

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

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

Vol. LXXV No. 26B - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, December 3, 2020

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 3, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 220—The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Thompson, that Bill 220, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lindsey: For many people who live in, particularly, northern Manitoba, the cuts that we've seen to snow-clearing operations have led to very unsafe conditions.

In the winter, large snowfalls can be extremely problematic for trying to travel to work, to seek medical care or for other reasons. This bill is an attempt to hold the government to account for making sure that our provincial roadways are cleared in a timely manner and maintained in a safe condition.

I look forward to the House's unanimous support for this bill.

Thank you.

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 of Conservation and Climate, and we did not have the 90 minutes notice sent out.

Is there leave of the House to still allow the ministerial—

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: So are the members indicating that there's no leave to proceed with the ministerial statement?

An Honourable Member: Well, if we knew what it was.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, perhaps the minister can provide a quick, one-sentence description of what it is so that the members opposite can consider it. And, certainly, I appreciate their opportunity.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Conservation and Climate, for just a brief overview.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Madam Speaker, this is about thanking our conservation officers, who have worked very hard this year.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave, then, to allow the minister to proceed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted? [*Agreed*]

Conservation Officers

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): It is a pleasure to stand in the House today and honour the hard work by our conservation officers, who are committed to addressing unsafe and illegal hunting practices at night, hunting from roadways and poaching. These are criminal acts and can have deadly consequences.

Our brave officers have done their absolute best in protecting Manitobans this hunting season. Newly acquired technologies, such as night-vision goggles and enhanced aerial surveillance with infrared capabilities, have served to assist officers in their efforts. Conservation officers have undertaken aerial support on more than 20 occasions to date, which has assisted in enforcement efforts and has already resulted in several night-hunting enforcement actions.

Since October 10th, conservation officers have conducted patrols to enforce Manitoba's new Wildlife Amendment Act. This includes charges or appearances, notices to 45 individuals for serious wildlife offences, warnings—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: –to 19 individuals for night hunting without a permit or for hunting in a moose conservation enclosure, charges—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: –to 11 individuals for possessing illegally taken wildlife, seizures of nine vehicles, seizures of 18 firearms and restitution orders totalling \$20,500.

In addition to this, many conservation officers, environment officers and drinking-water officers have stepped up and assisted with enforcement of COVID-19 public health orders. We thank them for not only upholding conservation efforts but also for keeping Manitobans safe from this virus.

Manitoba's conservation officers are doing an incredible and honourable job to keep our community safe. Officers have conducted themselves with a high level of professionalism and have worked hard on meeting our mandate to focus on enforcement efforts and to protect our vulnerable species.

It is important that we all recognize these dedicated people, and we commend them for their important work for protecting Manitobans.

On behalf of the Manitoba government, a sincerest thank you to all our conservation officers.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I do want to thank the conservation officers who are out there doing an important job on behalf of many communities right across Manitoba.

Now, unlike the members opposite, who use conservation officers as a political ploy, I, as somebody who is teaching my kids how to hunt safely, regularly speak to conservation officers out in the field, and we have a good relationship, a good working relationship based on mutual respect.

I'm not like one of these city Tories who never heard of a conservation officer before they got elected to this Chamber and then merely fell in line behind the race-baiting, divisive rhetoric launched by this government to try and divide team Manitoba against itself. No, Madam Speaker.

I'm part of that salt-of-the-earth Manitoba that knows how to live off the land. I'm not one of these false Tories who couldn't tell you the difference between a clove hitch and a trailer hitch. I'm a real Manitoban who knows how to procure sustenance

from this land, learning it and earning it from the generations that came before me.

You know, when I'm out there in the field, or even when I'm bumping into a conservation officer at a place like Dauphin Countryfest or at the mall, and we get a chance to speak, you know what they tell me the No. 1 challenge is that they have on their jobs? The No. 1 challenge that conservation officers have on the job is the fact that they have to work alone in the field because of this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this Cabinet's wage freeze.

The wage freeze is making it unsafe for each and every day for conservation officers to work in the field because we're losing all the talent to Saskatchewan, we're losing all the talent to Ontario. And those very few COs that remain here in the province to try and do the right thing are rewarded by a wage freeze and job cut after job cut.

So I thank the COs in a real way, and I detest the Province for trying to use them as a political stunt.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order.

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

Madam Speaker: Does the member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I've had the good fortune to go out with conservation officers on occasion, and I want to report that those experiences have been good experiences, that I have found individuals who are conservation officers who are very concerned about wildlife, who are very concerned about the future of our fisheries and who have raised these issues related to this on many, many occasions.

There are, of course, problems with the current government in providing insufficient resources to let people do their jobs. There are problems with the current government in providing sufficient staffing resources, and so it is a challenging time in Manitoba to be a conservation officer.

I want to also comment on the need for this government to be better understanding of all the people in our province, and I speak in particular of Indigenous people in Manitoba and the rights of

Indigenous people and the needs of Indigenous people to hunt, to make sure that they can survive—nutrition and eat wild game.

I think that this is very important to the Indigenous culture in Manitoba, and in many, many communities is important to get good food because of the limited amounts of food that there is available at high prices in many northern stores.

* (13:40)

So I applaud the conservation officers in Manitoba for the job that they do, but I question some of the actions of the current government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for McPhillips.

The honourable member for McPhillips, on a members' statement? Can the member unmute?

Princess Auto

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Yes. I am proud to sit here and give a well-deserved Christmas cheer to one of our own Winnipeg businesses that is spreading their own holiday spirit through giving.

Starting last December, Princess Auto started donating meals to hospitals in Winnipeg to help lift the burdens of our tireless health-care workers. Each day, Princess Auto is donating 150 lunches and 150 suppers to St. Boniface Hospital and to the Health Sciences Centre throughout the entire holiday season. That is 600 meals per day every day until December 31st, or 10,200 meals in total. We know that this thoughtful gift will go a long way to help everyone during this unprecedented holiday season.

I'd also like to give thanks to their partners for this Christmas operation. Thank you to Fionn's, Salisbury House, WOW factory catering and Trans Canada Brewing Company for providing the food for all the meals. We are very proud of these local businesses for coming together and giving this large and thoughtful gift to our health sector. This feat couldn't have been done without their partnership, as well as the partnership between the Health Sciences Centre Foundation and Princess Auto Foundation.

This instance of giving is hardly unique for Princess Auto. In fact, they even have their own registered charity organization. They have a large history of giving back to their communities, from

donating to Boys & Girls Clubs last December, even donating clear plastic shields that were repurposed into transparent face masks last spring. Already comments are pouring in from grateful health-care staff whose lives were made slightly easier by this act. Princess Auto's thoughtful gift has clearly reached forward to the heart of our city and to the hearts of our critical staff.

Please join me in giving a well-deserved round of applause to Princess Auto and all our health-care workers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Home-Care Workers

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, thousands of Manitobans rely on home-care services every day to make sure that they get the care and assistance that they need. Home-care workers across our province work diligently to make sure their clients stay healthy, happy and safe in their homes for longer, the same goals the program had when it was first introduced by an NDP government over forty years ago.

Unfortunately, at a time when accessing care while staying home has become more important than ever, the Pallister government has been making life harder for home-care workers and the clients that they serve. Just like in 2017, when they carved off and privatized over \$15 million in home-care contracts, we're once again seeing this government stack the deck against public health care.

I have heard from home-care workers across Manitoba who have seen first-hand what's happening on the front lines. Many workers travelling between clients' homes have not been given adequate PPE, relying solely on the same decades-old expired masks this government gave to ECEs; they have not yet received N95 masks, or have been given the wrong size or fit, and are being mandated to work in PCHs due to a lack of staff and resources—a direct result of this government's refusal to boost funding, hire enough staff and call in the military where necessary at long-term-care facilities.

These deliberate actions by the Pallister government have put the health and safety of home-care workers and the clients they serve at risk. What's more, like many front-line health-care workers, health-care—home-care employees have been given the short end of the stick by being excluded from the government's \$5 wage enhancement. Despite an—unprecedented challenges these workers are facing

throughout this pandemic, the government still hasn't given them a raise.

It's time, Madam Speaker, the government get home-care workers and clients the resources they need by purchasing adequate PPE, investing in dedicated PCH resources and supporting fair wages that recognize their incredible work. On this side of the House, we will continue to call the government to support essential health-care services like home care, and to treat every front-line health-care worker with the respect they deserve.

2020 Retrospective

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's the end of a year we'd like to forget / But things will improve next year, you can bet.

But before we all go I'll share a few rhymes / To perhaps get a smile in these challenging times.

Our jobs they have changed with constrained Chamber seating / As we sit in our offices, in Zoom legislative meetings.

Sweatpants now can work when wearing your suit / But remember that when speaking, please first press un-mute.

Dr. Roussin and Lanette, whose advice we must take / You deniers please listen, this risk is not fake.

Manitobans, we can do this, we're up to the task / Just maintain your distance, and wear a darn mask.

I know that it's tough, someone's mood to apprise / But you can tell if they're smiling, just look at their eyes.

In QP in this Chamber, some of you are quite vocal / But this year use your voice and holler out, just shop local.

These holidays will be different, but still can be sweet / So be thankful and kind, and keep your distance six feet.

Unprecedented times, they say, but what do you mean? / Don't you remember, this happened back in 1918.

This COVID pandemic has indeed cast a pall / Over life and how we live it. It impacts us all.

No concerts, no markets, no festivals to attend / Just think of the party, when it comes to an end.

It's sad for our teams we're unable to cheer / Although our Bombers will be champs for two years.

But soon with the promise of a COVID vaccine / We can then go watch a movie on the big screen.

Many thanks to the workers who are on the front lines / Your efforts in this struggle are a ray of sunshine.

Merry Christmas, season's greetings, let's all raise a glass. / Please stay home, and remember: this too shall pass.

Thank you.

Garry Raven

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I am always honoured to be able to share the stories of our Indigenous knowledge keepers. As knowledge keepers, our elders pass down customs, traditional knowledge and cultural teachings to ensure that our Indigenous culture survives.

Today I would like to share a few words of our late elder Garry Raven, also known by his traditional name, Morning Star. Garry lived most of his life in our Treaty No. 5 traditional territory, with great pride in his community and the land.

Garry was a residential school survivor. Through his strong will and belief in our culture and tradition, Garry was able to hold onto his Indigenous customs and traditions that these schools intended to eliminate.

From the ground up, Garry developed Raven's Creek traditional campground, and as a traditional teacher he opened up his home, his land and his life to pass on his knowledge about Indigenous culture, traditional medicines and ceremony.

Garry taught at schools and universities and has travelled extensively all over the world sharing his traditional teachings. Garry had immense knowledge of the land and the need for the work of conserving our land for future generations and for the importance of sharing your knowledge with others.

If you are ever in Washington, DC, I strongly recommend a visit to the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, where you will find the exhibit titled Our Universes in which Garry and our fellow elders from the Sagkeeng Anishinabe nation were instrumental in its creation.

Madam Speaker, I would like to end by sharing a quote from Elder Garry Raven. Quote: To be Anishinabe is to understand your place in all creation. We are spiritual beings on a human journey. Everything in the Anishinabe world is alive.

Everything has a spirit and everything is interconnected. Unquote.

Miigwech, Garry Raven.

Madam Speaker, I would respectfully request my colleagues in the Chamber to rise and show our respect and appreciation for the contributions of Elder Garry Raven, traditionally known as Morning Star.

Thank you and miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Tyndall Park

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Today I want to share a few words about the constituency in which I have the honour of representing, Tyndall Park.

In Tyndall Park, we've got six schools: Garden Grove, Meadows West, Shaughnessy Park, Stanley Knowles, Prairie Rose and Tyndall Park. And with these schools come incredible teachers, child-care workers, students, EAs, administrators and custodians. We also have dedicated transit workers, taxi drivers and driving instructors ensuring everyone can get to school and to work.

* (13:50)

Which leads me to the many small businesses in Tyndall Park that I am going to attempt to name: 4D Auto Detailing, A2Z Super Mart, Aristocrat, Angelina's Hair City, Axel Auto Parts, Bakerite, Endeavour Electric, Fil-Mart Corp., Gil's Supermarket, Hair Technique, Hoffmann's Fine Foods, Jas Indian Cuisine, Jeepney, Kuya's Foods, Kimchi Sushi, Lucita's Restaurant, Marcel's Bakery, My Indigo Indian Street Food, Pam's beauty hair, Presto Pizza, Samosa Crown Sweets, Sardar Super Market, Spa Natural, Tandoor House, The Icing Castle, Topo Clay Boutique and Waterplant 204.

What a mouthful, Madam Speaker. And many of these small businesses I just listed would not be functional if it wasn't for our long-haul truck drivers, warehouse staff and grocers, as they are the ones ensuring that we have the essentials we need.

Tyndall Park is home to ACCESS NorWest and to many individuals who work in our health-care system. Every job, from dentistry, pharmacies, to home-care aides, lab techs, security and cleaning and health facilities—thank you for your unstoppable commitment towards the health of Manitobans.

In closing, I want to thank my constituency staff: Carl, Francis, Prab, Ate Adelle and Tito Robert; our caucus staff: Shandi, Richard, Colin and Colleen; all

of our clerks, guards, everyone here at the Leg., and, of course, Madam Speaker, you.

* * *

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

An Honourable Member: Sorry, Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable member for Concordia, on a point of order.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): My apologies. I simply wanted to ask of the House if there was leave to have a moment of silence with regards to the member for Keewatinook's (Mr. Bushie) member's statement?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please stand.

A moment of silence was observed.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

Twenty-twenty has been a year unlike any year we have experienced in our lifetimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many changes in our lives and also in how we perform our duties and carry out our responsibilities to those we represent as legislators.

I recognized early on that one of my jobs as Speaker of this Legislature is to protect the health and safety of all MLAs, while ensuring full parliamentary representation and accountability. In order to fulfill these requirements this year many changes were made, including physical distancing measures in the Chamber and engaging the virtual options for carrying out the business of the Assembly.

I would like to take a few moments now to thank and celebrate the incredible team who worked tirelessly over the summer and fall and every day this session, to allow the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to continue meeting during the pandemic by enabling the option to meet in this hybrid virtual setting.

I will get to the team in a moment, but before I do, I first want to thank all members of the Legislative Assembly and any of your staff who assisted in this effort. I deeply appreciate the patience you have all shown as we have worked through the odd problem here and there over the last two months.

Adapting to this hybrid virtual model, with all of its inherent quirks and modifications to existing practices, has been a huge cultural shift for a 150-year-old institution, especially one that is not known for accepting rapid change easily. There were some technical glitches here and there, but no more than the average Zoom meeting. Thank you all for your perseverance and for the appreciation you have shown for our efforts.

As I told you all on October 8th of this year when we held our first sitting in this manner, virtual sittings of the House are complicated operations. There are many moving parts to this endeavour, and our staff devoted many months of intense effort to make this process work as well as it has.

As a result of that hard work, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba now has the ability to continue to meet despite the many necessary restrictions and limitations on life during the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing this service to Manitoba's 57 MLAs and therefore allowing the citizens of Manitoba to stay in touch with their Legislature, this team has served our province very well, and for that we should all be truly grateful.

In addition to all of the technical requirements which make all of this possible, we also had to consider all of the procedural implications of such a change in our processes. This detailed examination of our rules and procedures happened in parallel to the technical process and took almost as long to perfect.

The culmination of these efforts manifested in the Sessional Order passed by this House on October 7th. This step was a crucial part of making these sittings work.

You may not know that through this achievement the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba is leading the country in the depth and breadth of what we have accomplished here. So far this year, the House of Commons, the Senate, as well as the BC and Newfoundland and Labrador legislatures have all employed similar hybrid virtual models to conduct their House sittings, and we benefited from their experiences as we planned our infrastructure.

However, Manitoba is the only jurisdiction in Canada to have successfully conducted three hybrid virtual sittings from three different rooms simultaneously. This incredible accomplishment occurred last month when we considered departmental Estimates in the Committee of Supply.

Just as these hybrid virtual sittings are far more complicated than a simple Zoom call, conducting three hybrid virtual sittings at the same time is exponentially more complicated and difficult, yet we did it, and we will do it again as required.

I can tell you that once this session ends, our team will not be resting on their laurels. Rather, they will continue to improve on the infrastructure which makes this all possible.

When the House meets again in 2021, you will see some improvements, and the team will again ensure that we continue to put our best foot forward.

I would now like to mention by name all of those who have let their intellect, determination and sheer hard work to making all of this possible. Some of these folks are elsewhere in the building at their posts, some are in the gallery and some on the floor of the House. I would ask that, for those in the Chamber and the gallery, you please rise when your name is mentioned and stay standing. I will ask members to hold their applause until I have completed the list.

First, let me mention the procedural team who determined how to best amend our rules and procedures, ensuring that the businesses of the House remained valid in the hybrid virtual model. Our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk, led this effort with her usual procedural expertise. Our Journals Clerk, Monique Grenier, ably assisted the Clerk in revising and refining the sessional order. Research officer and Clerk Assistant, Greg Recksiedler, also assisted in this work and other tasks.

Our newest team members are the crew we needed to hire this fall to both operate the cameras in all three rooms and also serve as moderators for the virtual meeting calls: Graeme Leachman, HyunChul Lee, Darin Morash, Graham Parsons, Richard Pope, Derek Robinson, James Rinn, Candace Smith and Tony Wytinck.

As part of the development of this process our team conducted several exhaustive live tests of the system, with Assembly staff playing the part of MLAs in the Chamber and virtually. Our MLA actors included: Danielle Broadfoot, Julie Sass, Vanessa Gregg, Daisy Giesbrecht, Arlene Finkel, Marionne Cronin, Stephan Day, Todd LaRue, Sharmin Khan and Sherri MacQuarrie.

In addition to the virtual component, we also needed to make a number of modifications to the

Chamber in response to COVID. Clerk's Office Manager Pat Malynyk, Sergeant-at-Arms Dave Shuttleworth and Speaker's Office administrator Michele Lapointe-Dixon all procured invaluable supplies for the Chamber to allow us to accommodate essential physical distancing and sanitation measures.

The technical crew who envisioned, experimented, toiled and ultimately implemented everything you see and hear as part of this experience includes Trevor Melanchuk, the Assembly's technical operations administrator, who found answers to the many vexing hardware and software issues that arose with our audio systems in all three rooms; John Kamchen, media specialist from Communication Services Manitoba, who planned, tested and enabled all of the video equipment, cabling and screens you see before you; John was ably assisted in these tasks by Keith Grift and Travis Golby, also from Communication Services Manitoba; Michael Fruck from Legislative Building Information Services was our team's primary IT support for the entire project; Tim Abbott and Kat Tefft, our clerk assistants and clerks of committees, who led the mammoth project of testing and vetting many video conference platforms, created the guides for virtual members and moderators, as well as conducting one-on-one training sessions with almost every MLA; Becki Derksen, our digital media specialist, who assisted in almost every component of this project, and who took a lead role in training and mentoring our new moderators; and last but not least, Rick Yarish, our Deputy Clerk, who assembled and led this team with great determination and commitment.

* (14:00)

I would now invite all members in the Chamber and virtually to show their appreciation for this remarkable team.

As we all know, the pandemic we are all enduring and the necessary limitations we are all living with will persist well into 2021. No one knows when we can emerge from our protective cocoons.

We do know, however, that this institution will weather this storm and that the mission of this Assembly shall not be defeated or impeded. We shall carry on, just as the people of Manitoba have asked us to, just as they need us to.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yes, when you're talking MLA actors, can you tell us which actor played which MLA?

No, on a more serious level, I wanted to just reiterate, on behalf of our team, the thanks to the many people that you'd already named, but I also wanted to specifically add the folks who work in our leader's office and our caucus, those staff members who assisted in all the preparations. As well, on the government side, their legislative affairs director, the people in their caucus, the people amongst their political staff who helped to accomplish this and of course, the staff working with the independent Liberal members.

I also want to give a special shout-out to the House leaders, who carried out many, many, many hours of negotiations in order to facilitate these meetings.

So, of course, to my friend from Steinbach, my colleague from St. Johns and, of course, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), I want to say a big *kitchi miigwech*, *merci beaucoup* and thank you very much for allowing us to sit.

Madam Speaker: I would thank the member for those comments. However, as good as they were, they weren't a point of order, but appreciate the comments.

And just to add to this, it takes—it took us about 34 people to bring this together just from the technical side of it. So this isn't an easy, simple process that we were all through, but we have assembled before us an incredible team that actually just did it all and did it in a relatively short period of time, although it did take several months.

So thank you, again, to all of you. Thank you for being here in the gallery to hear these comments.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Senator Murray Sinclair Retirement Acknowledgment of Service

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, this is the last sitting day before Senator Murray Sinclair retires from the Red Chamber.

So I want to acknowledge his tremendous service to our province and country. I think we all know the accolades: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the pediatric cardiac inquiry, Thunder Bay, service in the Senate and so on.

I can tell you from personal experience that Senator Sinclair is the type of person who can lift you up with encouragement but also call you out when you are not doing right. He's done that for me personally, but he has also done the same for our country and he's done it with a vision of love and hope and a dream of a better tomorrow.

So, I want to say a big thank-you for your service to Senator Sinclair. I'm sure the Premier would like to add some words as well.

I do have a question about the pandemic, but I wanted to put that on the record first.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, just to add some words on behalf of all of us, I hope, in respect of the thanks we feel, Madam Speaker, for you, for your team, for the work you've done to accommodate this session.

This is our 150th year as a province. We've had that celebration dwarfed somewhat by the reality of a global pandemic, but nonetheless, it's in our hearts to celebrate that and to celebrate also the 100th year of beautiful building that we work in.

So many others work in it too, and so I will echo the earlier comments of my colleague and friend and say that this is a time to celebrate the work of all of us here, but also the work of all of us in Manitoba, and to remember those who are suffering as a consequence of COVID—in particular those who've lost family members and friends—and to remember also the situation facing many who are without work right now in our province as a consequence of COVID.

We're, all of us, I think, very much consumed by a desire to focus on addressing COVID as our real opponent in this historic time, the ability to adapt, to be dynamic in these dynamic times has been represented by your people here, and I thank you for that, Madam Speaker.

And so I say, again, a thanks to all of you here and to all Manitobans as we move forward together.

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

Health-Care Services Government Record

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, like a needle being pulled off the record, we can stop the Kumbaya right now, because we're very disappointed with this government's failure

to prepare for the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Not only did they fail to prepare for COVID, Madam Speaker, but over their time in office, they've been making cuts to health care that have simply been making things worse.

Now, because of that, I want to propose a Christmas list that many Manitobans are asking for this year and see if the Premier would deliver it for them: reopen the Roblin and Grandview ERs, reopen CancerCare at Seven Oaks and Concordia, reverse cuts to personal-care homes, approve the programs to train more nurses, hire staff to fill vacancies throughout the health-care system. These are the needs that we have in the province of Manitoba.

Will the Premier listen to the Christmas list that Manitobans have put before him and stop with the cuts?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the problem with the narrative the member preaches is he doesn't stick to the same narrative. One day we're cutting, the next day spending too much. Madam Speaker, he can't get his story straight over there, but we can.

And the reality is people reveal themselves when under stress, and so too do governments, and the fact is that we have risen to the challenges, and we didn't do that overnight. We did that with planning and preparation and teamwork for a number of months. So that's why our lab testing capacity has quadrupled since summer; that's why our contact tracing capacity is up 50 per cent since October. Our modelling three weeks ago suggested that we would have 1,000 cases per day right now, and instead we have less than half that many and we need to drive that down.

And, Madam Speaker, this work will continue, because our progress is a little and much more needs to be done. And we are dedicated to making sure we stay focused on the real adversary, and the real adversary for Manitobans is COVID.

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

COVID-19 Testing in Schools Asymptomatic Surveillance Program

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier seems to believe that he is unpopular because he told Manitobans to stay home. No. Premiers in other provinces have told people to stay home and they've remained more popular than ever.

The difference here is that this Premier and his Cabinet failed to prepare for the second wave of the pandemic. We've documented the cuts to health care that made things worse, but when we get to the education sector, it's been just as bad. We have teachers that are overburdened. We have students who are falling behind, in some cases being left behind on the wrong side of a digital divide.

Now, the Premier made an announcement earlier today, but like everything else that they've done during the pandemic, it's fallen short of what Manitobans need. What people actually want is a targeted surveillance testing program that would include children so we can actually see if there's community spread happening in schools that includes the students.

Will the Premier commit right now to ensuring that the surveillance testing that takes place includes students so that we can understand accurately what's happening with the pandemic?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the difference has been put on display, Madam Speaker. Over the last number of weeks, the NDP appears focused on problems and scoring political points. We're focused on fighting COVID. And because of that, and because of the work of Manitobans, we're the only province west of the Maritimes with lower positivity ratings than two weeks ago.

Every other province is facing this challenge too, Madam Speaker. None is facing it with more focus than this team on this side of the House. We're not team hindsight; that's over there. This is team foresight. And that's why today we announced tens of millions of dollars of investment—in additional investment—in rapid testing, so that rapid testing can be made available on our front lines, including with teachers in classrooms so they're able to get back to work and work with their students as they love to do.

Madam Speaker, that's the kind of foresight that we put on display. The member opposite puts hindsight only on display.

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

COVID-19 Financial Assistance Support for Small Business

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier is so out of touch and so misunderstands the needs during the pandemic that he thinks announcing testing programs,

after we've already seen hundreds of cases a day for months on end, that that is somehow forward thinking. If he was adequately prepared for the pandemic, we would have been announcing these testing programs in the summertime.

Again, when it comes to small business, we know that this government has failed absolutely. Of course, they talk the rhetoric of business when they're campaigning, but when they get into office, it's nothing but cuts and leaving business owners behind. It's quite remarkable to see that the PCs have alienated the business community during this pandemic, but luckily, we'll continue to stand up for them—stand up for those who are being left behind by overly strict criteria, and those who may have qualified but are worried about a clawback.

* (14:10)

Will the Premier announce today a new business program that will actually deliver the help that businesses need?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The most generous and consultatively designed business support programs in Canada are testament to our commitment, the commitment of our Finance Minister, of our Economic Development Minister.

Madam Speaker, the reality in this stressful time is the solution lies in supports, and we offer those supports and will continue to. Staffing supports offered by our Health Minister for front-line workers is a graphic example—for our personal-care-home workers.

Our restrictions are starting to work. Manitobans are listening, they are abiding by them. Our supports are going to help us bridge through this challenge. But what will not help is the member's allegations, as false as they may be, and his hindsight.

What will help is staffing support benefits, supports for small business, supports for educators, supports for our students and families. That's what we're offering, Madam Speaker. We offer a plan. The member offers peanut gallery instead.

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

Hydro Rate Increase Request to Cancel

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, never has a government kicked out so many press releases while helping so few people.

We know what this government's plan is, the plan that the Premier's talking about. It's his plan to increase the average Manitoban's Hydro bill by \$120–\$120. Of course, that would be a shame during good times, but during a pandemic, it's downright wrong.

And what's particularly wrong is that you have members here from suburban west Winnipeg, from southwest Winnipeg, from northeast Winnipeg, from rural Manitoba. Of course, nobody from the North on their side, but people from all those other areas who signed up to increase people's Hydro rates during the pandemic.

Will the Premier admit that that was wrong, and use the royal assent later today to repeal the increase to Hydro bills that he's rammed down the throats of Manitoba ratepayers?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The NDP record, Madam Speaker, in government is testament to their dislike and disdain for Manitoba small businesses. Manitoba small-business people understand that. The problem the NDP faces now is they can't get their story straight; they have no plan; they just stoke fear and panic and put it on display.

Our Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer)—*[interjection]*—the member from St. Johns knows that our Minister of Central Services faced the challenge of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and we know have six months of PPE ready to go. Our Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson) has made extra funds available for front-line workers working with families, working with children. Our Minister of Health's made sure we have adequate staffing at all points in our health response and in our testing response, Madam Speaker. You know we've quadrupled our testing, shortened our turnaround time and maintained our systems for tracking and strengthened them with additional staff.

We faced every challenge every step of the way together, while the NDP attacked civil servants and front-line workers. Shame on them.

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

Rent Control Program Request to Implement

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, Madam Speaker, the Premier likes to look in the mirror and imagine that that's what really matters right now. But we know that standing up for Manitobans is what actually matters. It's not about panicking.

You know, I have a lot of respect for Candice Bergen, and so I take it seriously when she points out that the Premier here has panicked, is completed panicked, has abandoned all wisdom in the face of panic. I take that seriously, but I know what's really needed right now is somebody to stand up for the seniors like Deborah Kunkel.

Now, what was this government's plan when it came to Deborah, on top of raising her hydro rates? Well, they decided hey, why don't we increase her rent by 30 per cent as well. That's \$300 extra a month. Her pension isn't going up by 30 per cent, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier abandon the affordability crisis that he is manufacturing and foisting upon Manitobans and essentially create a rent control program that actually works for Manitobans?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the advantage of the member being in the peanut gallery, Madam Speaker, is he always gets to pretend he's right when he looks in the mirror. I don't pretend we made everything—every single decision correctly. I don't pretend that any government is doing that.

What I do tell you, Madam Speaker, is that—opposed to some of the members opposite—we're a team; we're ready to work together. The members opposite are willing to say that we're going too fast and too slow; too high and too low; too broad and too narrow; too soon, too late; too few, too many; and that we should ignore the advice of the leading health experts and follow their advice. The last time I looked, there wasn't a doctor as the leader over there.

We'll follow the advice of our health experts. We'll turn the corner together. We'll stand up for Manitobans, Madam Speaker. And merry Christmas to Manitobans and all the people in this House and across this province who know that 2021 will be our chance to show and shine over COVID.

Thank you. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

**Personal Protective Equipment
Request for Distribution of New Supply**

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, earlier this year, long-expired surgical masks were sent to facilities in health care, education and child care across the province. It took months for the Pallister government to recognize this mistake, and they put the burden for fixing this onto front-line workers. Now we learn it wasn't just surgical masks but also 12-year-old N95 masks no longer certified by the manufacturer that were sent to multiple health regions, hospitals and personal-care homes.

Why is the minister still, nine months into this pandemic, sending inappropriate personal protective equipment to our front-line workers?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, in a rare moment of agreement, I would like the Opposition Leader to know that I also brought a list today, a list of issues that the opposition doesn't raise anymore: screening sites, because the number of screening sites for COVID-19 doubled in the last six weeks; wait times at screening sites, because there are 15 new sites and appointment testing has now eliminated lineups; Health Links wait times, where the volumes are up but the wait times were cut in half and then cut in half again; virtual tariffs, where we just expanded doctors' virtual tariffs for a third time and a million tariffs already performed.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to continuing on my list. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, days away. That's how close this minister said his government was to running out of PPE this spring.

Through lack of preparation, important supplies like N95 masks were in short supply. The government's panicked response to this was to buy \$16 million worth of inappropriate masks that can't be used, and now nine months into this pandemic, facilities are receiving 12-year-old N95 masks. This is serious, Madam Speaker: N95s that are used when folks come into contact with those with COVID-19.

Will the minister commit to removing these masks today and getting new ones out to our health professionals?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, this is serious: serious improvement in the way that our government has been responding to COVID-19 and keeping Manitobans safe.

Lab testing, another issue the opposition won't raise anymore. Why? Because we doubled the number of lab tests in just one month. Contact tracing, where we've added 350 new, trained callers, and 90 per cent of people now receive within 24 hours the notification—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen:—financial supports for front-line health-care workers, where we just—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen:—added retroactive pay for doctors and we just added increased pay for nurses being deployed; Red River training course for new health-care aides: over 100 people have been hired and more start work tomorrow. Madam Speaker, I look forward to continuing with my list.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, as of today, we have a record number of patients in hospital with COVID-19. This week, we saw a record number of folks die from COVID-19. We have a record number of patients in ICU with COVID-19. This minister is failing, and he should stop bragging and start getting to work on behalf of our front-line health-care workers.

Madam Speaker, the minister sent boxes upon boxes to health-care regions of expired 12-year-old N95 masks—to our health-care workers, to our personal-care homes, to folks working in direct contact with those with COVID-19. He put their health at risk. That's a failure of this minister.

* (14:20)

Again, I ask: Will the minister remove these masks today and get new ones out to all of our health-care professionals?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I'm so sorry that the member only blames and gets angry by the improvements that are designed to keep Manitobans safe, but I assure them that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Friesen: –Manitobans are encouraged by these continued improvements and the way our government is putting the care of Manitobans first.

Other things that the opposition won't raise anymore: personal-care-home shelters, where all the shelters are now constructed and the last ones are being delivered to site; rapid tests, where our Premier (Mr. Pallister) today announced \$40 million more for—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –rapid testing. And, Madam Speaker, I only regret this Christmas season I won't even be able to get to the issues of PPE, dedicated sites for health-care workers and mental health response.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Friesen: And as we meet the needs of Manitobans with their mental health issues, they yell—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order. Order.

I'm going to ask everybody. I need to be able to hear, and I haven't been able to hear all of the comments that are being made in this question period, so I'm asking for everybody's co-operation.

There's heckling and there's yelling, and yelling is something that is just so unproductive—as is heckling, but the yelling is making it very, very difficult for me to hear. So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please. Get—if everybody could get in the Christmas spirit, that might help get us through the rest of the day.

The honourable member for St. Johns. *[interjection]* The honourable member for Notre Dame.

Internationally Educated Nurses Barriers to Certification

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, I have asked the Health Minister many times in this House to remove unfair barriers for internationally educated nurses so that they can join the fight against COVID.

Last week, the Health Minister said that the barriers had been removed; however, the College of Registered Nurses said that it's waiting on a ministerial order.

Will the minister stand up and tell the House why he continues to mislead this House and why he is delaying action amidst a pandemic to get qualified nurses on the job today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Now, the member should try to do more careful preparation in advance of question period. They are, once again, wrong.

The ministerial order that she speaks of was signed and off of my desk days and days and days ago.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a supplementary question. *[interjection]* Order. The honourable member for—*[interjection]* Order.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, our province is in a critical nursing shortage.

Top public health officials have identified that health staffing shortages continue to be our chief vulnerability in this fight against this pandemic. We desperately need all the nurses we can to join the fight against COVID. We have dozens of qualified nurses with job offers in hand ready to work, but they cannot because this minister is not acting on this important issue.

Will the minister commit to immediately grant the ministerial order requested so that qualified nurses can get to work today?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, with respect to the member, her statements are false; her information is erroneous.

The nurses have been validated by the college. This issue has been resolved. And I understand that the nurses themselves are moving already into work-force as early as tomorrow or Monday.

This has been resolved. I ask the member to move on because we've solved this one.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The process for credential recognition in Manitoba has too many barriers. It has driven away 23,188 skilled new immigrants and their families in the last three years under this PC government's watch.

Due to unfair barriers set up by regulatory colleges, nurses are part of this out-migration and

have left to practise in other provinces. This will continue to be a problem for Manitoba if we do not address inequities in our nursing qualification process.

Will the minister commit today to working with the nursing colleges to create a fair and affordable nursing qualification process? The nursing colleges do not take my phone calls. They'll take your phone calls. You fix this with the colleges, Minister.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to the member for Notre Dame that questions are not to be put in the first person. She was just doing that. They are to be put in the third person. We have that rule in place for a very specific reason and just a reminder and a request to her to please follow that request.

Mr. Friesen: The member is still a day late and a dollar short. The issue is resolved. She has erroneous information; she should get caught up.

I just listed today in the House 10, 12 different areas where our government has taken action. I only regret that I was not able to include the issue of internationally educated nurses, where the NDP for years and years did nothing, and we are working with the college to get nurses that we need now more than ever into our work stream.

That's our pledge. That's our promise. We'll get it done.

Legislative Session Government Intention

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The House rises today, Madam Speaker, and the Pallister government is still hiding its plans for Manitobans to review. No other government in Canada has ever conducted itself in this fashion with its agenda hidden out of view for citizens to see. It's unprecedented in the history of this province and across the country.

Why is the Pallister government hiding its true intentions?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Frankly, Madam Speaker, I appreciate any question from that member on cover-ups. I mean, there was no evidence of any work done, but a paycheque was cashed every two weeks for about seven years.

Madam Speaker, in terms of health, in terms of our health plans—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —we've made those public. The NDP was given—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —detailed recommendations on how to improve our emergency services, for example, and the report sat unused for years. Madam Speaker, we've advanced plans to improve our health services, plans to improve our education services, plans that are improving our Child and Family Services.

We're going to continue to clean up the mess we inherited from the NDP and that member.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier can't even hide his anti-Indigenous racism anymore when he attacks an Indigenous woman from 2016 in this Chamber every opportunity that he has.

And we know that there are so many issues the Pallister government is hiding from the public. Their plans to privatize child care and their means to enact it are hidden from view. Their education review and the overhaul of the system is closed in the trunk of the Education Minister's vehicle. Their plans to change police accountability is locked in the Justice Minister's suitcase. Their plans to overhaul the right of the press and the public to gain access locked away out of view.

Why is this government hiding its true intentions?

Mr. Pallister: While I was working for years with Indigenous women to advance the cause of Indigenous women, the member was leading shout-downs to shout down the pleas of Indigenous woman at House of Commons committee meetings and bragging about it to her friends.

If anyone wants to talk about a hidden agenda in racism, the member's an expert on those things. The do-good-ignorant-white-people memo was sent not to anyone else, but to that member, and she had no response. She didn't stand up against racism when she had the opportunity.

We are. We're advancing initiatives for improving the safety of people in our workplace, whereas the members opposite covered those up for years. It was no evidence of any attempt on the part of the previous government to protect people, including civil servants.

Some oppressive behaviour on the part of senior people in their own government—they were told to tough it out; they were told to suck it up. Madam Speaker, we're taking initiatives forward that are

protecting people and helping people, and we're going to keep doing that.

* (14:30)

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

Ms. Fontaine: Obviously, the Premier's upset that his full racism is on display today, not only in the House here, but in his press conference. It's not my fault he's racist, Madam Speaker.

The government must be ashamed of its own priorities. Otherwise, Madam Speaker, they would have presented them proudly. Instead, they want to stifle debate and limit public awareness because their agenda is privatization and their agenda is cuts. This is shameful.

Why is the Pallister government hiding its true intentions?

Mr. Pallister: Our intention is to work in partnership with people, including Indigenous people. That's what we've done, Madam Speaker.

The previous NDP government used their plane to go up to The Pas so that they could promise people jobs in Hydro up there in order to get votes in a leadership contest that they had—that they self-imposed on themselves because of a rebellion, Madam Speaker. That's how much the NDP acted like they valued Indigenous people: false promises about jobs that Indigenous people needed. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: We're creating jobs. We're partnering with Indigenous communities on pulp and paper development, on mining and resource extraction initiatives, Madam Speaker. We got people home to the Interlake and the Indigenous communities where they were out of their communities for half a decade, and the NDP said nothing and did nothing about it.

Madam Speaker, we don't need lessons from that member, especially, on issues around racist equality. We fight for the opportunity for equality for all people, including our Indigenous people in this province.

Madam Speaker: I would just remind members that are joining us virtually that there is no opportunity that allows members to unmute their mics to heckle. There is a clear directive that went out to everybody that there is no heckling to occur. That would just complicate this whole process way beyond what is already happening.

So, just a reminder to members.

Manitoba Hydro Government Relations

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Day by day, one thing is becoming clear: the Premier does not want Manitobans to know what he's doing at Hydro.

Since September, the Premier has privatized a profitable subsidiary of Hydro. He's inexplicably ordered another subsidiary to stop work. He's frozen the wages of hundreds of Hydro workers and then, without any consultation, he rammed through a rate hike at four in the morning in the hopes Manitobans wouldn't notice.

On this side of the House, we know where we stand: for good jobs, low rates and a publicly owned Hydro. And we will continue to fight for it.

Why is the Premier attacking our most important Crown corporation?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): In the face of pressure, Madam Speaker, some rise and some don't, and that member makes it clear that he's not rising to the challenge of being accurate in his preambles or in any of his assertions.

The NDP hydro rate increases were, in 2012, 4.4 per cent, and in '13, 3.5 per cent. And now they complain about a 2.9 per cent increase now. Actually, under the NDP, the average increase in hydro bills was 16 and a half per cent higher than the one that we're putting in on an interim basis while we develop—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —legislation to protect Manitobans' interests in Manitoba Hydro from any future government that can never again be able to do the things the NDP did: to quintuple the debt of Manitoba Hydro and Americanize it without permission from the people of Manitoba.

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

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

Mr. Sala: The Premier has spent the entire pandemic attacking our most important Crown corporation. He's demanded hundreds of job cuts from Hydro in the spring, then he cut the wages of thousands of workers. Now he's carving up and privatizing parts of Hydro that help to keep rates low, and he's making every

single family and every single business in this province pay more, in the middle of a pandemic, just in time for the holidays.

He's totally and completely disconnected from the realities facing Manitobans. On this side of the House, we don't agree with his actions and we will continue to stand up and speak out against the Premier's plans.

Will he reverse his cuts and rake heights at Hydro today?

Mr. Pallister: If the member wants to further his leadership aspirations, he's got to do a lot better than that, Madam Speaker.

You know, the NDP has opposed every tax reduction that this government has brought in, and there've been many of them, including opposing taking the PST off people's home insurance, Madam Speaker. Shamefully, the NDP actually added the PST to people's insurance when they insured against loss—tragic loss of their most important asset.

Now the member tries to launch—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —a leadership campaign by claiming that he cares about the people of Manitoba, when the NDP actually opposed every tax reduction that we brought forward, including giving \$200 to seniors in need.

So, Madam Speaker, the member speaks about issues he knows nothing about. We know something about putting money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans. The NDP are just expert at taking the money off.

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

Mr. Sala: So says the Premier who snuck through a rate increase in the dark of night in a piece of legislation that was guaranteed passage.

The Premier's smokescreens do not fool anyone. It's clear by now what the Premier's political agenda is for Hydro. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: He's going to interfere to raise rates for families and cut good-paying jobs. He's going to interfere to break up and lay the groundwork to privatize key aspects of Hydro. He's going to interfere without telling Manitobans. He'll attack and use questionable tactics to silence anyone who opposes him.

We're committed to stopping this agenda because it makes life harder for regular people, workers and families across this province.

Will the Premier back off and stop interfering in Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Pallister: I have no desire to silence Manitobans and certainly no desire to silence the member opposite. Foolishness should be put on display, and the member does it every time he rises in his place. When he rises in his place to attack an—a civil servant in our government's employ who is leading the fight—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —against COVID-19, he demonstrates his own desperation, his own futile attempt, okay, to put himself ahead of everyone else, his disrespect for people in positions of difficulty and stress.

He does that, Madam Speaker, at his peril, when he opposes and his opposition colleagues oppose Seniors Economic Recovery Credit, when they oppose the MPI rebates, when they oppose Disability Economic Support Program, Manitoba Bursary Program, taking the PST off home insurance and instead, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and instead, Madam Speaker, they stand here and pay lip service to supporting the people of Manitoba while we actually put money on the kitchen tables of Manitoba families and small businesses. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker, they have nothing but heckling to offer. We offer real supports at a time when they're needed.

Manitoba Network Contract Matter Under Consideration

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): On October 14th, the Premier rose to the defence of a public servant, saying that he was only ever following his own and Cabinet's orders to a T.

Now, in the last years, Bell MTS and its companies like Epic have received over \$570 million in contracts, including a \$64 million sole-sourced contract from August 2019, which I table. Now, the Premier argued that that public servants' assets were registered with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, but when we submitted a freedom of information request, we were denied. But I do table our FIPPA as long—along with a Bell MTS merger contract that

shows that that public official at one point owned many shares in that company.

Can the Premier confirm that the president of the Treasury Board no longer has any financial interest in Bell MTS or BCE?

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order, please.

Could the table please stop the clock.

I'm going to remind members that when issues are taken under consideration in a matter of privilege, those issues cannot be raised in the House. And I am going to remind members that the—this topic that they are choosing to go down right now cannot be asked in the House because that matter of privilege hasn't been decided yet. And I'm going to indicate to the member that he cannot be asking about that particular topic because it is under advisement.

* (14:40)

And I'm going to remind all honourable members to keep this in mind, as we go forward, with all matters of privilege. Until I bring back a ruling, those—the specifics related to those matters of privilege cannot be asked.

So the member is going to have to, I think, come up with a new question. I think he—the member has a—that member—can I just ask the table officers how long the member from St. Boniface went? Oh, the member's time has expired from asking his question, so he does not get a chance to re-ask.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, not to respond to the specifics of the allegation except to say that sometimes people sink under pressure, and the member's sinking almost as fast as the member for St. James (Mr. Sala).

To try to attack a civil servant with no data, no research done, to make false allegations, to impugn the integrity of someone who is in—not in a position to defend themselves, this is beyond contempt. The member should be ashamed of himself.

Madam Speaker: The—I would ask the table to turn off the clock.

Just a reminder to all members, and in the Premier's comments just now, there can be no reference at all in any responses either to this issue that has not been resolved yet.

So the honourable member for St. Boniface, on a supplementary question.

Bell MTS Merger Government Consultations

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): My questions are about—more broadly, about Bell MTS.

So, one of this government's first decisions on being elected in 2016 was whether to support or oppose the Bell MTS merger. And would it seem the Premier has often sided with Bell MTS, even if it means costing Manitobans more money.

Now many warned that the Bell MTS merger would cost consumers more, but the Premier was fine with that. Service didn't get better; it got worse. And when the CRTC said carriers needed to improve rural service, the Premier sided with Bell MTS against Manitobans.

Now I tabled documents showing the former chair of the PC Manitoba Fund was co-counsel on the Bell MTS merger.

Did the Premier ever discuss the Bell MTS merger with him?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Again, Madam Speaker, the issue the member raises is the renewal of a contract with Bell to provide connectivity services—electronic communication services within government. This was the renewal of a contract that was signed a decade ago, untendered, by the previous NDP government, and it was renewed at a time for a term under the same cost base as the previous contract the NDP signed. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: The member is basing this allegation—this innuendo—on that renewal of that contract.

Is the member suggesting that, in this time of COVID, that this is a wise time for us to be tendering for electronic service throughout government? Because if he is, he is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —totally out of touch with the reality of this unprecedented situation—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: If that is what the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) is suggesting, she should put it on the record rather than heckle from her seat.

Madam—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Pallister: –Speaker, people here are focused on this side of the House on fighting COVID. I am entirely unsure, and I'm sure Manitobans are, as to what the heck the member for St. Boniface—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* The member's time has expired.

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

Clerk of the Executive Council Federal Oliphant Inquiry

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It seems that the Premier doth protest too much.

When I asked about PC fundraisers possibly benefiting from the Bell MTS merger—its executive council—the Premier responded by saying, quote, give me all that Liberal scandal stuff. However, we submitted a FIPPA for it, but no records exist.

It's also surprising, Madam Speaker, giving that the Premier's pick for Clerk of the Executive Council, David McLaughlin, was at the centre of a scandal that was a subject of a 450-page federal Oliphant inquiry into \$300,000 in cash that Karlheinz Schreiber gave to Brian Mulroney. Mr. McLaughlin was in charge of the Bear Head Project that was the subject of that inquiry.

Was the Premier aware of Mr. McLaughlin's role, or is that why he hired him?

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

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Totally missing the point, Madam Speaker. SNC-Lavalin, Jody Wilson-Raybould—and all the member wants to talk about now is Karlheinz Schreiber. Okay.

While we stay focused—some rise—over here, these members are rising to the challenge of facing COVID together; some sink—the member opposite is sinking faster than a stone.

Small-Business Support Government Initiatives

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I think we can hopefully end this question period on a better note.

I can note that nine out of 10 Canadians working in the private sector are employed by small business. Small businesses are the backbone of Manitoba's economy, and COVID-19 has had devastating effects across all sectors, and small businesses are not immune.

Small businesses have been forced to find new ways to operate in light of life-saving public-health orders.

So can the Minister of Economic Development and Training please update this House on how our government continues to support small businesses as they innovate and as they adapt through COVID-19?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Training): Today, we announced \$1.5 million that will support chambers' networks to enhance grassroots local programs across the province, including support for goodlocal.ca.

In addition, we evolved our gap program to allow access to federal supports, up-front wage subsidy. Cash is flowing out the door. We're amplifying the shop-local message through #ShopLocalMB digital campaign, and we're providing \$5,000 up front to bridge funding to eligible businesses.

This is how team Manitoba works to stand up for and support and save small businesses. I invite members opposite to get on board with this program.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

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

On March 17th, 2020, the honourable member from St. Vital raised a matter of privilege regarding the government's use of omnibus legislation and how that has obstructed members' ability to do their jobs. The member concluded by moving, and I quote, "that this matter be referred to a committee of the Legislature". End quote.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) also spoke to the matter of privilege before the Deputy Speaker took the matter under advisement. I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair.

As members know, two conditions must be met in order to establish a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity and, second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached.

The honourable member argued for a broad interpretation of the timeliness condition, referencing the need for contextual analysis in a holistic sense. Upon review, I am unconvinced by his argument and,

accordingly, I am ruling that the test of timeliness was not met.

Regarding the second issue, as members know, a matter concerning the methods by which the House proceeds in the conduct of business is a matter of order, not privilege. Joseph Maingot, in the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, states on page 14 that, and I quote, allegations of breach of privilege by a member in the House that amount to complaints about procedures and practices in the House are, by their very nature, matters of order. End quote.

With the greatest of respect then, I rule that the matter raised does not fulfill the criteria of a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: And I also have a brief statement for the House.

As the House is expected to adjourn later today for our winter break, I would encourage all members to remove the contents of their desks today.

I would further encourage members to recycle as much of the material as possible. The blue bins here in the Chamber are designated for recycling of Hansard only. Any other material you would like to recycle may be placed in the larger recycling containers in the message rooms located just outside the Chamber.

Thank you.

* (14:50)

PETITIONS

Vivian Sand Facility Project—Clean Environment Commission Review

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares, making it the largest claim ever given to a single company in Manitoba's history. It is larger than the city of Winnipeg, which is four thousand–46,410 hectares.

(2) The amount of dry, solid sand mined or produced last year—per year according to the EAP

is 1.36 million tons, and much of this sand will be used in fracking.

A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, including both carbonate and sandstone aquifers, which covers much of south-eastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and an abundance of wildlife and ecosystems.

Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

The sustainable yield of the combined sandstone and carbonate aquifers has still not yet been established by provincial authorities.

The mine could cause leaching of acid and heavy metals and pollute the aquifer, as it will go down 200 feet into the Winnipeg formation of the sandstone aquifer. There is concern that the shale, which separates the carbonate and sandstone aquifers—sand and pyritic oolite itself contains sulphides—will, when exposed to injected air from the CanWhite Sands extraction process, turn to acid.

An additional concern with the proposed mine and plant is the potential to pollute the Brokenhead River and the aquatic food chain leading to Lake Winnipeg.

Residents in the area have expressed fears of being overexposed to silica dust during production, as there has been a demonstrated lack of safety and environmental procedures by the CanWhite Sands Corporation during the exploratory drilling phase. Signage and fencing has been poor; identifying and required mine claim tags were missing; there were no warnings for silica dust exposure and no coverings to prevent exposure of the silica stockpiles to the elements.

Residents' concerns include the fact that boreholes, which should have been promptly and properly sealed, were left open for a year. The drilling of hundreds of improperly sealed boreholes yearly create significant risk of surface contamination, mixing of aquifer waters and drainage of 'surcal' fecal matter into the aquifer.

There is also a risk of subsidence around each borehole as a result of sand extraction.

There is also a potential transboundary issues that need to be addressed as the aquifers extend into Minnesota.

This project should not proceed, as no licensing conditions and mitigation measures will alleviate the risk to all Manitobans and the environment since CanWhite Sands Corporation plans to use an unprecedented mining technique with no established safe outcome. The corporation has gone on record indicating that it does not know how to mine for the silica in the water supply and needs to develop a new extraction methodology that has never been done before.

Contamination of the aquifers and the environment is irreversible and there are many surface sources of high purity silica that can be extracted without endangering two essential regional aquifers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to undertake a combined review of the Vivian Sand Facility processing plant and the mining/extraction portion of the operation as a class 3 development with a review of Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to include public hearings and participant funding.

(2) To urge the provincial government to halt all activity at the mine and plant until the Clean Environment Commission's review is completed and the project proposal has been thoroughly evaluated.

Signed by Henryka Schroeder, Jamie Kazmanski [*phonetic*] and James [*phonetic*] McEwan and many others. Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

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

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a petition.

Cochlear Implant Program

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

People who suffer hearing loss due to aging, illness, employment or accident not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, relatives or colleagues; they also can experience

unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

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

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

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

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor.

The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement Program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

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

In Manitoba, pediatric patients, who are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant

Speech Processor Replacement Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Does the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) wish to read his petition? No?

We will move on then to grievances?

And then orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I hope to indulge the House of a series of matters before calling government business.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that the fees paid with respect to—I will first, before I do a motion, as the severe instruction from the—and—but also very wise instruction from the clerk's desk, make a committee announcement.

On House business: would you like to—I'd like to announce that Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, January 11th, 2021, at 1 p.m. to consider the following report: the annual report of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, January 11th, 2021 at 1 p.m. to consider the following report: Annual Report of the Manitoba

Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020.

* (15:00)

Mr. Goertzen: I'd like to announce that, in addition to the report previously referred, that the report titled Proposal to Modify the Voting Process will be considered at the December 7th, 2020 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced, in addition to the report previously referred, that the report titled Proposal to Modify the Voting Process will also be considered at the December 7th, 2020 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm going to be asking for leave for an extension of the current Sessional Order. However, in co-ordination with both the Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), I do want to provide a few words of context.

While the Sessional Order deals with issues of virtual participation as a way to ensure safety for the staff and members of this Assembly and the Manitoba Legislature, it is the desire and the intention of all political parties and members to return as many sitting members to the Assembly as soon as is possible, given the current health situation.

So, while we are seeking to extend the Sessional Order, we all recognize that this is not our desired state, and we will continue to meet with public health officials and seek advice as the pandemic develops, and if we are able to return more members to the Assembly prior to June 1st of 2021, that is the desire and the intention of all of us.

Therefore, in accordance with section 36 of the Sessional Order passed by this House on October 8th, 2020, and amended on November 19th, 2020, I'm seeking leave of the House to further amend that same Sessional Order so that in the first paragraph, December 3rd, 2020 is replaced by June 1st, 2021.

For clarity of the House, this would mean that all of the provisions of this Sessional Order would remain in effect until June 1st, 2021, rather than expiring today.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to further amend the Sessional Order passed by this House on October 8th, 2020, and amended on November 19th, 2020, so that in the first paragraph, December 3rd, 2020 is replaced by June 1st, 2021?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Is there leave of the House to waive rule 137(2) to allow bills which have been introduced this session to be distributed to members intersessionally, specifically between December 4th, 2020 and March 2nd, 2021?

For clarity, for each bill, the sponsoring minister would provide the usual written authorization to the Clerk of the Legislature; the Government House Leader will advise the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in writing that the bill has been authorized for distribution.

Once the authorization letter is received, the Clerk will distribute the bill in hard copy to the caucus offices and to the Legislative offices of the independent members. The bill will also be sent electronically to all members.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to waive rule 130—

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: I would prefer if members could wait 'til I actually ask if there's leave before they weigh in on that.

Is there leave to waive rule 137(2) to allow bills which have been introduced this session to be distributed to members intersessionally, specifically between December 4th, 2020 and March 2nd, 2021.

For clarity for each bill, the sponsoring minister will provide the usual written authorization to the Clerk of the Legislature; the Government House Leader will advise the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights in writing that the bill has been authorized for distribution.

Once the authorization letter is received, the Clerk will distribute the bill in hard copy to the caucus offices and to the Legislative offices of the independent members. The bill will also be sent electronically to all members.

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: I'm seeking leave for the House to not see the clock today until (1) the question is put on concurrence and third reading of Bill 7, 9, 42, 208, 218, 300 and 301; and (2) royal assent is granted to all

bills that pass concurrence and third reading today, as well as Bill 4 and 211.

Is there also leave (1) to allow a motion to be moved today without notice for the refund of fees related to Bill 301; and (2) for the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, scheduled to meet at 6 p.m. tonight, to not begin until the House has risen in the event that the House sits past 5 p.m.?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the House to not see the clock today until (1) the question is put on concurrence and third reading of Bill 7, 9, 42, 208, 218, 300 and 301; (2) royal assent is granted to all bills that pass concurrence and third reading today, as well as bills 4 and 211?

Is there also leave (3) to allow a motion to be moved today without notice for the refund of fees related to Bill 301; and (4) for the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development scheduled to meet tonight at 6 p.m., to not begin until the House has risen in the event that the House sits past 5 p.m.?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: I'll end where I accidentally began.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): So I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that the fees paid with respect to Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, be refunded less the cost of printing.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: Is there any debate? No?

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

I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: For business this afternoon, could you please call for a third reading Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act; third reading of Bill 9, The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act; third reading of Bill 42, The Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act; third reading of Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act; third reading of Bill 300, The United Church of Canada Amendment Act; third reading of Bill 218, The Somali Heritage Week Act; and third reading of Bill 301, The

Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider the following bills this afternoon: 7, 9, 42, 208, 300, 218 and 301.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 7—The Planning Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call concurrence and third reading of Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, Bill 7 will amend The Planning Act to extend subdivision approving authority to the City of Brandon. This bill demonstrates that the government of Manitoba is committed to modernizing planning processes, streamlining approval processes and reducing administrative burdens for municipalities.

Land-use planning is a partnership between the Province of Manitoba and municipalities and planning districts. The Province of Manitoba retains a strong interest in planning and regional approaches to sustainable development and protecting our natural resources. For example, preserving agricultural land, protecting water resources, maintaining the integrity of the provincial transportation network and mitigating impacts of flooding are key areas of interest for our province.

* (15:10)

Amendments to The Planning Act under Bill 7 continue to uphold the provincial-municipal partnership in land-use planning while supporting greater local decision making on subdivisions for the City of Brandon.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The city of Brandon is Manitoba's second largest urban centre, and demonstrates both a high capacity and competence in land use planning and develop-

ment. This bill will allow Brandon to maintain subdivision approving authority independent of its membership in the current Brandon and Area Planning District, ensuring continuity of land-use planning services in the city as it transforms itself into the Keystone Planning District without Brandon as a member.

This proposed legislation responds directly to a request made by the City of Brandon seeking the same level of subdivision approving authority already granted in the city of Winnipeg. I also note that representatives from the City of Brandon, rural municipality of Cornwallis and the rural municipality of Elton all presented in favour of Bill 7 at the standing committee held last Thursday evening and called on all MLAs to pass this bill expeditiously.

The bill also authorizes the minister to make regulations designating other municipal councils as approving authorities and to establish eligibility requirements and conditions for when a council can approve subdivisions. This authority to approve subdivisions will be based on municipalities demonstrating that they have the capacity to meet the requirements and conditions to administer subdivision approvals in a professional and transparent manner.

The Province of Manitoba's committed to continuing to engage with key stakeholders on the substance of the regulations that will be developed under Bill 7.

Overall, the proposed bill maintains the provincial-municipal partnership and land-use planning, while also recognizing greater local decision making on subdivisions for the City of Brandon and in times other authorized municipalities.

I'm pleased to present Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, to the House for the third reading and call on all members to support the City of Brandon and the RMs of Elton and Cornwallis and pass this bill without delay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as this is my last moment to stand in this House before we rise for our winter break, I do want to take an opportunity to thank all the staff, the Speaker's—from the Speaker's office and all of our clerks here. I wish them a very happy holidays.

I'd also like to extend my greetings to my critic, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), and wish him and his family a happy holiday season. And I'd also like to say to my friend from Union Station, who had showed incredible kindness at a time when it was most

needed, for that I want to say thank you and wish them a happy winter holiday.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I just want to, before I begin, echo the comments of the Minister for Municipal Relations and wish her and her family a merry Christmas, to everybody in the House and the Chamber, especially to the staff, the clerks who have helped us get to where we are in terms of the technology and allowing us to participate as we have. Thanks to everybody for the work that they've done.

I did want to put a few words on the record with regards to Bill 7. I think it is an important piece of legislation and I'm glad that we are here now, you know, one could say at the eleventh hour of the legislative session, finally moving forward on this bill.

The minister noted that there has been quite a bit of a delay with this particular piece of legislation originally brought last year to the Legislature as a different bill and because of the actions of this government—the unwillingness, first of all, to call this bill and to prioritize it in last fall's session to get it done for the people of Brandon and then, of course, we saw in the beginning of this fall session a prorogation of the House and no ability to move that legislation forward.

We've been on the record in support of this legislation, and glad that the government is finally getting on board and finally moving forward with this to work with the people of Brandon.

I won't spend too much time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about the good people of Brandon because I know that the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), our Leader of the Opposition, did so very well the last time this came during second reading. We certainly had a great opportunity during public committee to hear from folks in Brandon, from the RM of Cornwallis and from the RM of Elton.

And to express to them how much we appreciate the work that they're doing. We know that the Keystone Planning District will be successful, as it has been in the past in another format, and we support the work that they are doing and are happy to support it.

The unfortunate part of all of this, of course, though, is that the same sort of level of co-operation that the government is now finally showing for the people of Brandon, they still refuse to show to the rest of the municipalities across Manitoba. And, of course, I'm talking about, you know, the bills that this government is bringing forward with regards to planning.

Now, the minister wants to indicate that this is some sort of, you know, partnership that they want to replicate, that they want to bring elsewhere to other relationships, but that's not the path that, in fact, they're taking. What they're, in fact, doing in other jurisdictions is not listening to those local elected officials on the ground. They're not listening to those reeves and to those mayors in all the municipalities across Manitoba, and, in fact, they are trying to push forward legislation that will take power away from those municipalities, and we think that's wrong.

We know that Manitobans want a government that upholds virtues of consistency and transparency. So, while, of course, we don't oppose this particular designation, we know that the minister is handing herself broad regulatory powers through this particular bill. Manitobans would be better served, we believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if instead they went to the people of Manitoba when changes like this are to be made and asked for their input and their support.

Manitobans look to their government to adequately co-ordinate with members across all levels of government, and none are more important than the local governments across our province, but we know that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government does not know how to foster these good relationships with those municipal governments.

And they've, in fact, made things more difficult for them, and we hear this time and time again. When we go out, we reach out to municipal leaders across this province, when we have a chance to meet with them and speak with them at the recent AMM convention happening—happened virtually this year, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but still was a great opportunity to hear from our municipal friends.

And we heard from them how things have been getting more difficult for them at their level of government. We know that operating grants have been frozen in municipalities since 2016. We know that infrastructure spending, of course, continues to be underspent by hundreds of millions of dollars, and then when it comes to the community's ability to plan their own future, we know that this government does not respect local decision making.

For instance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2018 they passed Bill 19, the planning amendment act, which undermined local decision making around livestock operations. The bill made it harder for local objections to be heard, and they made changes to local bylaws that made it so that large-scale livestock operations no longer required conditional-use or a zoning bylaw and

any decisions that were made locally about large-scale livestock operations or aggregate quarry operations were then appealable to the Municipal Board. As we saw previously, in Bill 19, the Pallister government values the development and the developers' concerns rather than the concerns of the local people and especially of the local elected officials in municipalities.

We heard, certainly, on this issue and on so many others from local reeves and councillors who urge the government to not pull away and not step back on these responsibilities that they have. In this latest committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard Bill Courtice from the RM of Cornwallis, Ross Farley from the RM of Elton and Ryan Nickel from the City of Brandon. And all of them, you know, sort of came to the same, you know, thank you for finally getting moving on this. But you could tell that their concern goes much deeper than just this particular piece of legislation. They're happy that the government is finally moving on it, but they know first-hand the way that this government has worked, or the lack of work that's being done, with local municipalities across the province.

And I'm sure that they have the same misgivings as the AMM has expressed and other municipalities have expressed with regards to Bill 37. And, you know Madam Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is where, you know, most municipalities are focused right now, concerned about what the future will bring. Again, this government is not willing to show its hand with regards to its legislation, broadly, but we know that Bill 37 is heavy-handed and it certainly gives more power to overrule local communities regarding development and expropriation.

* (15:20)

We know that, if it is passed, it takes away the power from local municipalities; it takes away the local voice of the municipalities; allow the minister to establish planning regions, including the composition of Winnipeg's capital region, simply by a stroke of a pen, by regulation. It overrules the decision-making by having the municipal board have the final say with regards to key land use planning processes, such as zoning, zoning amendments, secondary plans, secondary plan amendments, conditional approvals, subdivisions and development agreements.

You would think that, you know, this—you know, while this takes away the power from local municipalities and gives it to the municipal board and to others, that this would be something that developers

would be behind, but even they are saying they're concerned about how that bill will impact their ability to get things done because they understand how important it is to have that local input.

Bill 37 is universally opposed by communities across Manitoba, including the mayor of the City of Winnipeg, Brian Bowman. The capital region, the mayors and the reeves across Manitoba joined with him. He said Bill 37 disenfranchises residents from having an equitable voice and is definitely a step backwards in terms of openness, transparency and accountability.

This is just one example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of how this government continues to not listen to the voices of our municipalities, to listen to the voices of our local elected officials, and it's been frustrating, I can tell you, from their perspective, that the minister continues not to listen and continues to push through that bad legislation.

But what I asked of the minister—I in fact, I couldn't get an answer from her, so I asked the reeves and the representatives from the RMs and City of Brandon. I asked them exactly what was the process, how did you get this moving, what was the secret sauce that you guys used that made this actually work for your particular region. And, you know, they said that they opened up a line of communication; they reached out to departmental officials; they did absolutely everything that they could.

And even at best, even when they did the absolute best job of communicating with this government—this is a simple change, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a simple change that simply takes a structure that wasn't working and puts into law a structure that will work for this particular planning district—even at that point, they couldn't get this moving forward and they couldn't get the government to react fast enough to have this in place for when they wanted to, which was January of 2020.

So, as I said as I began, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm glad that we can push the government here to get this moving—to get this bill moving forward. I'm glad that we can stand with the people of Brandon and of Westman to say that this is an important bill that we will support and we will ensure it gets royal assent today so that they can move forward in the Keystone Planning District starting in January 2021, that we can move past this.

And we will continue to stand with them as they oppose the further changes that they—that are happening across the province more broadly with regards to municipal relations, while they stand opposed to the cuts that they've seen in their local municipalities, the freezes and the downloading of responsibility over and over again with no funding and no support.

These are serious issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The official opposition will continue to stand with municipalities and represent their voices here in the Legislature. We hope that the government will listen, will rescind or amend legislation as requested by the AMM and by municipalities and, maybe for once, listen to the people of the municipalities in Manitoba, the local elected officials, hear their voice in the Legislature and stand up for them rather than jamming through and taking back more power at every turn.

So, with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that this bill does move forward, that we move forward on royal assent and this moves forward today.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to congratulate the councils of the RM of Cornwallis, the RM of Elton and the City of Brandon for their ability to work together and to find an equitable and satisfactory way to move forward.

This piece of legislation is a part of that process, and it will allow the City of Brandon to look after its own subdivision and that is a good step forward. I think, overall, these are substantive and good changes. I've talked to one of the councillors recently in Brandon who's very supportive of this initiative, and I think that it will benefit the people of the city of Brandon and the changes in terms of the planning district will benefit the RM of Cornwallis and the RM of Elton.

So, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record, and I look forward to many, many successful years ahead for the City of Brandon, for the RM of Cornwallis and for the RM of Elton.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any other further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question? *[Agreed]*

The question before the House is the concurrence and third reading of Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *Agreed? [Agreed]*

Bill 9—The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So now we'll go on to Bill 9, The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

The honourable member for justice—or, no, the Minister for Justice.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 9, The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Justice, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: Just for the record, I do actually represent the community of justice, so you were correct on both occasions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is my pleasure to rise and give third reading to Bill 9, The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act today. This bill will allow our Province to join many others in a class-action lawsuit aimed at holding opioid manufacturers accountable for the damaging effects their products have had on the health and well-being of Manitobans.

This bill is another step in our government's commitment to address mental health and addictions challenges in our province. I look forward to the support of this House and the passage of this bill so that we can take on those companies that have created such significant and ongoing harm.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): To put some final words on the record in respect of Bill 9. The other day when we were doing second reading, Deputy Speaker, of Bill 9, I had put a little bit of words on the record about my own mom. I had shared that and I wanted to share that, you know. Of course, I posted that video and, you know, in honour of my mom because, of course, it was her birthday two days later.

And in response, I had so many messages, kind messages, thoughtful messages, but I also had messages from people that are struggling, that their own family members are struggling, including a young woman who her father died in July of an overdose. And I asked this young woman, I said, had your father been dealing with addictions for a long time and she said no, she said he had started dealing with addictions

only in 2017. And so here's this young woman starting her path in her life and in, you know, three short years lost her father to addictions, to overdose.

* (15:30)

And so I want to bring her words into the House this afternoon and let her know how important she is and how important her father was and how her father deserved all the supports that he should have been entitled to. And that I lift her up for the courage of reaching out, and I lift her up for the courage of supporting her father.

I had other folks who reached out to me, including folks that are on the frontlines of addictions, working in some of our prevention organizations and harm reduction organizations, who shared with me that this year alone there's been over 400—based on their knowledge and research and being on the frontlines, there's been over 400 overdoses in Manitoba.

And I want to take this opportunity to remind the House that the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) has been asking repeatedly in the House since we returned back in October if the Pallister government could provide the statistics on overdoses in Manitoba. And to this very second—it is 3:31 on Thursday, December 3rd—we still haven't been offered that information. And that's critical information. You know, I know that, you know, like most Canadians, we've watched in awe the public health doctor in BC, who is just phenomenal. Like, on so many fronts, the way that she's handled the pandemic.

But coupled with handling the pandemic, she's also talked about the overdoses that BC is dealing with. And she's done it in such a genuine, compassionate, loving way. And I commend her for that, because the families of—who are left behind deserve to have that recognition and citizens deserve to know what the statistics are in their particular province.

And so, I ask the Pallister government. I ask those—the Health Minister, I ask them to release those statistics to Manitobans, so that Manitobans can see the effect of overdose in our province and the effect that it has in the lives of families like this young woman.

Finally, I just want to say as well, from all the people that reached out to me, I want to acknowledge each and every one of them, the commitment and dedication that they had and still have to their loved one. I said—in my second reading debate, I said, you know, when you're a family member dealing with a

loved one who has addictions, you try everything, Deputy Speaker. You yell at them, you cry with them, you plead with them, you laugh with them, you rage with them, you give them all of the love that you have while trying to keep away that fear that we all intrinsically have.

And so, to all of those Manitobans, I want them to know that I see them and I hear them, and that I stand with them as we continue to fight for resources and supports and recognition for folks who are struggling with addictions.

And again, I ask our Premier (Mr. Pallister), I ask our Health Minister to take this issue seriously and to put in the supports that are needed because we all deserve equity. We all deserve the ability to access those resources and those supports, regardless of whether or not we have addictions.

And with that, I say miigwech.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to speak to this bill, which is geared to allow Manitoba to join in a lawsuit together with British Columbia and a number of other provinces, to seek payment from the large pharmaceutical companies who've been involved in selling and promoting opioids.

It is right and proper that we do this, and that we try to recover some funds, which we can use to help those who have addictions and make sure that we have the right services and supports here.

But, as we do this, I think it is also really important that we don't let our focus shift from helping Manitobans who have addictions. Too many Manitobans have addictions. We need to collect better data on the number of people who have had overdoses and, further than that, the number of people who have addictions to opioids.

We need to collect this information so that we have the information that we need to properly pursue this lawsuit, but we also need to have this information so that we can better address the opioid addiction and the problem of overdoses and ensure that we have better treatment and better care for those who have opioid addictions and that we have sufficient staff and resources to help those who have addictions.

We need this information, in part, so that we have the information as to what the cost will be for treating these individuals properly and adequately. We need to know the number of health professionals. We need to know the extent of the resources that we need. We are too low right now on staff treating addictions. We are

too behind on the provision of adequate information but we certainly need, as we get into the lawsuit, a much better understanding of the real cost that the job that we need to do, which is to help and treat those who have addictions and to help them move beyond their addictions into a more productive lifestyle.

Unless we have that information on the costs that it will take to treat people properly and the resources—human resources and other resources that it will take—we will not be able to properly budget in the upcoming budget but, more than that, we need this information to properly pursue this lawsuit because if we underestimate the cost of treating and helping people, then we will underestimate the amount of money that we're asking for from this lawsuit.

And so I call on this government to do this job properly, to make sure that they really have the proper information on what is needed to help and treat people adequately in terms of human resources, in terms of other resources and so that we can properly budget for this so that we can be ready with the lawsuit and give the courts the proper information for them to act in deciding what any settlement might be.

So I say to the minister and to the government, please do your due diligence. Make sure that the information is there. Make sure that we know what the costs and the resources are to do the job properly. We will be in a better position to pursue this lawsuit if we know the damage that has been done from the opioid addictions. We will know better to pursue this lawsuit if we know the costs of helping people adequately.

We must have this information for the lawsuit but we must have this information to help people properly who have opioid addictions.

There are too many who are still calling out for help. I get emails and messages and calls very frequently, including from Brandon, from Winnipeg and from elsewhere in rural Manitoba of the desperate needs of so many individuals. It is a tragic situation. It is a difficult situation to deal with but that is what governments are there for: to deal with difficult circumstances, to help people adequately and to make sure that the resources and the human resources are there and that we can do the job that we need to do.

Thank you.

* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 9, The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*.

I declare the motion carried.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 42—The Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So now we'll go on to debate in concurrence of third reading of Bill 42, The Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act, various acts amendment. It—we—on the—we have—the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) has 13 minutes remaining. *[interjection]*

Is there leave to have the bill remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No? It was—leave has been denied.

Any more speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the concurrence and third reading of Bill 42, The Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act (Various Acts Amended).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*.

I declare the motion carried.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 208—The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So now, we'll go on to concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage).

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I move, seconded by the member from Dauphin, that Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property

from Water and Wildlife Damage), be reported from the Committee of the Whole and concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), seconded by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), that Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage), reported and from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and now read for the third time and passed.

Mr. Johnson: Bill 208 will amend The Wildlife Act to allow local authorities to make decisions on their watersheds with respect to natural debris accumulation. This is great legislation; let's get it moved.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I don't have comments on this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers?

Is the House ready for the—

An Honourable Member: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, the honourable member for the Burrows.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Thanks for the opportunity to speak regarding this Bill 208, and I want to thank the member from Interlake-Gimli for bringing forward this bill. And I want to say thank you to all the members supporting this bill because this bill empowers the local governments regarding decisions related to drainage and protecting farmers' property from wildlife and water.

I started working for Manitoba Agriculture in the Interlake, and I started in the town of Arborg, which is north Interlake. While this bill supports all the producers who are facing these drainage and wildlife damage problems in Manitoba, I think of the Interlake producers because while working as extension co-ordinator in Manitoba Agriculture between December 2014 and February 2017 in north Interlake.

I got an opportunity to work with nice people on their basic problems. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I say nice people, I mean north Interlake conservation effort, and when I say I worked on their basic problems, I mean to say bifrost agriculture sustainability community service co-operative. These were the organizations I used to work with while at Manitoba Agriculture.

Farmers lose a lot due to the drainage problems, and farmers lose their livestock to wildlife predation and they have to go through these MASC claims due to these issues. And I'm happy that all the members in this Chamber, they stood together in support of this bill that empowers local municipalities to authorize a person to remove a beaver lodge or beaver dam, or to remove an obstruction to water flow caused by accumulation of debris if it adversely affects local water flow or land use.

At the same time, I wish that the member, while working on this bill, should have included a few more points. For example, if we're decentralizing the powers to the municipalities, the government should also allot some budget—portion of the budget—to facilitate the local governments to work on what they're supposed to work on. These producers—many of them are grain producers; the rest of them are livestock producers—they used to come to me; we used to organize some information sessions, Grain Information Day, some seminars on beef and livestock production.

And I still have those memories in my mind. They were so much welcoming, because this was my first job with the Province in Manitoba Agriculture and I used to drive from Winnipeg all the way to Arborg where No. 68 ends. And I had a chance to work from the Teulon office as well, and I had chance to interact with Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation staff in south Interlake, in north Interlake and in the Eastman when I moved to the Beausejour office.

So it's good news, and I'm happy, with my caucus members and all other members in the Chamber, to support this bill that would help solve a few of the problems that our producers are facing.

* (15:50)

So, as today is the last day of the session before we come back in the year 2021, before we conclude, I want to say happy holidays to all who are listening, merry Christmas and your respective festivals during this season. And at the same time, I want to say this: that the Sikh community, during the Christmastime, while they're celebrating Christmas—this is the same time when it's a remembrance week because it's this time of the year when then-Sikh Guru sacrificed all the—four of his sons.

The older princes, while fighting for human rights, and the younger princes, aged nine years and seven years, who were bricked alive by the then-government. So it's a mixed feeling for the Sikh

community, so let's stand together with them and let's remind ourselves that we have to stand up for human rights.

I would conclude here. Thank you so much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to speak regarding this bill. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers? Is the House ready for the question—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just a few words on this Bill 208, which deals with transferring the responsibilities for protecting farmers from the department of conservation to the local municipality.

I think this is a good move. We are, in the Manitoba Liberal Party, all in favour of good, local decisions, and we think this is appropriate. The people in the local government are much more on top of the local situation, know the people and the farmers and the wildlife in the area well and can make good decisions with respect to the future of beaver dams.

I want also to say that, it's a time when we can recognize and honour the beavers, even if we don't always appreciate some of the dams that they build, and that the beaver, of course, is a national Canadian symbol. And the beaver, like Canadians, is industrious, of course, building dams and buildings homes. Like Canadians, as we know, from the stories of Anahareo and Grey Owl, beavers can be very friendly and very fascinating, but they can also be very fierce defenders of those who would attack them. Again, I would suggest, somewhat like Canadian personality, at times.

So, I think, even as we shift the responsibility—because this is about beavers, after all—that we should at least honour the beavers for the wonderful things that beavers are, for the contribution that beavers have made to the history of our country and the fur trade, and for the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —contribution that they continue to make to wildlife and the nature that we enjoy in our province.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act, (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 300—The United Church of Canada Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll go on to concurrence and third reading of Bill 300, The United Church of Canada Amendment Act.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I move, seconded by the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston), that The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred—be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Riding Mountain, seconded by the honourable member for Assiniboia, that Bill 300, The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and then now read for the third time and passed.

The honourable member for River Heights—I mean, the honourable member for Riding Mountain.

Mr. Nesbitt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill 300, legislation that will amend The United Church of Canada Act to reflect changes to the church's governance structure that were agreed to at the 43rd General Council in 2018. As was stated during second reading and again at committee, this democratic change in structure will allow the church to meet the realities of today's society.

One of the big changes involves the United Church of Canada moving from four courts—pastoral charge, presbytery, conference and General Council—to three councils: a local community of faith or the congregation, a regional council and a national General Council.

The United Church of Canada was incorporated in 1924 by an act of Parliament. That same year, the Manitoba Act was passed in this Legislature dealing with property rights and powers of the United Church in Manitoba. This means that any significant structural or administrative changes made federally must also be ratified through provincial legislation and that's why we are here today.

I want to thank all members who spoke to this bill on second reading for the kind words about the faith-based work of the United Church in Manitoba, as well as its respected role in societal change and global affairs.

I look forward to unanimous passage of this important bill this afternoon.

Thank you.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): This is the second time I've had the chance to speak on this bill, but I'm happy to put some additional words on the record in support of this bill which will be helpful for the United Church of Canada.

As has been acknowledged, this bill reflects recent changes in the governance structure of the United Church and we know that this was a difficult decision to make, as it meant eliminating many jobs across the national church.

But one thing that I know about the United Church is that, in addition to embracing a progressive, inclusive theology, that they have historically been able to adapt to changes: changes in population, economics, cultural shifts, new learnings about old history, such as their role in Indian residential schools, and even today, adapting to the pandemic by rapidly shifting to online services, meetings and other supports.

Members of the United Church, like most faith communities, would prefer to meet in person to pass the peace and worship side by side with their friends, neighbours and loved ones, but the United Church is also—progress a—is a progressive spiritual community whose faith does not preclude a belief in science and respect for public health and government.

The UCC wants their members to be safe and to be part of the solution and not part of the problem, so United Church congregations across the country have followed public health orders and have not attempted to find ways to work around them. The national church has provided many digital resources for supporting worship at home, pastoral care and other important elements of their faith community.

The United Church of Canada is the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, ministering to over 2 million people and about 3,000 congregations, and I didn't know it was an act of parliament in 1924, but I know that the United Church inaugurated on June 10th of 1925 in Toronto, Ontario, when the Canadian Methodist Church, the Congregational

Union of Canada and 70 per cent of the Presbyterian Church of Canada entered into a union. Also joining was the small General Council of Union Churches centred largely in western Canada.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

It was the first union of churches in the world to cross historical denominational lines and receive international acclaim. Each of the founding churches had a long history in Canada prior to 1925 and the movement for church union began with the desire to actually co-ordinate ministry out here in the vast Canadian northwest. Congregations in Indigenous communities from each of the original denominations were an important factor in the effort toward church union.

I mentioned during the last debate on Bill 300 that the United Church was the first church in Canada to welcome lesbian/gay members back in 1988 and to agree that individual churches could decide to call gay and lesbian ministers to serve. At the time of its inception in 1925, the United Church of Canada considered homosexuality a sin and openly LGBTQ persons were rejected as candidates for ministry, but by the 1970s, United Church members were adapting to new understandings of human sexuality and humanity, and as early as 1977, the United Church urged Canada's Parliament to amend human rights laws to protect gay men and lesbians against discrimination.

* (16:00)

In 1988, the United Church formed a task force that released a report called *Gift, Dilemma and Promise: A Report and Affirmations of Human Sexuality*. This report stated that all human beings, regardless of sexual orientations, are persons made in the image of God and recommended that the Church welcome sexually active gay men, lesbians and bisexuals into all aspects of the Church, including the ministry.

On August 24th, 1988, at about 20 to 1 in the morning actually, the United Church General Council commissioners, by a three-to-one majority, endorsed a statement called *Membership Ministry and Human Sexuality* that stated all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, professed their faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to be or become members of the United Church of Canada and that all members of the United Church are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry.

Taken together, these two statements opened the door for openly gay men and women to join ministry. I won't pretend that those changes came quickly. It took about four years before the first openly gay minister was ordained and there were splits in the church, with some congregations leaving the United Church or members continuing to speak out against the inclusion of lesbian, gay or bisexual members for many years. However, slowly but surely, the UCC adapted to modern times, to science and to their own theology of a loving and accepting God.

Today, the United Church of Canada is active in fighting against harmful practices such as conversion therapy. The statement on their website states that the United Church of Canada affirms the value and dignity of all people and rejects any therapy or practice that labels LGBTQIA+ and two-spirit people as abnormal, broken or otherwise not whole individuals.

We strongly condemn the practice of conversion therapy or any efforts that attempt to change a person's sexual or gender identity through treatment that is hostile to a person's identity; unethical; spiritual and psychologically damaging; and not supported by evidence.

And since we're currently, right now, on day nine of the 16 days of activism for gender-based violence, I thought I would also share about the United Church's leadership among religious organizations on gender-based violence. It's a topic they've been talking about also since the eighties.

Their website today says this: Sex- and gender-based violence is deeply rooted in our cultures, institutions and religions. It affects ourselves, those we love and our communities, country and world. Public campaigns and movements such as #MeToo, Time's Up, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and the World Council of Churches' Thursdays in Black initiative have affected our thinking, our faith and our activism.

When listening to painful and inspirational stories of survivors of sex- and gender-based violence, we hear God calling us to work with each other to affirm the human dignity, rights and needs of all. Gender-based violence can be experienced in many ways. This is violence rooted in gendered norms or social expectations that are arbitrary and discriminatory.

It includes domestic violence and rape; date rape; rape as a weapon of war; trafficking of women and girls; female genital mutilation; child marriage and

forced marriage; and ill treatment of women, girls and LGBTQ+ people in the criminal justice system.

Transgender, gender non-conforming, intersex people and lesbian and bisexual women are at increased risk of violence. They may face corrective rape, forced 'impregnation' or physical attacks. Gay and bisexual men, as well as heterosexual men and boys, can also experience violence that stems from socially determined norms and expectations.

This type of violence does not operate in isolation. For example, racialized and Indigenous women are more likely to face violence, and women who experience domestic and sexual violence can be pushed into a cycle of poverty.

And their website goes on to linked resources and other information as they take leadership on this issue and encourage congregants to take action.

And one final issue I want to mention about the leadership of the United Church is they've done so much work on a variety of social justice issues, and I'd encourage any member of our House to take a look at their website and see some of their teachings. But I want to share particularly what I was reading about their leadership on racism.

It says this on their website: Although we believe that God is found in our common diversity, the sin of racism is present in our society and in our church. The United Church is committed to becoming an anti-racist church through a continuous struggle against racism. Change is possible. We believe in forgiveness, reconciliation and transformation and the potential to learn from stories and experiences.

The United Church of Canada's 'anti-racism'-racism policy, that all may be one, names four key areas of work: organized for the full participation of all people; organized for diversity by supporting anti-racism work and promoting positive relationships among diverse people; act justly within the church's structures, courts, policies and practice; and speak to the world by supporting anti-racism work within broader society. There's so much we could be learning, even as a Legislature, about the governance and the leadership coming from this church and those practices.

The website goes on to say that, our commitment to racial justice includes building right relationships with our neighbours, particularly reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. It means engaging in interfaith dialogue and speaking out against violence and discrimination rooted in

racial and religious bigotry, including 'islahobia' and anti-Semitism. It finds expression in our intercultural vision. It means having the courage to talk about racism and white privilege in our church and our society.

As the United Church moderator, the one-time United Church moderator, and my long-time friend Jordan Cantwell put it in her March 2017 letter to the church: We need to name and examine our fears, prejudices and assumptions. The privilege that many of us are born with may desensitize us to the injustice, exclusion and hate that some in our community experience on a daily basis. Only in that way can we build as that all may be one envisioned, a church and society where all are welcome—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, just a few words on Bill 300 dealing with changes to the United Church. We on the Manitoba Liberals, we support this legislation and support the United Church as it moves forward on a progressive plan to bring the church further ahead as—and prepare for the future and for the coming years.

I want to speak not so much about the ideas, which have been adequately reviewed by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor). The United Church, indeed, is a progressive church. This can be illustrated by the choice in 1992 of Stan McKay as the moderator, the leader of the church. He was from Fisher River, a well-known and highly recognized Indigenous leader, and he led the United Church from 1992 to 1994 and has an outstanding career and made many contributions to our country, to Manitoba and to our society.

I also want to mention a friend, Don Robertson, who lived for a while in River Heights. He passed away just under a year ago. He's from Norway House. He became a minister in the United Church and spent quite a number of years in Melita. He was very wise and conscientious individual who I respected greatly.

I also want to mention Karen Lumley, who's the minister at the River Heights St. Andrew's United Church where Naomi and I are members. She has provided excellent leadership from many, many perspectives, and I just want to compliment her and all the leaders of the United Church and just to say in summing up that it is with pleasure and with an honour that I'm here today to speak about this bill and to speak and with praise about the work that the United Church

has done, and its leaders, and will do and continue to do in the years ahead.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak on debate?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 300, The United Church of Canada Amendment Act.

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

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS (Continued)

Bill 218—The Somali Heritage Week Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to bill 208, The Somali Heritage Week Act.

* (16:10)

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 218, The Somali Heritage Week Act, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: I'm grateful to have an opportunity to put a few more words on the record in regards to this bill, of which I'm very proud to be able to bring forward on behalf of community members, not just in Union Station, but certainly Somali community members all across Manitoba.

First, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff and clerks and folks here at the Legislature who have made it possible for us to actually participate in this democratic process and have worked above and beyond to make Manitoba a leader in making sure that virtual sittings can happen during this pandemic and moving forward.

Madam Speaker, I want to share a little bit about my own family's history. My parents immigrated to Canada, to Winnipeg, in the late 1970s, and very early on in my life my parents instilled in me that community is so important and that being proud of your identities is so important, and that to live in a place that celebrates who you are and recognizes you as a whole person is critical to not only individuals but

whole communities being able to thrive and raise their families and to achieve their goals and dreams and aspirations.

And it's those lessons that I learned from elders in my own community—I'm a first generation Nigerian-Canadian—it's those lessons that I learned from elders in my community, from my parents that have really informed the ways in which I try to do my work as a public servant and as a legislator. And I'm really grateful for those lessons, and I'm grateful for the ongoing efforts of people in our communities to make sure that their identities, that their origins, are respected and celebrated here in Manitoba.

So, I want to make sure that I acknowledge someone really, really special, you know, a couple of folks who are at the root of why this bill was brought forward. And first I'd like to acknowledge Mayran Kalah; I mentioned her this morning. I first actually met Mayran at a comedy night. Mayran is a comedian, amongst many other things; she's hilarious, and I met her at a comedy night at the Good Will Social Club. I couldn't believe, after watching her perform, that it was the second time ever that she'd ever performed comedy on a stage.

And what was so special about Mayran's performance was that she was talking from a place of lived experience as a refugee, as an immigrant, as a mother, she says, to 7,000 kids, someone who came from the bushes of Somalia here—to here in Winnipeg. And we formed a friendship after that evening. I was just in awe of how passionate she was for community and the work that she did selflessly on behalf of her community.

And Mayran introduced me, down the road, to Fowsia Sheikhal, who's become a dear friend and is somebody who actually brought the idea for this bill forward to me initially. And, you know, it's building those relationships that lead to moments like this where we see bills being passed that reflect the needs of the communities here in Manitoba.

Interestingly enough, Manitoba will become the second jurisdiction in North America to pass a piece of legislation like this. The first jurisdiction is Ontario, where MPP-NDP MPP Faisal Hassan passed that piece of legislation. And Faisal came to Canada, I believe, 1990, and actually the first place that he resided was right here in Winnipeg, and, you know, as a recently elected MPP in Ontario, made a point of making sure that, you know, his community, as a Somali immigrant, is celebrated, uplifted and acknowledged. And it was because he passed that

legislation in Ontario that Fowsia was inspired to bring this forward and ask if we could do the same thing in Union Station.

And what that really speaks to to me, Madam Speaker, is the importance of representation, the foundational importance of folks seeing themselves reflected in their elected officials and the opportunities that are generated from that representation, the confidence that's generated for people to be able to go to their elected officials who they see themselves in and ask them to put forward a bill that would amplify the voices and the beauty that is encompassed in their community.

That's so important, Madam Speaker, and the significance of that is not lost on me. And the connections that are made in our communities in Manitoba, and broadly, are not lost on me either.

So, one of the last things I'd like to talk about is why a bill like this is so important. Yes, it's important to celebrate Somali heritage week and Somali Independence Day and to celebrate communities, but it's also important to acknowledge that, you know, there are many folks who live in Manitoba who are still facing disproportionate, negative things that they shouldn't have to in 2020.

A few years ago, Mayran actually invited me to meet with a group of Somali women in Union Station—before it was Union Station. And we met at the University of Winnipeg. And she asked me if I, as a friend and as a community organizer, would meet with her and this group of Somali women, most of them mothers, because they were facing challenges in our communities: challenges around housing, accessing education, dealing with xenophobia, anti-black racism, Islamophobia, Madam Speaker. All things that shouldn't exist in 2020, shouldn't have existed at the time a few years ago when we met.

And, fortunately—and I certainly have a greater appreciation now for how busy MLAs are—but fortunately, the MLA for St. Johns actually attended that meeting with us and very graciously shared some of her time to help provide support and concrete, tangible answers for these folks in terms of how they could strategize and find solutions around the issues that they were facing.

Madam Speaker, it's many of those women, it's many of those community members who are an integral part of why I'm elected today. There are many first-time voters in this most recent election who come from, you know, these communities, who supported

me in my election. And I'm really excited to be able to share that, you know, for all the folks who are following Manitoba politics, who are learning more and more about what's going on, all the folks that we represent in Union Station. I'm really proud to be able to be a part of a team in this NDP caucus that recognizes and uplifts and celebrates and champions the beautifully dynamic communities here in Manitoba. I'm really proud to be a part of that. And I'm really proud to be in a position where we can celebrate those communities in the way of law and passing legislation.

Madam Speaker, I think it is so important that, moving forward, we recognize the capacity that we each possess as legislators to do the absolute most in ensuring that we're moving our province in a direction of true equity, that we're doing the absolute most to ensure that every single member of our constituencies feels seen and heard by this Legislature.

And I'm grateful that today we're going to pass a piece of Legislation that will contribute to that, not only in Union Station but, as I've said, broader Manitoba and, quite frankly, across North America. Hopefully, this will encourage other jurisdictions to follow suit and pass similar pieces of legislation as well.

So, thank you for the time to be able to put a few more words on the record today. I want to thank all members of this House for supporting this Bill today and I want to wish everyone safe and healthy and happy holidays. I'm looking forward to—you know, I know we're in a pandemic and it's challenging times, but I am looking forward to each of us, in our own unique ways, in our own unique traditions, being able to celebrate, you know, the holidays as best as we possibly can.

So, well wishes to everyone and thank you.

* (16:20)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights?

Is the honourable member for Tyndall Park online?

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Ms. Lamoureux: I just want to get a few short words on record.

I want to thank the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) for bringing this legislation forward and for sharing their stories, for claiming the week of June 25th to July 1st each year as Somalia heritage week.

It's a bill we are very happy to support, to celebrate independence for Somalia, Somaliland and Djibouti, because it recognizes the history and everyday contributions that Somalia Canadians continue to contribute to our great province.

So again, we're very happy to support this bill and we're looking forward to its passage.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 218, The Somali Heritage Week Act.

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

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PRIVATE BILLS (Continued)

Bill 301—The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) that Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, be reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm just going to keep it very, very quick.

I just want to thank members of the Chamber for the—everybody in the House for supporting Bill 301. I think that we can all agree the Winnipeg Humane Society does phenomenal work in the lives of animals all across Manitoba, and so I just want to say to them, congratulations, happy holidays and again, miigwech for their work.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying a thank you to you as Speaker, to the clerks, to all those who work in the Legislative Building and who've made the historic session that we are in at the moment a success. It has been quite an effort. Moving virtual has required a lot of adjustments and—but it has worked with this hybrid format; and for me, being completely virtual the last little while, it's been an interesting experience.

I also want to pay a tribute to the Winnipeg Humane Society and to the animals that they so well care for. The Winnipeg Humane Society has done an incredible job over many, many years, and it's good to see their efforts being supported in the changes in this bill.

Pets are amazing. During—over many years, Naomi and I have had dogs and cats as pets, and our kids have had a variety of other animals. But I remember in particular one dog, whose name was Charlie; he was a Newfoundland dog and a big dog.

But he was amazing, because we would go swimming and he would go out to our kids and come up to them and turn around so they could grab on, and he would pull them in. And they would do this time and time again. And of course, Newfoundlands—I don't know whether they have an inherent ability or this is trained—but they're amazingly able to rescue people. And my kids were swimming well, they weren't in any particular danger, but it was just wonderful to see him interacting with our kids and doing wonderful things.

And they learned a lot from having dogs and cats: patience, caring for animals, just a lot about the world and the interaction of people and animals, and why animals can teach us so much and share so much with us and help us to learn so much.

Animals are amazing because of their impact on people's health. Having a pet—a dog or a cat—improves the health and the life and the well-being of people. And study after study has shown this. I'm sure that part of this with dogs is people having to get some exercise, to take their dog for a walk and get outside, but I think that there's a lot of other things that animals contribute in terms of ability to provide comfort and companionship, and be able to listen to somebody who's upset and be able to help them work through it in a way that only a pet can.

Madam Speaker, just with those words in support of the Winnipeg Humane Society and in tribute to the

animals that we have as pets and who serve us so well and are such great companions.

Thank you, as we close the session. Merci. Miigwech.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): To speak to this bill, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Opposition House Leader for bringing forward the bill. The Winnipeg Humane Society; it's a place that I've had the opportunity to visit a number of times with my son, who's a huge animal lover, as I am, and it's been great to see the work that they do.

I mentioned in the House a while back that when my very beloved 14-year-old dachshund passed away earlier this year, we, of course, after a while started to think about the process of getting another dog and looked at the Humane Society.

We were stunned to find out that dogs are a hot commodity during a pandemic. There's a lot of odd hot commodities during a pandemic, toilet paper being one of the early ones in the pandemic. More recently, animals, as a lot of people have gotten pets—because they've been home for a long period of time.

So there wasn't a lot of dogs available at the Humane Society. So we ended up getting a Jackapoo, a cross between a Jack Russell terrier and a miniature poodle, which we've now had for a few weeks. His name is Reagan [*phonetic*]; you can probably figure out why.

But he's really settling in—I know, the member for Concordia's (Mr. Wiebe) not very happy about this, but I'm sure he's probably had a pet named Layton [*phonetic*] or something, I don't know. But I do appreciate the addition that he is to our family but, more specifically, the work that the Humane Society does.

I also want to acknowledge, as other member in the House have done, the great work of the members, or sort of the staff of this Assembly. And that, of course, starts with the Clerk's office, it extends to everyone who's been involved in making this virtual sitting happen.

Back in March, when the discussions about virtual sitting were beginning, I—it was hard to get my mind around that, conceptually, how it would work. And I wouldn't want to say I was skeptical or not certain that it could be done, but there were times when I wondered how it would be done. And I want to say that it's really been remarkable.

I mean, there's only been a few hiccups that have happened now and again, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has sometimes accidentally popped up on the screen and wasn't able to leave, but other than those, you know, few very small inconveniences, it really, really has been quite something.

Last week, I was a virtual member—as opposed to a member without virtues—but I was a virtual member in the Assembly, my—number of health conditions and my family that did—it was important that I was home, or closer to home, last week.

And it was kind of a neat experience, to see how the whole thing worked, and it worked really, really well. The moderators and others did a great job of getting us connected. There was something unique about ending the day at five o' clock and leaving the Assembly and moving right into your kitchen. And it was actually quite a neat experience, actually.

But it gave me an appreciation for how well the staff of the Assembly have made this work. Now, all of us would rather be here, you know, in person, but for the weeks or months that this might go on for, this is an alternative to allow members to be able to be the voice for their constituents because when they're not in the Assembly, either virtually or personally, they can't be the voice for their constituents. And so at the early part of this pandemic, it wasn't a good situation where members couldn't be here to represent their constituents.

* (16:30)

And so all of you have done a tremendous job in making this happen and some day, Madam Speaker—this is an old Gary Doer joke, but some day in the—some day you'll be hung in the Legislature—your picture will be hung in the Legislature, of course—and we will all, I think, God willing, gather together for that event, and I hope that you remark a little bit at that time about what it was like to be a Speaker during a pandemic, because it truly is historic and I look forward to your reminiscence about it then.

Hopefully, of course, well on the other side of the pandemic at this point and all those who are involved in this, I'm sure, will share their experiences, either in the clerk's forums or in the parliamentarian forums that we have, but I really look forward to hearing that on the other side when we can actually get together.

But speaking of getting together, this December's going to be a little bit different. So those who are celebrating Hanukkah or Christmas or Kwanza or the

various different celebrations that happen that are religious-based on or not during December are not going to be the same, for sure.

And that'll make all of us sad, that we can't get together in the way that we would like to get together, Madam Speaker, but I know and you would know from talking to people who've gone through different hardships in their life, whatever those hardships are, that often they come through those hardships with something that has transformed them or made them better people or given them a better perspective of life or the importance of life or the importance of time with family.

So as difficult as this is for all of us, I do hope that on the other side of this, that we all find a way to take something positive from it because we don't want to just survive the pandemic and come through with nothing that makes us better people or better individuals or better legislators or better parents or better whatever is in our life. And so I hope that we all find a way to find something positive on the other side of the pandemic and hopefully the other side is very soon.

So with that, Madam Speaker, I want to thank everybody who has been involved in this very unique and historic session. I've been House leader at different times for many, many years, probably 10 years in total if you add them all together and it's been the most unique session that I've ever had the opportunity to be a part of.

And so I appreciate all of the efforts that have gone on for all the members who have learned many, many things, I'm sure, but ultimately I think that we can be proud of how we've come through this part of the pandemic and we'll see what happens in the spring when we start up again in March.

So to all the members of the House, regardless of your faith or your beliefs or however you're going to be spending this particular holiday season, I truly wish each of you peace, health and the greatest opportunity to spend time with family in the most difficult time. May it still be the most blessed time for you.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

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

And as previously agreed, we shall now proceed to royal assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Honour Janice C. Filmon, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

At this sitting, the Legislative Assembly has passed certain bills that I ask Your Honour to give assent to.

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier):

Bill 4—The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed); Loi sur les heures d'ouverture des commerces de détail (modification ou abrogation de diverses lois)

Bill 7—The Planning Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire

Bill 9—The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act; Loi sur le recouvrement du montant des dommages-intérêts et du coût des soins de santé imputables aux opioïdes

Bill 42—The Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur l'attestation à distance (modification de diverses lois)

Bill 208—The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de

la faune (protection des biens contre les dommages causés par les eaux et la faune)

* (16:40)

Bill 211—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Unpaid Leave for Reservists); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé non payé à l'intention des réservistes)

Bill 218—The Somali Heritage Week Act; Loi sur la Semaine du patrimoine somalien

Bill 300—The United Church of Canada Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Église-unie du Canada

Bill 301—The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation « The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation »

Clerk: In Her Majesty's name, Her Honour assents to these bills.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

God Save the Queen was played.

O Canada was played.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you canvass the House to see if it is the will of the members to call it 5 p.m.?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of members to call it 5 p.m.? [*Agreed*]

And prior to rising, I just want to take a moment to wish everybody and your families the best of the season, in whatever way you may celebrate. It's certainly going to be a tough one for all of us because of this pandemic, but I hope everybody will find a way to share comfort and joy with family and friends.

Take care of yourselves, too, and stay safe.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until March 3, 2021, or the call of the Speaker.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 3, 2020

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Hydro Rate Increase	
		Kinew	1278
Introduction of Bills		Pallister	1278
Bill 220–The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act		Rent Control Program	
Lindsey	1269	Kinew	1278
		Pallister	1278
Ministerial Statements		Personal Protective Equipment	
Conservation Officers		Asagwara	1279
Guillemard	1269	Friesen	1279
Kinew	1270	Internationally Educated Nurses	
Gerrard	1270	Marcelino	1280
		Friesen	1280
Members' Statements		Legislative Session	
Princess Auto		Fontaine	1281
Martin	1271	Pallister	1281
Home-Care Workers		Manitoba Hydro	
Wiebe	1271	Sala	1282
		Pallister	1282
2020 Retrospective		Manitoba Network Contract	
Nesbitt	1272	Lamont	1283
Garry Raven		Pallister	1284
Bushie	1272	Bell MTS Merger	
Tyndall Park		Lamont	1284
Lamoureux	1273	Pallister	1284
Speaker's Statement		Clerk of the Executive Council	
Driedger	1273	Lamont	1285
		Pallister	1285
Oral Questions		Small-Business Support	
Senator Murray Sinclair Retirement		Teitsma	1285
Kinew	1275	Eichler	1285
Pallister	1276	Speaker's Ruling	
Health-Care Services		Driedger	1285
Kinew	1276	Speaker's Statement	
Pallister	1276	Driedger	1286
COVID-19 Testing in Schools		Petitions	
Kinew	1276	Vivian Sand Facility Project–Clean Environment	
Pallister	1277	Commission Review	
COVID-19 Financial Assistance		Gerrard	1286
Kinew	1277	Cochlear Implant Program	
Pallister	1277	Lamoureux	1287

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

Government Motion

Goertzen 1289

Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 7–The Planning Amendment Act
Squires 1290
Wiebe 1291
Gerrard 1293

Bill 9–The Opioid Damages and Health Care
Costs Recovery Act
Cullen 1293
Fontaine 1293
Gerrard 1294

Debate on Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 42–The Remote Witnessing and
Commissioning Act (Various Acts Amended) 1295

Concurrence and Third Readings–Public Bills

Bill 208–The Wildlife Amendment Act
(Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife
Damage)
Johnson 1295
Lamoureux 1296
Brar 1296
Gerrard 1297

Concurrence and Third Readings–Private Bills

Bill 300–The United Church of Canada
Amendment Act
Nesbitt 1297
Naylor 1298
Gerrard 1300

**Concurrence and Third Readings–Public Bills
(Continued)**

Bill 218–The Somali Heritage Week Act
Asagwara 1300
Lamoureux 1302

**Concurrence and Third Readings–Private Bills
(Continued)**

Bill 301–The Winnipeg Humane Society
Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act
Fontaine 1302
Gerrard 1303
Goertzen 1303

Royal Assent

Bill 4–The Retail Business Hours of Operation
Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed) 1305

Bill 7–The Planning Amendment Act 1305

Bill 9–The Opioid Damages and Health Care
Costs Recovery Act 1305

Bill 42–The Remote Witnessing and
Commissioning Act (Various Acts Amended) 1305

Bill 208–The Wildlife Amendment Act
(Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife
Damage) 1305

Bill 211–The Employment Standards Code
Amendment Act (Unpaid Leave for Reservists) 1305

Bill 218–The Somali Heritage Week Act 1305

Bill 300–The United Church of Canada
Amendment Act 1305

Bill 301–The Winnipeg Humane Society
Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act 1305

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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