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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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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

Wednesday, April 28, 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 Pivniuk): O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws may—to—as they may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only which in accordance with Thy will, that we seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everyone.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 229—The Restriction on Material Accompanying Government Cheques Act

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino), that Bill 229, The Restriction on Material Accompanying Government Cheques Act; Loi imposant des restrictions sur le matériel accompagnant les chèques émis par le gouvernement, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliv: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 229, The Restriction on Material Accompanying Government Cheques Act. This act would prohibit the name, image or title of a Cabinet minister, including the First Minister, from being used on any material included with a cheque mailed by the government or any government agency.

This bill is, unfortunately, very necessary to ensure governments do not use rebates as a tool for political self-promotion. I'm looking forward to unanimous support of the House on Bill 229 to ensure that Manitobans are provided rebates in the quickest and fairest way possible that also ensures taxpayers' value for money.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister for—Minister of Finance. The required 90 minutes notice prior to the routine proceedings was provided in accordance to rule 26-2.

Would the honourable member—the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Every year, Manitobans join more than 100 countries to recognize April 28th as the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job

The Day of Mourning gives us all a chance to reflect and honour the Manitobans who did not return home safely from work last year, and the families impacted by the workplace injuries and illnesses.

In 2020, more than 20—more than 13 Manitobans lost their lives as a result to work-related incidents and occupational diseases. Many more Manitoban workers were seriously hurt enough to cause permanent injury or necessitate time away from their jobs.

Of course, those we've lost are much more than workers, Mr. Speaker. They're also family members; they're friends; there's colleagues as well as neighbours. We will continue to miss them each and every day.

Today is also a time to recommit ourselves to safety and health in the workplace and prevent further injury, illness, as well as death. As we look to the future of our province, I invite and encourage all of us to continue to work together to support safe and healthy workplaces.

We all share in the vision of making our province stronger, and that requires a safe and healthy workplace for all Manitobans. By working together, we can accomplish our unified goal to bring everyone home safely at the end of the workday.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members stand for a moment of silence in the Chamber, to honour the Manitobans who were injured or killed in the workplace over the past year.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Today is the Day of Mourning, a day that we commemorate all workers who have died, suffered injury or illness just by going to work. This day is especially—significance this year, given many Manitobans have contracted COVID-19 at their workplaces, with at least one worker passing away as a result.

Twenty-eight years ago, the Canadian Labour Congress declared April 28th as an annual day of remembrance, thanks to a former Steelworkers president in Thompson, Dick Martin. Our NDP MP, Member of Parliament, Rod Murphy, introduced a private member's bill that passed in the House of Commons officially recognizing April 28th as the National Day of Mourning.

I came from a workplace that averaged a dead worker every 15 months back in the '90s. Strong regulation, strong enforcement by governments and unions made the difference. Mine fatalities are few and far between these days in Manitoba.

This government continues to take actions that are anti-worker, making the workplaces less safe. They recently increased the apprenticeship journey person ratio to two to one, which will make workplaces less safe.

There's been dramatic reduction in safety inspections since this government took office. They've also cut the budget of workplace health and safety year after year.

These changes will put Manitobans at further risk on the job. They fail to recognize the importance—

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

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to have the member finish his statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. It's a no. Finishing denied.

The honourable member for—the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)? Oh, the honourable member for Tyndall Park—sorry.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the member—honourable member for Tyndall Park have leave to speak on the member's statement—minister's statement? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Lamoureux: Today we take some time to remember those who lost their lives from being injured on the job. We know workers have had to sacrifice more in the last year than anyone could have ever expected or anticipated, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we know many workers are forced to choose between whether to stay home, unpaid, and go to work to ensure they can put food on the table, afford their prescribed medications, or have a roof over their head.

This is why there is an immediate need that would protect workers to be able to stay home during COVID through a provincial sick pay program.

Mr. Speaker, labour is a provincial responsibility and the provincial government should be the first to provide for it.

In October we asked this government to implement a sick pay program because Manitoba workers continue to be forced to make decisions between potentially spreading the virus and not paying rent.

This government is putting workers at risk with legislation and regulation changes. We saw this in December, when the government quietly made changes, reducing the apprenticeship ratio from one supervisor to one worker to one instructor responsible for supervising two workers now.

I think about a construction site, for example. How is a teacher or an instructor supposed to teach two students when, hypothetically, one is working on the 13th floor and another's on the—

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

* (13:40)

An Honourable Member: Do I have leave?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave for the honourable member to finish her ministerial statement?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Is there agreement to observe a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Jocelyne Larocque

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): It is my honour to rise in the House today to recognize the commitment, dedication, work ethic, talent and heart of Jocelyne Larocque, recipient of the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Council Manitoba Indigenous Female Athlete of the Decade award.

Jocelyne is a Métis from Ste. Anne, Manitoba. She's also the first Indigenous woman to play for the Canadian Olympic women's hockey team.

Jocelyne started playing hockey at the age of five because her sister, Chantal, played the game and she wanted to be just like her. In 1998, at the age of 10, Jocelyne watched the Canadian women's hockey team compete in the Olympic Winter Games held in Nagano, Japan. At the time, she did not know professional women's hockey existed, but after watching the games, the fire was lit.

Jocelyne made her debut on the international stage in 2011 and she has medalled in every event she participated in. Her dream came true in 2014 when she qualified for the Winter Olympics held in Sochi, Russia. Canada won gold in women's hockey, beating the United States in a thrilling 3-2 overtime victory.

She returned to the Olympic stage in 2018 when she joined the Canadian women's hockey team in PyeongChang, South Korea. Her leadership and defensive skills helped her team to bring home a silver medal.

Jocelyne hopes to inspire and motivate Aboriginal youth to dream big and believe that with hard work and dedication anything is possible. As she says: If you can see it, you can dream it.

Please join me in congratulating Jocelyne Larocque for her extraordinary athletic accomplishments.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know many across the

province are eager to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. As of today, Manitobans living in the following areas are newly eligible: St. Johns, Wolseley and the West End of Winnipeg, as well as Brandon downtown. This is in addition to Point Douglas north, Point Douglas south, downtown west, downtown east, Inkster east, Seven Oaks west.

Adults working in these communities in K-to-12 schools, child care, food processing facilities, grocery and convenience stores, gas stations, restaurants or anywhere that serves food, including food banks, as well as public health inspectors or workplace safety and health officers, are now eligible.

All those who live or work in the northern regional health authority are eligible, including Churchill, First Nations people age 30 and over, folks over age 40–40 and over, rather, are also eligible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as elected officials, it's our responsibility to empower our constituents with any information and support they may need to access the COVID-19 vaccine. We must close the gaps.

Unfortunately, this government has failed seniors, Manitobans living with disabilities and those financially marginalized by doing nothing to ensure those folks can access free transportation to a vaccine location or have vaccines brought to them. That has to change.

Now, as public health experts have repeatedly shared with us, the best vaccine that you can access is the first one that you're eligible for.

I encourage all Manitobans to get their vaccine as soon as they're eligible and to reach out to public health or your MLA with any questions or concerns. We're here to support you in any way we possibly can.

Thank you.

Adam Bighill

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): Today I have the great pleasure of delivering a private member's statement honouring a Waverley constituent, Mr. Adam Bighill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember back in 2018 when the Winnipeg Blue Bombers had played the Ottawa Redblacks and the game went into overtime. The Bombers had just scored a touchdown and a 2-point conversion, but when Ottawa was driving and looked—it looked like they were on the verge of scoring a major and perhaps a tying 2-point conversion.

Someone on the Bomber defence had to make a play. That player was none other than No. 4 and Waverley constituent, Adam Bighill. He caused a fumble, the Bombers recovered and ended up winning that game. That year they went to the CFL Western Final but would fall short to the Calgary Stampeders.

Adam Bighill had signed a one-year deal that year with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers on May 19, 2018. He finished the 2018 season as the Blue Bomber's nominee for outstanding player, was named to the CFL All-Star team and was ultimately named the CFL's Most Outstanding Defensive Player. The problem was, now he was a free agent, and I, like most Bomber fans, was worried he would re-sign back with his old club, the BC Lions.

But great news: the Blue Bombers were able to re-sign him. He helped lead the Bombers defence as they defeated the Hamilton Ticats 33-12 in the 107th Grey Cup. The game saw Bighill recover a fumble which led to an Andrew Harris touchdown.

After the win, Adam said: I've packed too many garbage bags. I only play this game to win a championship. We're bringing it home to Winnipeg, Manitoba. It doesn't get any better than that.

He has made a difference on the field and also off the field serving on boards, giving back to the community coaching kids or volunteering for various organizations including the Special Olympics, to name a few.

Most of us know him as a football player, but now you know Adam Bighill is truly a community guy who also gives back to the community.

I am glad Adam, his wife Kristina, with their three beautiful children call Winnipeg, Manitoba home, and as Winnipeggers, Manitobans, and as Bomber fans, we are all happy that you are part of our community.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Wildlife Management Areas

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, once again, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has shown his true colours by renaming eight wildlife management areas—our Indigenous territories—after prominent Manitobans, all settler men.

Let me be clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is colonial, patriarchal, sexist, elitist and completely tone-deaf.

For example, the Premier chose as one of his prominent Manitobans, Don Orchard, a former

Filmon government Cabinet minister, whose only contribution to conservation was being the minister of Energy and Mines. Don Orchard stood against citizens' rights in accessing abortion while banning its medicare coverage and has numerous allegations against him that should have ruled him out—but no.

Place names have a deep and significant meaning, especially for our peoples as the original caretakers and protectors of these territories. Each of these WMAs are in Treaty 1 and Treaty 2, but not a single one of these new place names recognize Indigenous peoples, our languages and our ancestral understanding of these lands sustaining us over generations.

It's our peoples—in particular, matriarchs—who have protected our lands, waters and resources, and continue to do so today. The PCs didn't reach out to any Indigenous communities or women's organizations or women themselves.

In an era of reconciliation, the Premier could have renamed these in one of the many traditional Indigenous languages spoken on these lands—but no.

The Premier needs to stand up in the House today, apologize to Indigenous peoples and to Manitoba women. And then he needs to immediately rescind this directive and work with Indigenous peoples and women's organizations on the exercise of renaming these areas in a respect, equitable manner.

Finally, my message to Manitobans is: When the Premier and his Cabinet show you who they are, believe them. And vote them out in 2023.

Miigwech.

Harry J. Enns

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Jobs): I rise in the House today to recognize a truly wonderful man who left a legendary impact province of Manitoba. Harry J. Enns was the MLA for the great constituency of Lakeside from 1966 to 2003—an astounding 37 years. In fact, next year will be the 100th anniversary of only three MLAs in the constituency of Lakeside. I am proud to call myself one of those three.

* (13:50)

Harry had a unique distinction of having been appointed to Cabinet on three separate governments under four premiers: Honourable Duff Roblin, Honourable Walter Weir, Honourable Sterling Lyon and Honourable Gary Filmon.

Harry truly was a renaissance man. In his early years he was well-known as a singer, performing in musicals at Rainbow Stage. He was a rancher, politician, innovator, conservationist.

Harry had many accomplishments in his 37 years in politics. Two of the most notable that still have an impact in Canada today involve hemp and conservation. Harry was the first politician serving in government to buck the anti-cannabis trend and risk his reputation to help Manitoba farmers by allowing experimental hemp plots in 1995, '96 and '97. As a result of the information gathered from these trials, Health Canada allowed hemp crops to seed, which was a birth of the hemp food industry.

The other was the creation of Oak Hammock Marsh. Harry was a lover of outdoors and was tremendous conservationist. He knew how a great role these marshes have on the effect of the ecosystem and wanted to share that knowledge with everyone.

Oak Hammock Marsh offers education classes and provides tremendous learning experience to all those who attend personal or virtually. Oak Hammock Marsh also serves headquarters for Ducks Unlimited Canada, an immensely important wetland preservation company for North American waterfowl.

Last year, the provincial government announced a \$6-million—

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

An Honourable Member: Ask leave to finish my statement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to have the minister finish his private members' statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Eichler: Thank you, and thanks to my colleagues.

Last year, provincial government announced a \$6-million endowment fund to Oak Hammock Marsh. It was also announced the interpretive centre would now be known as Harry J. Enns Wetland Discovery Centre. The remaining of the centre will ensure the great conservation legacy of Harry is preserved for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba's Workforce Paid Sick Leave

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Working Manitobans want to do their part to help fight the COVID pandemic by staying home when they're sick, but there are still too many economic barriers standing in the way of them doing so.

With rising case counts, with variants of concern, with the vaccine rollout that's still behind the supply that has been provided from Ottawa, we know that there is that need for an enhanced, more accessible, paid sick leave program here in Manitoba.

That's particularly relevant for all those people out there who are living paycheque to paycheque because of the PCs keeping them artificially below the poverty line, even though they work full time. Now, people are forced to make these difficult choices because of the lack of an accessible paid sick leave program.

Will the Premier stand up today and commit to an enhanced paid sick leave program that's accessible to all workers in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): As far as the issues that the member referenced in his preamble concerning affordability for Manitobans, we're vitally concerned with that as a government and have demonstrated it by raising the basic personal exemption, for example. And so we've taken over 12,500 Manitobans right off the tax rolls, where the NDP used to tax them.

Now, that is just one example and there are dozens of others of how we're concerning ourselves with making sure that there is more money in their households of those who need that money.

On the issue of vaccines that the member raised, we've actually, in co-ordination—close co-ordination with Premier Horgan in British Columbia, we advocated very strongly and were able to get the premiers unified around working with the federal government, and they committed, as a government, to develop a sick leave program.

I'm very concerned, as a number of my colleagues are, about the inadequacies of the program the federal government has outlined. We were patient with the federal government but we'd like them to step up. We'll continue to dialogue on this issue as soon as tomorrow.

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

Mr. Kinew: I think the point we're making is that it's important for the Premier to take action today, rather than waiting on some dialogue tomorrow. And again, begging Justin Trudeau for more money is not showing leadership. Showing leadership would be instituting a paid sick leave program that's immediately accessible to all workers.

The concern that we've been hearing from working Manitobans is that there is that lag, that period where they go without income. And then, when they do get the sickness benefit, it's at an income level far lower than what they need to keep their heads above water.

The Province could take action immediately. The Province could ensure that there is a paid sick leave program accessible through employers so workers wouldn't see any disruption and that they could have a level of income closer to that which they are accustomed.

Will the Premier heed the calls of public health experts and working Manitobans by enhancing paid sick leave to be more accessible today?

Mr. Pallister: Well, a couple of points. Consultation doesn't seem to matter to the Leader of the Opposition in this context, yet he tells us we should delay building flood protection for people in the Interlake by half a decade because we need to consult.

An Honourable Member: That's a bit of a stretch.

Mr. Pallister: There's a bit of a—yes, there's a bit of a stretch is right.

You know—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—Mr. Speaker, the fact is the member tells us to consult one day and next day tells us, don't bother. The plan that we proposed, that an NDP premier—who the member is now speaking in opposition to, by the way—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—an NDP premier and I advocated for a national plan. Every premier agreed. And the federal government agreed, too, but they didn't take the necessary actions to enact a national plan.

And a national plan in an era when people are more and more mobile between provinces—well, less currently with the pandemic—but more and more—

[interjection]—as the NDP leader may understand, workers are mobile in this country and we need a national plan for sick leave in this country. So that's what we've advocated, and all premiers are onside.

The NDP leader chooses to heckle. He doesn't have a position. He's going to change it now.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, if the Premier wants to continue following the lead of Premier Horgan in British Columbia, then what he would do is implement paid vaccine leave for workers here in Manitoba.

In fact, if he offered three hours of paid leave for every worker out there to be able to go get the shot when it's their turn, not only would he be following in the footsteps of Premier Horgan, he'd also be following in the footsteps of Premiers Kenney, Moe—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—and Ford, as well.

Again, it's a simple move that would help ensure that there's consistency no matter where somebody works. Right now, with the state of emergency having been in place for many, many months—for longer than a year—you would think that the government would take emergency measures to be able to ensure that there are no more barriers to people's participation in the vaccination program.

Will the Premier commit to paid vaccine leave today?

Mr. Pallister: Actually, I've led in so many ways, Mr. Speaker, that I can only remind the member we were one of the first provinces to guarantee people they wouldn't lose their job as a consequence of going to get tested or of having to leave because they were ill.

What the member argues for is consistency. He says consistency matters, but he needs to understand one size doesn't fit all in every respect. And so things like child care, for example, are things that need to be worked out. Among the provinces, each of us has different strategies.

But in the case of sick leave, we believe that a national program would be the right thing to do. He's arguing against it today and he's arguing we should follow BC's lead. But he should understand, yesterday

he argued for a shutdown of the economy in our province and for our retail businesses to be closed. However, in British—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—Columbia, the rules are that there is no restriction, that they only have to social distance.

So today he's saying something totally at odds with what he said yesterday, and that's pretty much the rule of thumb for this member in this Chamber on a daily basis.

We're going to continue to do things to advance the possibility of recovery here in Manitoba and to support vulnerable people here in our province. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a different question.

Manitoba Hydro Labour Dispute Collective Bargaining Negotiations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today is an important day where we stand in solidarity with families who are mourning across Manitoba. It is, of course, the Day of Mourning. And in addition to commemorating those who lost their lives and fighting for those who are living, it's an important time for us to show solidarity with working people and with the labour movement.

But as we gather here today, we know that there is one group of workers who are being sorely mistreated by this government, and that is the Manitoba Hydro employees of IBEW. We know that they are being prevented from having a fair deal negotiated with them. We know that this government is refusing arbitration. And we know that the government is hiding billions and billions of dollars in Manitoba Hydro revenue, just to try and cheat those hard-working Manitobans out of their due.

* (14:00)

Now, we would ask the Premier to finally take a step back and allow IBEW members to negotiate freely and fairly with Manitoba Hydro.

Will he comply today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member has trouble understanding, because of his inexperience and reckless nature, the nature of labour negotiations. What he doesn't understand is filling the air these days, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

IBEW is negotiating. The government is negotiating with them, and they're negotiating in good faith. The process isn't fun to watch, but it's the reality of the situation.

For many years, the NDP didn't bother with negotiations; they just gave the unions whatever they wanted. Now we have negotiations and they're actually happening. You know, IBEW leadership—some of whom are friends of mine—don't need the Opposition Leader to take their hand and tell them what to do. They don't, because they've been doing a great job for many, many years, standing—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—up for their members. And all without—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—all without the advantage of a political publicity stunt, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The NDP leader can't get his questions in when he has a chance, so he likes to heckle. But I can only say to him, the IBEW didn't need a publicity stunt to represent their members. Their bosses—their union bosses are doing a job that they've done for years without his help, and they sure don't need his help now. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, we know that there are no free and fair negotiations happening, because every time a representative of workers goes to an independent tribunal, what happens? We hear that the Premier is dismissed as being unreasonable and that the measures this Cabinet signs off on are unjustifiable.

Those are—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—direct quotes: unreasonable, unjustifiable.

And it's not just once, it's multiple times. We've heard it from the Court of Queen's Bench, from the Court of Appeal, from the Labour Board, from multiple independent arbitrators. Every single time they intervene and they tell us what the Premier is doing is wrong, it amounts to interference in negotiations and it is bad faith. How else could you describe hiding billions of dollars from your

negotiating partner? And with this government, I use partner very loosely.

When will they finally get out of the way and allow IBEW to negotiate a fair deal? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Talk about hiding: the NDP wasted \$10 billion trying to Americanize Manitoba Hydro. Think where IBEW workers would be with that \$10 billion back in Manitoba right now. Think where Manitoba ratepayers would be.

But let's talk about this population—or, popularity pursuit the member has with publicity stunts, for a minute. Yesterday, the deputy premier went out in the hall—*[interjection]*—and he can listen if he wants to learn—and said—

An Honourable Member: Deputy leader.

Mr. Pallister: —I quote, the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —deputy leader said, you can't ask Manitobans to go into another lockdown, leave folks out who are breaking public health orders and there are no consequences. That's what she said yesterday. I think she launched a leadership campaign yesterday.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Manitoba Hydro and IBEW Request for Arbitration

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, again, we know that the Premier is flailing, flailing because he increased hydro rates on every single Manitoban at the time when they could afford it least. He compounded that by hiding billions of dollars, not only from all Manitobans but, importantly, from the workers he was supposed to be engaging in good faith negotiations with.

We know further to that, that the wage freeze they've been trying to implement on these Hydro workers that every single PC member called a hero in 2019, but has now been turned around and forced a wage freeze that the courts have called unconstitutional. The Premier's position is untenable. The morals of his space are wrong. The politics at the very least, in the suburbs of all places, are absolutely terrible.

Will the Premier finally just back down and allow IBEW and Manitoba Hydro to go to arbitration?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): So, an unprecedented publicity stunt by the member ends in him not wearing a mask in a big group that's oversized, while not distancing, and he takes no responsibility for it, and the deputy leader of the NDP quite rightly—quite rightly—goes out and says there need to be consequences for these individuals, the same individuals that gather and put all of us at risk. That's what she said. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: And that's exactly what the man to her left did. That's exactly what he did, but he doesn't want to acknowledge it. So he's meddling in a labour dispute he has no business doing.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I'm getting a lot of—I want to hear the person who's speaking all the time, for Hansard's sake, for actually answering the questions or—having the questions. We can't hear anything in here anymore, and it's getting to the point where it has to stop.

Mr. Pallister: My point exactly: that the member opposite has no respect for the rules of this place or anywhere else.

You know, and I tell the member, you know, understand, understand there's a consequence for that. He says he's a new man. He says he's a new man. He keeps saying he's a new man. He keeps behaving exactly the way that he always did when he got in trouble in the past. He tries to cover it up. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: He wants to deny it, but he keeps on doing it, like he's doing right now—no respect—and he talks to me about morals, and this is a man with eight criminal charges.

Okay, so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he should get up and apologize for breaking the rules, just as his deputy leader instructed him to do. She was right to say it; he'd be right to do it—

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

Manitoba's Workforce Paid Sick Leave

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Today is the Day of Mourning. We mourn for workers. We remember those that have fallen, but, more importantly, we need to fight for the living.

We can do that today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by extending paid sick leave for all Manitobans, permanently—not a temporary federal program, not just for some workers, but for all workers.

So will the minister and his government institute permanent, provincially mandated and legislated paid sick leave for all workers today? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our government has taken the lead in terms of this, making sure the federal government introduced the sick leave program. Now, we think that they need to do better, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We think that the feds need to do better, and that's what we continue to do.

We'll continue to push the federal government for a more enhanced sick leave program. That's something the Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks to with the Prime Minister all the time; that's something I'll be talking to the Minister of Finance.

We're very proud of the fact we're the first jurisdiction to introduce legislation to ensure that workers could get the sick leave program from the federal government level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a secondary—supplementary question.

Apprenticeship Training One-to-One Ratio

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This minister's empty words mean absolutely nothing to workers in this province, workers who've bravely gone to work in the face of a pandemic, yet bill 28—unconstitutional—stills hangs over workers' heads.

Now the minister's reduced safety in their workplaces on the job by watering down the apprenticeship ratio, changing it from one to one to two to one.

So will the minister stop, and will this government support workers and reverse those legislative changes back to one to one to protect Manitoba apprentices and workers?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): We know what the NDP's track record is. They like to talk a lot, but they don't like to do a lot, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's why, over 17 years, they'd introduced anything about sick leave. But now, apparently, it's important to them. It's a—hypocritical from their point of view.

It's hypocritical from their point of view, but that's what the opposition is. They're all talk and no action. You look at things like workplace harassment; we know the track record of the NDP. That's a mistake that we're not going to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary question.

Advertising During Last Provincial Election Apology Request for Minister's Comments

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Today, we are mourning and honouring workers. But that's not what this minister's doing, that's not what this government's doing, because that's not who they represent.

* (14:10)

Last election, the 'deputy'—Deputy Premier falsely claimed that Unifor was not in compliance with election laws. Despite his ranting and ravings, it was once again proven wrong by the elections commissioner. But there was one party who did break the election laws, and that was the non-unionized shop, Merit Contractors, who illegally advertised in support of their Conservative buddies.

Will the minister apologize to Unifor today? Or is it one set of rules for the Conservatives and their buddies and one set of rules—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —for everybody else, yet again?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Talking about one set of rules for them and one set of rules for everyone else, that's what the opposition does in terms of their policy on harassment. We know what their track record is, we know that the Leader of the Opposition likes to go and have superspreader events, and yet everyone else needs to follow the health orders.

They're hypocrites, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's something that's—that Manitobans want a balance between labour as well as business practices, and that's what this government does. It provides a balance—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: –between business and labour practices.

We're going to continue to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I'm just asking for more decorum in this Chamber. It's kind of embarrassing when you—if you have anybody from the public is listening to you guys. So have some decorum and respect each other when they're asking questions or answering questions.

Correctional Officers Contract Collective Bargaining Negotiations

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, the PCs prove again that they are incapable of bargaining with public sector employees in good faith: 1,800 correctional staff working at different correctional facilities all across Manitoba are still without a contract for two years.

The minister refuses to provide any monetary proposals, making it clear they're trying to push their unconstitutional wage freeze on these workers. It's not fair bargaining, and now these workers will be forced to go to the Labour Board just to try and get the government to give them a proposal.

Will this government bargain in good faith with correctional officers and stop trying to freeze the wages of hard-working public sector employees?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services): Pleased to rise to address the question. Thank you for the question.

We continue to engage in collective bargaining with unions, and it's part of the mandate for this government. We are fair in the collective bargaining process.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet have a clear disdain for public sector workers, as evidenced by the tens of thousands of public employees like nurses, Hydro workers, correctional officers, who have all been without a contract for years. This government keeps forcing workers to go to court in order to be treated fairly. Bill 28, the Province's basis for these wage freezes, has been ruled unconstitutional.

Will the minister finally provide monetary proposals for the 1,800 correctional officers that are still waiting for a contract?

Mr. Helwer: Again, we continue to engage in the bargaining process.

I know that the member opposite wants to intervene and make sure that their friends are well compensated. And, generally, the civil service is very well paid, but we continue in the collective bargaining process.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Clearly, the minister doesn't know what he's talking about.

Correctional officers put themselves at risk every single day, particularly during this COVID-19 pandemic, and yet the PCs refuse to bargain in good faith and negotiate about wages. Instead, they try to continue with their unconstitutional wage freeze. This is simply just wrong.

Will the minister show respect for the work of correctional officers and show up at the bargaining table with a monetary proposal today?

Mr. Helwer: Again, collective bargaining within the Manitoba government is ongoing. We remain committed to this process and efforts to provide public service to the—Manitobans in a sustainable manner, and collective bargaining continues to be—for expired collective agreements. We are in communications with those—with groups that are at the bargaining process.

Emergency Room Services Wait Times and Staffing

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): We encourage all Manitobans to seek emergency and urgent care for important medical situations. Public health urges the same because there are some Manitobans who've been reluctant to seek care during the pandemic, even when they're facing serious health concerns. As a result, visits to emergency and urgent care have plummeted.

That's why it's all the more alarming to see a spike in emergency wait times. At Health Sciences Centre, there was an eight-hour wait for care last month. Like at the Grace, there's a breakdown happening in our emergency rooms. Hallway medicine is returning. It needs immediate attention.

When will the minister take action to address this?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Acting Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Mr. Speaker, we know that, under the NDP, wait times in the province of Manitoba, when it comes to getting into an ER, continued to grow to the point that we were the worst in Canada. Every year, it continued to grow. You could get on a plane and you could fly to Toronto, you could have supper there and fly back, and that would take less time than to get into an ER when the NDP were in government.

This government took significant steps to reduce ER wait times. Clearly, in a pandemic, there are many things that are a challenge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to health care, but this is a government that is rising to that challenge, along with those who are working in the health-care system.

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

MLA Asagwara: Mr. Deputy Speaker, last week 4,700 people visited an emergency room in Winnipeg: lower than it's been in a long time. Yet, even with very low demand, those waiting in the morning for a bed that is far—those waiting, rather, in the morning for a bed is far too high for this time of year. It's the highest it's been in many, many years, actually. It's the creeping return of hallway medicine and it's happening when demand in this area is at a 15-year low. That's alarming.

Part of the problem, as we know, are the beds the Pallister government cut from Winnipeg hospitals. The other concern, of course, is the very high nurse vacancy: over 20 per cent at both Grace and St. Boniface.

Action is needed today.

Will the minister address this return of hallway medicine?

Mr. Goertzen: It's worth reminding the member, Mr. Speaker, that when the NDP were in government, not only did individuals have to wait to get service in the hospital, they had to wait to get into the hospital. They would wait for more than an hour to get offloaded from an ambulance.

Then, when they got into the hospital, they couldn't find medical attention for many, many hours in time, so they often had to wait in the hallway. And then, when they finally got some kind of attention, even if it wasn't enough, the NDP would put them in

a taxicab, sometimes in the middle of winter, and send them home, unfortunately sometimes to die on a doorstep in the middle of winter, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

MLA Asagwara: I would remind the member opposite that it's actually under his decision-making that this chaos was initiated in our Winnipeg hospitals.

Hallway medicine is returning to Winnipeg hospitals. Manitoba's busiest emergency room has an eight-hour wait for care as of last month. I'll table the data for the minister.

That should concern all of us. That happened while normal traffic is being suppressed, which means, unfortunately, the situation is going to get worse. As demand increases at our emergency rooms, the situation is unravelling.

Now, there are some solutions: return the hospital beds that were cut under this minister and this Pallister government, and address the unacceptably high nurse vacancy rates of over 20 per cent.

Will the minister—

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

Mr. Goertzen: I would remind the member that, according to CIHI, this is a government that has made some of the most significant advances when it comes to waiting—or, reducing wait times to get into an emergency room. And that is after inheriting a situation—not during a pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but inheriting a situation where people couldn't get into the hospital because they would sit into an ambulance. They couldn't get service in the hospital, and then they got punted out of the hospital into a taxicab.

* (14:20)

We're addressing that system. We're working, of course, in a pandemic with everybody in the medical system doing extraordinary work to deal with the pandemic along with all the other extraordinary work that they do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Advanced Education Administration Act Request to Withdraw Bill 33

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Laurentian University, an esteemed academic institution in our neighbouring province, is facing insolvency, and professors and

faculty and staff are losing out on jobs without severance or support. Not only are good jobs being lost, but valuable programs for students are being cut and departments are being discontinued. This happened because their provincial government cut funding to universities the same way this provincial government is cutting funding here.

Manitobans don't want to see our colleges and universities end up in an insolvency position.

Will the minister reverse his cuts to fund universities and colleges adequately so that no academic programs need to be cut?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I thank my colleague for the question on the topic of Laurentian in Ontario.

I know that he's really concerned about what's happening in Ontario—unfortunately, has not been very concerned in regards to what's happening in Manitoba, because we on this side of the House are actually moving forward with quite a few recommendations from the Auditor General and also working with our partners to make sure that our students see success here in this great province of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Moses: Manitobans want quality education at affordable prices.

With the government—this government has not prioritized or supported post-secondary institutions. We know it's possible, even though this minister chooses not to do so. This government is raising tuition. They've increased by over \$1,000. And Bill 33 puts no limits on how high they can rise.

This government's regressive approach to post-secondary education excludes many Manitobans from attending university or college, and it takes the autonomy away from these institutions.

The minister must withdraw Bill 33 and work in good faith with the educators, staff and—

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

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the—my colleague from St. Vital for the question. It seems like he needs one of those Garmin or navigational devices because he's all over the map today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We on this side of the House continue to collaborate and work with our partners in education, and that includes students, students' associations, faculty and the post-secondary institutions themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I'm not going to take any lesson from the member on that side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because when they were in government, we saw that our various different rates and different student fees rise dramatically.

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

Mr. Moses: This government continues to undermine the intrinsic value of post-secondary education. This government and the minister should instead consider operating with the knowledge that providing equitable access to post-secondary education would actually improve the quality of life for all Manitobans.

During a time when many Manitobans are considering new career options, post-secondary institutions should be accessible and affordable. This government must step up and fund post-secondary adequately.

Will the minister stop his regressive cuts to universities and colleges today and withdraw Bill 33?

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, and I'm thrilled that the member from across the way brings up funding and accessibility. The fact is—and the member knows this because I've repeated this multiple times—I'm not sure if there's a literacy problem or a comprehension problem, but we on this side of the House are going to work on that for all Manitobans.

Just to remind the member, we have the lowest tuition rates west of Quebec. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even under an NDP government in BC—we are still cheaper than them.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again, not going to take any lessons from the member from St. Vital.

Thank you. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

St. Boniface Hospital ER Conditions

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I received a plea for help from people who work for the ER in the St. Boniface Hospital today. The stories, which I table, are harrowing.

There should be 130 nurses in the ER, but there are routinely less than 100. A 104-year-old patient was left on a stretcher for six hours and then left against medical advice. Seniors left—were left in observation for 72 hours as they declined. When there were no private beds available, palliative patients are dying in the ER. And one patient had to wait without food for days because their operation kept getting postponed.

A nurse wrote: Our staff dedicate themselves to do the absolute best we can. We do not have enough resources. We are not supported and our patients are having to pay a price for that. It's morally distressing.

Is this government going to step up today for the St. Boniface ER and make sure staff have the resources to keep patients safe?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Acting Minister of Health and Seniors Care): We know that officials within the regional health authority are working every day not just to deal, of course, with the pandemic, but to deal more broadly with all the different needs within the health-care system. Of course, at different times there are challenges when it comes to staffing, not the least of times would be a pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but there are always actions being taken to deal with those situations as they arise.

We also need long-term situations to be addressed. We need a real partner in Ottawa to ensure that we can have those resources, not just during a pandemic but beyond as well. There are challenges today, but there are challenges that'll continue in the future.

I would ask the member opposite to join us in addressing those challenges.

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

Mr. Lamont: This Premier and this government have ordered multiple rounds of cuts and freezes while receiving and refusing to spend new health-care money. That is their choice. They should own it.

There are stories from the front line, who are facing the full burden of this government's indifference to the suffering of workers and patients alike. People having mental health crises are being held for days in the ER's family room for a lack of beds. Last fall, two patients waited for angiograms for over four days in the ER without being brought up to the ward first. A nurse wrote, quote, as bad as things are now,

I can assure you they will only get worse unless this government changes course. She's right.

Will we have to wait for another tragic crisis for the government to act, or will they step up today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I can only say to the member, we have been acting, we continue to. Our investments in health exceed any previous government's by significant amounts.

I can also say to the member, the investments that Ottawa is making in sharing support for health care in all Canadian provinces have never been lower. Never lower, in the history of Canada, in any jurisdiction. NDP premiers agree. NDP premier agrees in BC, Liberal premiers agree across the country.

We're all unanimous in this respect, that we need to have greater supports than we have for health care, because the wait times we've shortened are longer in every other province, because the resources we're putting forward to health care are more significant than most other provinces on a per capita basis.

We continue to focus on health care investments, and we need the support and partnership of a federal government that cares enough about people to invest, too.

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

Gravel Pit in Riverdale, Manitoba Request for Update on Proposal

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have raised concerns about a proposal to put a gravel pit in the centre of an ecologically sensitive area in the RM of Riverdale just south of Rivers.

In early April, using careful COVID precautions, I visited the area to meet people who have great concerns about this proposal. I've been working on their behalf since then.

The area has native forest and prairie and is incredible wildlife habitat, including for endangered and threatened species. The area also has important archeological sites. The gravel pit would have a significant adverse impact on these as well as on drainage in the area.

I ask the minister: Has a decision been made with respect to this gravel pit proposal?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): Our government recognizes that this particular piece of Crown land has significant environmental concerns.

And, after careful review—there was a quarry permit application by the applicant—and I'm pleased to tell the member for River Heights and to the people around Rivers that the permit has been denied.

* (14:30)

Thank you.

Disability Support Legislation New Income Support Program

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Earlier this week, the Minister of Families introduced Bill 72, the disability support act, meeting a long-standing commitment of our government.

Can the Minister of Families rise today and update the House on what this bill will do to better the lives of Manitobans?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Accessibility): I'd like to thank my colleague for that question.

On Monday, our government was proud to introduce Bill 72, the disability support act, in this Chamber. This act will support the creation of a new, distinct income-support program for—specifically for Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities. We believe that a program tailored to their needs will help these valuable Manitobans live more dignified lives, and this bill will enable that.

I look forward to moving this bill through the House and I look forward to unanimous support from all members of this Legislature for this important legislation to improve the lives of people with disabilities in our province.

RM of St. Andrews Water and Waste Upgrades

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Kerri-Lynn Naumik saw her family's income fall \$30,000 last year due to COVID-19. At a time when families are facing severe economic challenges, they deserve to know that the government will be there to support them. Yet, in the midst of this global pandemic, Ms. Naumik is facing a \$16,000 bill to hook up her St. Andrews property to Winnipeg's waste and water service, a tab that they cannot bear.

The RM of St. Andrews needs more support from the Province, and RMs all need a voice at the table.

Will the minister commit to supporting Ms. Naumik and families like hers with additional investments in this much-needed water and waste upgrade today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We take the plight of any family in Manitoba very, very seriously and that's why we're proceeding with a reduction in the education property tax that will assist that family to some degree. The other issues will be addressed.

But it is without a great degree of pleasure that I rise today to inform the House of the passing of Vera Helwer, who is the mother of the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), who's a wonderful woman and a wonderful human being.

And to share with the members of the House, I know their—our sympathy and our condolence to the Helwer family and to their many, many supportive family and friends, for a life tremendously well lived.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just on a point of order, I just wanted to—on behalf of our team, our side of the Chamber—just to extend our sincere condolences to our colleague from Brandon West.

The passing of a parent at any time is certainly a difficult burden to bear, but also when you're in a position such as our friend from Brandon West where you're juggling the multiple responsibilities of serving in caucus and in Cabinet.

Certainly, when he has that opportunity to see his family in the coming hours and days, we hope that he makes the most of it.

And once again, we just offer our sincere condolences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Anyone else, on the point of order?

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Simply to say that we join all members in wishing the member our

very best. It's been a very difficult year for everybody and, of course, mourning in this time will also be very difficult. So our heart goes out to him. On behalf of my caucus, we wish him and his family the best.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On that point of order, I just wanted to let everyone know that it is not a point of order but, again, from the Speaker's Chair here I—my condolences to the Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer), to him and his family. We're with—our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Okay.

PEITITIONS

Epilepsy Treatment

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) One in 10 Manitobans will have a seizure in their lifetime, and the incidence of epilepsy in Indigenous populations is double the national average. Epilepsy occurs just as often as breast and lung cancer worldwide.

(2) COVID-19 has cancelled epilepsy surgeries booked for Manitoba patients elsewhere in Canada because they cannot receive this standardly routine surgery in the province.

(3) Manitoba is the only province which has an inappropriate hospital environment to perform most epilepsy surgeries because it conducts epilepsy monitoring on an orthopedics ward with orthopedic staff instead of an epilepsy ward with trained epilepsy staff.

(4) Patients in Manitoba have to wait three or more years for epilepsy surgery, which has resulted in them having to continue to suffer uncontrolled seizures, struggle with mental-health issues including depression, anxiety, headaches, general poor health and even death in some cases.

(5) Since an epilepsy neurologist resigned in 2012, more neurologists have resigned due to dealing with old and failing equipment, which has resulted in sending patients out of province, costing the provincial government millions of dollars.

(6) Epilepsy surgery is extremely effective, resulting in patients requiring less medication, sometimes becoming seizure-free, enabling them to work, drive and live fulfilling lives.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to open a genuine, four-bed epilepsy unit, similar to the one recently opened in Saskatchewan, at the health sciences centre, with modern equipment and adequate epilepsy neurosurgeons, neurologists, nurses, clerks and technicians.

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to formally establish an epilepsy program to ensure that all epilepsy staff can deliver care to patients in a co-ordinated fashion.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) One in 10 Manitobans will have a seizure in their lifetime, and the incidence of epilepsy in the Indigenous population is double the national average. Epilepsy occurs just as often as breast and lung cancer worldwide.

(2) COVID-19 has cancelled epilepsy surgeries booked for Manitoba patients elsewhere in Canada because they cannot receive this standardly routine surgery in the province.

(3) Manitoba is the only province which has an inappropriate hospital environment to perform most epilepsy surgeries because it conducts epilepsy monitoring on an orthopedics ward with orthopedic staff instead of an epilepsy ward with trained epilepsy staff.

(4) Patients in Manitoba have to wait three or four—more years for epilepsy surgery, which has resulted in them having to continue to suffer uncontrolled seizures, struggle with mental-health issues including depression, anxiety, headaches, general poor health and even death in some cases.

(5) Since an epilepsy neurologist resigned in 2012, more neurologists have resigned due to dealing with old and failing equipment, which has resulted in

sending patients out of province, costing provincial government millions of dollars.

(6) Epilepsy surgery is extremely effective, resulting in patients requiring less medication, sometimes becoming seizure-free, enabling them to return to work, drive and live fulfilling lives.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to open a genuine, four-bed epilepsy unit, similar to the one recently opened in Saskatchewan, at the health sciences centre, with modern equipment and adequate epilepsy neurosurgeons, neurologists, nurses, clerks and technicians.

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to formally establish an epilepsy program to ensure that all epilepsy staff can deliver care to patients in a co-ordinated fashion.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Lead Water Pipes

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) 2,755 homes in the Elmwood-East Kildonan area have lead water pipes connecting their basements to City-owned water pipes at their property line. Homes built before 1950 are likely to have lead water pipes running to this connection.

* (14:40)

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

(3) 31 per cent of Winnipeg's 23,000 homes with lead water pipes connecting basements to the City-owned water pipes at their property line were found to have lead levels above the new Health Canada lead level guidelines.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately contact all home and property owners in Manitoba with lead water pipes connecting to the City watermain line and to provide full financial support for them for lead water pipe replacement so that their exposure to lead levels is reduced, their health is better and costs to our provincial health-care system are also reduced.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (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) 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.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call for debate on second reading this afternoon Bill 71, followed by Bill 40?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that—to

call on Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, and the property tax insulation assistance act and the income tax act amended, and also Bill 40.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And the—standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has 21 minutes remaining on Bill 71.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to continue my comments on Bill 71. I did make some comments yesterday about this particular bill, and there is a huge issue in the province right now where this government is fundamentally restructuring the entire education system without really explaining to the participants, especially teachers and parents, as to what the spread of this initiative really is.

You know, governments in the past have made changes to the school boards, usually, you know, reducing them and reconfiguring them somewhat. And governments in the past have talked about changing the funding model to take the emphasis off of property taxation and—over a period of years, and that has resulted, I think, in a lot of talk over the years, but it's never really come around to being realized.

And the argument for that is that areas that have, you know, a good property tax base, be it industrial or residential—in other words, richer areas—have an advantage over a poorer area in terms of raising revenue. So whether it's municipal boundaries like the city of Winnipeg or whether it is the school board boundaries, there has to be some sort of equitable redistribution of the incomes that come in so that children are getting an equal education, regardless of where they live in the province.

And so as far as the property tax question is concerned, the education on property tax is concerned, we are talking about a \$900-million bill here, and once the Premier (Mr. Pallister) takes this off over the 10-year period, the money's going to have to come from somewhere. And so it's going to be—have to be made up under—out of general revenue. And the question is, how is he going to raise that \$900 million?

Is he going to do it through a—through an income tax increase? Is he going to raise fees on government services? You know, just how is he going to deal with

this issue? I don't know that we have been given a clear indication of where he's going there.

But what we know is, there's all of a sudden this big urgency to give an education property tax rebate at a time when he's missed the deadline for bringing in bills that would be guaranteed pass this year. So, clearly, this is something that's been only kind of dreamed up by him and the government in very recent days.

And the suggestion's being made it's because of his lagging and flagging poll numbers that's causing him to decide that he wants to now send out cheques in the next number of weeks rebating some of the education property tax that people are, in fact, paying in the province.

And, of course, what he's planning to do is do a—I think it's 25 per cent on the homeowners for this year. And what he will do is he will, like he did last year, he will send out a cheque with his signature on there, presumably with a letter like he did last year, telling the seniors how vital they were in building the province—and it's certainly a true statement.

But the reality is that that didn't go over as well as he thought: (1) his popularity didn't go up and (2) a lot of people didn't know why they were getting the cheques in the first place. The cheque appeared in the mail, people opened it—and I know I had a number of people mention it to me that they wondered, like, why was he doing this?

And I think the question is going to be asked here as well, that the Premier's not explained to people why—what he's doing here about this, what his plan is, and he's just going to send out cheques. People are going to wonder why—what this is all about.

And I don't think they're going to be that naive to know that if they're getting money back on their property tax, the education portion of the property tax back, rebated back to them, that the money, the replace of money has to come from somewhere, that all they're going to be doing is turning around and having their income taxes increased to pay for the \$900 million that he's rebating them on the other side.

The other question would be—and, certainly, the teachers will be asking this question and a lot of other people concerned with education financing in the province are going to be—well, now, if he doesn't—if he rebates the money and he doesn't raise taxes on the other hand, then what is the solution, here?

Well, the solution will be cuts, will be cuts in compensation to the education system, particularly the schools and to the teachers and the people in the school system. So that's going to be something that's he's going to have to deal with.

Now, he's also—while he's doing this, he's also making a move to eliminate the school boards. And once again, that is an issue—and I explained this yesterday—that, you know, has been visited by other provinces—currently, Nova Scotia, I believe. He seems to be wanting to follow Nova Scotia.

* (14:50)

But New Brunswick—when Frank McKenna won all 57 seats back a number of years ago now, Frank McKenna came in and eliminated the school boards. Well, guess what happened? After 10 years, Bernard Lord came in as a Conservative premier and Bernard Lord brought them back.

So have we not learned anything by, you know, looking at—or has the government, in fact, looked at what, you know, the experience and what happened in New Brunswick as to why they got rid of them in the first place and why they brought them back? So I don't really see where he is going to get a huge benefit out of eliminating the school boards, except that he wants to have parent advisory councils, which I assume that he is going to be appointing.

And, of course, that's going to be a big problem and certainly a problem in the other jurisdictions where this is being tried as well because, once again, if parent advisory councils are being appointed by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), by the government, then I would expect that you're going to have people with a certain political inclination—in this case, Conservatives—will be put on this parent advisory council and that is not going to go over very well with the public.

And I can tell you that, you know, we have—we changed the school divisions, reduced the number of school divisions back in the early 1990s and 2000, 2001. And I can tell you that in my own area, we have Winnipeg 1 and we have River East school division in the Elmwood constituency. And the premier of the day asked me whether we should put the Winnipeg 1 portion—the Elmwood and East Elmwood portion—into River East, and he said, you know, you can make the decision on this.

And I did and I left it where it was. And I tell you that it was very popular to leave it as it was because there are a number—a good number of residents in the

Elmwood area who have a certain benefit that they get from being in the school division—Winnipeg 1 school division—which they would not get being in River East, and there were some people who would have a benefit in River East that they wouldn't in Winnipeg 1.

So, you know, any changes that the government makes—we're talking about school division boundaries here. You know, that causes a lot of stress among people in the—in our constituencies. And what is he doing? He's not just changing boundaries, he's eliminating the whole system. He's throwing out all of the school divisions and taking control of the education system.

So, you know, I think maybe he thinks that if you create enough confusion—and especially with a pandemic going on right now—that somehow people are not going to notice. And to a certain extent that has been the case in the past year, where people have been thinking more about the issues of the pandemic and they're not really paying too much attention to what is going on down here. So perhaps he thinks that he can, you know, get this through without, you know, awakening people.

But, you know, as I indicated yesterday, you know, with the Manitoba telephone system, when the Conservatives sold that off a number of years back, it took the opposition a while to get organized. But when it got organized, it was substantial. And that is probably, you know, what can happen here, that there can be a big backlash against the government.

And one only has to look at Sterling Lyon. Sterling Lyon—somebody mentioned it yesterday, but Sterling Lyon was only—I think it was the only one-term government in Manitoba up to that time. But Sterling Lyon, you know, won the election over the NDP Schreyer government second term by promising to, you know, balance the budget: a typical Conservative campaign.

And so he won it and he proceeded to do his cutting. And, you know, what happened was—and he was looking at megaprojects like aluminum smelter he was going to develop and so on. But he went into the election, his first term after four years, he went into the election maybe, probably 10 points ahead—most governments don't call elections unless they are 10 points ahead, or they shouldn't—and he was ahead, and guess what? The whole wheels fell off his campaign because the public was—didn't sense that he was on top of where—of the issues that they believed in. He was very aloof.

And, you know, what I see today is very similar to that kind of situation, where this Premier seems to have his—in his own mind he's got his war plan, his battle plan. But I don't think he communicates it well to his troops over there who are supposed to carry this battle forward. And he's certainly not communicating well with the public. And that's going to be, at the end of the day, his downfall here.

I don't really think that the—either one of the—these bills, Bill 71 or Bill 64 and all of the things that are going to come out of it—the results that are come out of this are going to bode well for the government in the—in—overall, primarily, because they're not explaining it. There's too many grey areas in their plans.

And, you know, maybe that's part of their plans, is they want to drive the agenda forward, they want to eliminate the school boards, they want to change the education funding and hope that somehow people aren't going to notice that this is going on. But there's a lot of very concerned and very worried people out there.

I haven't found any teachers in the last couple of years that are supportive of this government and what it wants to do. And I guess maybe just is a simple fact that they're Conservatives kind of tipped the teachers off that this is all about finances and balancing the budget and cutting back the education system that is really driving all this move. And so the government is going to end it—end up in a big problem.

I'll give you an example of where they ran into trouble on their health-care restructuring just before the last election. They just—they made an announcement that they were going to close the emergency room in Concordia and Seven Oaks. And guess what? They—people rose up against this idea and after—within one year, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) backed off.

He backed off on the closure and he decided he was going to have a pharmacy in there, I think it was. And then that didn't go over well, and guess what happened? He backed off to the point where we ended up with an emergent—urgent care in there, which was not really that substantially different from what was there before. So what was the point of this big exercise? You put people through all this stress, put people through all sorts of stress, and it ended up walking back what he was going to do.

And I can give you all kinds of examples where governments walk things back. I mean, we've certainly, on our side, we've had the French language issue back in the 1980s where we were going to provide French language services where numbers warranted and the Conservatives created such a stirred-up opposition against our plans, and the premier, at the end of the day, after driving the issue as far as he could, ended up backing down—backing off on the issue.

So I have a lot of confidence here that this government is going to see the error of its ways, the public is going to rise up against them and that they're going to back off on most of these initiatives, and that would be my prediction. I'm not going to say that that's exactly how this could turn out, but looking at the history of issues like this—because this is a huge, huge, huge restructuring in the education system in Manitoba.

And we're not getting a lot of details as to how this is going to end up playing out in the long term. And I, you know, I listened to a very good speech yesterday by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), who outlined a lot of the issues that people are concerned about here and, you know, just on the simple issue of rebating—sending out a cheque.

* (15:00)

Like, I don't see the minister—the Premier is, I think, kind of tone-deaf here. I think he thinks that somehow people are going to appreciate the education tax rebate and reduction because they're—they have got extra expenses due to COVID. And he is expecting that he's going to be able to sneak in there and cause all kinds of ruckus.

Now he's trying to use the idea that somehow, you know, we're slowing up his rebate cheques by not passing this bill right away but, at the end of the day, he doesn't realize that this is, in my way of thinking, not too much different than what he tried to do last year, sending out that unasked-for \$200—I think it was \$200—to all the senior citizens with the letter. Like, he did not—he did not gain—he did not gain anything. And, well, obviously, he didn't gain anything.

Look what happened to his popularity since he did that. So, you know, if he thinks somehow that this—sending out these cheques is somehow going to be a—you know, going to change the public's perception of him, I think he's sorely mistaken about that.

And so I know that this is, you know, this is a government with a majority, and majority governments do have the right to make bad decisions, I guess, like all governments do and all governments had. And what looks good, you know, today—what looks good today is not necessarily going to look good over time. And that's my, I guess, my point about all this is that I don't think that they have really spent the effort to be able to judge how far the public is prepared to go along.

And, you know, you cannot facilitate any new policies if you don't have the people behind you, if the government has to, you know, roll out the program and so on but, at the end of the day, you have to have people behind you. And I don't see any big groups out there rallying behind the Premier, behind the Conservative caucus asking for these things.

So, you know, I really don't think that they are on very strong footing here at the end of the day and I—my prediction is that whatever it is that we see coming out of these collection of bills here, 71 and 64 and some of the others, I think that right now we may think that somehow the situation looks really bleak, but the history of this government, I'm sure, and past government says that what you want to accomplish by your legislation, you know, is great in the beginning, but as the days and the months and the years wear on and the opposition starts to mount against your initiatives, the thing, you know, the plan doesn't look as good as when you started all of this stuff, right?

And I think that's what we're going to be see—that's what we're going to see here, that this government is going to be, probably, sorry that it embarked on this program in the sense that they're trying to do it all at one time as opposed to dealing with one issue at a time.

Deal with the issue of the school boards, the powers of the school boards or the elimination of the school boards and the whole structure that they're going to replace it with. And the financing issue is a totally different issue. It's totally different issue from the issue of the school boards.

And to try to drive all this through under the guise of a pandemic, hoping that people are not going to, you know, figure out what you're up to here, and only giving out, you know, pieces and parts of the information, I think is pretty unrealistic of the government to think that it can end up being successful on this.

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

And—just before I make—go on to the next speaker, I just want to make announcement for the House that we got a letter from the official—Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), his—in pursuant of rule 44-2, all the rules, orders and forms preceding—first proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I am writing to advise that I will be designating my unlimited speaking time in the debate on the reasonable—reasoned amendment motion for Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, the property tax insulation assistance act and the income tax act amended, to the member for Concordia.

The honourable member for Concordia, unlimited time.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Thank you very much—[interjection]—thank you very much, and to my fan club here in the House this afternoon. Other members, I think, will probably join in as we go along.

But to start off, I appreciate members from this side of the House who know that we—where we stand as a caucus, where we stand rock solid behind the working people of Manitoba and where we stand in opposition to Bill 71, and, in fact, stand in support of this reasoned amendment going forward, and will continue to do that.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Now, I just wanted to start by acknowledging the speaker who just went before me, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). And, you know, I just wanted to start there because, you know, as somebody who's been around the House for a few years, you know, the member for Elmwood, I would say, has a good political nose. He knows kind of—and I think he alluded to this in his statement—he's seen the political winds change over the years, and sometimes in his favour or in the party that we represent's favour, sometimes they've gone the other way.

But I think the point that he was trying to make is, is that when a government, a majority government like we have here in Manitoba today, fails to listen to the people of Manitoba and instead goes off on their own and brings in these sorts of changes—which, you know, really just amount to a political shell game—that, ultimately, they're going to see, they're going to feel the effects of that politically.

They're going to see in the polls. We've seen that already that they're dropping. And when they make changes that really don't affect the people of Manitoba in a positive way, then, you know, then we're going to see the polls reflect that.

And, you know, I'll just say that the member for Elmwood, you know, time in and time out, comes into this House and he will continue to advocate for those working Manitobans. And so I just want to thank him for those words and getting this conversation going here this afternoon.

As I said, you know, this particular bill, Bill 71, is a political shell game, plain and simple. There's no other way to describe it. And we've had a chance now to hear from many members on this side. Unfortunately, not as many members of the government want to stand up and talk about how great this Ponzi scheme is. But certainly members on this side will happily talk about how this impacts their constituents, how this impacts others like the Premier (Mr. Pallister). And I hope to get into that.

I do have, well, a few minutes here this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It looks like I—the clock isn't running, so I'm free to spend some time on that.

But I do think that it's more important to focus on those Manitobans who are struggling. And, I mean, that's always the starting point that we come to this House, you know, at. That's where members of this side of the House of the NDP begin every single day in this House, is thinking about not only our constituents but all those Manitobans that are struggling.

And, you know, that—this year has been difficult in so many ways but, certainly, when it comes to the uncertainty, the economic pressures, you know, the job losses and the uncertainty when it comes to employment—you know, we're really hearing from Manitobans now that they're struggling and they're looking for a government who's willing to stand up for them and try to make life a little bit easier.

But instead, we see a government that instead brings, as I said, a shell game. They want to move things around. They want to—you want to play politics with people's tax money and they want to try to convince them, oh, no, no, no, don't worry, it's us that's giving you the money; we are giving you the money. And that's a shame.

We've seen this before, you know. And, look, I'll be the first to say this has happened not just under Conservative governments. It's happened under other

governments. There have certainly been times when these sorts of, you know, the—you know, the cheque-in-the-mail kind of effect. But I think, at this time, when Manitobans are struggling so, you know, so seriously, for a government to play these kind of games is especially disheartening.

* (15:10)

And, you know, and maybe, you know, maybe there's going to be some opportunity here for the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) to get up and explain exactly how sending out a cheque with his Premier's signature on it, with his Premier's face on it, with a—maybe a little flyer inside that envelope talking about how great they are, maybe that's what he wants to talk about in his time.

But I certainly have a lot to say about it, because it's pretty clear to anybody who's paying attention to this what's going on here. We've seen the polls lately. We've seen that the Conservative popularity is going down. But even more worrisome for the members opposite is their own Premier's popularity, who's just taking an absolute nosedive.

And, in fact, I heard, and I—you know, I don't follow these polls, you know, super closely, but I've heard that, you know, you hear him out Winnipeg, of course the NDP is pulling ahead. There's a widening gap between the NDP and the PCs in Winnipeg. You know, I think that that speaks to some of our folks that we've talked to for a long time. They're coming back to us.

But it's rural Manitoba who, you know, across rural Manitoba folks are going, wait a minute, these guys aren't representing us. They haven't been in there working on behalf of us. They haven't been working on behalf of Manitoba families. And they're making different decisions. They're ready to make different decisions.

So, you know, as I said, I don't follow these very closely, but I do know that the member for Steinbach, he checks these stats every single day—every poll, he's picking it apart, he works it out on his Excel sheet, and he's going to figure out exactly what his chances of re-election are. He's a little bit concerned because of the polls and the way they're headed.

And certainly the member for—the First Minister is watching these polls. He's watching these polls and he's probably feeling a little bit hurt. He's probably feeling personally a little bit hurt because, you know, he—in his mind, he thinks, well, you know, I'm—well, I'm doing—I'm doing a great job. He says everything's

fine, I think he said the other day when he was talking about, you know, the poor vaccine rollout.

You know, when people talk to him about the economy, he says, oh, it's okay. Don't worry about it. I think he's doing okay. I don't think there's been any issues for the Premier on Wellington Crescent. I think he's doing just fine.

So he's trying to think, why are Manitobans turning against me even more than they have in the past? Why don't they like me? And so he's seen these polls dip and he's understanding that this is his legacy. This is it. There—you know, he's already a lame duck premier. He is heading off into the sunset as we speak. The—all the members behind him are conniving and plotting against him. They have their sights set on that premier seat.

So the Premier is ready to walk out and head off into the Costa Rican sunset, and he's worried. He's worried about his legacy, as he should be, because he doesn't have much to show for it. He's totally bungled the vaccine rollout.

Of course, during the initial stages of the COVID pandemic, he put up big billboards all over the place saying mission accomplished. Ready, set, go. Manitoba's back. We're ready to reopen and, you know, and don't worry about the consequences.

So the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is very concerned. And what was this, what was his one go-to move that he could go to in times like this when he sees his popularity dropping? He thinks he can send out cheques to every Manitoban with his signature on it and his name on it and maybe they'll start to like him again, or maybe just start to forget all about the terrible things that this government has done—the cuts that they've made.

But, of course, we know that that's not a real cheque to Manitobans because, at the same time he's trying to put something on—in their pockets over here, he's taking something off their kitchen table over there. Well, he's taking a whole bunch off their kitchen table. But specifically, when it comes to education property tax, he's actually taking the money directly off and saying, oh, no; you get a little bit less over here, and I'll just give it to you over there. It'll have my signature on it, and this is new money. It's not the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, you know, again, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) may want to get up later and he may want to set the record straight. He can get up whenever he wants and he can support the bill that was brought

forward by the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) asking that, look, if it's not a political game, then why not go ahead and take the Premier's signature off of that? Why not? What is the—what's the issue? Apparently, he believes in this Ponzi scheme so strongly that he's willing to support the bill, say, yes, we definitely don't need the Premier's signature. He'll support the bill and we can move forward.

Well, I don't think he's going to do that, and I certainly don't think he's going to support this reasoned amendment, because what this reasoned amendment says is it tries to lay bare exactly how this government is playing with Manitobans' money.

It's trying to get them to not realize that they're, in fact, not only just, you know, moving the three-cup monte around and trying to get Manitobans to guess which cup their money is in but, in fact, is actually giving more money to the wealthy in our province, and most importantly, taking money off the table directly off of low-income Manitobans.

And, you know, and I do have a lot to say about that, but I'll maybe just leave my opening comments there.

So let me just start by maybe describing for Manitobans who are following along exactly, you know—to begin talking about Bill 71—let them know exactly how this is working so that they can sort of follow along, and then we can talk about some real world examples and they can see how nefarious this particular political ploy is.

So we know a levy is imposed in lieu of school taxes on the incremental assessed value of properties designated under The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act as community revitalization properties.

So school taxes include the community revitalization levy, and this bill is designed to reduce school taxes by means of a system of rebates: these are the cheques that I was talking about. This amends The Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act to provide for the following rebates beginning in 2021: 25 per cent of school taxes on farm and residential properties and 10 per cent of school taxes on other properties.

After 2021, these percentages may be increased by regulation. The government's already indicated that is the direction they're going.

The school tax rebate is payable to a person who—in whose name the school taxes are imposed. So if

there's multiple owners of a property, the rebate can be paid out to any one of them, and if a person other than the rebate recipient is responsible for the property tax, the person may recover their share of the rebate from the rebate recipient.

If a rebate recipient who pays a community revitalization levy is entitled to a refund by way of a grant under The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act, the rebate in respect of that levy reduces the amount of the refund.

The following items are also reduced by the same percentage that applies in determining school tax rebate for residential and farm properties: the school tax assistance of up to \$175 to pensioner tenants whose family income is less than \$23,000, and the Farmland School Tax Rebate of up to \$5,000.

The income tax currently—Income Tax Act currently provides for the following in respect of the taxpayer's principal residence: a school tax reduction of \$700 to be credited on the property tax bill for a single-family dwelling and an Education Property Tax Credit of up to \$1,100 for seniors and \$700 for anyone else, less any school tax reduction applied to the property tax bill; a school tax credit of up to \$175 for persons aged 55 and up whose family income is less than \$23,000, and a seniors school tax credit rebate of up to \$470 for a senior whose family income is less than \$63,000.

Bill 71 amends The Income Tax Act to reduce those benefits by 25 per cent for 2021 and later years. After 2021, the percentage may be increased by regulation to match the percentage of the school tax rebate for residential properties under The Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act.

The Education Property Tax Credit advance, the school tax reduction for a principal residence, is also reduced for 2021 to 75 per cent of the lesser of \$700 in the school taxes otherwise payable.

Under The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act, the community revitalization levies imposed on some properties are refunded to the property owner as a grant. As a red tape reduction measure the act is amended to allow properties to be exempted from the levy by regulation.

The Municipal Act is amended to require tax notices to include material supplied by the minister, and that's what I was speaking about earlier. I hope to spend more time talking about that soon.

The Residential Tenancies Act is amended to provide for a rent freeze for 2022 and 2023 for properties that are subject to rent regulation under part 9 of that act. A landlord, of course, may still apply for a rent increase under section 123 of that act. So that's an application for an increase above maximum—above the maximum permitted by regulation.

* (15:20)

But the landlord school tax rebate under The Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act will be taken into account. The \$50 school tax reduction provided for the school tax reduction regulation for Pinawa is reduced by 25 per cent in 2021 and in subsequent years it will be reduced by the same percentage that applies in determining the school tax rebate for residential properties throughout the rest of the province.

So, that's his brief description of the bill. What does that mean to the average Manitoban? What does this mean to somebody who's living in the constituency of Concordia? And, you know, I've got a great neighbourhood that I live in. It's pretty varied. There's a lot of different income levels. There's a lot of, you know, different kinds of families and folks that live in my constituency. I'm super proud, that I feel like it's a pretty good snapshot of who we are as Manitobans.

The one common thread, I would say, throughout my constituency is that they are all hard-working, honest, good people that live in my constituency and, you know, those folks go to work every single day and earn that paycheque. They want to come home to a neighbourhood that's safe, that's comfortable.

They want to have the health care that they've come to depend on. They want to make sure that the services that government provides are there; education for their kids. They want to make sure that those services are protected. That's the number one thing that's on their minds.

So for those Manitobans who are looking for, you know, some kind of relief from this government or support from this government, especially, as I said, during COVID, they're maybe looking at this bill and going, wait a minute. Okay, so I'm getting a cheque from the government, this is a good thing, right? This is a positive thing. This is maybe what they're thinking right off the bat.

But the problem with that, of course that it's not the government's money that's being given to these Manitobans. This is, in fact, their own money. This is

the money that they are spending on their property tax that is now being given back to them with a signature of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) on it. And I just thought I'd maybe go through my constituency and think about a couple of examples of where we might see how this would play out.

So let's say—let's start with a place in—a house in Morse Place. Morse Place is a fantastic neighbourhood. I used to live in Morse Place. I would say any Manitoban, any Winnipegger who's looking for a place to buy their first home, maybe buy a little bit of a larger home for their family, it's a— it is a fantastic neighbourhood. It's safe, it's a fantastic place to raise a family. And they're pretty moderately priced homes.

You got a pretty diverse neighbourhood, you've got people who are, you know, have lived there for their entire lives. I've, you know, met many folks who've been there 50-plus years in the same house. I've also met lots of young families, newcomers to Canada. I've met lots of folks who, as I said, hard-working people, you know, take a lot of pride in their homeownership. They're happy to pay their taxes, and their tax bill for a house in Morse Place is about \$300—or, sorry, is about—is going to see a rebate of \$300 coming from this government.

So they're going to be getting a cheque from this government with the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) signature on it that's about \$300. Again, sounds great, doesn't it? Of course, what they're also going to notice is that come tax time, the rebate that they're supposed to be receiving from this government, the one that was instituted by, well, I guess it was an NDP government—I guess it was Gary Doer who brought that in many, many years ago. That rebate is going to be reduced.

So, wait a minute. Wait a minute. So you're saying that their rebate's going to be reduced, they're going to be paying more on their property tax and then they're going to get a cheque in the mail and it's going to have Brian Pallister—sorry, it's going to have the First Minister's signature on it.

It won't say the First Minister. It'll say, in fact, his name and it'll be a nice fancy signature, maybe even his picture next to it. That's what the folks in Morse Place are going to get. So taking off their kitchen table and slipping in their back pocket and saying this is from us.

Well, how much are they going to benefit from that? Well, you know, we did the math. Looks like it's about \$50 a year that they're going to benefit. The

folks in Morse Place are going to benefit, they're going to have their tax bill reduced by \$50. Sounds great. Sounds great, doesn't it? Everybody's says that sounds like a great thing. We can reduce the tax bill for Manitobans. That sounds great.

If that's where the story ended, well, then maybe Manitobans—maybe even members of this caucus, might support this government's shell game that they're playing with Manitoban's monies. We might say, well it's, you know, it's crassly political but we'll let it—you know, we'll let it pass, we'll let it go, we won't even bother spending too much time in debate, we won't bring a reasoned amendment to this bill.

But that's not where this story ends, because I would say that the people in Morse Place is what I would call average Manitobans. That's probably about middle of the road.

But of course, we know there's a lot of people who aren't as well off as the people in Morse Place. People that maybe live on Herbert Avenue in my constituency. Again, great people; hard-working people. I love the neighbourhood, you know? I think those folks take a lot of pride in their neighbourhood as well, and they certainly understand when they pay their property tax that they want to make sure they're getting the services and not seeing cuts from this government.

But what's going to happen to them? Well, for them, they're still going to have about \$200 taken off their kitchen table, and then when the Premier slips into their back pocket a cheque, unfortunately that cheque's only going to be about \$159. So they're worse off, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're worse off because of this Premier's political games. There's actually more of a burden on somebody who lives on Herbert Avenue than there was before.

Again, if that's where the story ended—because, I mean, it's a hit. It's a huge hit for somebody who probably doesn't have a lot to begin with. That's probably a big hit to their yearly tax bill. They're going: wait a minute, I'm not getting as much back on my tax return, but, you know, but all of a sudden I'm getting a cheque?

They might say, okay. You know? Again, political shell game; let's move past it. But I think they're going to have a different opinion when they understand what the other half is going to get—of our society.

Because, the—we don't have to look very far; we can look directly at the Premier of this province and we

can look directly at the one asset that, you know, we all know about—we've talked many times about it; seven-car garage, it's—apparently it's a beautiful place. I have not gotten an invite, and so I don't know, but I've certainly seen pictures and I've heard.

I also know he has other properties throughout Manitoba, but we don't even need to bring those into the conversation at this point because just talking about the principal residence of the First Minister—and I think it is very important to do that. I think it's important to put that out for Manitobans.

The house that the Premier lives in: seven car garage, \$2.5-million value—I think that's probably low, I think that's based on the 2016 assessment. We don't have the current up-to-date numbers. I—you know, I think maybe other members do, but I—this is what I got.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) pays \$16,000 in education property tax every year—\$16,000. I mean, again, if I was to tell some of my constituents that—just that number, they wouldn't even know how to process it. It wouldn't even make any sense—\$16,000, just in the education property tax—that's not the full property tax bill, of course; that's just the education portion of that property tax bill.

And so, this member for Fort Whyte will get a rebate. He'll get the same 25 per cent that every single other Manitoban will get. And what will that impact—how will that play out in his case?

Well, it's not hard math to do. The total is \$16,044 in school taxes, so a quarter of that is \$4,011—that's the cheque that the First Minister will—I'm looking for my pen here—the First Minister will sign and date and take his photo and paste it on the side there, put in an envelope, put the stamp on it, bring it to his mailbox and put it in there, take it out and benefit \$4,000.

Now, the member on—or, the person who lives on Herbert—they, you know, they have no concept of what that means, but they definitely know that they're paying more in property—education property tax while the Premier is getting a \$4,000 benefit.

This is a shame. This is an absolute shame. Because as I said, if we're just talking pure politics; if this was just about playing a political game, a cheap political stunt—and we've got to remember where this came from, you know? This is a—this was a campaign promise that the PCs made in the—*[interjection]*—in the dying days of the campaign, when they started doing the math—*[interjection]*—they started doing the math and they said, uh-oh, the member for Rossmer's

(Mr. Micklefield) in trouble; uh-oh, the member for Radisson's (Mr. Teitsma) in trouble; uh-oh, the member for the—*[interjection]*

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

I am having a hard time hearing.

* (15:30)

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They said, we need something to jolt the campaign. Well, we're going to make this promise and we're going to say 10 per cent off property tax, you know, every year after we balance the budget, 10 per cent off every single year until it's removed. *[interjection]* The member's—he's clapping for a promise that they broke.

How did they break the promise, Mr. Deputy Speaker? How did they break the promise? First of all, they didn't balance the budget. Oops. Forgot to do that part. I guess there was a pandemic and they forgot to balance the budget.

In fact, where we stand right now—well, \$1 billion, you know, that seems quaint now. What is it, \$1.6 billion this year; \$1.8 billion last year? Let's just keep raising and building on the deficit and the debt in this province. That's the legacy of this Premier. This is the legacy of this Premier.

So, first of all, they've completely blown the doors off of their prediction, oh, well, we're—don't worry, we can figure this out. Well, they didn't. In fact, things are worse now. So—and so, what did they have? They had this Hail Mary promise and they said, well, okay, why don't we just go back to that. Why don't we go back to the promise, but instead of saying the 10 per cent, we'll go straight to 25 per cent and 50 per cent.

The problem with that is they don't have the money. They're going and borrowing the money. They're borrowing Manitobans' money, Manitobans' future earnings, and they're saying, don't worry, we're going to do this Ponzi scheme.

And who ends up benefitting? It's benefitting the First Minister, and it's not benefitting the people on Herbert Avenue. It's benefitting the Premier. It's not benefitting the people on Herbert Avenue. And that's why this is really, really nefarious, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because, again, if it was just about putting out a cheque with the name on it, well, we'd be pissed off about that. Sorry for the language.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would like to—order. I would like to reminder to—for the member to watch his language, please. If he could apologize to the Chamber for—

Mr. Wiebe: I did already, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll do it again. I'm sorry. My mom's watching, probably, right now and she's probably not too happy I said that word. So I definitely say that.

But it—this is especially nefarious because this is actually hurting average Manitobans. This is actually making a difference—*[interjection]*—and, you know, the members opposite, they think it's funny. They think it's hilarious.

I don't think it's hilarious. I think this is a straight-up transfer of wealth from the average hard-working Manitoban straight to the people like the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

Now, does it stop there? No, because the Premier's going to get, of course, the \$4,000—he's going to get the cheque for his own primary residence. However, it gets worse, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the Premier, like many others, doesn't just have the one property. He has multiple properties. He has properties in Portage la Prairie, I believe. He has other properties here in Winnipeg.

I don't have all the details but I know that there's other properties involved. The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has other properties, so he knows well about this.

And so—and everybody who has a second property understands that they get the rebate on their first property, but as it stands right now, the \$700 rebate does not apply to their other properties.

So you would think that if you were just—again, if you were just trying to do this in an honest way, in a—well, a dishonest-honest way, where you were just trying to make sure your signature got into everybody's mailbox—again, I don't think that's good politics. I don't think that that—actually, I don't think it makes a difference, first of all, and it certainly is seen through by most Manitobans, but at the very least, what you could have done with this bill is you could have said, well, at the very least, we'll say that the same rebate would apply for the second property and the third property and the fourth property this time. In other words, that you would not get the 25 per cent cheque from the Premier in your mailbox for those other properties. Easy.

Easy to do, but does this government do it? No, because I think it betrays where they're actually headed with this kind of legislation. It's taking money out of the pockets of average Manitobans and making sure the Premier gets a 25 per cent rebate, a \$4,000 cheque with his own name on it mailed directly to him, on his primary residence and then gets another cheque that's sent for his property in, say, in Portage la Prairie, and then gets another cheque for his property that he has, a business property.

You know, I don't know all the properties that he has. I know he has multiple properties. I know the member for Steinbach has multiple properties. He's going to get those cheques. He's going to get those cheques and he's going to be—he's going to go cash them. He's going to be fine.

Is the person on Herbert—do they have multiple properties? No. They're, in fact, paying more education property tax next year than the year before, and they don't have the ability to go and say, well, the second property, the third property, the fourth property, the fifth property, the business property, all of those properties these members opposite and every wealthy Manitoban is going to get a cheque for. That's not right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's not right that they're doing this on the backs of average Manitobans.

So who loses out? Well, not just those people who, like I said, live on great streets like Herbert in my constituency, but who really loses out on this are renters in this province.

Now, this is where it gets really bad, because at least for the people on Herbert Avenue, they can say, well, you're taking money right off my kitchen table; you're trying to slip me a cheque in my back pocket. The problem here is that they're taking the money off the kitchen table and there's no cheque in the back pocket. They're not landowners, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so they don't get the benefit of having an additional amount that would be mailed to them. They don't get the cheque mailed out to them. And renters will be getting less in their rebate; their \$700 rebate will go down. *[interjection]*

Now, I hear the members opposite, and, you know, I—it's been a long time since, I think, they were in a situation—*[interjection]*

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

Mr. Wiebe: Now, the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) talked about the people—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

It is getting a little bit loud in here and a little difficult, so if you guys could—if you folks could please turn it down a little bit.

Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: The—you know, the member for Union Station talked about people who don't—maybe don't have a kitchen table to begin with. There's a lot of people who are renting in this province, you know, and either it's a stepping stone to something else or it's what they can afford that's best for their family. They are hard-working Manitobans who are doing their best to provide for their family, and the Premier's going onto their table and he's taking money off. He's actually reducing.

So they're going to go—and I remember this, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I moved out at a young age, you know, scraping and saving to go to university, put myself through university. And every single time, when tax season came around, I knew exactly every dollar I was getting because I took that money—it was usually about a \$1,000 rebate—and I put that directly into my next year's tuition. It was a big deal. It was a huge deal to have that money and be able to afford my tuition the following year, which was frozen, by the way, which isn't the case, and, of course, tuition is going up. But I digress.

So I knew exactly where that went. So renters understand this. They know that that rebate goes a long way; it makes a big difference. It means food on their kitchen tables. It means tuition for their kids. It means a whole bunch of stuff.

Seven hundred dollars is now being reduced, and they don't get that cheque from the Premier (Mr. Pallister). Now, why not? Again, if you were just trying to get some political points, if you just wanted to make sure everyone saw your signature, everybody thought that you were, you know, the guys giving out the cheques, well, that's fine. Then why not send them to the renters? That could've been in the bill. That's what we're talking about here in our amendment. Why wasn't that in the bill? *[interjection]*

So now this is great. I think I heard the members opposite say that they're actually supporting this amendment. They want to support—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

An Honourable Members Oh, no, no, not that one.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, well, that was—I think we were close there to having a breakthrough and then the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) said, wait,

no, no, no, no, don't you realize what we're actually doing is we're actually making it tougher for average Manitobans? We're sending the Premier a \$4,000 cheque.

That's the plan here. Every wealthy Manitoban's going to get a \$4,000 cheque and up, and the people on Herbert Avenue are going to get a little—pay a little bit more, and the people that are renting are going to pay a lot more.

Now, this is nefarious, and this is a real problem that I think people that are in—that are renting across our province, they're certainly going to see, and they're certainly going to wonder why, you know, the Premier is getting a cheque that he writes himself.

He did this before. I mean, you know, just politically, you would say, like, the first thing you'd do is, like, no, guys, don't send it to me, like, you know, figure it out how I don't get the cheque. He got the cheque, he cashed it, he enjoyed that.

And then on top of that, not only are we hitting renters really hard, we're hitting the folks who live in low-income Manitoba really hard. Who's getting the worst of it all? It's seniors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of all people.

* (15:40)

Now, just a little history lesson for those who follow politics a little more closely, and certainly to all the seniors, because they certainly remember this. The first act of this government in 2016, the first act that they brought in as a government—you know, often they talk about the first 100 days, you know, the first priorities, the No. 1 priority—the first thing they did, day one of being a government, is they jacked up the education property tax on seniors. It was the biggest tax hike in Manitoba history on seniors.

And, you know, Manitoba seniors came to the Legislature; they filled this gallery; they yelled down at this government and they said, why are you doing this to us? And yet this government plowed ahead and said, we are not listening and we don't care about you. Now, that was bad because that actually reduced so the seniors get a little bit of a top up now, a little bit more than the \$700; they get up to \$1,100.

Now this government says no, no, we're not done yet. We're going after you again and we're going to actually reduce your amount that you get in your rebate by more than the average Manitoban, so your rebate is going to be even less. And you probably don't live in a \$2.5-million mansion on Wellington

Crescent. Well, some seniors do, I guess, but most seniors don't; most seniors are on a fixed income, and they're going to be spending more of that fixed income just to pay for this Premier's giant tax increase.

So, you know, Manitoba seniors are telling us—I mean, you know, of all people who are going to get hit by this. You know, first of all they're saying we don't need these political cheques. They told us that originally when those cheques got sent out. They said, look, we're—we want to visit our grandkids, we want to get the vaccine, we want to be healthy and make sure our health-care system is there for us. But if you're going to send out cheques, send out cheques to those who are really in need. Most Manitoba seniors understood that it was just political, all right, from the beginning. But they're going to be paying more now. They're going to be paying more than any other Manitobans.

Now I also want to talk about just how, you know, crassly political this is in the sense that, you know, here we are, we're spending, you know, debate time here talking about this when we got a lot more to say. *[interjection]*

You know, I hear the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) say he wants to get up; he wants to speak to this; he's eager to finish the day by speaking, I think he's got the unlimited time next and I'm sure he's going to spend days upon days talking about how proud he is that he's gouging the people of Manitoba and giving all the benefits to the people like the Premier (Mr. Pallister) who are going to get \$4,000 cheques. So he's excited to get up.

We've got lots to debate on this, and yet we didn't need to, in fact, do this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We didn't even, in fact, need a bill. Of course we didn't need a bill. The government has the taxation ability to tax. They have the ability to raise the tax. They have the ability to lower the tax.

Now, time and time again this caucus has said we have—we have a real interest in making life more affordable for Manitobans. There's a whole bunch of ways that we have done that in the past and that we plan to do that in the future. So, I mean, it's pretty simple stuff.

You know, day one, what do we do? This government is jacking up tuition every single year. They're cutting the funding to post-secondary education and they're jacking up tuition every single year.

So what would be one of the things that we could do as an NDP caucus? We could say, well, actually

we want to make it more affordable for Manitobans, we want to actually encourage more people to go to university to get that degree, especially in today's economy, especially coming out of COVID. There's a whole bunch of reasons why we'd make tuition more affordable. So we'd be—you know, that would be a first step; that would be something that we could do.

We could look at what this government has done when it comes to hydro rates in the middle of a pandemic, no less. They've said, well, we're scared of going to the PUB. We will not go back to the PUB because we know that they're going to say you shouldn't be raising rates in the middle of a pandemic when Manitoba Hydro's more profitable than ever, when there's more to be done, more and more to be built. When it comes to Manitoba Hydro, why are you raising rates? So they just say, well, we'll bring in legislation that gets rid of the PUB. There's no PUB anymore, and we're not going to listen to the PUB, and, in fact, we're just going to go to the Cabinet table and we're going to sign off on a hydro rate increase. That would be one way that we could actually make life more affordable for Manitobans. We could do a whole bunch of things.

Now, if you did want to do the tax measure, if you wanted to play the shell game here, take money off the kitchen tables of Manitobans and slip it in their back pocket, and some people, oh, yes, I'm not giving it to you; oh, and I've got an extra fat envelope for you, Mr. Premier. Then okay, you could do it that way too; that's what the government has chosen. Why don't they do it?

Why won't they actually just do the stuff that they want to take? They have the ability; they know that. You know, we made sure—we went back to check with Leg. Counsel, check with all the authorities. Wait a minute, the government can still set tax rates, right? Yes, of course. The government—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member for Steinbach, on a point of order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): It is important as a point of order to put factual information on the record.

I have provided the Opposition House Leader with the legal opinion from Legislative Counsel saying this bill needs to pass. The member should

check with Legislative Counsel, and apologize for his false information.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are there—anyone else wishing to speak on this point of order?

I will consult with the clerks.

This seems to be a dispute over the facts and not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Wiebe: Well, of course it's a dispute over the facts, because the government knows very well that they want to make sure that their cheque goes out, they want to make sure that signature is there, that the flyer from the Premier is there.

Well, yes, I guess you need a bill to do that, to do the political, you know, shell game, that's important. But it's not needed if you actually wanted to just lower taxes for Manitobans.

But that's not what the government's actually wanting to do. That's not their aim here. This is not an exercise in making things more affordable, because they've had chance after chance after chance to show that they could do that. And they will not do that, because they know that they want to make sure it's cheaper for some—like the Premier (Mr. Pallister), they want to make sure he gets his cheque—but they certainly don't care about making sure that it's more affordable for other Manitobans.

You know, just even on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm glad the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), you know, just reminded me how political this process is. You know, a while back—couple weeks ago—a whole bunch of communications folks got together, probably a room of 15, of 20 communications staff—you know, young political staffers—got together around a boardroom table, and they said okay, scratched their heads, how can we make it seem like we're actually trying to help Manitobans here? And somebody said, well, wait a minute, wait a minute; we talked about tables before, why don't we go to a focus group and find out what a normal person's kitchen table actually looks like?

So, they went to a focus group and they spent probably about a week cycling through the folks and they said, okay, now, do you like this table or do you like that table? They showed them a picture of the big, you know, marble table from the Premier's house and they said, well, what about that table? No, no, no that's not the table we want; there's got to be another table. Maybe the member for Steinbach, his harvest table

from his estate maybe was there, and they said, well, wait a minute that doesn't look like my table either. They spent probably days and weeks, you know, making sure, focus-grouping exactly which table they wanted.

Now, they found the table and they had to send out those 20 staff to go out there, and they ran around, they picked up the table, they probably had to rent it, it probably cost some money to do that, and they brought it in here—now, this is in the middle of a pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is when people's lives are at stake when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic; it's also when people are so—you know, so many people are just scraping by, they're just trying to make ends meet, you know, day to day, week to week, month to month. And these guys go out and they get this kitchen table.

And so this is their perfect opportunity to say, well, you know, all the spin doctors are together, you know, why don't we bring forward this bill? Why don't we bring forward a bill that makes it seem like we're actually doing something for Manitobans?

Was it a priority for them? Well, no, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they didn't even bring this bill forward in the required time to guarantee passage. If this was the No. 1 priority, then why wasn't it brought forward? Why wasn't it brought forward as one of their No. 1 priorities? It was Bill 71.

I'm looking at the clerks here—have we ever gotten to the '70s? I don't know, that's—the Clerk says we have. This is probably the top end of the number of bills.

Has Bill 71—I'll ask—maybe I'll ask this rhetorical question: has Bill 71 ever been the top priority of a government? Of course not. This is bottom-of-the-barrel stuff; this is just pure political theatre. It's not actually making Manitobans' lives better. While nursery school fees are going, while tuition is going up, while Hydro rates are going up, this government says, well, just don't look over here, we're going to move these cups around and we'll hope that you don't notice.

* (15:50)

At the same time that they're renting kitchen tables, they're spending weeks with their focus groups, they're spending all their time trying to figure out what a normal kitchen table looks like, they're also spending over \$1 million just to mail this cheque out, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, so, I mean, during the pandemic you could not find a better use for

\$1 million? You could give the tax relief and you could just put the \$1 million towards programs and services that people need right now.

It's not rocket science. You still get your bumps. You still get your blip in the polls. I hope they do a poll, you know, in the next month and maybe there'll be a little spike and then it'll just be continue to plummet, because we know where this government is headed. They know that this is their legacy. They know that Manitobans know exactly what a mess they've made of it.

Now, they—you know, over and over again, this government continues to try to, you know, gloss over the fact that this is going to benefit wealthy Manitobans. And that's why, you know, this reasoned amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is really important. This is a good way for them if they, you know, again, wanted to put their money where their mouth was, if they actually said well, you know what, we drafted this up and we made a mistake, we actually—we had an opportunity here to make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

They could go back to the drawing board and they could change this bill. They could alter the bill. They could, actually, look at the situation that renters are going to be paying more. They could look at the people that live on Herbert Avenue and say, wait a minute, they shouldn't be paying more in their education property tax. That doesn't make any sense. They don't have the ability to pay.

They might want to go to Morse Place and they might want to say, you know what, \$50, I'm not sure that that's what Manitobans are asking for. Maybe they're asking for protecting our education system, not tearing it down, not bringing bills like Bill 64, which completely ignore what the education commission told this government to do, what every single teacher, every single parent, every single clinician, every single superintendent, every single councillor, every single reeve across this province, every mayor told them this shouldn't go forward in the format that it's being brought forward. And yet they're just jamming it through.

This is an opportunity for this government to say, wait a minute. We got this wrong. We're going to back off. We're going to actually try to make things more fair for Manitobans. That's not what they're doing here. That's not what the people in my constituency are going to see.

And so it just lays perfectly bare where this government's priorities are. They do want to make sure that people like the Premier (Mr. Pallister) get their \$4,000 rebate this year, \$8,000 next year. Does it continue on? Help me out here, for the—member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I think he's working on his own tax calculation on his multiple homes. He's going to make sure that he gets his piece.

But it's not going to benefit the average Manitoban, and that's where, I think, Manitobans are asking us to bring this reasoned amendment, to actually turn the attention off of the Premier—and we've seen this over and over again in question period, right? You know, has an—I mean, oftentimes it just turns into these personal, flailing attacks. That's fine, that's his style. But what's actually gotten him the most worked up over the last little while, the thing that's gotten him the most worked up is when you start talking about how this is going to benefit him. All of a sudden he's the most engaged he's ever been. He's the guy who says, no, no, I got to get this through; Bill 71—top priority. This is super important.

Yes. Give me that cheque, he says. He doesn't care that he's the one signing it. He doesn't care that it's coming from the average Manitoban. He doesn't care. And, you know, these—you know, these members opposite, they're all making out like bandits. They're going to be just fine. Their friends are going to be just fine. But for the average Manitoban, they're going to be hurting.

And, on top of all of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, again, this is, you know, I'm—I think I have some more time, so I'm going to take as much as I can, but, you know, I think we do need to remember that this also impacts our education system, ultimately, in the long run. And so that's the other piece of this that I think—the average Manitobans, these folks in my constituency, all across this province, who, you know, pay their taxes, they expect things like their education system to be protected and invested in. So when they see a bill like Bill 64 coming in in conjunction with bills like Bill 71, they start to see—they start to put the pieces together.

If the average Manitoban is not getting a tax break, the poorest Manitobans are actually paying more and guys like the Premier are getting \$4,000 cheques, where is that money going to come from? And to this point they've had the ability, you know, as I said, you know, they used to say—there was a projection that the government used to have, and they said, you know what, oh, you know what, if we

don't do something the deficit's going to rise to \$1.6 billion.

They're blowing the doors off those numbers. They beat the target that they had. They had this target that was going up and they said, oh, it might get that bad. It's gotten worse, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's absolutely shameful, totally shameful that this—these members opposite, they think that, you know, throwing people's money around is no big deal; they're borrowing money, their credit downgrades; don't worry about it, we're just going to keep borrowing, keep borrowing, keep borrowing.

Out of one side of their mouth, they criticize the federal government.

An Honourable Member: You talking about that Trudeau?

Mr. Wiebe: Exactly, they think that Trudeau is doing something wrong and then do—they do it in the exact same way here in Manitoba. They're borrowing money, they're taking money and transfer payments that were never seen in this province before—record transfer payments.

Now, they're all probably rooting against their federal cousins, hoping that there's not a federal Conservative government in Ottawa, because then they'll see what austerity looks like at the federal level, and all of a sudden all this money that they're saving—that they're borrowing, I should say—to try to play this shell game, all of a sudden it's going to come home to roost. And who's going to lose out?

Now, again, you know, we don't need to imagine this scenario. We don't need to imagine what this would actually play out like because we've seen when this government is up against the wall, when this government is looking for places to cut, they're not going to pussyfoot around. They're going to go straight for the things that are important to Manitobans.

We saw it with health care. We saw them absolutely decimate the health-care system that—which we are paying for as we speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker: less ICU beds, more strain in our hospitals, no—less nurses. We're still trying, you know, to recover from the number of nurses that were fired by this government.

You know, throughout the province now, they're going after ERs. You know, I heard, you know, many members—and I won't name them because, you know, they're in prominent positions right now in our

Chamber—but, you know, they came and they said, what about my ER, you know? And now all of a sudden there's radio silence.

Nobody talks about their rural ERs closing down: ERs in southern Manitoba, in the Parkland, in the Interlake, shutting down hospital stations, shutting down ER or emergency services. Like, give me a break, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have no words about it. So we don't need to actually guess what it's going to be like when they turn their attention to education, because we've seen it.

And we know that they're actually painting themselves into this corner where they're going to have less and less funding for education, and if the federal government turns off those taps and they know that they can't just keep borrowing into infinity, well, all of a sudden, where are the cuts going to come from?

We've already seen cuts. Well, we ain't seen nothing yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's going to get bad because there's not going to be at least a local-of-level of government that's going to be able to fight for their schools, going to fight for their communities—

An Honourable Member: Thank goodness.

Mr. Wiebe: – across the province.

And I hear the member say thank goodness that they're getting rid of local democracy. That is shameful. I hope—you know, I hope that the Hansard picks that up, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Absolutely shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order. It's getting a little loud in here, please.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, it's absolutely shame—and again, I do hope that the Hansard picked that up, because the member actually said that he hopes that local democracy is gone and that they don't have a voice. It is absolutely shameful that this government will now turn their attention to education, throw out everything that they're commission said and just go straight for cuts.

And when—again, when their back is against the wall, when the funding is down, when they don't have the ability to borrow anymore, who's going to be hurt? It's going to be the kids in Manitoba, it's going to be the communities across Manitoba. This is shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I do think that there is a lot that Manitobans are concerned about.

So, as much as the government wants to play this political game, they want to—you know, they want to shuffle the money around, they want to say, don't look over here, we're just taking money off your kitchen table to try to give it back to you with our signature on it to make it seem like this is new money, the more nefarious part of all of this is that it's a transfer from the backs of working-hard-working Manitobans straight to people like the Premier (Mr. Pallister) who are going to benefit exponentially.

And then on top of that, it's going to put the future of our education system in jeopardy. There is a lot of good ideas and good progress that could be made in our education system. There's a lot that I heard—you know, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) never showed up once to any one—I think he was, you know, he had the ability to come. I mean, why not listen first-hand to those people and actually listen to the people who are talking about how education could be better in our province? It was inspiring.

It was unbelievably inspiring to actually hear from parents, to hear from educators, to hear from community members—you know, to a one—came there to fight for education in our province—absolutely every single one of them—and came with innovative ideas, came with new ideas, came with new ways of doing things.

* (16:00)

And, you know, I saw the commissioner sitting there and, you know scribbling down some notes, and, you know, there was certainly a lot of notes that were given to the commission, that were given to the government. The government got that report, sat on it for a year—during a pandemic, no less—sat on that report, didn't show Manitobans.

And then, when, you know, Manitobans are distracted, when they're already worried about their own financial futures, all of a sudden they bring out this education report and they say, well, we're not going to do any of that. We're just going to do this Ponzi scheme, we're going to play this shell game with your money. We're going to take the money off your kitchen table, slip it in your back pocket with our signature on it and hope that that is, you know, that's going to be enough to get us up in the polls and get us through to the next election.

Manitobans are smarter than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Absolutely, Manitobans are smarter than that.

We're going to continue to tell this story. We're going to tell this message to Manitobans. We're going to let them know how this is going to impact them. They'll see their tax bill in June, they're going to see that they're paying more on their education property tax, and they're not going to buy the cheques that are coming out.

And, you know, they can say, well, they're in such a rush to do this, but it was never a priority and it's certainly not a priority of this government. It's not a priority now, it's never been a priority to actually make things more affordable for Manitobans.

So, I do have more to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm a little bit, you know—I'm a little bit—you know, it's a little unfortunate. I could keep going. But what I do want to also do is I also want to give an opportunity to other members in this House, because as I said, you know, time after time after time, every single member of the NDP caucus has stood up and has talked about what a sham this is, has talked about what a transfer of wealth this is to people like the Premier (Mr. Pallister), has talked about how this is going to hurt people in our own constituencies.

We'll continue to stand up for working Manitobans, and we'll continue to try to let Manitobans know exactly what's going on here. I think they're hearing the message; I think they're going to stand with us in the next election, and I do think that this government should just support this amendment, withdraw Bill 71, and go back to the drawing board to figure out how to make life actually more affordable for Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I think, you know, I'm only here to provide my colleague from Concordia a bit of reprieve, because if it was on content alone, I could certainly listen to him all day, but I do want to give him a chance to, you know, take a break, grab a drink of water, what have you.

But he certainly hit the nail on the head over and over and over and over again with that tremendous bit of rhetoric and discourse. And certainly, the verisimilitude of arguments that he's advancing against this government and the perspicacity with which he articulates this reasoned amendment truly does, I think, highlight the failures of this government.

You know, it's—particularly with respect to Bill 71, which is the reason why we have brought

forward a reasoned amendment—my colleague who moved the amendment I think did so for a very reasonable rationale, and that is that this bill that is being proposed is going to make life less affordable for people who rent here in Manitoba.

So, just another example of how they'll—those folks will be worse off as a result of the decisions of the Pallister government—and we're talking about hundreds of dollars a year here, you know? And, you know, we don't hear from anyone who feels like they have more money in their pocket since the Pallister government took office, and the reason is simple: it's because, you know, the fees have gone up, utility bills have gone up, and of course for renters, their tax credits will be going down.

In addition, we know that this—Bill 71 is in need of amendment because it will disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Manitobans, including, you know, some of the wealthiest corporations out there. You know, I don't think there's a huge groundswell of people demanding, let's give some of the richest in our province a break right now during this difficult time, and yet that's precisely what the First Minister has done.

And do you know, it is pretty sad when you think about it in terms of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) political legacy. Like, he's forcing all these PC MLAs to try and give away this big handout to large corporations and rich Manitobans in an effort to preserve his political legacy or to try and make his political legacy.

I'm sure if the member for Fort Whyte had his way, his political legacy would be about the PST and property taxes. Every Manitoban out there knows what his legacy's going to be. It's going to be the Maples, it's going to be the second wave, it's going to be the failure on COVID. And so this reasoned amendment is designed to introduce some reason into the discussion, which has been sorely lacking over the past year—certainly longer than that, but it's been especially apparent to many Manitobans within the past year.

Again, even when you just go on the government's own social media pages, you look at an ad that the PCs put up about this very bill, Bill 71, the entirety of the comments section below this ad, they're making very similar points to what my colleague from Concordia was making and the rationale behind the reasoned amendment that was moved here.

So, again, this ad was posted. It was supposed to be greeted, you know, with the sort of fanfare that a triumphant liberator hears when they arrive into town. You know, it's, you know, 25 per cent off this year, 25 per cent off next year and, you know, they're just hoping that this thing's going to go viral and get so many shares.

Instead, people in Manitoba are smarter than this government gives them credit for. People are saying, well, how much health care are you going to cut to pay for this thing? How much education are you going to cut for paying for this thing?

People in the comments section are saying, you know what, I enjoy making my fair contribution to ensure that kids get educated in our province. I look forward to paying my fair share so that we have the health-care system that can withstand the pandemic.

You know, these are the type of things that we see. We see people criticizing the PCs. So they're saying, you know what, this is a PC Party unlike we see in other provinces even, worse—a lot worse than even the Conservative parties we see in other provinces.

One commentator was just saying, you know, I just recently moved here, and I'm surprised to see the PCs doing something so transparently partisan and gimmicky, right? Another commentator just said, you know, why is the government trying to buy me off with my own money? I know what they're doing.

I recall one commentator, not on this particular issue, but a similar one, who said, when a government tries to buy you off with your own money, it's a bit like getting a Christmas present from your kids, right? You might appreciate the gesture, but at the end of the day you know it's your own money that paid for it, right?

And so that's the sort of situation that we're in. We're trying to preserve the political legacy, I guess, is what the PCs are thinking; trying to preserve the political legacy of the Pallister government by buying the affection of Manitobans with their own money. And yet, even in so far as that's what the public face is being presented by this government, it's not actually the substance of what this bill contemplates, right?

There's no social media ad being put forward by the PC Party that says that landlords who own apartments with 300 units in them are going to stand to benefit from this property tax giveaway, right? There's no social media ad out there being put forward by the government that's saying, guess what, renters,

we're going to make your life less affordable by hundreds of dollars a year, right? Why aren't they doing that? Well, because they know it's wrong. They know it's a bad move. They know it's unpopular, right? And so it's a bit of a sleight of hand, I guess, is also what I'm trying to say here.

In addition to trying to, you know, put forward this brave face, as though they're doing something that's going to help people in some significant way, they're also concealing the fact that it's really, really going to benefit people who are already very, very well off in our province.

Any time you have a revenue measure that's being contemplated, you have to think about the impact that it's going to have on government expenditure, as well, right? It's a balancing equation.

Of course, you want to see governments balance the books during good times, but right now, during a pandemic, the priority really ought to be focused on ensuring that the health-care system has the capacity to be able to withstand the third wave. By implementing an unfair, un-income-tested approach with Bill 71, as this amendment seeks to fix, the PCs are guaranteeing that there isn't going to be necessary or adequate funding to maintain the current level of health care in Manitoba.

And let me draw out, let me elucidate, let me articulate, let me extrapolate what that means, Mr. Acting Deputy Chair. Right now, with the current level of funding in Manitoba, you have seniors sitting in hallways in emergency rooms for days on end. Right now, with the current level of funding, you have nurses in those emergency rooms, who are leaving the profession.

* (16:10)

They're citing burnout, they're citing mental-health issues, they're sorting—they're citing stress as a cause for them to leave those areas where they're so badly needed. Right now, with the current level of funding in the health-care system, we see that the system is already struggling with 1,300 empty nursing spots. And, again, this is the impact of the current level of funding. Imagine what's going to happen when the PCs reduce the amount of investment as a result of the measures contemplated in Bill 71.

Right now, there's a bit of a shell game going on because of the deficit financing situation brought about in justification by the pandemic. But we know that once the pandemic subsides, there's going to be a permanent structural deficit created by this

PC government. And how will they choose to address that structural deficit? They will seek to address it by further cutting health care, right? The current level is inadequate to meet the needs of Manitobans, and they're going to cut more.

They're going to cut it from education. Bill 64: very unpopular across rural Manitoba, very unpopular. People don't want to see local schools closed; people don't want to see their local priorities lost in a big province-wide bureaucracy. Most importantly, people don't want to see fewer teachers working in those schools; they don't want to see less one-on-one time between their child and that teacher, less time with a clinician.

It's bad enough right now in many rural divisions where a clinician has to drive an hour and a half this way to one end of the school district, then drive two hours in the complete opposite direction just to spend that time with a child who may have a challenge with their learning or perhaps might need some assessment with hearing or vision or what have you. Once we move to a province-wide bureaucracy, how much further is that clinician going to have to drive? How much further are they going to be stretched, right?

So Bill 64, combined with Bill 71, definitely, the situation needs to be amended because it's going to exacerbate, meaning it's going to make worse, it is going to damage, it is going to endanger the quality of education that we have in Manitoba here today. Manitobans are smart; Manitobans realize that. They see a cynical, political, partisan ploy when it's presented to them. And that's what Bill 71 is, and that's why we have to bring forward this reasoned amendment.

Now, if all this that I'm laying out, and, of course, we could probably go through the department and name, like, okay, well, what are you going to have to cut in Ag, you know, what are you going to have to cut in Families, what are you going to have to cut in climate and conservation? We could go on down the list and recognize that there's going to be impact on the provision of public services as a result of this public stunt that is being perpetrated on the people of Manitoba by the Pallister PC party, right?

Manitobans understand that that's going to be damaging, right, and so, where are we going to go from here? Well, I can tell you what. If this reasoned amendment is not adopted—that would at least cushion the impact somewhat, that would at least make life a little bit better for people in Manitoba—it's going to

take that much longer for the next administration to fix the damage that the PC's have caused.

When the NDP got in in 1999, the health-care system was a disaster, hallway medicine all over. The Filmon PCs had just finished privatizing MTS and had their sights set on Manitoba Hydro. Beyond that, tuition was unaffordable for people across the province. It took years to even start to undo that damage, never mind begin to dream of progress and building a Manitoba that works for all of us. And what's striking is that even though the Filmon administration had 10 years to wreak all that havoc on the province of Manitoba, the Pallister government is causing more damage in only five years.

And so it's bad enough that they've ruined health care, that they mismanaged the pandemic, that they're now setting their wrecking ball toward the education system, but now with Bill 71—and in the absence of this reasoned amendment—they are now also looking to hand down to future administrations a structural deficit that will tie the hands of future governments to be able to help the people of Manitoba. Does the Premier (Mr. Pallister) care?

Will the Premier be in Manitoba to see the impacts of the cuts he's making and the structural deficit that he's creating? Legitimate question. That's not even a partisan jab; that's a legitimate question that could be asked right now. Two years from now, three years from now, five years from now, 10 years from now, when the health-care system continues to be in shambles, when the education system is barely holding on, will the Premier be in Manitoba to see the impact of the decisions he has made? I doubt it.

And so, why don't we have the folks who are invested in Manitoba long term step up and speak their piece? Certainly, we do that on our side. I would hope that my colleagues on the side opposite understand that Manitobans are smart, insofar as they see through Bill 71 and are asking for the type of changes we're proposing with the reasoned amendment.

Manitobans also recognize that the member for Fort Whyte does not operate in a vacuum. The member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) does not operate without a supporting cast of characters. The member for Fort Whyte does not make decisions alone; he does so with the approval of every single PC member who refuses to speak up against him. And Manitobans will remember that, right?

I'm sure some members of the PC caucus feel like they have safe seats and so they don't need to worry

about it. Well then, that makes it all the more incumbent on those PC MLAs who are in so-called target constituencies to speak with moral conviction, to raise their voices on behalf of their constituents, to even just utter some common sense.

At the height of the second wave—and it seemed like we could just call in the military to help out at a few personal-care homes—why didn't anyone on the opposite side stand up? It's a germane question, because here we are with Bill 71, which is going to permanently damage education funding in Manitoba. The question remains: why doesn't anyone on the opposite side stand up against this thing, right?

And I guess there's some sort of internal political calculation that's going on that says, well, if I just keep my mouth shut and I don't speak out on behalf of what my constituents want and I just keep my head down, we let Bill 71 pass, those cheques hit the doorstep, and then people will remember the cheque, and then maybe I'll get re-elected? No. It's not going to work. It's not going to fly.

People will cash the cheques when it arrives in their mailboxes. For sure they will. But if you think that people are going to ignore what happened during the pandemic under the PC watch, if you think that the people of Manitoba are going to forgive the next Leader of the PC Party because they got a rebate cheque, give your head a shake. Wake up, right?

So, we could make the argument on political courage. We could make the argument on morality. Even if we make the argument on pure politics—come on. Get with the program.

Again, we know that this is an issue that is going to be felt for many, many years here in Manitoba. And so when it comes to Bill 71, there's definitely the need for a reasoned amendment. There's definitely a need to have some common sense introduced to this government, you know?

And we see them, you know, on the other side, they're making their moves and, like, trying to set up for what's going to be coming next in terms of their political timeline, and, you know, people are positioning themselves for this, positioning themselves for that. I see people starting to eye each other in a certain way on the other side of the House. Get over yourselves.

We got a state of emergency that's been in place for 13 months in Manitoba. Start acting like a mature government that is responsible for 1.3 million people during a time of emergency.

Now's not the time for horse trading and jockeying and palace intrigue; now's not the time for one senior political operative to use the Premier and other public officials to hang another senior operative out to dry in the public sphere, as has been happening recently on the other side. No.

Now's not the time to try and take our office space away from us or get us to use a new email domain server. Now's not the time to be, you know, telling us that no, you've got to stand on this side of the hallway instead of that side of the hallway. Really? While people were dying in Manitoba, those were your priorities? While 100,000 doses of vaccines stood stuck in the freezers, that's what you had your senior political operatives working on?

I mean, yes, fine, whatever, we'll change our domain name, we'll move offices. I don't care. You know why I don't care? Because I'm focused on the people of Manitoba. Because I'm asking questions about vaccines. I'm asking questions about Manitoba Hydro. Our team is focused on fixing health care. Our team is focused on schools in Manitoba. Our team is focused on universities and colleges.

So it's amazing how that, you know, political world just keeps on spinning, and where this PC team was so triumphant just a few years ago, they all know deep within their bones that they're not on the side of Manitobans right now. And so that's up for us, you know?

It's not going to be easy, not going to be automatic, but we're going to work hard. We're going to earn the support of people in Manitoba and we're going to bring forward a real, common-sense-attitude analysis and plan for what's needed here.

* (16:20)

And, again, so Bill 71 is a challenging situation, you know, it's going to be handed down to certainly whoever secedes the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister). And at least, you know, if we got an opportunity to try and make this thing a little bit better, we're going to avail ourselves of that opportunity. So that's where the reasoned amendment comes from.

Again, you look at constituencies like my own, which is just on the other side of the river, south side of the Assiniboine, west side of the Red; if you look at constituencies in the suburbs, right, whether it's southwestern Winnipeg, northeastern Winnipeg; you could even go to a constituency like Portage la Prairie. There's going to be renters in all those areas right across the province, right.

It might look a little different from each other in the sense that, in my constituency, you might be renting your apartment in a high-rise apartment building, whereas—and would—I should note that even though many of the PC MLAs claim to represent areas in rural Manitoba, most of them actually do live in my constituency, right, because those apartments are paid for by the Legislative Assembly.

But I digress, because it's, of course, the right of any MLA to do so. I just wish that they'd put my signs up during election time. Just kidding. Obviously, you know, we're very discerning about who we distribute those signs to.

Anyway, on a more realistic level, the point that I was making is in a constituency like mine, a renter—it might be that retired couple living in a high-rise who still own a piece of property in rural Manitoba that they like to visit from time to time.

You go to southwestern Winnipeg, northwestern Winnipeg, that renter family might be a young couple that's just getting started, full of dreams, full of ambition, got their first few good jobs, and they're building a life together. You go to Portage la Prairie, the renter may actually own their mobile home but is renting the piece of land on which it is situated, right.

So just think about all the different people from all the walks of life across our province. Some are well-off, some are working really hard to get by.

Some are, you know, enjoying the golden years, as they say. Some are really, really at the start of their working years, you know, and people come from all different walks of life. Certainly, we know that there's a great diversity in this inclusive province that we have.

And yet, all those folks are going to have their lives made worse by Bill 71, if it passes without this reasoned amendment, or if the PCs don't avail themselves of the opportunity to amend the bill themselves. All of those people, at a time when we are still in a recession—one of the most significant recessions since the Great Depression, by the way—are going to have less money in their pockets. There will be less money on the kitchen table.

And I'm not talking about the rented kitchen table that the Premier had his political staff go and rent from a furniture store and bring into the Legislature for a photo op—a really awkward photo op—because, like, who rents a table and then doesn't actually sit at it? But they just kind of, like, place it there for some photos where he, like, looks down at it, much in the

same way that he looks down on the people of Manitoba each and every day.

I'm talking about the actual kitchen tables, right, located in real people's homes. Those are going to have less money on them. By the way, I don't know who keeps money on their kitchen table anyways—just using a metaphor.

Most people probably keep it in a bank account, use a debit card. Maybe they pay with tap, maybe it's paying with their phone. But there's going to be fewer dollars linked to those accounts as a result of this.

Similarly, again, when you look at a wealthy landlord, is it fair that the government is using people who might see a hundred-dollar rebate to try and benefit somebody who's going to see thousands and thousands of dollars? People who don't need that money right now, right?

Folks who are well off could become more well off over the course of the pandemic. People who are poor, people who are working hard, people who are kept in poverty by the economic policy of this government could really stand to benefit from having a better suite of affordability options presented to them that could include things like, say, lower hydro rates, or maybe even just hydro rates that are set at a public process rather than hydro rates that are passed at the Cabinet table.

That's what the reasoned amendment seeks to address, is that we really do need to have, you know, some reason introduced into the discussion here. Could we have a government that actually works—not maybe works with municipalities is getting too ahead of ourselves here.

Could we have a government that meets with municipalities, right, respects them, talks to them, answers the phone, takes a Zoom call, you know? Used to be how it worked in Manitoba. But over the last five years, unfortunately, we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) that can't meet with municipal leaders, least of all, the mayor of Winnipeg.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The reason why I bring that up in the context of the reasoned amendment is because over the course of the last five years, in the process of starving municipalities of transfer payments, what the PC government has done is forced those municipalities to increase not only taxes but also increase fees on people in Manitoba.

Anyone who's gone to the Brady Road Landfill after doing their spring cleaning knows what I'm talking about: way more expensive to do that today than it was in the past, and the reason is because cuts are being downloaded from the Province to the municipal level.

And, again, Province, under the Pallister administration, likes to do that because they don't think Manitobans are paying attention. But Manitobans are paying attention. One of the things that I'm sure everyone has realized during the course of the pandemic is that there's more screen time happening, and as a result, more Manitobans are tuned in to provincial politics.

And wouldn't you know it, as Manitobans pay more attention to their provincial government, they like what they see less and less. And so that's being brought forward here under Bill 71. The situation's going to be exacerbated, and the reasoned amendment is designed to just try and balance the situation out again.

It's clear that, you know, if you own a 300-unit apartment building, there's a party for you, and it's the party on the government's side of the House; but for everyone else in Manitoba, there's a party for you, and it's on this side of the House.

It's clear for people in Manitoba that if you're a renter, there's one party that's going to ignore you, and it's the party on that side of the House, not—ignore is too soft. There's a party that's going to actively make things worse for you, and it's on that side of the House.

If you're a renter in Manitoba, there's a party that's got your back, and it's on this side of the House. And it's not just with the reasoned amendment. It goes to the work that we've been doing to oppose above-guideline rent increases, and it continues right on through a whole suite of policy proposals that we have that's going to make life just a little bit better, to make opportunity come just a little bit closer to people right across this great province.

So I think I made the point in terms of the necessity of this reasoned amendment. I would just hope that reason still has the capacity to be absorbed by the PC members, and not even all the PC members, just enough to ensure that the reasoned amendment passes.

If you see all the vote go along party lines, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will know that all the PC MLAs have abandoned their duty to their constituents because how else would anyone vote

against making life more affordable for renters and making the overall distribution of the promotional novelty cheques that the Premier is sending out more equitable to all people in Manitoba?

How could a suburban MLA from Winnipeg, whether that's southeast Winnipeg, southwest Winnipeg, northwest Winnipeg, et cetera, how could they decide to not have the renters in their constituency made better off by this reasoned amendment?

How could those same MLAs not want to tilt the balance away from those homeowners in their constituencies whose homes maybe are worth \$200,000, \$300,000? How would you not want to tilt the balance away from the multi-millionaires towards those folks?

Seems pretty apparent to me that not only is that the right thing to do in terms of the economy, having an equitable economic recovery that ensures that the benefits of government initiatives are going to meet the needs of those who need it most? But it seems like it would also be smart politics as well, right?

And so the whole idea of just going along with the party line, I guess it makes sense in good times, but when you see the disaster that's unfolding under the PC mismanagement right now, you would think that some people are going to stand up and say, you know what, I'm going to get off the sinking ship and I'm just going to do what the people of Manitoba sent me to do, which is to give voice to their concerns and stand up for the right thing.

So I think that's about as apparent and plain as I can make it. So with those few words on the record, I'd say let's pass this reasoned amendment and then let's just get on with the business of making Manitoba work for all of us.

* (16:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers on the reasoned amendment of Bill 71?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before us is the reasoned amendment for Bill 71.

All those in favour—should the reasoned amendment pass?

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 reasoned amendment, 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.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Deputy Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been declared—recorded—declared, call in the members.

The question before the House is reasoned amendment of Bill 71.

Division

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

Yeas

Adams, Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Naylor, Sala, Sandhu, Smith (Point Douglas), Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Nays

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodière, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 20, Nays 32.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion is accordingly defeated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We'll now debate Bill 71.

Any speakers?

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Well, here we are again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Where to begin telling Manitobans how bad this bill is; it's really bad.

It's potentially one of the worst bills that they've brought in, and they brought in a lot of really bad bills.

And, who knows? They may bring in more bad bills yet. But, you know, what's really fundamentally wrong with this is how it shifts the tax burden away from the wealthy and makes it disproportionately for poor people.

You know, there's—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —properties, I'm told, somewhere down on Wellington Crescent, that have these giant, giant kitchen tables that they'll be able to put their refund cheques on.

And, you know, I saw a joke on Facebook earlier about a certain member from Fort Whyte looking out the window, thought he was looking in the mirror.

And he'll be able to look out the window from his kitchen table and admire his cheques that he's sending to himself. Thank you, Manitobans, for giving this Premier (Mr. Pallister) your money. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Lindsey: And you know what, not once has anybody—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

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