Mental Health Amendment and Personal Health Information Amendment Act; Bill 6, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2018; Bill 8, The Referendum Act; Bill 9, The Family Law Modernization Act; and Bill 20, The Courts Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended).

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: On further House business, could you please call for second reading debate Bill 22, The Business Registration, Supervision and Ownership Transparency Act (Various Acts Amended).

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 22 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 22—The Business Registration, Supervision and Ownership Transparency Act (Various Acts Amended)

Madam Speaker: Therefore, I will call second reading of Bill 22, The Business Registration, Supervision and Ownership Transparency Act (Various Acts Amended).

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 22, The Business Registration, Supervision and Ownership Transparency Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 22. This bill makes a variety of amendments to The Business Names Registration Act, The Corporations Act, The

Cooperatives Act and The Partnership Act that will streamline business registration and reporting while also addressing money laundering, terrorism financing, tax evasion and tax avoidance.

* (16:20)

Madam Speaker, Bill 22 amendments would allow Manitoba to meet its business registration and reporting reconciliation requirements under the New West Partnership Trade Agreement effective January 1, 2020, and other agreements, by allowing Manitoba's business registrar to enter into agreements with registrars in other Canadian jurisdictions to collect and share information, documents and fees to allow for streamlined registration across partner jurisdictions.

It will also create a category of extraprovincial limited partnership, under our laws, to facilitate the registration of these enterprises across multiple Canadian jurisdictions and eliminate the requirement for a registered office for extraprovincial limited liability partnerships.

These changes will not just help us meet our commitments to the New West partners but will facilitate interprovincial trade with Canadian jurisdictions outside of that trade agreement.

The bill will also separate registrar functions from The Cooperatives Act from financial supervision functions under a newly created superintendent role. This will enable the transfer of registrar functions from Manitoba Finance to the Companies Office for more efficient use of government resources.

Additionally, this bill will require privately held corporations incorporated under Manitoba's corporations act to track ownership information of individuals who hold significant control over the corporation. This will implement Manitoba's commitment from a December 2017 federal, provincial, territorial Finance ministers' agreement to address money laundering, terrorism financing, tax evasion and tax avoidance.

This bill will also disallow the issue of financial instruments in bearer form to ensure that the owner is always registered with the issuing company, in accordance with the December 2017 agreement.

Thank you, 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.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I would like to ask the minister: This is rather an extensive bill, that it changes quite a few different acts all at one fell swoop, so can the minister explain to us exactly why he decided to bring this bill forward?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): First of all, under the New West Partnership Trade Agreement, which we signed in 2016, it requires parties to reconcile their business registration and reporting requirements and eliminate any requirements for business. So, under the New West Partnership, that was part of it. There was also some streamlining with The Cooperatives Act and also with the federal government on company registrations.

Mr. Lindsey: So, in the process of meeting the requirements for the New West trade partnership, can the minister explain to this House exactly how this bill will accomplish that? What rules have changed, what rules have lessened, compared to what they were previously in order to make a seamless transition for all the provinces in the New West Partnership?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, under the New West Partnership, we're—we will be able to—with this legislation, we'll be able to streamline registration and so that fees are waived outside. You register your company in your home province and you don't have to pay fees in the other three provinces in order to have your business registered and to be able to do business in those other jurisdictions, and therefore you only need to file an annual business return and pay the fee to their home jurisdiction, not to each province that you do business in.

Mr. Lindsey: So, just if I've heard the minister correctly, if you pay your registration fee for business in one province, you won't have to pay it in any of the other provinces.

So has the minister's department done a cost analysis to determine how much this potentially could cost in lost revenue from fees that are paid in this province to register your business, whereas now they may very well be paid in a different jurisdiction altogether.

Mr. Pedersen: The revenue is not significant, Madam Speaker. What is significant is it allows companies, such as a company in Manitoba, to be able to do business more readily in the other provinces. And it works vice versa, but it opens the borders to free trade between these provinces and that's a significant part of this legislation.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Just in terms of the beneficial ownership of this registry, is—will it be publicly accessible? How will people be able to access the information about ownership in these—that is now going to be registered?

Mr. Pedersen: You will still have to go to the company, but under this legislation the company is, by law then, required to disclose the full ownership—share ownership within the company. Previously—our currently, right now without this law there is not a need to do that and it's—they have to have it on record so that it is accessible, should they be asked.

Mr. Lamont: I mean, I think that's—it's a challenge. I mean, one of the things we actually need to be able to do, to be able to see beneficial ownership is we actually need to know that corporations exist and one of, like, challenges with tax—perfectly legal tax avoidance is that people set up shell companies that only exist for the purpose of tax—legal tax avoidance.

So how is it that if we only—can only access these registries at the office, how is this actually going to address the issue of tax avoidance?

Mr. Pedersen: The member should be talking to the federal government about that because under the federal income tax law they are required to file income tax, but if they're failing to do that, then that would be under the Canadian revenue agency, that would be up to them to follow up on that.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): As I understand the minister's answer to a question that the Liberal leader asked, it sounds like corporations will then have to disclose to corporations branch anyone who has more than 25 per cent of the shareholder voting rights.

Does the minister know what that current disclosure threshold is in the—a—companies branch?

Mr. Pedersen: The share disclosure is not to the corporations branch. They have to have it on record in their own corporate office.

Mr. Swan: Well, is the minister not aware that the annual return that currently has to be provided by every Manitoba corporation requires disclosure of any person who has at least 10 per cent of the shares of that corporation? Is the minister aware of that today?

Mr. Pedersen: Yes.

Mr. Swan: So, just so we can be very clear between the questions I've asked and the questions that the Liberal leader has asked, this bill will actually reduce the amount of transparency by reducing the ability of anyone out there who wants to find out who an owner of a corporation is, from someone with up to 10 per cent of the shares, up to now somebody who could own 25 per cent of the shares and not have their name publicly disclosed or the name of another corporation or any other interest holder.

Does the minister think that that's an improvement in transparency in Manitoba?

Mr. Pedersen: This was agreed to by the federal Finance Department and all the provinces at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting, so it will meet that threshold.

Mr. Lamont: The other question is, why are licence insurers and loan and trust corporations exempted, and does this include family trusts, because family trusts, especially, have been used as a means of legal tax avoidance?

Mr. Pedersen: I'm—I'll take that question under advisement right now. I'm not sure that is actually the case, but I will take that under consideration and get an answer to that.

* (16:30)

Mr. Lindsey: So can the minister explain to us what the implications of eliminating the requirement of the registrar to act as an adviser for co-operatives? Will there be other advisory supports put in place for people who are trying to start a co-operative?

Mr. Pedersen: As far as co-operatives go, the only change is that the registration of your co-operative as a company will go to the Companies Office. The existing functions of the co-operatives branch continues.

Mr. Lindsey: So that leaves me somewhat perplexed, I guess. It clearly says that the duties of the—now just let me find it here—duties of the registrar are now going to be the superintendent of co-operatives, so the registrar is no longer required to act as an adviser to co-operatives or provide model forms or any of that stuff. So is that all going to be done out of the superintendent of co-operatives or is it just not going to be done? Perhaps the minister could clarify that for me.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, the new superintendent role will allow the financial supervision functions to stay under Manitoba Finance when the registrar's functions are moved to the Companies Office. So it's only the registration of the company that moves to the Companies Office. The other stays the same.

Mr. Lindsey: Okay. So then if I could just get clarification from the minister: Who's going to be the group that advises co-operatives? Is it the registrar, is it the superintendent, or is it none of the above.

Mr. Pedersen: Perhaps the member could clarify what information he's seeking. There—the superintendent will still oversee the functions of helping to get co-operatives started and after that, co-ops function on their own. This is mainly for the incorporation of a co-op that the supervisor will help—or superintendent will help to—with those functions.

You register the co-op's name with the companies branch and then after that, co-ops run independently.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm aware that once the co-ops are up and running they run independently, but my understanding is that in creating this—or moving it to a superintendent of co-operatives, that the registrar now is no longer required to act as an adviser, and this is to new co-operatives that are trying to start out to provide them with information and model forms and articles and bylaws, things of that nature.

So who will be performing that function now?

Mr. Pedersen: The superintendent.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, thank you. It took a while to get to that answer, but at least we finally got there.

So, when this change takes place, particularly with the registrar as opposed to the superintendent, can the minister tell us, will there be any job losses with this change or is it strictly this person doing that person's job, or will there be people within a

department that are displaced because of this change?

Mr. Pedersen: No, there's no change in personnel on here, but the Companies Office already processes a high volume of applications for incorporation and registration. So that simply moves from a co-op—and I don't believe that there's hundreds and hundreds of new co-ops started every year, so I think the Companies Office can very well handle the limited number of new co-operatives that are formed each year and at the same time, the superintendent's office, under the Manitoba Finance, will continue to help co-operatives get started.

Mr. Lamont: One of the concerns with Canada being a tax haven is that it is actually incredibly easy to buy—to register a shell corporation. It can actually be easier to get a—to register a corporation than it is to get a library card, in many jurisdictions.

One of the definitions is multi-jurisdictional registry access service, which basically speculates about having a digital registry that anyone could access. Is there some reason why this has not been included in—just even for Manitoba, for these registries, rather than it just being at a corporation's office?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, we're talking about Manitoba corporations here. They still have to register with Canadian—Canada Revenue Agency, so I'm not sure how the member thinks that a company can register in Manitoba and still avoid Canada Revenue Agency. So this is for companies operating in Manitoba, and under the New West Partnership, they'll be able to do business under that same business registration in all four western provinces.

So he should be taking his questions up with Canada Revenue Agency about shell corporations and not filing income taxes.

Mr. Lindsey: So, can the minister explain to us exactly how the federal changes now would improve co-operatives and corporation ownership transparency?

Mr. Pedersen: The federal government is not involved in registering co-operatives. Co-operatives are registered within the province of Manitoba, so that would not include—the federal government would not be involved in co-operatives, if they're trading—if that co-operative is set up in Manitoba. Other than through Manitoba Finance—it'd be registered through Manitoba Finance, but I think the member is mixing corporations that deal Canada-

wide, in this case, versus co-operatives that tend to just deal in Manitoba only.

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

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Keep clapping.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'm not sure that I have a lot to say on this. I don't claim to be a business genius so I won't claim to fully understand all the ramifications of this particular bill. And it's always the subtle changes that take place in these bills that this government introduces that leave us suspicious, because normally our suspicions prove to be well-founded: that there's something in there that doesn't exactly work the way it was intended or the way it was presented.

And I guess the concern we have, of course, with anything that deals with this New West Partnership and some of these free trade agreements that this minister in particular and this government embrace so wholeheartedly that they refuse to put any protections into things like the New West Partnership or the Canada-wide free trade agreement that would protect any Manitoba business or Manitoba jobs.

I guess we're somewhat concerned when we start to see, potentially, the loosening of the registration requirements for corporations. That you can be registered somewhere else and you're good to go here. Not sure how that helps protect our Manitoba economy, and how it helps protect Manitoba jobs and Manitobans in particular.

It seems to me that it makes it somewhat less transparent that someone who is trying to find out something about a corporation that they have a problem with may land up chasing all over Canada trying to find out who exactly the principals of said organization happen to be because they won't be registered, potentially, in this province anymore. They'll be registered somewhere in Canada, one would hope.

* (16:40)

So, while this government, and this minister, talks a lot about open and transparent, clearly there are things in this particular piece of legislation that would appear to be counter to that, Madam Speaker. The requirement that changes the—let me just read it here—the corporations must maintain a registrar of

individuals who, separately or collectively, exert—corporations—so more than 25 per cent of the shareholder voting rights. So that's a change that would seem to fly in the face of things being open because right now the requirement is 10 per cent.

So it seems that some corporations that may be owned in a—of course has to be more than 25 per cent now, not just 25, so you may have a very difficult time now tracking down the ownerships of corporations because they'll be split amongst—I don't know—a husband and wife and a couple of daughters, and you won't actually find out then that who owns those corporations.

It becomes somewhat troubling, I guess, in particular in our setting here in the Manitoba Legislature that when we have to make full disclosure of corporations that we own and things like that, that this requirement would seem to—this new requirement would seem to make that disclosure somewhat muddier, if you will, Madam Speaker, that we may not now be able to find out members of the government and what some of their business dealings with the corporations that they privately own and control.

We won't know, then, that it's maybe a minister or someone higher up, perhaps, that has a beneficial interest in how legislation gets passed and formed when we don't have the requirement for full disclosure as to what some of those beneficial ownership requirements of a corporation are.

I mean, we've seen problems with sponsorships and things of that nature, so if someone owns a corporation that has dealings with the government or perhaps with contracts. I mean, we've seen problems already with this government with some sole-sourced contracts. Now, if we don't even have the ability to find out who the beneficial owners of some of these things are, even if they go through the tendering process and award contracts to themselves, their brothers-in-law, their family, with the requirement change now, how will we know that? It just leads, I believe, to less transparency, not more transparency.

So there's problems. I mean, the government—the minister says, well, we're just doing this to comply with the New West Partnership, but perhaps other jurisdictions that are part of that New West Partnership may already have problems with particularly things like who owns what corporation and, certainly in some of those jurisdictions where, really, it's the Wild West when it comes to things

like—I don't know—political party financing, election financing, and all of that stuff that, if we don't know who owns the corporations now that are contributing to political parties, for example, Madam Speaker, it becomes somewhat problematic, right—*[interjection]* The minister will have a chance to certainly stand up and speak, so right now he's correct. The—right now the minister, sitting in his place, saying that corporations aren't allowed to contribute. And he's correct right now, but how do we know down the road that this government won't decide to change that requirement so that maybe they will be able to contribute politically, because that seems to be the ones that they like to listen to are the ones that contribute to election financing in other jurisdictions.

And, as we go down this road of the New West Partnership that—maybe that'll be something that they want to change down the road is to go back to those kind of Wild West days of allowing corporations and unions to contribute to political campaigns and political parties. And certainly, Madam Speaker, we've seen in Alberta some of the things that took place with that.

So, once we start seeing these insidious little changes like are presented in this Bill 22, then we begin to question what the ultimate goal is, where ultimately the government may have a plan. And, you know, I think most—all of members 'oppiter' are really—members opposite are reasonably intelligent, and I give them credit for that; I'm sure they have a long-term van—plan and a long-term vision. Now, they may not all be privy to what the plan is, but it's when we start to see these subtle little changes—well, 10 per cent to 25 per cent, not a big deal, right? It is still less than 100 per cent, so.

But then we start to think about, well, where they could they be going with this and, you know, they often accuse us of fearmongering that the things that we've suggested—and the minister's having a little chuckle about that, but, you know, we—during the last election, we were concerned that they were going to cut front-line services and they said we were fearmongering. But, lo and behold, front-line services are getting cut.

So how does that relate to this Bill 22? Well, it relates very clearly that we start to see some of these little changes that cause us to start having alarm bells going off. And are we fearmongering? Well, no, because the things that we've been afraid of happening and the things that we've warned of

happening generally come to pass, particularly with this particular government.

So, you know, if it's really about open and transparency, maybe that number should've gone the other way, right? Maybe instead of raising it to 25 per cent to protect some of their influential friends and family members, maybe they should've changed it to 5 per cent. Maybe they should've changed it to if you own a portion of a company, it should just become public knowledge so that we know really and truly who is trying to direct a government and who is asserting influence on the corporations which, in turn, then influence government decisions?

Because we know, certainly, that that's who this government in particular listens to; they don't listen to hard-working Manitobans that are on the front line, they listen to their corporate friends and masters.

And so, really, just that one little piece of that bill is problematic in that it is contrary to everything that this government has said about being open and transparent but, you know, that shouldn't really surprise us a whole lot, Madam Speaker, because so many things that we've seen this government do are contrary to what they've said they're going to do.

So we certainly believe on this side that being more transparent and open will lead to a better province. And it's kind of a shame that this government isn't really on that same page. So really, it's not just us, it's Manitobans as a whole who deserve to know who owns the businesses that they're doing business with, who owns the business that may be taking their money, who owns the business that is advertising and advertising in certain ways that it helps shape public opinion and public perception.

* (16:50)

So, really, Manitobans deserve to know that, and this Bill 22 takes us in the opposite direction.

So I understand that the minister and the government are big fans of free trade in the New West Partnership, which this plays into, but those aren't necessarily what are the best things for Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

So we understand that openness is not the strong suit of this government. And, I mean, as simple as tell us the date that they're going to close the Concordia Hospital so that people that work there know what their life is going to be in—I stand

corrected—closing Concordia ER, not hospital. But they won't give us that simple answer upfront. So that really speaks to a government that's not being open with the citizens and this bill, Madam Speaker, is another example of doing the opposite of what they claim to be doing, which is be open and transparent and that's clearly not what the bill is designed to do, at least not that part of it.

And just saying, well, in the interest of free trade, we'll just blend all our regulations, all our rules into the same as every other jurisdiction. You know, we've seen them do that with some things. Health and safety regulations, for example, Madam Speaker, that they didn't tell the other jurisdictions, you have to come up to our level. They said, okay, we'll come down to your level.

So, is that what's happening in this case? Is that what we can expect with everything that we deal with the New West Partnership or the Canada-wide free trade agreement, which, beginning to suspect that is the case, is the race to the bottom continues and that's always been the case with free trade agreements as envisioned by Conservative and, unfortunately, Liberal governments as well, is they're not about doing what's best for the people that they're supposed to be representing. They're about doing what's best for their corporate friends.

So we see that happening. Now, some of the changes with the co-ops. Certainly, we on this side of the House are fans of co-operatives and co-operative movements and, really, what better business model can there be than co-operatives that involve people that have the interest in that particular business, in seeing the business survive and having the profits of those co-operatives go back into the hands and the pockets of the people.

Now I've realized this government is more about the corporations, making sure that the profits go to the shareholders who may or may not be here and now who we may or may not even know who they are. So certainly the local co-ops are beneficial.

You know, I look at a co-op store in northern Manitoba, for example, Madam Speaker, that in the community of Leaf Rapids, well, groceries are more expensive, obviously, than they are here. They are cheaper than they are in the next town, Lynn Lake, because Leaf Rapids has Co-op; does things differently. Lynn Lake has a Northern Store that looks after the Northern Store first and the people somewhere down the line.

So groceries are so much more expensive in Lynn Lake that people actually drive, that have the ability, to Leaf Rapids to buy groceries at the Co-op.

So co-ops are a good thing. We just—we really need to make sure that the government is fully supporting co-ops and the formation of co-ops. Certainly, we've seen co-operative housing movements here in the city that have provided affordable housing options for people in the city that may otherwise not have been able to get into housing. And, certainly, I'm sure my friend from Wolseley is more well versed in how some of those co-operative housing projects work.

I know I've talked to an individual from the city that I happen to be friends with, and he's certainly a big supporter of those kinds of things. So we need to make sure that any of these changes that the government has proposed won't hinder community groups, in particular, as—community individuals as they try and start a co-operative—whether it's a co-operative housing, co-operative store, co-operative business venture—we want to make sure that they can get the information they need, the assistance they need to get that co-operative up and running.

And so that's where, during the question and answer period here, I was asking the minister questions trying to clarify that that information is still going to be available, and people will know where to go to get it and those kinds of things that are important because, really, co-ops are so important to our whole business perspective and they're so important to our communities that we need to make sure that those kinds of services are still available to community groups, individual groups that want to start a co-operative business venture.

Because, really, those particular ventures provide valuable services to citizens of our communities, and certainly, they're right there, a worthwhile business model that should be available to help our communities, and they do. So we just want to make sure that what's been proposed in this particular piece of legislation doesn't impact people's ability, community group's ability.

So, if anything, Madam Speaker, we would hope that the government would bring forward legislation that would make it easier for people to be able to start a co-operative and understand what exactly is involved, and the government would provide more access to that kind of information and documentation that would help people get those co-operative businesses up and running.

So, certainly, moving the duties of the registrar to the—to a different department and—we hope that that isn't intended to make that process more difficult. We would hope that it's intended to make the process easier to start up and get the information that people need.

So, you know, we've somewhat concerned with some other things that—you know, in the last budget, Manitoba's credit unions, quite frankly, were blindsided when it was announced that a special deduction they had received would be phased out by 2023.

Now this is a huge blow to the credit unions, because now they're going to have to pay an additional \$15 million in provincial corporate income tax.

So, you know, the government talks about, well, we should have a referendum whenever we're going to raise taxes. Well, here's a case where they went about raising the corporate income tax to credit unions. They didn't have a referendum to do that.

That was just a unilateral decision that was made by this particular government to attack the credit unions for no particular reason other than, well, I guess they needed some money because they wanted to reduce the PST by 1 per cent. So who better to get some of it from than very successful businesses, the credit unions that really were a lifeline to so many individuals that, through the normal chartered banks, were unable to get loans, were unable to financially succeed. Credit unions were certainly a vital part of helping them do that.

And now with this government scratching out an extra \$15 million for their own pockets from the pockets of the credit unions, it may very well impact—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have eight 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, May 6, 2019

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