

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

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Speaker*

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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, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	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

Monday, April 19, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everyone.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We'll go on to introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 71—The Education
Property Tax Reduction Act
(Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act
and Income Tax Act Amended)**

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), that Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act. The will—bill will provide \$248 million from rebates, education property taxes and the community revitalization levies to over 658,000 property owners. Rebates will be 25 per cent for residential and farm properties and 10 per cent for other properties in 2021, and higher rebates will be able to be set in regulation in future years.

The bill also provides corresponding reductions in various existing education property tax-related

credits to ensure that all property owners are paying 25 per cent less in residential and farmlands.

Lastly, the bill will provide zero per cent rent guidelines in 2022-23 while residential rents could be adjusted. Provincial cheques will be—to property owners can be released once the bill receives royal assent.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to—when I was introducing that, when I—reporting the bill here, it's actually, on Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, and property tax installation assistance act and the income tax amendment act. So I just wanted to state that when I spoke—introduced the minister.

So now we'll go—is it all—is will to the House to accept the bill of—Bill 71 as first reading? *[Agreed]*

Bill 226—The Red Tape Reduction Day Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll go on to the next bill, Bill 226.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), that Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, this legislation will designate the third Tuesday of September as the red tape reduction act. I look forward to having the support of all my colleagues on this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it in order that Bill 226 be now read for the first time? All agree?

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

Bill 223—The Spirit Bear Day Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll go on to the next bill, Bill 223, The Spirit Bear Day Act, now be read for the first time.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member from Keewatinook, that Bill 223, The Spirit Bear Day Act, be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Smith: I'm honoured to rise today and introduce to this House for the second time, Bill 223, the spirit day act. May 10th, 2016 is an important day in the history of Jordan's Principle. It is a day that Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued its first non-compliance order against the Canadian government.

May 10th is also recognized as spirit day—Spirit Bear's birthday, a bear that has become symbolic of Jordan's Principle. Formally recognizing May 10th as spirit day will help create awareness of Jordan prince—Jordan's Principle and the challenges faced by First Nations children when accessing government services.

I brought forward this bill once before in 2019. Bill 223 is supported by the family whose story inspired Jordan's Principle as well as many First Nations. Spirit Bear Day is already celebrated on May 10th by schools across this province.

I hope Bill 223 will receive the unanimous support of the Assembly in recognition of this important day.

Miigwech, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Now we'll go on to committee reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Sixth Report

Mr. Jon Reyes (Chairperson): I wish to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Economic and Social Development—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Sixth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- April 13, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.
- April 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 33)** – *The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire*
- **Bill (No. 34)** – *The University College of the North Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Collège universitaire du Nord*

Committee Membership

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 13, 2021 and April 15, 2021 meetings, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Committee Membership for the April 13, 2021 meeting:

- Mr. ALTOMARE
- Hon. Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. MOSES
- Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. PIWNIUK
- Mr. REYES

Your Committee elected Mr. REYES as the Chairperson at the April 13, 2021 meeting.

Your Committee elected Mr. PIWNIUK as the Vice-Chairperson at the April 13, 2021 meeting.

Committee Membership for the April 15, 2021 meeting:

- Mr. ALTOMARE
- Hon. Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. MOSES
- Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. PIWNIUK
- Mr. REYES

Your Committee elected Mr. REYES as the Chairperson at the April 15, 2021 meeting.

Your Committee elected Mr. PIWNIUK as the Vice-Chairperson at the April 15, 2021 meeting.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the April 13, 2021 meeting:

- Mr. KINEW

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the April 15, 2021 meeting:

- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following 40 presentations on **Bill (No. 33)** – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement post-secondaire:*

April 13, 2021 meeting

*Patrick Noel, Private Citizen
 Jacqueline Pelland, Private Citizen
 Marianne Hladun, Public Service Alliance of Canada
 Sophia Adeleye, Brandon University Students Union
 Tanjit Nagra, Private Citizen
 Brianne Goertzen, Private Citizen
 Adam Pawlak, Private Citizen
 Savannah Szocs, University of Manitoba Students Union
 Brendan Scott, Private Citizen
 Kristin Smith, Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students
 Jonathon Henderson, University of Winnipeg Student Association, VP of External Affairs
 Michael Shaw, Private Citizen
 Orvie Dingwall, Private Citizen
 Peter Miller, Private Citizen
 Julius Chester, Private Citizen
 Riley Shannon, Private Citizen
 Kiratveer Hayer, Private Citizen
 Joshua Dasman, University of Winnipeg Students' Union
 Robert Chernomas, Private Citizen
 Jennifer Adair, Private Citizen
 Scott Forbes, Manitoba Organization Faculty Association
 Peter Ives, Private Citizen
 Scott Grills, Private Citizen
 Brenden Gali, Canadian Federation of Students – Manitoba
 Jonathan Northam, Private Citizen
 Alannah McKay, Canadian Federation of Students (National)
 Matt McLean, Canadian Union of Public Employees*

April 15, 2021 meeting

*Shawna Peloquin, Private Citizen
 Jim Clark, Private Citizen
 Mike Moroz, Private Citizen
 Mark Gabbert, Private Citizen*

Whitney Hodgins, Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

*Dane Monkman, Private Citizen
 Hannah Mihychuk Marshall, Private Citizen
 Andrew Kohan, Private Citizen
 Joe Curnow, Private Citizen
 Elizabeth Shearer, Private Citizen
 Zach Fleisher, Private Citizen
 Jelynn Dela Cruz, Private Citizen
 Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour*

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following nine written submissions on **Bill (No. 33)** – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire:*

*R.J. Leland, University of Manitoba
 Joanne Parsons, Private Citizen
 Rob Schmidt, Private Citizen
 Eveline Milliken, Private Citizen
 Katinka Stecina, Private Citizen
 Michelle Faubert, Private Citizen
 Othniel Harris, Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society Inc
 Tim Podolsky, Private Citizen
 Tendai Dogo, Private Citizen*

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 33)** – *The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill with the following amendment:

THAT Clause 2(b) of the Bill be amended in the proposed definition "student fee" by adding ", but does not include a fee set by or payable in respect of the student union or student association of a university or college" at the end.

- **Bill (No. 34)** – *The University College of the North Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Collège universitaire du Nord*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Reyes: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll go on to the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma). *[interjection]* Or, the honourable member for Lagimodière.

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Seventh Report

Mr. Andrew Smith (Chairperson): Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Seventh Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- April 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.
- April 16, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 47) – The Early Learning and Child Care Act / Loi sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants**

Committee Membership

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 15, 2021 and April 16, 2021 meetings, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Committee Membership for the April 15, 2021 meeting:

- Ms. ADAMS
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mr. SALA
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Hon. Ms. SQUIRES
- Mr. TEITSMA

Your Committee elected Mr. TEITSMA as the Chairperson at the April 15, 2021 meeting.

Your Committee elected Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE as the Vice-Chairperson at the April 15, 2021 meeting.

Committee Membership for the April 16, 2021 meeting:

- Ms. ADAMS
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. SANDHU
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Mr. SMITH (Lagimodière)
- Hon. Ms. SQUIRES

Your Committee elected Mr. SMITH (Lagimodière) as the Chairperson at the April 16, 2021 meeting.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the April 15, 2021 meeting:

- Ms. LAMOUREUX

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the April 16, 2021 meeting:

- Ms. LAMOUREUX

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following 31 presentations on **Bill (No. 47) – The Early Learning and Child Care Act / Loi sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants**:*

April 15, 2021 meeting

Laura Burla, Private citizen
Jodie Kehl, Manitoba Child Care Association
Susan Prentice, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
Megan Turner, Making Roots Montessori Centre
Anna Weier, Private citizen
Cindy Curry, Private citizen
Brianne Goertzen, Private citizen
Brenda Still, Private citizen
Lynn Martin, Private citizen
Heather Ashdown, Private citizen
Colleen Lussier, Private citizen
Melanie Fraser, Munroe Early Childhood Education Centre Inc.
Kisa MacIsaac, Private citizen
Stephania Kostiuk, Ryerson School Age Centre Inc.
Darren Stebeleski, Private citizen
Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
Sue Sydoruk, RRC Childcare Centre
Mike Urichuk, Private citizen
Renee Cable, Private citizen
Jessica Perry, Private citizen

Jill O'Donohue, Private citizen
Ross Martin, Private citizen
Orvie Dingwall, Private citizen
Madeleine Dwier, Canadian Union of Public Employees
Pat Furman, Inspired By Wonder
Claudia Colocho, Private citizen

April 16, 2021 meeting

Jim Pringle, Private citizen
Rosemary Miguez, Private citizen
Scott Forbes, Private citizen
Rebecca LaRiviere, Childcare is Essential
Anna Levin, Private citizen

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following nine written submissions on **Bill (No. 47) – The Early Learning and Child Care Act / Loi sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants**:*

Corinna Valdez, Private citizen
Phyllis Doyle, Private citizen
Janel Wotton, Private citizen
Hannah Gifford, Private citizen
Samantha Henry, Private citizen
Larissa Childs, Private citizen
Melinda Walden, Vice Chair, RRC Early Childhood Centre Inc.
Keesy Rodewald, Child Care Parent Advisory Committee
Jana Currie, Executive Director, Laura Secord Community Child Care Inc.

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 47) – The Early Learning and Child Care Act / Loi sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

* (13:40)

Mr. Smith: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), that the report of the committee be received.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith), second by the honourable member for Brandon East, that the report of the committee be received.

So now we'll go on to tabling of reports.
[interjection] Oh, sorry.

It is pleasure of the House to accept the committee report—adopt the motion for the committee report?
[Agreed]

Now we'll go on to tabling of reports? No tabling of reports. Ministerial reports—statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lindsay Platt

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Lindsay Platt has always dreamed of being a chef. At the age of eight, she would cook and have her parents judge her culinary delights. This love for cooking grew and Lindsay moved to BC where she attended and graduated from culinary college. Lindsay cooked with many great chefs and honed her love of French cuisine.

Eventually, Lindsay moved back to Manitoba and opened Modern Plate cafe with her sister Amber. Lindsay is the executive chef at Modern Plate cafe which is located at the St. Norbert Arts Centre. She brings local ingredients to the table to create fun, fresh and inspiring dishes. Lindsay's culinary talents combine family traditions with her French cuisine flair.

Lindsay stated: St. Norbert's arts centre offers the perfect venue to bring community together in a beautiful and relaxing space while escaping the craziness of everyday life. St. Norbert Arts Centre has provided an opportunity for Lindsay to showcase her culinary talents. Lindsay visits the many local farms, market gardens and seasonal markets to purchase the food that goes into her dishes. The location of the cafe combined with the ambience of the area saw an increase in visitors who were introduced to her cafe.

Lindsay said her pop-up cafe on Sundays was greeted with eagerness and she would sell out every Sunday she was open. Visitors return to purchase her homemade delights. Asked what the most sought-after dish is, she replied, there are many. Beef croquettes, homemade corned beef and charred carrot poutine are a few of the favorites people return for. Lindsay stated she plans to continue to offer takeout, picnic lunches, specialty baskets, canned goods and catering for all venues.

I encourage everyone to visit Modern Plate cafe or her website at modernplatecatering.ca. It is truly a hidden gem within the St. Norbert community.

Mariko Bercier

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Today, I would like to acknowledge a young hockey player-turned-business. Mariko Bercier was born and raised in Mosakahiken and Opaskwayak Cree Nation and is a proud Swampy Cree member.

Mariko was accepted into the Murray college of Notre Dame boarding school to take part in their hockey development program. This program is one of the country's leading hockey development programs and is a step forward for Mariko to accomplish his dream of becoming an NHL goalie.

However, his—this school is also very expensive, which led Mariko and his family to come up with an innovative way to pay for his schooling. He created an apparel line called the M30 Goalie clothing brand, whose name and logo pays homage to how he got to where he is today. The M represents his name, the No. 30 represents his hometown hockey team, The Pas Huskies, and the word goalie is for the people who have supported his dream of becoming an NHL goaltender. The feather in the logo is also a reminder for how hard his ancestors fought to be able to give him the chance to be where he is today. Together, all of these aspects come together as part of a brand that highlights Mariko's passion for hockey, love for his family and his Indigenous community.

The brand aims to promote active and healthy lifestyles while empowering, educating, encouraging Indigenous youth in First Nations communities and inspiring others to pursue their goals like Mariko has. Outside of its clothing, M30 Goalie promotes these values by honouring Indigenous athletes weekly, promoting sports camps and by donating goaltender equipment to communities, schools and individuals in northern Manitoba.

To follow and support more of Mariko and the M30 campaign, like them on Facebook, M-30-zero-N-D, and Instagram on m30goalie.

I'll leave you with a quote from Mariko, which guides his life and brand: Stay away from the bad stuff, work hard and train hard, and never give up.

Prairie Mountain Health Volunteers

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I rise virtually today in celebration of the thousands of people around our province who volunteer to make our communities and their communities a better place to live and visit.

We should all celebrate the over 500 volunteers who provided their time for the 2019 Tim Hortons

Brier or the more than 950 volunteers who helped make the 2010 Mastercard Memorial Cup such a success. In all aspects, volunteers are the backbone of Manitoba, and while we thank them every day, we show our gratitude in extra celebrations during National Volunteer Week, which runs this year from April the 18th to the 24th.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to draw to your attention the daily volunteerism in Prairie Mountain Health, which is graced by an enrolment of approximately 1,100 volunteers, supporting long-term care, acute care, community programs across the region. Even more volunteers participate on boards, foundations, 'excelleries' and Meals on Wheels programs, all of whom work effortlessly in the aid of delivering health services across our region.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the supervision of Barb Ross, the manager for the Brandon Regional Health Centre volunteer resources program, she reports an enrolment of 420 volunteers just for the health centre program. These volunteer placements include wayfinding, patient visiting, chemotherapy, lab and the role of secondary recovery surgery assistant.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, volunteers work in placements in the fracture clinic, emergency, diagnostic imaging waiting rooms and guiding patient flow. Many other volunteer placements assist staff in ways to allow them to better serve their clients.

The present state of emergency has altered the volunteer program, seeing the majority of placements suspended across the PMH programs.

While we say thank you to our volunteers year-round, it is during this National Volunteer Week across Canada that I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the outstanding efforts of all these volunteers.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Menstrual Product Availability

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Period poverty is a real issue for many Manitobans, and while this Conservative government refuses to take the issue seriously, community has stepped up.

Eight-year-old Paisley started a campaign called Dream Big to collect menstrual and personal hygiene products, hair brushes and undergarments for folks that are in need.

Paisley's project not only helps Manitobans but also deconstructs the stigma and shame young people feel when they start their moon time. Paisley personally feels more empowered and comfortable talking about these issues.

She's collecting donations at three locations, including my own constituency office, and gifts everyone who donates with a beautiful handmade bracelet with the slogan Dream Big. Her campaign has already been a huge success, and she doesn't plan on stopping any time soon.

Jennifer Berthelette, Brianne O'Neill and Terry Duddridge, three Winnipeg realtors, successfully fundraised over \$2,300 towards a Costco trip to buy menstrual products and spent two weeks collecting them. All donations went to the west central woman's resource—or west central woman's centre and Resource Assistance for Youth. Terry brought the ideal to—idea to Jennifer and Brianne, who agreed they wanted to learn more, give back to the community and use their privilege for good.

Local businesses are also stepping up. Madame Premier, a woman-owned clothing brand, has committed that when their Winnipeg store opens, menstrual products will be available free to anyone who needs them. And of course, Councillor Vivian Santos is leading the movement towards free menstrual products in all civic buildings.

And so, where the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his crew are offering USBs and lots of excuses, our community is offering hope and equity to those Manitobans facing period poverty.

There's still time for this caucus, this PC caucus, to get on the right side of history and provide free menstrual products in all Manitoban schools. Manitobans certainly hope that they do.

Miigwech.

Invasive Species Awareness Week

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Mr. Deputy Speaker, seven years ago, in 2014, I had the misfortune of finding a zebra mussel on my dock floating in the Red River. When I reported the presence of this invasive species to the government at the time, I was met with indifference and told that this was impossible. When I finally convinced the department to come investigate, they found five zebra mussels in total. This impossibility—zebra mussels in the Red River—was, in fact, a reality.

* (13:50)

When our current government assumed power in 2016, we quickly shed the idea that we have 100,000 chances to get it right next time; we understood that, as the second leading cause of biodiversity loss, mitigating the spread of invasive species required swift action to conserve our ecosystems. I was proud to sponsor a private member's bill that established an Invasive Species Awareness Week, the first province in Canada to enshrine this in legislation.

Ever since, our government has clearly prioritized the awareness and control of invasive species in our province. For example, when zebra mussels were found in a moss ball product last month, our government's aquatic invasive species unit quickly informed the public in order to stop the accidental spread of this species. Further, the unit dealt with the contamination issue through co-ordination and collaboration with all levels of government and local retailers.

This year, invasive species 'awareness' week—awareness week starts today, April 19th. Our government will once again be reminding Manitobans how invasive species affect our environment, as well as advertising information on invasive species found within the province. Some examples of invasive species include zebra mussels, emerald ash borers, Dutch elm disease, fungi; and some less-known species include common tansy and the St. John's wort.

To conclude, I would just like to remind all Manitobans to spread the word and not the species.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for oral questions.

COVID-19 Public Health Orders Release of Modelling Data Used

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

So, all Manitobans are very concerned with the ongoing pandemic, and, of course, Dr. Roussin tells us today, again, that the third wave is here. Now, of course, I knock on wood and hope that the heights of the third wave don't reach the levels at which we saw the second wave here in Manitoba.

However, one of the things that we've learned time and time again when it comes to the pandemic is that the public release of information and the public release of data really helps to drive that public buy-in

for any sort of public health orders that are being implemented.

We know that the Premier and Dr. Roussin a short time ago announced new restrictions that will be taking effect tonight, but we'd still like to see that public release of the modelling data that is being used to inform that process.

So I'd like to begin by asking the Premier: Will he commit to releasing publicly the modelling data that is going to inform those public health decisions?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): First of all, to you, Deputy Speaker, I want to wish you well in your new responsibilities, and also through you, on behalf of all of us, I'm sure, wish our Speaker a good healing after her, I understand, a procedure on a part of her body I shouldn't mention.

That being said, accurate data is important, and I know that the vaccine team, as well as the health officials, have been endeavouring to collate and categorize data throughout this process that has assisted them in making some very good judgments and recommendations to our government. And we thank them very much for their diligent work. And I expect that work to continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a second question.

COVID-19 Spread Prevention Paid Sick Leave Program

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): In the data that we have seen to date, we have seen that certain economic sectors are overrepresented in the COVID case counts. For example, we've seen in the manufacturing industry and also in some food services industry that there are more cases than might be predicted from just the overall contours of the pandemic.

At the same time, we know that the ability for people to afford to be able to stay home when they're sick or to be able to go to a vaccine without having to worry about that appointment affecting their paycheque are very important parts of the public health response.

Sadly, while there has been a federal paid sick leave program announced, it has not been sufficient to reach throughout the economy and be accessible to all workers. What workers are telling us is in fact needed is a paid sick leave program that is available without application and that is accessible within their workplace.

Given the fact that we are now in this third wave and we need to do what we can to ensure that people stay home when they're sick, will the Premier commit to working towards an enhanced paid sick leave program?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Manitoba and BC partnered to promote the establishment of a paid sick leave program and built the support of premiers of all political stripes coast to coast to coast, and the federal government undertook that they would do so.

I can only say the delays on that have been frustrating, I think, to all of us in this House, with the possible exception of a couple of members. I can also say that I hope sincerely that, this afternoon, the federal budget does address this important issue. It's been an oversight for a long time, and it's an important issue to address.

And I would also just say accurate data is important. I would encourage the opposition to—when they cite my education tax rebate, to do so accurately. They missed it by several thousand dollars. My actual rebate, I should share with the House, I have somewhere here, is \$1,318, which is actually \$13 less than the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final question. *[interjection]* Order. Order—on a final supplementary question.

COVID-19 Financial Assistance Small-Business Supports

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, now we know why the public health restrictions had to wait until today and couldn't be announced last week, do we.

Again, the government is hard at work in arming the Premier with these bizarre priorities that he chooses to bring up each and every day in the House. We'll continue bringing forward the real priorities of Manitobans who are struggling through the pandemic.

We know that small-business owners in particular have been hard hit by the pandemic, and, as the government announces new restrictions today, there should be that parallel response to help those small-business owners get through this time, which surely will be very difficult. And yet we're still waiting on news for a renewed program to help these small-business owners. We've been speaking to them throughout the pandemic, and even today folks are reaching out and raising their voices, saying there

needs to be that additional support for small-business owners.

So will the Premier announce today that, instead of looking up opposition research for the rest of the week, he'll actually get back down to business and help small-business owners who are struggling right across Manitoba.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): After years of being subjected to the pillage of the previous NDP government, small businesses have been afforded the strongest supports in this time of the pandemic in Manitoba of any—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pallister: —in Canada.

And because of this pandemic and, frankly, with a sincere desire to give Manitobans a break, I don't think that describing 660,000 Manitobans getting a rebate is—as bizarre as accurate, at all. It isn't me that put the story on the front page of the free D-P, it's the NDP.

So I will share with the member, while he's doing the class warfare, he might want to have a little fight with the member from Fort Garry, because his rebate is actually \$4 less than the Opposition Leader's, but still quite a bit more than mine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a different question.

Ratepayer Protection Legislation Request to Withdraw Bill 35

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's quite striking that the Premier has time for this but not time to fix the damage that he's causing at Manitoba Hydro right now.

Now, in addition to the Hydro strike that is going on still to this day and that is costing that Crown corporation millions of dollars, we also know that this government is putting at risk a huge amount of capital and a huge amount of jobs that have been invested here in our province.

Now, we've learned recently that the Industrial Power Users Group at Manitoba Hydro is very, very concerned because they object to the Premier trying to usurp the authority of the Public Utilities Board and use his pen at the Cabinet table, instead, to set their

rates. What they want is predictability. What they get with this group, however, is risk—risk to their bottom line. And that makes those units less competitive within their neighbouring jurisdictions.

What they're asking for is quite simple. It's the same thing we've been asking for all along: Will the Premier and the Cabinet finally abandon Bill 35?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): If the NDP was at all concerned about Manitoba Hydro or Manitobans, they didn't show it while they were in government. They totally disrespected the members of the Hydro board, the executives at Hydro, totally disrespected the Public Utilities Board—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —totally disrespected the whole process, threw away \$10 billion, Madam Speaker—\$10 billion, all on an effort to make Hydro more appealing for Americans, more affordable for Americans while Manitobans would pay for it. A legacy of debt—tripling the debt of Manitoba Hydro.

* (14:00)

The member can ask all the questions he wants about Hydro. While they pillaged Manitoba Hydro as a government, and while he would do the same, Madam Speaker, given the—Mr. Speaker, doing the—given the opportunity, our government will continue to stand up for Manitoba Hydro on behalf of all Manitoban citizens, who are the owners of Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplemental question.

Manitoba Hydro Rates General Rate Application Request

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only people who favour the Premier's approach are the people sitting around him in the Chamber right now, because when you look at who objects to the approach, it's virtually unanimous.

The people of Manitoba object to having their rates increased through a pandemic. We know that the Consumers' Association and many other stakeholders that the Public Utilities Board has consulted also object to the Premier's approach. And, of course, very importantly, as we learned over the weekend, the Industrial Power Users Group—again, the people who employ thousands of Manitobans in Brandon, in Selkirk, in Winkler, in many other places around the

province—they do very clearly object to this Premier's failing, heavy-handed approach to Manitoba Hydro.

What they want is low rates and predictability. What they're getting are rate increases happening behind closed doors and risks to their businesses. That is a risk to jobs. That is a risk to the future of our most important Crown corporation.

Will the Premier finally admit that he's wrong and direct Manitoba Hydro to hold a general rate application hearing today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam—Mr. Chair—Mr. Speaker, what is truly risky is the NDP approach to Manitoba Hydro, which was to Americanize it.

What is truly risky is to triple Manitoba Hydro's debt. What is truly absurd is to ignore the Public Utilities Board through that process. What is truly risky is to go 600 kilometres out of the way all the way around the province, wasting billions of dollars on a line to nowhere that isn't as good at transmitting hydro as the one that Hydro experts said they should've built. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: The NDP, when they had the chance to run Hydro, tried to run it into the ground. That was what they did, Mr. Speaker.

And so when the member speaks of risk, he knows whereof he speaks because what he is speaking about is a reckless record. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not something that we can fail to clean up. And so we will.

And so our interim rate increase is actually significantly less than the previous six years of the NDP. And I should mention about that the NDP raised Hydro rates while they were in government—and laugh about it—taking money off the tables of Manitoba families and small businesses, by 40 per cent and now he complains about less than three. I don't think so. I think that's risky and I think that's reckless, too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplemental question.

Mr. Kinew: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, the one thing the Premier got right there is that he is increasing rates on Manitobans. Let's remind the members opposite that they're increasing rates at the Cabinet table without a public hearing, that they're doing so during a pandemic, they're doing so in the middle of a recession. Nobody stands up to defend the Premier's

account there because we all know that it's absolutely wrong.

At the same time, the people at the companies that are involved with the Manitoba Industrial Power Users Group are raising very serious concerns. If we go down the avenue that they're laying out, that the Premier is paving with his rate increases behind closed doors, we are going to potentially put jobs at risk. We're going to put millions of dollars in revenue to Manitoba Hydro at risk.

And why are we doing this? Is it because it's necessary to raise rates during a pandemic? No. Are we doing so because this is what the Public Utilities Board has ordered at a public hearing? No. We're doing it simply to satisfy the Premier's political agenda.

Will he abandon whatever terrible advice the clerk of the Executive Council is giving him, and finally call a general rate application today?

Mr. Pallister: The member has just provided undeniably powerful evidence of the truth of the words of Ed Schreyer when he said the NDP couldn't run Hydro. He's just provided us that evidence today.

When the NDP were in charge of Hydro, Mr. Speaker, they tripled the debt of Hydro without asking Manitobans for approval—tripled the debt of Hydro. And they did it by leaving out the major topics that were supposed to be paid for by Manitobans for years to come and will be paid for by decades of Manitoba generations.

They left that all out. They ignored the Public Utilities Board. They ignored the people of Manitoba. They built a bipole line halfway around the province with no permission, and they left it out. They left it out of the PUB process—all of this in the interests not of transparency but in the interests of putting Hydro in their dark little encampment.

Well, we're going to bring it into the light instead.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station, on a question.

COVID-19 Pandemic Plan Release of Modelling Data

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Mr. Deputy Speaker, COVID-19—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —grows exponentially. That has been the case since the beginning of this global

pandemic, but we haven't seen the Province's updated modelling. Last year, the Province didn't release fulsome data until after the wave had already crested.

Now, in order to successfully get our cases low and limit the impact of another wave, we need public buy-in. And to get that, Manitobans need full transparency from this government.

Will the Pallister government release the modelling data so that Manitobans can see the potential impact of the third wave and how it aligns with this government's approach?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Certainly, the No. 1 priority for our government is protecting Manitobans first, Madam—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

That's why we're expediting vaccine 'delivery'. That's why we're expanding vaccine eligibility. That's why we're expanding asymptomatic rapid testing. Over 25 per cent of Manitobans have now received the vaccination.

We recognize there's still more work to do and we're committed to working with Manitobans to ensure that each and every Manitoban who wants to get the vaccine will get it, Madam Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Union Station, on a supplementary question. *[interjection]* Order.

MLA Asagwara: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll table a freedom of information request sent to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. It asks for a copy of the Province's regional pandemic plan.

Here's the response: The pandemic plan is considered wholly of advice to the Pallister government.

Why would this be withheld? Either this government is ignoring the advice of public health professionals or they're withholding information that should be given to the public.

I ask the minister: Is she withholding this information because she wants Manitobans left in the dark? Or is it because she hasn't taken the action as recommended by the pandemic planning documents?

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer was out earlier today in the media with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for a

media availability. That's where the information was announced to the public.

We do this daily, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so that's certainly not indicative of a government that's hiding anything.

In fact, we are very transparent with Manitobans. We want to ensure that they have the necessary tools they need to ensure that they are able to get the vaccine when they want it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Asagwara: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the modelling, it's been withheld. The—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —pandemic response plan has been hidden from view. This isn't transparency.

Test positivity rates have more than doubled in the last two weeks. Variants of concern are only raising more concerns. Modelling that supports public health decisions are not being released to the public. And, likewise, pandemic planning documents are being withheld in their entirety.

Now, this hurts public trust—public trust that is sorely needed.

I ask the minister: Will she release the modelling and the pandemic plan, and will she do so today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Almost every day, the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer or someone is out answering these types of questions in front of the media. That's how transparent our government is. Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (14:10)

So we will continue to put the protection of Manitobans first, Madam—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's why we're expediting our vaccine delivery. That's why we're expanding our vaccine eligibility. And that's why we're expanding asymptomatic rapid testing.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to ensure that each and every Manitoban has access to the vaccine that they need, want and deserve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, on a question.

**Manitoba Hydro Rates
Request to Withdraw Bill 35**

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Last week, the Manitoba Industrial Power Users Group, which represents many large industrial companies across Manitoba, wrote a letter to the Public Utilities Board stating that political interference in the setting of Manitoba Hydro rates has already forced them to reconsider capital investments that could lead to cutbacks in production.

Not only are Manitobans going to lose money on their electricity bills because this government continues to raise the rates, but now we're looking at potential job losses and big hits to our economy if large companies choose to leave because of this government's interference.

Will the minister finally admit his approach has been heavy-handed, and will this government finally stop interfering in Manitoba Hydro rate setting?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our legislation will strengthen the Public Utilities Board, it will not weaken the Public Utilities Board.

The real reasons why rates are going up is because of the dangerous approach that the NDP government took with over \$10 billion of expenses to Manitoba Hydro. That is the sole reason why rates are going up for ratepayers, for Manitobans.

Our legislation will strengthen it. It will provide predictability—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —to businesses as well as ratepayers here in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Sala: Whether or not the members opposite like it, they must answer to Manitoban ratepayers. And ratepayers, both residential and industrial, are concerned about continued government interference.

This government has raised hydro rates unilaterally without PUB approval, and now they've introduced Bill 35, which would further undermine the PUB's authority and give this minister and this Premier the ability to set rate increases by Cabinet directive.

Will the minister do the right thing for Manitobans and repeal Bill 35 today?

Mr. Fielding: The person—or, the party that has some real answering to do to Manitobans is the NDP, for their reckless approach to Manitoba Hydro that's cost over \$10 billion to ratepayers because of the mistakes that they made by ignoring the public utilities process.

That's something that we'll—a mistake we will not make. And that's why we're reforming the PUB, to make it more enhanced, to make it more accountable to Manitobans and ensure that rates are done on a—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —multi-year basis to save ratepayers tens of millions of dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Sala: In their submission, the Manitoba Industrial Power Users Group said that a lack of transparency in the rate-setting process means that their members are, quote, presently operating with an unprecedented lack of confidence. End quote.

Manitoba Hydro hasn't appeared before the PUB in more than two years, and there hasn't been a financial forecast since 2016. And we know that the true financial state of Hydro is being hidden by the Pallister government.

Will the minister listen to some of the biggest employers in Manitoba, repeal Bill 35 and call for a PUB hearing today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I encourage the member to familiarize himself with the bill a little better than was evident with those comments. I encourage him to also familiarize himself with the process and use across other provinces with respect to their—*[interjection]*—with respect to their Public Utilities—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —Board.

As the NDP leader has another question, I invite him to rise; the first two sets weren't that impressive.

What I can say to the member—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —if they're interested in learning about this, as opposed to just rhetoric—is that virtually every other jurisdiction in Canada and most around the world have multi-year rate sets.

What we do here in Manitoba is archaic. Under the NDP, it forced rates up because it—we wasted millions of dollars on rate hearings that occurred every other year, when everyone else was saving that money and making sure rates were lower.

This is the reason, in part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that under the NDP the rates rose by 40 per cent. This is the reason that the NDP rates averaged over 16 per cent more—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable First Minister's time is up.

The honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses). *[interjection]*

The honourable member for Notre Dame.

Child-Care Services Investment Request

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the federal government is proposing accessible, affordable child care across the country, the Pallister government is going in the opposite direction and has run up the child-care wait-list to 19,000 children. PC plans call for more expensive for-profit child care.

This is not what Manitobans want or need. What Manitobans want and need is quality, affordable child care that is accessible and close to home.

Will the minister acknowledge the ever-growing child-care wait-list and commit to child-care spaces where they are needed across Manitoba?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government recognizes the need for a strong, stable child-care sector. That's why this budget invests historic numbers of dollars—\$185 million—which is \$25 million more than the NDP ever invested in child care, into building the sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we witnessed a very unfortunate and deplorable incident at committee last week, when the NDP voted against provisions that would enshrine the inclusion support programs in legislation.

So I'd like to give the NDP an opportunity right now to—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —apologize to all the families that depend on the inclusion support programs for voting against those provisions. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Mr. Deputy Speaker, at committee we heard from a child-care centre who had to close with no help from this provincial government. Presenters explained that their child-care centres had to cut their nutrition programs and others explained that they have not been able to give a cost-of-living increase to their employees in five years.

We heard from early-childhood educators who need two jobs to make their ends meet due to poverty wages, and this is unacceptable, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Quality child care makes all the difference in the lives of our children and parents, and this sector should be adequately supported.

Will the minister do the right thing today and end her operating funding freezes for our child-care centres?

Ms. Squires: Our government recognizes that we need to build a strong child-care sector. That is why we are creating 541 additional spaces this year. We've created nearly 4,000 spaces since we formed government, plus we're investing in the inclusion support program.

And I would also like to remind the NDP that they voted against a provision to provide financial assistance to eligible parents for the inclusion support program. Mr. Deputy Speaker, who would vote against provisions in legislation that would provide supports for children with disabilities in our child-care sector? Will the NDP apologize for voting down that provision?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a final supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: Mr. Deputy Speaker, during last week's committee meetings we heard from child-care centres who had to close due to financial pressures even before the pandemic. These folks said they reached out to this government for help and heard nothing in reply.

Now, with Bill 47, this minister is focused on turning child care into a profit centre with no commitment to an increase in wages for child-care professionals.

Will this minister repeal Bill 47 and work with parents and child-care professionals—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: –to develop an accessible and affordable, quality child-care system for all Manitobans? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: Our government included a definition of early learning in the new act, which is something that remained silent in the former NDP act. They never, during 17 years in office, bothered to update the act to include the provisions for inclusion support to families with children with disabilities in child care. This act brings that into legislation. It enshrines it in legislation.

And what did the NDP do? They voted against those provisions. Will they apologize to all the Manitoba families who depend on the inclusion support program for voting against it? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

* (14:20)

Funding for Child and Family Services Caseload Reduction and Staffing

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Misty—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Phoenix Sinclair report recommended that the provincial government fund Child and Family Services so that agencies could meet the caseload ratio of 20 cases per worker for all family services workers. However, under this government, Child and Family Services workers report having caseloads as high as 30 cases.

Block funding is adding a real financial strain. Caseloads will only increase.

Will the minister put forward the funding needed to bring these caseloads down? Will she do so today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government appreciates and acknowledges that there are far too many children in care. There was far too many children in care under the previous NDP government. That is why, since we formed government, we have reduced that number by 8 per cent. That is why we ended the practice of birth alerts. And that is why we are reducing the number of children in emergency placement.

And I'd like to update the House that, in 2014, when the NDP government were putting children in hotels, they had a record number of 432 children in hotels. We have reduced that number significantly.

We no longer use hotels and we have less than a third of that in emergency placement services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: CFS workers are saying they cannot meet the needs of all of the young people that they're responsible for. The Pallister government mouths platitudes about the Phoenix Sinclair report, but some children haven't had an in-person visit with their case worker in months and some children are sitting in emergency placements because of a shortage of foster parents.

Will the minister protect Manitoban children and increase operating funding for CFS authorities so that staff can manage their workloads and focus on our children's needs?

Ms. Squires: Our government acknowledges that there are far too many children in care, and that is one of the reasons why we're making historic investments in preventive—preventative measures.

I was honoured on Friday to attend and make an announcement with the minister of wellness, recovery and mental health, along with two key stakeholders that are going to help us invest in services, whether it be a Super Dads program, respite for families, whether it be an Indigenous doula program.

We're making investments in the front end so we can have fewer children in care, unlike the NDP who had 432 children in emergency placement services in 2014. We believe that that is an unacceptably high number, and that is why we've reduced that number by almost one—two thirds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a final supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been six years since the Phoenix Sinclair has—was released and, unfortunately, five years today since this government took power. Despite commitments from various Families ministers, key recommendations in this report—this report that is about the lives and well-being of our vulnerable children—have still not been implemented.

Will the minister allow CFS authorities to hire more staff and keep Manitoba children safe?

Ekosi.

Ms. Squires: We're working with all of our partners to reduce the number of children coming into care. We

ended the birth alert practice that carried on for 17 years under the NDP government. We have taken—we have reduced the number of children in care by 8 per cent. And we are committed to implementing all the recommendations from the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to note that today we have 85 children in emergency shelter. That's down from 432 children in emergency shelter under the NDP.

COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Vulnerable Populations

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We continue to get complaints about this government's vaccine rollout because it looks like this government continues to sit on over 100,000 doses. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: In fact, if the 150,000 doses currently sitting on a shelf somewhere were used as a first shot, 40 per cent of adult Manitobans would have some immunity, instead of 25 per cent today.

Now, this government has argued they're holding back to ensure second doses, but we've received multiple calls from at-risk seniors and people with underlying conditions who don't know when their second dose is coming, whether it's in weeks or in months.

If holding back vaccines to ensure second shots has been the priority, why are people waiting months, worrying for when it'll happen?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member's a few weeks behind.

And, of course, it is true that we did continue to prioritize the second vaccine in the early days of the vaccine roll out because, quite rightly, our seniors in personal-care homes are some of our most vulnerable citizens and our folks who work with them are vulnerable as well. And so we did continue with the second vaccine. But that was over a month or five weeks ago; the member needs to get with the times.

The big issue, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not the pace of our roll out, which is fine and is compatible or better than most of the provinces. What is an issue is the availability of vaccines, where we still rank about 40th in the world. And so this is why we've taken steps to procure vaccines, to develop a vaccine-supportive model here in Canada, so that we no longer have to be at the back of the bus when it comes to

getting vaccines because of the federal government's inability to get them here.

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

Mr. Lamont: Over the weekend, several pharmacies announced they had left-over vaccines and invited people for shots to ensure that no doses were wasted. While we're glad someone is doing that, we still want to make sure that priority populations get access and that it won't just be a free-for-all.

Now, there are still people with underlying conditions and front-line essential workers—especially people working in education, as well as transit drivers—who this government has left behind. Last week, Manitoba was the last province to vaccinate police officers, and it was only done after we mentioned it.

When will this government ensure that every person with an underlying condition, as well as those who work in education and transit, are on the priority list? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Pallister: Couple of points, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm excited to see the federal government come out with a budget for the first time in two and half years. I hope that they address the long-overdue negligence that's been evident in their lack of support for health-care funding, and I'm pleased to see the NDP support our push, and the premiers of all parties are supporting this, just not the Leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba.

I would say the vaccine team has worked diligently to get the most vulnerable in our province vaccines, and if he doesn't agree, he might like to recommend which reserve doesn't get a vaccine so that he can make his numbers look better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a final supplementary question.

Gravel Pit in Rivers, Manitoba Local Resident Concerns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, local residents are concerned about a mining lease requested to build a gravel pit near Rivers. This is in the centre of an ecologically sensitive area with endangered and threatened species, known archeological—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard:—sites and human burials as well as unknown heritage resource sites and concerns over water and drainage issues. Four other gravel pits are within a few kilometres, so there's no 'immediate'—immediate need for this one.

I ask the minister to respect the wishes of local residents, including Marlin Beaver, the former president of Manitoba Beef Producers. I ask the minister to deny this lease or at least hold off on signing the lease until a full assessment of the site is completed.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): I'll remind the member that this is before a municipal hearing, before the local municipality and has a hearing there, where all residents have the ability to have the input there. No decisions have been made as to whether this quarry will proceed or not.

Invasive Species Awareness Spread Prevention Initiatives

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Invasive species such as zebra mussels, spiny water flea and emerald ash borer can threaten our landscapes and impact our environment.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development please share with the House what the government is doing to make sure Manitobans are aware of invasive species and what can be done to prevent their spread? [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

The honourable Minister for Agriculture and Resource Development.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): I thank my colleague for bringing that question forward. This week kicks off Invasive Species Awareness Week, an important reminder that all Manitobans need to be vigilant in keeping our waterways and landscapes healthy and free from invasive species.

The spread of zebra mussels is preventable, and our annual Watercraft Inspection Program is scheduled to start in mid-May, just in time for fishing season.

The key to protecting our forests from invasive species like emerald ash borer and Dutch elm disease is early prevention and early detection, and I encourage all Manitobans who enjoy our forests, lakes and rivers to visit our website today to learn how to stop the spread of these species.

* (14:30)

Consolidation of Laboratory Services Community-Based Access

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Pallister government's consolidation of lab services is causing a lot of concern for my constituents here in Transcona.

Many convenient and community-based labs have now closed. The result has been less convenient access, especially for those with mobility issues. That's what those with disabilities are saying. That's what primary-care physicians are saying. They say that these changes will present a large obstacle to 'marry'—many Manitobans.

Will the minister undo this mess of consolidation and return convenient, community-based access for lab work?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I certainly agree that it's very important that Manitobans—all Manitobans—have access to the kind of lab work that they need, want and deserve. And, certainly, we are working with those stakeholders in the community to ensure that we can offer those—that lab work for those individuals.

I will remind the member that we are in the middle of a pandemic; we are relying on these services, which are coming forward. We are getting the results in a much more expedited fashion, and so while there were some bumps in the road along the way, as there is always through a pandemic, we—I'll assure Manitobans that we have dealt with those issues, we've addressed those issues and we'll continue to work towards ensuring that all Manitobans have access to the lab work that they need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We'll move on to petitions.

Public Child-Care Grants

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable, accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible for all Manitobans.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and

yet the funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early-childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While child-care centres have been forced to—face increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spending thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has not provided any additional financial support.

The government spent less than 1 per cent of its \$18-million on the temporary child-care grant; instead they gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government cut nursery school grants double the—doubling the parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax status amendment act, which removes the cap on child-care fees for the private sector.

We petition the Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse changes to the nursery school grants, to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitobans.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In accordance to rule 133(6), when petitions are read, they must be deemed to be received by the House.

The honourable member for River Heights.

Member from River Heights, could you unmute your mic.

Vivian Sand Facility Project—Clean Environment Commission Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, 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 46,410 hectares.

The amount of dry, solid sand mined, produced 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 also 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 risks of surface contamination, mixing of aquifer waters and drainage of surface fecal matters into the aquifer.

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

There are also 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 need 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:

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 by Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to include public hearings and participant funding.

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 Ian Lavolie [*phonetic*], Ralph [*phonetic*] Goulet, Jeezy [*phonetic*] Lean and many others.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to

travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or urine sample.

* (14:40)

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at further risk in extreme weather, be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer wait times for services and poorer service in general. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: (6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they are able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all of the phlebotomy blood sample sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Public Child-Care Grants

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoba families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with low parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the Province has provided no additional financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government has passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child care's operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoban families.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over-capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed

with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May of 2020.

(2) DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba justice system was already more than 250 inmates over-capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and to proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, the DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27th, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over-capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

And this petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House business on—the honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Committee announcements first, please. I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 3, The Public Service Act; and Bill 12, The Crown Land Dispositions Act (Various Acts Amended).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was announced by the honourable Government House Leader that I would—the announcement of Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following bills: Bill 3, The Public Service Act; and Bill 12, The Crown Land Dispositions Act (Various Acts Amended).

Mr. Goertzen: I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 5, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee); Bill 6, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act; Bill 60, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been brought up by the honourable Government House Leader that—he announced that the Standing Committee of Justice will meet on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following bills: Bill 5, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee); Bill 6, the liquor and gaming—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis

Control Amendment Act; and Bill 60, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2).

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Can you please call for report stage amendments and third reading this afternoon Bill 67?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been called by the honourable Government House Leader, that on—the report stage amendments on Bill 67, the honourable member for Tyndall—[interjection]—and concurrence and third reading on Bill 67.

And now we'll go on to report stage amendments.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 67—The Public Health Amendment Act

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

THAT Bill 67 be amended in Clause 2(1)(b) by adding ", congregate living facility" after "personal care home" wherever it occurs in the proposed clauses 67(2)(a.1) and (a.2).

* (14:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Tyndall Park, seconded by the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont),

THAT—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

Is it the will of the House to—the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Ms. Lamoureux: I'll keep my remarks short. These amendments just further make the word personal-care home more inclusive. We think that it should be all care facilities, so it would be including supportive care homes, 55-plus homes, as well as other congregate living facilities, such as group homes.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): What I want to say is that, you know, I thank the member opposite for bringing this forward, and certainly this is something that is already included in the legislation. It can be specified under—it actually falls under other facility, and certainly if there is a need and a want to expand that definition, it can be done by way of regulation.

So, for those reasons, we don't believe that this amendment is necessary for the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers on the report stage amendments brought by—brought forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park? No other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is the third stage 'amendment' on the Bill 67, The Public Health Amendment Act.

All those in—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

The motion now is defeated.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On division. The honourable—third stage amendment is defeated on—report stage is defeated on division.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, the honourable member for Tyndall Park, on the second stage amendment.

Ms. Lamoureux: I move, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights,

THAT Bill 67 be amended in Clause 2(2) by adding ", congregate living facility" after "personal care home" in the proposed subsection 67(2.2).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Tyndall Park, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights,

THAT—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

Ms. Lamoureux: Similar to the first amendment, I do think that it is very important that we clarify further what congregate living facilities are. As the minister mentioned, she talks about how personal-care homes are specifically mentioned in the bill. I don't see there being any harm; it just seeks further clarification and allows us to hold the government accountable, too, that all congregate living facilities will qualify.

Mrs. Stefanson: Similar to the last amendment proposed by the member for Tyndall Park, the same holds true here, Mr. Speaker. In—this would fall under other facility, which can then be specified and further defined in regulation. So it's not necessary to have this amendment as part of the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any other speakers on this stage amendment? Since there's no other—

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, they have it—the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On division.

The stage—report stage amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, now we'll go on to third reading and concurrence of Bill 67.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 67—The Public Health Amendment Act

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 67, The Public Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique, 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.

Mrs. Stefanson: I just want to thank you for the opportunity to rise with some urgency today in the hopes that both sides of the House can stand together and protect personal-care-home residents and health-care workers from COVID-19.

With the third wave beginning in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and rising variant cases, it's more important than ever that we choose to put the health and safety of Manitobans first by supporting Bill 67 and amending The Public Health Amendment Act and supporting The Public Health Amendment Act.

Unfortunately, we have seen the devastating impact of COVID-19 on personal-care homes all across our country and the consequences for those residing in these homes and on staff. So, nothing is more important than implementing measures, obviously, to protect those individuals.

The order re: personal-care-home operations under Emergency Measures Act expired on April 15th and cannot be extended in its current form. Our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, believes that the single-site orders must continue to remain in place at this time.

So this bill allows for the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer to issue a public health emergency order to continue the provisions in the now-expired Emergency Measures Act order prohibiting or restricting the movement of health-care staff between personal-care homes and other health-care facilities and between home care and health-care facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the intent is to enable the continuation of the current order, not to broaden it. It will carry a one-year sunset clause as the orders will be required to be in place to protect personal-care-

home residents from COVID-19. Fully vaccinated health-care workers would be exempt from the order.

Creating consistency and stability for our health-care workers and personal-care-home residents during this time is absolutely critical, and I just ask that all members of the Chamber stand together today and help make a difference in the safety of our personal-care homes and please stand in support of this beer-bill. This beer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any speakers for the bill?

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I welcome the opportunity to put a few more words on the record in regards to this bill.

I want to thank the minister for providing a couple of opportunities—several opportunities, actually—to ask questions about the bill and to get some clarification around what some of our concerns have been—and certainly the concerns that have been brought forward to us by health-care workers and the folks that represent them.

I want to especially express gratitude and thanks to all of the health-care workers who continue to show up throughout this pandemic; folks who have put their health at risk, the health of their families at risk, in order to make sure that our health-care system keeps moving and that they can provide the best care possible to Manitobans.

I especially want to recognize the health-care workers in our personal-care homes, long-term-care homes. I know that during the second wave, many of those folks were not only physically taxed due to the strenuous nature of the work and what was going on during the second wave, but also mentally and emotionally incredibly fatigued due to the stress and the significant amount of loss that a lot of folks faced.

So, you know, we're always thinking about the workers, we're always thinking about the sacrifices that they're making, and we're, you know, going to continue to do our best to advocate on their behalf and make sure that their voices are heard.

* (15:00)

And I do also have to give a shout-out to the families of the health-care workers who have also had to navigate this pandemic and what their loved ones have been experiencing on the front lines. You know, oftentimes—and I say this as not just someone who was a health-care worker, but as somebody who is a sibling to health-care workers—you know, it's tough to know that your loved ones are navigating a lot of the

challenges they've been facing and to maybe not be able to interact or engage with them the same way as we would've before the pandemic. So I want to acknowledge the families and the communities of the health-care workers who are continuing to keep our system doing what it needs to do.

And so, specifically to this bill, certainly on this side of the House we recognize the seriousness of this unprecedented global pandemic. And we recognize that as this pandemic evolves, as we move through this pandemic, as the science evolves, as we learn more and we have more access to data and information, that we do have to be able to adapt to that information and make informed, strategic decisions to keep Manitobans safe, to keep health-care workers safe and to ensure that we're doing everything that we possibly can to prevent, you know, negative health outcomes and that, in fact, we're strategizing in a way that allows Manitoba to, you know, see the best possible outcomes for citizens.

And so this bill—we've been over this in terms of what this bill sets out to do. We can certainly appreciate the concerns of the chief public health officer and the public health expertise here in Manitoba.

There are a few aspects of this bill that, you know, we've already highlighted are of concern for us. The health-care worker aspects and the impacts on workers comes immediately to mind. We've heard from health-care workers in—at the committee stage. We did hear from unions who represent their members and who are bringing the concerns of their members forward, that there are in fact health-care workers who have been negatively impacted by the single-site order, folks who have lost wages, folks who are very concerned about their pensionable earnings and benefits being impacted by the single-site order. And we haven't gotten a great deal, quite frankly, enough clarification as of yet as to how those concerns which existed under the single-site order would be addressed and mitigated going forward under Bill 67.

And, you know, it's incumbent on this government to do everything they possibly can by way of legislation and policy to protect these workers, to make sure that their livelihoods are protected, to make sure that their families are protected, to make sure that by following these pieces of legislation and these orders and showing up day in and day out, that they're not going to compromise their own ability to feed their families and to have the benefits that are attached to their employment.

And so, you know, there are some concerns that we still have that we're hoping the minister will meaningfully and expeditiously address. I know they're concerns that she is aware of, but I certainly hope that we can continue the good communication in regards to this bill to make sure that those concerns are not only heard but truly, meaningfully and quickly addressed.

You know, when I talk about the health-care workers and we look at the single-site order and where it's going to be potentially applicable to, we have to recognize that the sites that folks are going to be ordered to work at versus being able to go from one facility to another, et cetera, many of those sites are facing staffing shortages that have not been addressed.

While this government made the decision to launch a—last summer a Ready. Safe. Grow. PR campaign to the tune of over \$425,000, you know, I can't help but shake my head at that decision making and just think about how staffing could've been addressed and supported with that money versus a campaign that pre-emptively and, you know, celebrated and unfortunately left us less equipped going into a second wave that we, you know, based on what's going on in other jurisdictions, we knew was coming to Manitoba.

And so, looking at some of these staffing vacancies, the staffing shortages in long-term-care homes but also in our tertiary settings, our hospitals, like critical care at the Grace Hospital, which had a vacancy rate of—for nurses alone—at 26 per cent. Critical care at HSC had a vacancy rate for nurses, again, at 31 per cent. Emergency care at St. Boniface Hospital had a vacancy rate—same category—for 28 per cent; worse than when it was publicly discussed in the fall of 2019. Didn't get better, it, in fact, got worse.

When I look at statistics like that, I do have some serious concerns about how we are and how this government is planning to address the already existing staffing shortages, which have left our health-care system in chaos and disarray before the pandemic. Certainly, I talked to nurses, health-care aides, environmental workers, doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, recreational therapists on a weekly basis; some of those folks on a, at this point, nearly daily basis in some way, shape or form, whether it's social media or via email, phone calls or what have you.

And those folks are expressing very clearly that they are in a state that is unsustainable at their health-care settings, that as much as this bill will allow the

chief public health officer to ensure that folks are working at one site, minimizing risk for transmission of these new variants of concern and COVID-19 and putting patients and residents at risk, these folks are making very, very clear that they, as staff—as the literal human resource that we are dependent upon to ensure that care is provided to vulnerable citizens—so those who are sick, in need of great health care, the great health care that these folks provide across multi-disciplinary teams across a wide variety of settings—these folks are making it explicitly clear. They have been sounding alarm bells since before and certainly during this pandemic that the workloads they are facing, the lack of support that they are enduring is not sustainable.

And the big concern is that we're going to see folks exit the health-care system and never want to return because this government has failed to adequately resource and support them during the time when we're also simultaneously referring to them as heroes and superhuman. Certainly, these folks are heroes, 'sheroes,' however you want to describe it. I can tell you these folks are not superhuman. These folks are human beings who have very real needs, who have very real limitations. They are on the cusp of burning out, if they haven't already, and they are pleading, they are begging this government to act. They are begging this government to listen.

And this piece of legislation needs to also reflect the commitment of this government to address those needs. We have to do better by these workers. And I'm hoping that the lessons that have been learned or the lessons that have been given to us, based on what happened under the original single site order, that we can effectively learn those lessons and put them to use with—under Bill 67, should it come to pass.

So, one of the other points that I want to make sure I talk about and put on the record is the fact that we have to be able to look at addressing these issues, addressing the staffing issue as more than just a retroactive. Let's address the missteps and mistakes of the government before the pandemic and also address the current missteps and failures throughout this pandemic and up to today.

We do actually have to strategically plan for moving forward. We do have to think years down the road. We have to make sure that we are in the midst of passing legislation during this pandemic, in the midst of debating Bill 67, which is intended to keep people safe wherever it is that they're accessing care or that they're a resident of and receiving care and

support. We do have to look at a strategic plan moving forward, which is why we do ask questions in this House, whether it be during QP or during committees or what have you. We do ask a lot of questions in regards to specifically recruitment and retention.

It would be really great actually if, you know, alongside this bill we heard some dialogue from the minister in regards to their efforts that are being made in the midst of all of this to actually help address issues around recruitment and retention.

* (15:10)

You know, especially when we look at rural and northern health, rural and northern communities, it would be wonderful to see a plan of action informed by data, informed by evidence, informed by the courageous stories and information brought forward by health-care workers. It would be wonderful to see, alongside this, knowing that Bill 67 is in fact time limited.

So, this is a bill that would be enacted for the duration of a year. Knowing that, having that in mind, that would inspire some, one would think, to actually use that window of time—that—to engage in some meaningful consultation with health-care workers, with unions, to engage in some meaningful engagement with the Manitoba-based organizations that have a ton—a wealth—of critical information and data and evidence.

Like the CCPA, as a good example, like the Manitoba Health Coalition as a good example, like the long-term-care association—just a few organizations that I would name really quickly who can help inform a strategy based on Manitoba-rooted data that would allow for positive outcomes surrounding recruitment and retention.

That is something that needs to be aligned with a bill like this and it needs to be aligned with a bill like this because, at some point—and I know we all hope this, we all see that light at the end of this pandemic tunnel—at some point, we are going to be transitioning out of this pandemic, and certainly, if this bill were to come to pass—this piece of legislation, because it is literally time limited.

And so, you know, I see that window as an opportunity for the government to do meaningful consultation, to use the information that is before us, right here in Manitoba, come up with a Manitoba-made plan in terms of public health and make sure that we are recruiting and we are retaining health-care workers.

Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And you know what? If it's done right, if it's done well, we should have more health-care workers in the system wanting to be a part of our health-care system and our teams well into the future—not have a health-care system that has workers fleeing it because they lack the support and resource of this government and are looking for a better work-life balance, looking for dignity and respect from their employers, looking for opportunities where they're not being called heroes on one hand while simultaneously being underresourced and undersupported on the other.

And so, I think I just want to make a couple of more comments before—I know that my colleagues have some tremendous insights that they would like to share and concerns from their own constituents and people in their circles that they can talk about and speak to.

And that's really important because, you know, we all represent very diverse and dynamic communities, communities of health-care workers and folks who, I know, are concerned about Bill 67 and have questions about Bill 67, because, like I said, I know that myself and my colleagues are hearing from those folks.

And so, there is, you know, an aspect of the legislation that—use of language that, for me, is a little bit vague, it's in terms of describing other facilities. So, we know that this bill, as it states, applies to hospitals, personal-care homes and other facilities.

I've brought this up a couple of times before. Other is just so vague given we know the health-care-rooted facilities in our province, we know where folks are receiving health care, we know the settings in which workers, you know, might have multiple employment or folks, you know, are coming to and from.

And so, you know, other facilities is just so vague when in reality I do think it could be very specific. There's certainly a capacity for that to be defined much more clearly, for some examples to have been provided and given.

I did raise this concern quite some time ago and have not been provided any clarification. And it's something that consistently—folks who read the bill, bring that concern to me.

So I know that it's not just something, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that I just notice as an issue, but it's in fact something that many people are picking up on

and have questions around and is worthy of some clear verbiage so that folks, you know, aren't confused, so that folks know exactly what they can anticipate and expect with a piece of legislation like this.

And so, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I think I'm going to leave my remarks at that, and I'm going to, you know, sit in this Chamber and listen to my colleagues and other folks speak to this piece of legislation. But I do hope that the minister hears those concerns, takes every step possible and makes every effort to address them, and recognizes that, you know, there's an opportunity ahead of us here to really make right some of the wrongs that health-care workers have had to face and endure by this government, and that, you know, the government should and can do better by workers across the province in every aspect of Manitoba.

And, you know, make sure that we have a health-care system that has these workers here in the system, enthusiastic, supported, feeling respected by their government moving forward.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): One moment, please.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I want to thank the minister for bringing this important bill forward. Of course, we all know it's an urgent matter with some urgency, so it's important that we bring it forward and get it passed.

It's a fairly straightforward piece of legislation, and basically, last year, the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer was given authority under The Emergency Measures Act to institute the single-site rule, and that authority has now expired, and so it's important that we legislate this.

And of course, this government's going to continue to act on the advice of our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, and—as we have, and try to make—there's no rulebook in all of this, but try to make decisions that align with the best data and science that we have available. And, of course, the single-site rule is something that has to be done to keep our residents of our personal-care homes and other such sites safe.

So, let me also use this opportunity just to express my thanks to all our front-line workers caring for seniors. Of course, the variants have changed the game a little bit, as it sounds like the variants seem to be attacking younger people in greater number, but it's

very clear that our seniors in Manitoba bore the brunt—and across the country and across the world—have borne the brunt of COVID.

And it's had a devastating impact, and so this has been one of those rules that—the single-site order has been necessary to limit the risk, to try to curb the risk of introducing COVID into some of these personal-care homes and further exacerbating a very difficult situation.

So, I support the bill, but again, as I said, I just want to express my thanks to those that work in our personal-care homes and our congregate living facilities, and in our—all our health-care workers, support workers, for their work. It takes truly special people. And I've got family and friends who work at several local nursing homes and personal-care homes and it's more—perhaps more a calling than a job.

It's certainly something that takes a lot out of you as a person, I'm sure, but it's deeply fulfilling to be able to be there for people who've lived long lives of meaning, who've, you know, had families and loved their neighbours, contributed to their community, and lived lives with dignity, to then, as you get older, to be in a situation where you go to a personal-care home and, you know, you're not independent, you know, as maybe you once were.

* (15:20)

And, you know, I think of those struggling with dementia and their, you know, obviously medical issues and things like that involved. And so, you know, it's not easy to go through that, I'm sure, as a senior.

I'm speaking as a, I guess, perhaps the baby of the House, but having seen friends and family and those who work at these local nursing homes, the work that they do certainly is challenging but so rewarding. You know, they're looking after precious people, people that have forged a path and gone before us and deserve to live with dignity in their last days and deserve the very best care and support. And that's what we, as a government, have tried to do.

And so I'm, again, happy to support this bill. I think anything that we can do to support our seniors through these difficult times and keep them safe and—I think is something that we should do. And so it's important that we get this done and that we don't have a gap here in our orders.

So, Mr. Chair, I think with that, I will leave my—yield back my time, but I just wanted to express my

thanks to our front-line workers and—for the work that they do, and my thanks to the minister and the previous ministers. You know, being a Health Minister at this time is a considerable load to carry. And so it's important work.

So I'm happy to support this bill and will conclude my remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thought that the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) was going to rise on the most relevant health-care issue in his constituency, which is the Altona ER. Certainly been hearing from a lot of nurses in the area who are very concerned about that.

And if not the Altona ER, then perhaps he'd stand up in opposition to Bill 64, which I've certainly been hearing a lot about from his constituents. But, you know, there it is, par for the course with the PC members: just go along to get along kind of thing. Not much critical thinking going on at all in that caucus.

We know that the issue of personal-care homes during the pandemic has been top of mind for so many families in Manitoba. I think we were all very, very moved by some of the very difficult stories, but also inspired. You know, every time we hear a story about a senior living in a care home or a hospital who recovered from COVID-19, I think that also gave us some of that lift that we needed collectively to make it through this difficult time.

Now, of course, you know, the idea of a single-site order has been one of the aspects that the government has referred to as one of their important priorities when it comes to try and protect the health of seniors and to enhance the public health of Manitobans. That's why it's pretty surprising that the government actually let this thing expire. You know, the previous measure I believe came into effect April 15th, 2020, and I'm guessing that a civil servant realized sometime after the House rose on Thursday that this government had in fact let their single-site order expire and that therefore they had to work, you know, put a bit of time in on the weekend to put the dominoes in place to try and see passage of the bill today.

It doesn't speak very highly of the government's emphasis that they put on prioritizing and protecting seniors that they would let one of the things that they've referred to as being one of their most

important measures to protect seniors actually have a gap in place. And so, over the weekend, you know, there was that sort of legislative space.

And again, it's a reflection of the government's priorities. They've come up with a zany scheme to try and mail cheques out to people across the province. You heard the Premier (Mr. Pallister) today, he's been doing opposition research on everybody's property tax amounts. What they haven't been doing, and what has fallen on the back-burner while those priorities and the vaccination campaign have been getting ignored—what they haven't been doing is ensuring that there is protection for seniors.

But when you look at this government's budget, it shouldn't be surprising. We were all very heartbroken at the tragedy that unfolded at the Maples Personal Care Home, at the Parkview Place personal-care home, at so many other care homes across the province, both here in Winnipeg and Brandon and many other communities.

And it was my impression, at least—based on the public comments of the former minister of Health, the current Minister of Health, the Premier and so many others—it was my impression that we were finally all going to stand shoulder to shoulder and finally do something to fix seniors care for the long term here in our province.

And then we see their budget, and they froze funding for personal-care homes in Manitoba. So, unfortunately, it's a sad reflection on the failure of this government to do the right thing for seniors, that not only would they freeze funding for personal-care homes—therefore effectively saying that they think that the current level of care provided to each senior is a little bit too much, and with more seniors entering to the system, they actually think that there should be fewer hours at the bedside—but they would go beyond that and then allow one of these public health orders to lapse. And so that is a failure of planning, and it's a failure that could have potentially impacted seniors.

So, of course, we're reasonable, hard-working and we got our eye on the ball, so we're willing to step in where the government has failed and do our part to help them correct course here, considering that they did drop the ball over the weekend and let some of these measures expire. But at the same time, it is very important for us to note and put on the record that, even with Bill 67 moving towards royal assent later today, that's not the end of the project.

Certainly, the workers who are going to be impacted by this, many of them have seen their pay-cheques impacted to the negative, which is not a unique situation with the PC government in power. In fact, they probably could find solidarity with well over 100,000 fellow Manitobans who've been put in the same boat. But, essentially, with the single-site order coming into place, some health-care workers, health-care aides, nurses, others—other professionals, who had previously relied on putting together maybe a 0.2 over here and a 0.3 over there to, you know, cobble together an income, now see that shrink when they can only work at the one site.

Similarly, with that reduction in hours worked, as a 'resite' of the single-site order, there's also an impact on pension, pensionable earnings, potentially an impact on benefits, depending on when benefits kick in for a newly started employee, as well. So these are all things that we're going to be asking the government to keep an eye on and ensure that those workers are treated fairly and made whole again in the long run.

The reason why I say that on the record here, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, is because Bill 67 says, while there is, you know, some contemplation of a transition after the pandemic, to move people back towards their old work arrangements at different sites, the language in that part of the bill, it only says the government may: the government may put those sort of transitional arrangements in place to look after things like pensionable earnings or returning people to other worksites where maybe they're previously engaged, or to help make up for lost income. Bill 67 doesn't say that the government must do that.

So I'm putting these words on the record today to indicate that, you know, we're going to stay on top of this. We're going to stay committed to ensure that these workers are treated fairly. We recognize, you know, the public health rationale behind trying to restrict movement across different health-care facilities but, at the same time, there needs to be that contemplation and accommodation for those health-care workers whose lives—livelihoods are being impacted by these measures. And certainly, when we talk about something like a pension, that's not just the income today. That is income which should have been earned today, deferred to a future date, that is therefore going to impact the earnings of the course of a lifetime for the workers in question.

So, again, we very much support measures that can help seniors, that can help those working in hospitals, personal-care homes, other health-care

facilities, but we would have liked to see a more proactive, on-the-ball approach that would've seen the government work towards this goal prior to letting the old measures expire. And we will continue to be working to ensure that the government does proactively be more on the ball, in terms of taking care of these health-care workers.

And while the government is being urged to treat these workers more fairly, hey, why not sign a new collective agreement with nurses. If we are in this third wave, as Dr. Roussin has told us multiple times at this point, it seems like we should be trying to ensure that we have the health-care capacity, should it be needed during this third wave. And I can, you know, certainly say that ensuring that there's a collective agreement in place, to not only ensure the compensation and benefits for nurses are where they should be, but also that there's that basic level of respect accorded to them, would be one foundational piece that could help us through this challenging spring and early summer that we're currently looking ahead at.

* (15:30)

So, with those comments on the record, I just wanted to take the opportunity to speak in favour of our health-care heroes and those who work at different health-care facilities and just remind them that, when it comes to the people on our side of the Chamber, it's not just calling you a hero one day and then, you know, trying to disrespect you at the bargaining table the next day. With us, it's for real; we're here for you today, we're here for you in the long term.

Miigwech.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this measure, which will extend the single-site approach for workers at personal-care homes and other facilities, was one of the measures which was implemented very early on during the pandemic, I believe, in Canada, having been originally in British Columbia, and which has been found to reduce transmission and has been used elsewhere.

We have a number of concerns with this legislation. One is that it doesn't necessarily include all congregate facilities and, as my colleague, the MLA for Tyndall Park, has pointed out, this would have been a good move to have included all congregate facilities.

There were concerns which were raised during the committee meeting about staffing levels and ability to fill the staffing needs if one had the single-

site requirement. We certainly agree that this government has managed staffing very poorly. We have called on many occasions for more adequate staffing of personal-care homes and other long-term-care homes. This is really essential in order to provide adequate care, and we continue to hear concerns of inadequate care from some facilities in long-term care.

So, the government should have addressed—pre-pandemic, early in the pandemic—the care home, personal-care home needs for staffing; this was pointed out many, many times by Jan Legeros of the long-term-care association, and also by other with MARCHE, the Manitoba association of residential and community care for the elderly. So, the government hasn't listened and it should have listened and should still act to make sure that there are adequate staffing levels.

The issue and the concern with regard to having people—workers—who are able to work at more facilities will be met because this bill will exempt health-care workers who are fully vaccinated. It points once more to the urgency of making sure that all who work at long-term-care facilities—and not just nurses and health-care aides, but all who work at long-term and care facilities—should be vaccinated and they should be vaccinated not just once, but twice so that they are fully vaccinated.

I have heard, recently, that there's significant numbers in some facilities who are not vaccinated and the government should be addressing this with the utmost urgency. There are still, as of this morning, something like 150,000 vaccine doses which the government has in stock in freezers and fridges, but they have not been put—given to people. So there's adequate amounts of vaccine doses to be able to do this. The government should be acting to protect staff people in long-term-care facilities and other congregate facilities with the utmost possible speed.

We stand here, in the Liberal Party, very much in support of residents in long-term care. We also stand in strong support of those who are staffing the long-term-care facilities, their hours per resident, their need to be able to deliver the quality care that they want to deliver instead of being constantly found in short-staffed positions, as has happened too often under this Conservative government.

So, we will support this legislation, but we urge the government to get on with addressing staffing

levels at long-term-care facilities and properly supporting workers at these facilities, as well as ensuring that residents get the care they need to have.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I want to raise a few points with this particular piece of legislation.

The first one that comes to mind is the vague reference to other facilities or combination of facility. It would seem to me that the government should have had sufficient time to figure out what health-care facilities, what congregate living facilities this particular piece of legislation would apply to. To leave it vague, one has to ask the question: now, does that refer to home care?

So, does that mean that a home-care worker, potentially, is only allowed to work in one home? Which, if that's what the intention of the government is, that could be acceptable if we had enough home-care workers to manage to supply home care to all those who need it.

We know already that we don't, because on a good day we don't have enough home-care workers to actually supply the need. And I certainly can't speak to the shortage in the rest of the province, but I know in the North, and Flin Flon in particular, that that has been an ongoing concern for a few years now, is the shortage of home-care workers, direct service workers, that are going into homes.

So, if that is the intention of this minister, to limit home-care workers as well, then we need to know that up front and the workers need to know that up front. If there are other facilities that the minister is contemplating, that should be included in this bill, not left vague.

I listened to the member from Borderland, who wanted to thank those who work in health-care settings. Well, the best way to thank them is to actually pay them what they deserve. So, on an ongoing basis, we know that this government has implemented wage freezes—wage freezes that have been shown to be unconstitutional, and yet they still refuse to back down on that.

They like to stand up and say thank you to front-line health-care workers, like the member from Borderland just did. And yet they refuse to negotiate properly with them, they refuse to let those workers have their constitutional right to negotiate.

So we know that, for the last year—with the imposition of the emergency order that limited a lot of

those front-line workers to working in one facility—we know that they've already lost income because they weren't able to pick up shifts as they previously had been at various facilities. We know that this impacts their pension credits and we know that this impacts, potentially, things like their health-care benefits, other benefits that kick in dependent on hours.

And we've heard that the minister said, well, this bill can't fix some of those things because that is up to the negotiating process. And, fine; I support that it's up to the negotiating process, except that the government is imposing something that's outside of the collective agreement in an emergency order, so I don't see why they can't impose the fix to that outside of the collective agreement. And I'm sure that if they went to any one of those unions that have collective agreements and said we want to sign a letter outside the collective agreement that guarantees that no worker will lose pension, wages or other benefits as a result of this, I'd be shocked and aghast if one union said, well, we don't want to sign that.

* (15:40)

So it's somewhat disingenuous for the minister to say they can't really fix this, when in fact they do have the power to address it and fix it so that workers don't lose money.

One of the things that strikes me as odd is they put this emergency order in place a year ago, thought they had the authority to do it. So they've had a whole year to figure out that maybe they didn't have the authority to do it or that, at some point in time, they may have to extend it. And here we are, at the last minute, with a piece of legislation that isn't—hasn't been properly debated, hasn't been properly fleshed out, hasn't been properly amended to address some of the issues that speakers previous to me and myself are bringing up here.

Certainly nobody wants to put people in the health-care setting at risk. This COVID is dangerous and we want to make sure that people in those settings are protected.

But there—by this government's legislation, there's exemptions to the one worksite. So what are those exemptions?

Well, we know right now that, because we're so short-staffed in the Northern Health Region, that the exemptions apply to agency people. So, while a local resident who's only allowed to work in one health-care setting, someone that flew in from a different province, didn't have the same limit on where

they could work. I don't know how that makes any sense, other than the fact that a lot of the seniors homes, in particular, I know they were short-staffed prior to there being a pandemic.

So again, we're supposed to take a blind leap of faith as to what some of these exemptions might be. Why aren't they listed as a schedule? If doctors are in short supply and they need to be exempt with special things put in place to ensure that they can go from one facility to the other, let's say that. If a specific nurse, a specific nurse type needs to be exempt, then let's say that and let's say what we're going to do to make sure we provide a level of protection for them and the residents of the facility.

Let's not just leave it vague and figure out the details by the seat of our pants later on, because clearly that level of planning—which we've kind of seen from the government on this health file—has gotten us into some of these difficult situations that we're in.

You know, I've heard that we have nursing students, for example, that had to take a leave of absence from their job as a health-care aide because they didn't want that person going to school, going to their clinical class in a hospital and then to their job in a facility in Flin Flon. So we know, very specifically, that that person has had their ability for future income impacted because they had to make a decision: do I keep going to school, keep going to class or do I keep earning enough money to live?

So, those are issues that the minister needs to address. Those are issues that we can't just leave to blind faith that maybe they'll get to them and fix them some day.

So, there's been concerns expressed to me around the exemption that the—perhaps if someone's vaccinated, they could pick up extra shifts to try and fill in the blanks. Caution needs to be exercised, I suspect, with that kind of exemption, as caution should be exercised with every type of exemption. But if we disallow local workers from being able to work in more than one site, again, I question how agency folks that are coming from elsewhere are allowed to work in more than one site without really knowing where they've come from.

I know that we've had any number of agency folks, for example, that came from Ontario. Do we really want them entering our health-care facilities now? I mean, right now, Ontario is—it's looking

for other jurisdictions to send health-care workers because they're so short with the variants that have just gone wild in Ontario.

So, again, there's been an opportunity that the minister and her predecessor have missed the boat on to actually have most of these issues addressed long before today. It puts everybody in a precarious situation to leave things to the last minute with so many loose ends hanging out there that haven't been addressed. And workers, unions, us in the opposition are left hanging to accept that the minister and this government will address these issues, when we know, in fact, that a goodly portion of them are long-standing issues that should have been addressed long before now.

So, while we may support this bill in order to try and protect some of the most vulnerable citizens of Manitoba, we must really urge the minister, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to actually fix some of the issues that have been identified by myself and others here today that are missing from this bill, that really leave things hanging, that have to be addressed.

It's not good enough to just say to health-care workers: Thanks; you're our hero. Oh, and by the way, we're cutting your wages because you're only allowed to work in one site as opposed to two or three. Oh, by the way, somewhere down the road your pension is going to be affected. But thanks for coming out; thanks for showing up.

And somebody else previously said, you know, it's more than just a job for those folks. And it is. It is a passion; it's a calling; it's all of those things. But it's all of those things that need to be recognized by this government and taken care of, because the best way to actually show thanks to those folks for showing up every day is to very specifically make sure they're not losing out, that their families aren't losing out because of the actions of this government and because they are trying to show up every day.

So I just really want to impress upon the minister the importance of fixing these issues and fixing them sooner rather than later. If this bill passes, we really ask the minister and the Premier and this government to not just leave the words may be addressed, but to change that language to say those issues must be addressed so that workers' losses are mitigated.

The ill effects on working people who step up and go every day and want to do the best job they can do: this government should make sure that those impacts

must be mitigated in this legislation, not just may be. May is not the right word.

If they haven't addressed it in this legislation—and legislation, at the very minimum, must say that the employers at the health regions, Shared Health, wherever, must address these issues without fail and without undue delay, because we cannot expect our health-care heroes to keep going to work and losing money in the process.

* (15:50)

So with that, I think I'll conclude my remarks and cede the floor to the next speaker.

Thank you.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Bill 67, The Public Health Amendment Act, the purpose of this bill is to amend and—to amend The Public Health Act to enable the chief public health officer to make orders during an epidemic that prevent people from working at more than one hospital, personal-care home or other facility. This order-making power is repealed one year after it comes into force.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, our health-care system was pushed to the breaking point. This past year, we saw the importance of all Manitobans being able to access quality care close to home, and we've seen that an unacceptable number—well, actually any number of COVID-related deaths that occurred in our personal-care homes. It's clearly demonstrated the deep, systemic flaws that we have here in the province and the way that we care for our elders. Thank you.

During the pandemic, the Province tried to implement a one-site rule for PCH staff, but these staff were so undersupported that this was just impossible for some PCHs and they had to apply for exemptions to the rule just to have enough staff to take care of their residents. This is a result of the Pallister government's deep cuts to our health-care system, including for our personal-care homes.

Sorry. A one-site rule during a public health crisis is an excellent idea in principle, but it won't practically be possible under the Pallister government's cuts. Also, unions were not consulted on this bill, despite the impacts that this bill will have on them and their members.

So, this morning, when I found out that this bill would be discussed, I reached out to several folks that

I know that work in long-term-care homes and folks that actually work as nurses and folks that run nursing agencies. And I asked them what has the impact been, this one-site, single-site public health order this past year? What's the impact been on patient care? What's the impact been on workers and benefits and pay?

And for some, they said that, well, I was able to—as a worker in a long-term-care home, I was able to get more hours from the long-term-care home that I worked at, so my income didn't get affected so much. And for some others, they said that the problems with staffing, the patient-to-staff ratio, were so unmanageable and terrible that even when they would get offered more hours, they wouldn't take them because they knew that they would hardly be able to provide, you know, decent care for their patients and also that they just wouldn't be able to get through more work, more hours in their day.

It's just been that bad at some of these facilities. And we know that because of how—because we've seen all the reports from the families and people and folks that have died due to, you know, lack of staff, really; people that have been dehydrated and not fed and not cared for the way that we should be caring for them.

Some folks have said, well, you know, now that we have two doses—because—two vaccine doses, it's—and now that we have sufficient PPE, it would be really nice if we didn't have to do the single-site order because of how short-staffed we really are. And we need to get that staffing up, no matter what.

So, this is what's coming from the field. These are the people on the ground working with our loved ones, and they've said that this single-site order has, you know, been—has made it almost impossible for them to have enough staffing to provide the patient care that is necessary, and this needs to be addressed by this government now.

You take a look at what other jurisdictions have done to more successfully address the personal-care home situation that we have here, and you take a look at—for example, Quebec. Quebec last year announced that they are going to spend an extra \$100 million annually to boost home-care services for the elderly and other Quebecers with reduced autonomy. The province was facing increased demand for home-care services due to its rapidly aging population and, of course, that demand increased during the pandemic,

which killed as many as 4,000 residents in Quebec in regulated long-term care homes.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that—some of that funding—some of that \$100 million annually—will go toward salary increases for home-care workers and for new equipment, and workers that are hired through that government's direct allowance service employment paycheque program will see their hourly wage be bumped up by \$2, from \$14.25 to \$16. And workers hired through domestic help businesses will also get \$1.75 hour—per hour raise.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

From the Quebec government—they had a press release that said, to make up for the scarcity of resources in the field of care for the elderly and the vulnerable, the government of Quebec is unveiling the new, accelerated program support for assistance care in health facilities.

The Premier announced nearly 10,000 new long-term-care facility attendant positions. This new training program will be offered in accelerated format over a period of three months for a total of 375 hours. It will lead to an attestation of professional studies, and training will be offered in a hybrid mode—120 hours in training centres followed by 255 hours in work-study formula, or 103 hours in distance training approximately two days per week and 152 hours in establishments approximately three days per week.

Students will receive a scholarship equivalent to \$760 per week during their training, and they will then be assured of employment upon obtaining their certificate with a full-time annual salary of \$49,000, which includes a minimum of other training and other benefits relating to their work.

The reason why I spent so much time in taking a look at what other jurisdictions are doing is because our jurisdiction isn't doing anything like this to address the personal-care home and long-term care and other kinds of congregate facility situation that we have here in Manitoba.

The PCs have forgot the people that we need to try to protect the most, and that was evident in their budget. After Lynn Stevenson delivered her report on the tragedy in Maples Personal Care Home, we were hoping to see some real action by this government to address the lives lost in long-term-care homes and personal-care homes. But this PC budget did not

address this ongoing crisis and staffing shortages that we're seeing, and back to Bill 67, the single-site public health order will continue to exacerbate those staffing shortages that we're going to see.

And again, this is a good idea in practice—in principle. But in practice, without adequate staffing, how are these facilities going to manage and make sure that these vulnerable residents will be getting the care that they need? And we know they're not getting that care that they need.

This government has forgotten about the most vulnerable in our population. Of the 17 recommendations made by Lynn Stevenson, more funding and more staffing ranks as top priorities. The budget that was recently released noted that \$9.3 million will go to funding facility expansions in Steinbach and Carman, but that eats up the lion's share of the \$10.1-million increase in funding to long-term-care services.

So that overall increase, that leftover amount, is about 1.6 per cent, and that 1.6 per cent does not keep up with inflation costs. And if you're not keeping up with inflation, you're actually going backwards.

So for the facilities, for the existing facilities that we have here in the province, these vulnerable patients and for our health-care heroes who are working understaffed, that's an actually—that's actually a cut happening in these spaces.

* (16:00)

And despite what we've seen with the lives lost in the second COVID wave and despite the fact that we are now in a third wave of COVID, this government has chosen cuts to our most vulnerable in this province. I think that's it.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I just want to put a few words on the record here. I think it would be important this legislation add clarity and be more inclusive to include other care facilities and group homes. Mr. Speaker, the minister acknowledged that other congregate living homes would be included in the legislation.

So, if she is willing to specify personal-care homes, I'm hopeful that she would reconsider and allow for more inclusivity and specify group homes and all long-term-care facilities.

I think it should be mentioned, too, that here in Manitoba, many people work in both long-term-care homes and group homes, and I know people working in these facilities are feeling overworked and overwhelmed.

And we need to make sure that we have adequate staffing numbers so those in care homes and group homes have their needs met and those working are not being overworked. This is something my colleague from River Heights has spoken a lot about.

And with those few words, I'll end my remarks here.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers on the third reading and concurrence of Bill 67? No other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is third reading and concurrence of Bill 67, The Public Health Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Deputy Government House Leader): Could the House please prepare for royal assent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable acting House leader has asked for royal assent on Bill 67.

We will pause and we'll wait until the—Her Honour's ready for the royal assent.

Thank you.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cam Steel): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. 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, Mr. Deputy Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

* (16:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Your Honour:

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

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier):

Bill 67 – The Public Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In Her Majesty's name, Her Honour assents to this bill.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader. Oh, sorry. Okay.

Please be seated.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you canvass the House to see if it's the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 19, 2021

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