

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 3, 2022

*The House resumed at 1:30 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 12—The Peak of the Market  
Reorganization Act**

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Smith), that Bill 12, The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Johnson:** I'm pleased to introduce Bill 12, The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act to the Legislature. The main purpose of this bill is to allow potato and root-crop farmers to grow as many potato and root crops as they wish to sell and buy as they want.

The bill would also create a new structure for the marketing agency, Peak of the Market, as a not-for-profit organization. The legislation would eliminate regulations associated with Peak of the Market. This will also create the building blocks for the organization's future success as a business to grow Manitoba's vegetable production and exports.

Producers and Peak of the Market have requested this legislation and producers of potato and root crops and Peak of the Market would be better able to grow their business, expand local sales and export, and provide opportunities for new growers in Manitoba. This, in turn, would create jobs and economic growth for our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee Reports? Tabling of Reports?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

## World Lymphedema Day

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Sunday, March 6th, marks the seventh annual World Lymphedema Day in Manitoba, a day designed to bring awareness and educate the world about lymphatic diseases.

The disease affects more than 300 million people worldwide and approximately 1 million Canadians are currently living and suffering from lymphedema.

The international symbol, Madam Speaker, for 'lymphedema' is a blue butterfly, so you may see individuals during this month wearing the blue butterfly on their lapel. Lymphedema is a disease where the accumulation of high-protein lymphatic fluid can impair mobility or function, can cause pain and swelling in the legs, arms, head and/or neck and can lead to a severe infection or loss of the use of limbs.

There are two types of lymphedema. Primary lymphedema is caused by the abnormal development of the lymphatic system and can be present at birth or can develop later on in life. Secondary lymphedema occurs when various factors cause damage to the lymphatic system, for example, cancer or infection.

Our government recognizes that patients suffering from lymphedema endure physical discomfort and disfigurement and cope with the distress caused by these symptoms. We remain committed to working with partners and stakeholders in the health system to raise awareness of lymphedema and its impact on patients.

In honour of World Lymphedema Day, a free virtual lymphedema symposium will be hosted on Saturday, March 5th, for the public and health-care professionals.

And on the evening of March 6th, the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba will celebrate their second annual walk to the Manitoba Legislative Building to bring awareness and unity for the lymphatic community in honour of World Lymphedema Day. The goal of the three-kilometre walk is to promote awareness and education for this

disease and to increase attention for the medical community and patients and also to help those living with lymphedema.

Please join me as we honour and recognize individuals with lymphatic diseases, and the hard work being done to raise awareness and improve access to resources, services and treatments.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** The Manitoba NDP stands with all Manitobans suffering from lymphedema, a disorder of the lymphatic system commonly caused by dysfunction in the flow of lymph fluid through the arms or legs. It is often very painful and affects a diagnosed person's mobility and overall well-being.

Too often, conditions like lymphedema that are not always visible or immediately threatening to an affected person's life are not seen as serious, but they and their families know how debilitating it can be and how necessary it is for our health-care system to support those living with it.

While the pandemic is ongoing, we can't forget about the non-COVID health issues like lymphedema, which have, sadly, not been given enough attention over recent years.

In December, a nurse named Emma Cloney spoke out after the province refused to cover a surgery to treat her lipedema, a condition with similar symptoms as lymphedema. This treatment is not available in Manitoba and would put Emma on the hook for the \$167,000 cost to get the treatment in the United States. This surgery would drastically improve her quality of life. Instead, Emma was told she could get liposuction, which would risk her condition getting worse and turning into lymphedema.

This PC government is denying care and putting patients at risk because of their failure to invest in our health-care system.

Now, if you begin experiencing symptoms of lymphedema, such as swelling of part of all or part of your arms or legs, hardening and thickening of the skin or restricted range of motion, please consult with your doctor or medical professionals as soon as possible.

Of course, we know that doing so in Manitoba unfortunately is not so easy, as years of PC health-care cuts and mismanagement have made it difficult for many Manitobans to access the services they need.

If you are in that position, know that the Manitoba NDP will do everything we can to ensure investments are made for those suffering from lymphedema, and all other medical conditions, so that they can live as healthy as possible in this province.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to this ministerial statement.

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, World Lymphedema Day is an important day and one that recognizes a significant health condition.

The lymphatic system complements the arteries and veins of our circulatory system. Arteries take blood from the heart to the tissues. Veins return the blood from the tissues to the heart. In the normal course of events, some fluid leaks out of the capillaries which link arteries and veins. This fluid gets into the tissues, and the leaked fluid is returned to the heart through the lymphatic vessels, passing through lymph nodes along the way.

When the lymphatic system is not functioning for one reason or another, fluid builds up in the tissues and produces, as an example, a swollen arm or a swollen leg. A common situation where lymphedema occurs is after breast cancer. Lymphedema occurs, in this case, in the arm, and it's usually the result of either surgical removal or radiation treatment of the lymph nodes in the axilla.

Lymphedema, while it is not yet possible to cure it, can be treated. Treatment of lymphedema following breast cancer is covered under medicare. Sadly, treatment of lymphedema following other cancers or under other circumstances is not covered.

I hope that the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) will announce today, on World Lymphedema Day, that she is extending the coverage under medicare to all forms of lymphedema. It's essential. It decreases the risk of infections which are common when lymphedema is left untreated.

It was a sad day when the development of lymphedema after other cancers was not covered under medicare, and it has been a sad day every since for those who suffer from lymphedema due to other cancers or other conditions.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Highlighting Businesses in Brandon East

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** In the heart of any community are the people, and I am proud to rise in the House today to highlight a group of individuals who, together, have shown their love and support of the people in Brandon East.

\* (13:40)

I would like to start by recognizing the openness to work together by Bernie Whetter of The Green Spot Home and Garden. The Green Spot has been a staple in Brandon East for quite some time, but on October 23rd, 2021, the landscape changed as renovations to the greenhouse wrapped up and the doors reopened to the public. With this reopening came a unique partnership with two other Brandon businesses, Chez Angela Bakery and Café and The BloomBox.

Madam Speaker, I had the privilege of attending the grand opening and toured the renovated facility with great excitement. In the middle of this facility is a magical garden oasis, where a live jazz band, made up of jazz students from Brandon University, played to the enjoyment of all attendees.

With music playing in the background, I was able to congratulate James and Angela Chambers on the opening of the Secret Garden Café, located next to where the band was playing. A butter croissant, a fresh cup of coffee and seeing the excitement on the faces of those attending was a blessing to the overall experience. This will truly be a place that will become one of the go-to places in the community.

After enjoying a tour and a visit of the birds in the greenhouse, I took the opportunity to purchase a beautiful floral arrangement for my wife from The BloomBox. After 10 years in downtown Brandon, Trish and Shaun Fjeldsted relocated their flower shop to The Green Spot.

So, Madam Speaker, the services offered by these shops complement each other and they provide a positive outlook with economic growth in a time of need. The next time you are in the—have the opportunity to visit Brandon, I invite you to visit, to explore, to enjoy the company of friends and to support three amazing small businesses at the same time.

Thank you very much.

### Elmwood Bear Clan

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I rise today to recognize the incredible volunteers and organizers of the Elmwood Bear Clan.

In 2020, Elmwood became the fourth Bear Clan chapter in the city after more than 100 local residents gathered to talk about ways to expand our community patrol. They recognized the need to enhance community safety while supporting the most vulnerable in our community, and the Bear Clan model was the perfect fit.

Operating out of and supported by the Elmwood EK active living centre and the Chalmers Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, the Elmwood Bear Clan walks the streets of Elmwood on Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons, offering support centred around community well-being through a harm reduction approach.

Co-ordinator Lorraine Kehler uses her own vehicle to load up supplies, such as food, clothing and other necessities, to distribute. The group then patrols the community looking for people in need, offering support and engaging in friendly conversation.

The group works with other agencies that support folks with poverty, housing and addictions issues, and is responsive to community input on emerging issues in the neighbourhood. The group also relies on support and donations from local churches and businesses. Charlee's Restaurant has always been a great community partner that provides volunteers a place to warm up, use the washrooms and enjoy a complimentary beverage.

I've had an opportunity to walk with the Elmwood Bear Clan multiple times and I'm always inspired by the dedication of those volunteers. Despite the challenges of gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic, they've maintained a core volunteer base but are always open to more volunteers.

Madam Speaker, I encourage everyone to volunteer with your local Bear Clan and I ask all members to join me in recognizing the outstanding work of the Elmwood Bear Clan Patrol.

Thank you.

### Lymphedema Awareness Day

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I am extremely proud to recognize March 6th as the Lymphedema Awareness Day in Manitoba.

As all members are aware, in 2014 I introduced bill 209, a private member's bill proclaiming March 6th to recognize those who live with lymphedema and increase public awareness of the disease right here in Manitoba.

I want to thank Ms. Kim Avanthay, founder of the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, who was very active in helping get that bill passed. Kim's inspiration to form the patient-focused organization comes from her son, Austin, and their family's own experience in dealing with the disease.

Lymphedema is a hidden epidemic affecting approximately 250 million people worldwide and over 38,000 people right here in Manitoba. It can affect anyone at any age, yet most people are not aware of this condition and how it is treated. Lymphedema is a condition of chronic swelling that affects a limb or other body part due to an accumulation of lymph fluid.

Lymphedema Awareness Day gives us an opportunity to draw public attention to lymphedema as well as celebrate the progress made by Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, and of course, to honour all Manitobans who suffer from this disease.

In our province, there continues to be a dedicated team made up of staff, board members and volunteers and health-care workers that help to not only raise awareness of lymphedema and improve access to quality information, but finding treatment solutions for those living with this disability medical condition.

Madam Speaker, this Saturday, March 5th, The Lymphedema Association of Manitoba is having their annual symposium virtually, on the topic of identifying and treating lymphedema-related fibrosis. I encourage anyone who might be interested to attend.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Lymphedema Association of Manitoba Board: Adrienne Pearson, president; Linda Menzies, past president; Amanda Sobey, vice-president and secretary; Kim Radford, treasurer; Bonnie Ash, Jessica Diamond, Isabelle Thorvardson, Ron Wersch, Ace Zhao*

### **Invasion of Ukraine**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** One week ago today, Putin's forces invaded Ukraine and unleashed the biggest attack on a European state since World War II. Since then, the world has been flooded with the constant, devastating stream of pictures and news from the war. Hundreds have been killed, wounded, and with over 1 million Ukrainians already

fled the country in the past week, Europe is preparing for one of the largest refugee crises it has ever seen.

At the same time, the outpouring of global support has been tremendous. Right here in our province, people have donated millions to aid organizations, sent dozens of supplies and even offered their own homes to take in Ukrainian refugees.

But there is more work to be done. To date, Manitoba has pledged only \$150,000 to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress—less than \$1 for every person in Manitoba of Ukrainian descent. Manitoba needs to do far more. We are calling on the government to match provincial donations to private donations.

We urge this government to increase their Immigration department's currently limited staffing levels, drop the application fee and expedite all provincial immigration applications from people residing in Ukraine immediately. The government also needs to provide funds to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to hire full-time settlement co-ordinators to assist the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees.

This government accused us of partisanship, so I suggest that they create a joint committee of the Legislature and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to come up with a constructive plan for how Manitoba is going to respond to this.

We call on the federal government to create a fast-tracked, private sponsorship program for Ukrainians who could be targeted by Russia or have medical issues that won't get adequately treated during a war.

Putin's attack on Ukraine is an attack on all of us, and there is much more we could do to stand up to this gross injustice and protect the innocent people caught in the crossfire.

Slava Ukraini, heroyam slava. [*Glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes.*]

### **Marion Willis and Léonne Dumesnil**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** It's a joy today to pay tribute to two incredible women leaders from St. Boniface.

Marion Willis runs Morberg House and St. Boniface Street Links. She is the person who put the meth crisis on our radar back in 2017. And in the last years, as we've seen a rising tide of poverty, people struggling with substance use with nowhere to go, people living on riverbanks and under bridges, Marion has always been a champion for them.

She reaches out to them. She treats them as they should be treated—as human beings—and, incredibly, her work has been recognized in the sweetest possible way by having her face on the wrapper of a limited edition Hershey chocolate bar for International Women's Day.

The other four Canadian women being recognized are Natalya Amres, Fitriya Mohamed, Yasmeen Persad and Erica Jacobs.

Congratulations to Marion.

J'ai été aussi ravi de lire dans *La Liberté* que Soeur Léonne Dumesnil est reconnue pour son rôle extraordinaire dans l'éducation en français et dans l'immersion française au Manitoba.

La force pure de sa personnalité qui était enracinée dans son sens féroce de la moralité—elle était sévère et gentille, humble et enjouée, avec un scintillement dans l'œil.

Apprendre à parler français au Sacré-Coeur a changé le cours de ma vie. Tout ce qui est—tout ce que j'ai—ma famille, mon poste—c'est grâce à l'immersion française.

La qualité de l'éducation était incroyable. On s'attendait à ce que nous nous parlions en français dans les couloirs. Mon frère a trouvé quelques-uns de ses vieux devoirs, parce que ma mère garde tout, et il a dit qu'il était étonné des conjugaisons qu'ils nous demandaient de faire.

Sacré-Coeur a changé la vie de milliers d'élèves, et Soeur Léonne—et tous les autres professeurs et aides—nous a donné un cadeau que nous ne pouvons qu'espérer rembourser. Au moins, nous pouvons rendre le don de l'amour.

À Soeur Léonne et à tous ceux qui ont fait du Sacré-Coeur une réalité, mille mercis.

### **Translation**

*I was also delighted to read in *La Liberté* that Sister Léonne Dumesnil was acknowledged for her extraordinary role in French education and French immersion in Manitoba.*

*The sheer force of her personality was rooted in her fierce sense of morality. She was strict and kind, humble and cheerful, and she had a twinkle in her eye.*

*Learning to speak French in Sacré-Coeur changed my life. Everything I have—my family, my position—I owe to French immersion.*

*The quality of the education was incredible. We were expected to speak French in the hallways. My brother found some of his old homework, because my mother keeps everything, and he said he was surprised by the conjugations we had to do.*

*Sacré-Coeur changed the lives of thousands of students, and Sister Léonne—and all the teachers and assistants—gave us a gift that we can only hope to repay. At least we can give the gift of love.*

*To Sister Léonne and to everyone that made Sacré-Coeur a reality, thank you so much.*

## **ORAL QUESTIONS**

### **Surgical and Diagnostic Services Timeline for Backlog Clearance**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Manitobans are asking themselves a question, Madam Speaker: Who is going to fix health care and who is going to make your life more affordable?

\* (13:50)

Now we know that the Pallister-Stefanson governments want you to forget about all the damage that they have caused over their time in office.

It was June of 2021 when Doctors Manitoba raised the alarm about the surgical and diagnostic backlog—backlog was over 100,000 at that point. Now, nearly 10 months later, there has been no progress. Actually, that's not entirely true. There's been progress, but it's been in entirely the wrong direction: 160,000 procedures. That's a 60 per cent jump under the PC watch.

What a failure, and the Premier still, to this day, refuses to set a date for when this backlog will be cleared.

Will the Premier tell this House which day the surgical and diagnostic waits will be cleared?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, we know the NDP has a track record of not fixing health care, in fact, making health care worse in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we have spent record numbers of dollars on health care in the province—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —of Manitoba, almost \$1 billion dollars more than the NDP ever did. We will take no lessons from the members opposite.

I want to thank all of those who are on our surgical and—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:**—diagnostic task force for the incredible work they're doing. I know they have an update coming very, very soon.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, there was supposed to be an update last month. That was the promise from the Premier. Oh, no. That was a promise broken. There was no update from the task force—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:**—last month and, of course, we know that this is just the latest in a long line of failures—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:**—under the former Health minister and the current Premier.

Just like Brian Pallister, her plan is to send Manitobans down the highway to North Dakota for health care. That's highway medicine, Madam Speaker, and that's not what Manitobans deserve.

Manitobans want to know when they can get their surgeries, when can get—they get their tests and when will they get a straight answer from this Premier.

By which day will the Premier clear the surgical and diagnostic backlog?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, we are—have come through two years of a worldwide pandemic that has caused us to redeploy staff within the health-care system, and we're in the process right now of allowing those people—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:**—back into their positions. That will take some time, Madam Speaker, but what Manitobans want is they want that access to the surgical and diagnostic procedures that they need, want and deserve. That's what we're ensuring.

We're not taking an ideological approach. We are looking to ensure that all those Manitobans get the surgeries that they need, Madam Speaker. And if south of the border, if they're looking to help us out to ensure that one, two, three, five more people are able to get those surgeries that they need, that's what we will do.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, it's a simple question: when will the surgical and diagnostic backlog be cleared? No one in the PC Cabinet, nor the Premier, has an answer.

Doctors Manitoba has called—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:**—for a date to be given by which the surgical and diagnostic backlog will be cleared.

Manitobans who are waiting in pain deserve to know an answer to how long those waits will be. We should be able to set a date for clearing the backlog.

The only reason the Premier will not answer is either her government doesn't know—in which case they are incompetent—or they do know and, in that case, they are hiding it from the people of Manitoba.

So, when will the surgical and diagnostic backlog be cleared?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Again, I want to thank our surgical and diagnostic task force for the incredible work that they are doing.

I also want to thank our Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) for the incredible work that she has done to ensure that we move forward on this.

What we do know, based on what the Leader of the Opposition just said—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:**—is that they would deny people the access to the surgical procedures that they need, Madam Speaker. That is unfortunate because of their ideological approach, which they have always taken when it comes to health care.

We are concerned about ensuring that Manitobans get the access to the surgical procedures that they need, want and deserve, while the members opposite would deny that of them.

Shame on them.

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

### **Trucker Convoy Border Closure Cost to Provincial Economy**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, let's talk about ideology. When you put money ahead of people and cut health care,

that's an ideological decision and that is the ideology of this Premier and her government.

Let's talk about another ideology, an ideology that would see this government capitulate to the convoy. Half a billion dollars—half a billion dollars is what the border closure cost our economy. Now, that might not seem like a lot of money to the members across the aisle, but that affected people's jobs. That affected people's incomes. That affected businesses in our province—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** As the cost of living rises and Manitobans struggle under economic pressure, they deserve to see some accountability from the First Minister.

Will she apologize for caving to the convoy and costing our economy half a billion dollars?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Let me just address the wrong statement of the member opposite. We are spending more in health care now than the NDP ever did, almost \$1 billion more, Madam Speaker. Those are the facts.

Now, I know the member opposite maybe has problems with law enforcement. I don't know, Madam Speaker. But what I will say is that the RCMP did incredible work at our border to ensure that things did not escalate as a result of the protests that were taking place there. I shudder to think what could have happened if the NDP were involved in that time and what they would have done in intervening in what would—what the RCMP was doing. That's what they're asking.

We let the RCMP, the professionals in all of this, do their job, and I thank them for the incredible job that they did.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, Madam Speaker, we know what the Premier let happen. The Premier let the convoy determine their public health policy. The Premier let the convoy determine our economic fate.

Half a billion dollars—half a billion dollars—because of the convoy border closure. And what was the Premier's response? Capitulation. That capitulation to the convoy, it cost Manitobans jobs. It cost Manitobans'—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:**—incomes and it cost Manitobans a huge impact—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:**—on their cost of living. That's not a recovery plan, Madam Speaker.

So Manitobans want to know: Why did the Premier cave to the convoy to the tune of half a billion dollars?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Public health decisions with respect to COVID-19 are made in conjunction with Public Health, Madam Speaker, not with the member of—the Leader of the Opposition.

But what I will say, Madam Speaker, while the member opposite, I know he doesn't like law enforcement, the fact is that they are professionals who are put in their jobs for a reason. They are trained. They are trained to do their jobs and the RCMP did that at the border. I want to thank them for that.

\* (14:00)

I also want to thank the Winnipeg Police Service for the incredible work that they did at—the outside the Legislative precinct here, Madam Speaker. I want to thank them for what they did in negotiating those efforts.

I know members—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:**—opposite don't like to rely on the police and the professionalism that they showed throughout this pandemic, Madam Speaker, and throughout these protests, but we on this side of the House are very proud of the work that they did and we thank them for that.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, the Premier of Manitoba owes the people of this province an explanation. Why did she capitulate to the convoy and damage our economy to the tune of half a billion dollars?

And by the way, why did she kick a member out of Cabinet for being an anti-vaxxer and then go ahead and capitulate to the convoy a month later?

The lack of explanations abound, but the impact when it comes to our economy was clear: half a billion—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** –dollars, took away jobs. It took away economic opportunity. It took away income at a time when Manitobans are struggling—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** –with the cost of living. The cost of 'ling'—living keeps going up for regular folks.

So who will help Manitobans with the rising cost of living? Will it be this team of hard-working Manitobans or will it be a Premier who forgot about \$31 million? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

I'll remind members of the rule that when the Speaker stands the House should be silent, and there a few voices here that were continuing on even though I was standing. So I am going to ask for your co-operation, please.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I very much appreciate any question from the members opposite about affordability for Manitobans.

We, of course, stand on the side of making life more affordable for Manitobans, Madam Speaker. That's why we lowered the PST that—subsequent to the NDP's raising of the PST. We are on the side of affordability for Manitobans. We will remind them each and every day about what the NDP did by raising their taxes. We lowered them.

We are creating a more affordable life here for Manitobans. We will continue to do so, unlike members opposite.

#### **Premier's Schedule as Health Minister Work Hours During Pandemic**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** At—just like Brian Pallister, when families needed a government to fight for them, the Premier, as the Health minister, was nowhere to be found. FIPPA documents show the former Health minister did not work once on the weekends during the third wave. When we—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I know that they find that funny—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** When we ran out of ICU beds and we were sending Manitobans out of the province, the Premier didn't work once on the weekend. I'll table the Premier's calendar, which shows that when

Manitobans were stepping up and doing their part, the Premier was taking the weekends off.

Does she think that this is right, to take the weekends off when our hospitals were—

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

Order.

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** You know, I'm very proud of the time that I've devoted to public service in this province, Madam Speaker: more than 21 years that I've devoted to ensuring that Manitobans have a better place to live for their families. I won't apologize for that at all.

I know what—the narrative that the members opposite are trying to create, and it's just simply wrong, Madam Speaker. They can continue along those lines. You know, I bet if I FIPPA'd their calendar, there wouldn't be a lot on those weekends.

But what I will say, Madam Speaker: every single hour of every single day, they know we get texts from people, we get phone calls from people. Those don't always show up in our calendar. I am absolutely devoted to the people of this province, to ensure they have a better place to live.

I shudder to think what would happen under another NDP government, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** It's there in black and white. There's nothing in the Premier's calendar from when she was the Health minister when we were in the midst of a third wave. And when Manitobans were looking for leadership, the former minister for Health decided to take every single weekend off. That is shameful, Madam Speaker.

The Premier left Manitobans and health-care workers to fend for themselves in a global pandemic. Manitobans don't take the weekends off during a crisis, and we shouldn't expect our leaders to as well.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) apologize to Manitobans today—right now—for not even working one weekend when she was the Health minister?

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness):** I would like to

point out I find it deplorable that the member from St. Johns is attacking a working mother's schedule.

She should know better. And especially from someone who worked for four years in government, and didn't produce a single report.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** On Sunday, May 9th, the government announced that every single school would be closed that coming week because of the pandemic.

Was the Health minister working? No, she wasn't. There was nothing in her calendar. It was blank. It's there for everyone to see.

The Premier didn't work one weekend the entire time when she was the Health minister. This is a disgraceful record. The Premier hasn't been there for Manitobans during this pandemic. And while she refuses to act, she expects everyone else to step up and do their part. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Will the Premier stand up in this House today and apologize and admit that she failed as the Health minister and she's failing now as the Premier? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** From this self-proclaimed feminist to attack a working mother who has achieved the highest level of office in this province, the first woman to do so, is deplorable.

Madam Speaker, when we speak about needing to—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** —unity—when we speak about needing unity and working as one together to achieve success, this member is showing that she is a self-proclaimed feminist, but not in the true sense that feminists identify as.

#### Premier's Schedule as Health Minister Work Hours During Pandemic

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Just like Brian Pallister, Premier Stefanson has been missing in action—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

\* (14:10)

Just a reminder to the member that she can—they can be referring to a member by their titles or their constituency, but not putting the two together as they just did.

So I would just remind the member.

**MLA Asagwara:** I apologize for that misstep.

Just like Brian Pallister, the Premier has been missing in action during the worst moments of this pandemic.

Madam Speaker, patient transfers didn't stop on the weekends. While patients were being transferred far away from their families and loved ones on the weekends, the Premier's calendar was blank. Kick back and relax was her approach and attitude.

Why did the Premier take weekends off when we were sending ICU patients out of province on the weekend?

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

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** For an opposition member that worked in the health system to not understand patient transfers are not done for individuals that are in the ICU is just an indication of their lack of knowledge of—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** —our health system, of how it works in our province.

Madam Speaker—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** —patient transfer protocol within the province has been in place for decades prior—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** —to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it's important to remember that the clinical decisions are being made by physicians who take several factors into account when a decision is made to transfer a patient outside of their region.

We will continue to look to those professionals instead of members opposite.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** While our health-care system was in crisis, when nurses were working overtime—

mandated overtime—on weekends, the former Health minister was taking every weekend off.

When health-care professionals wrote letters calling for urgent action, explaining how the system was at a breaking point, instead of showing up to work the former minister of Health decided to take weekends off. And her explanation was a shoulda, coulda, woulda.

That's wrong. That's not what Manitobans need. They need leaders who show up, not ones who take every weekend off during a crisis.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) tell Manitobans why she didn't work a single weekend while she was minister of Health?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, I've been in this House a long time and I've had my differences with lots of Health ministers, but the one thing I've never heard of a Health minister accused of is not working.

It is among the hardest jobs in this Legislature. This Premier, this former Health minister, took that job on and, like every other Health minister, brought home countless briefing books, brought home—day and night to read these things, Madam Speaker, to work to have meetings during the week—all the time working.

Now, I don't know if the member opposite is referring to a time when the former Health minister, the now-Premier, was on a medical leave—a well-known and disclosed medical leave—but if that is the level that this opposition is sinking to, I'm sad on most levels, but I'm happy on one level because you'll be in opposition a very, very long time.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

Excuse me. I've been standing now for some period of time and I just indicated a few minutes earlier that when I stand, I expect respect from this House for the Speaker of this House, whoever that may be and the position that person holds. So I'm asking for your co-operation please.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, they know full well this has nothing to do with an understandable medical leave. They are grasping, and that is desperate.

Madam Speaker, we're not actually that surprised—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —to learn that the former minister of Health took weekends off. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** This is the same person who told Manitobans, and I quote: The government can't protect Manitobans. End quote.

Just like Brian Pallister did while he flew away to Costa Rica when Manitobans needed him, Premier—the Premier was no different as Health minister by taking every single weekend off. That is not leadership, Madam Speaker. It's disrespectful to Manitobans who have continued to step up and do their part.

Will the Premier simply apologize to all front-line workers—

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

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, a war in Ukraine, and this is what they have.

They know that every Health minister, those that I've agreed with and those that I haven't, Madam Speaker, work every day, 17 hours a day, whether it's reading briefing files, whether it's meeting with officials, all the time. This Health Minister did it. The former Health minister did it. The Premier did it.

Yes, and there was a time—and she had a news conference and she disclosed that she had a medical leave. I used to think that in this House there was enough dignity to understand some of these things.

I think I said it yesterday that we were, in some ways, you know, when we had disagreements or illnesses, we understood that. That apparently doesn't happen anymore.

Well, that's okay. The—Manitobans don't deserve a government like the NDP and we're going to make sure they never get one, Madam Speaker.

#### **Drug Overdose Death Reporting Request for Publication of Data**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** The addictions crisis is raging in this province, but we still don't know the full impact.

Manitoba is much slower than any other—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —province in producing information. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, all of these provinces—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —give the data out, but our province? No, we don't. No data when you open up that reporting on all provinces. It's shameful. It's actually embarrassing.

Will this government—will this minister get up today and tell us that she's going to report in a timely manner on how many overdoses in this province and the drug that was overdosed on?

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness):** I do appreciate the question coming from the member opposite.

I know that her personal walk and experience advocating for those with addictions really does enhance the thoughts that she brings to this House, the questions that she is posing.

And, Madam Speaker, I am happy to offer to sit down and work with the member opposite and hear those ideas, because I have committed to sitting down with those with lived experiences to help us improve all of our systems.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** More than one person a day has died in this province in 2020, and Manitoba's on track to exceed that. We know the numbers up until June are 199 people dead in this province due to overdose. We don't even know the drug that they've overdosed on because this government refuses to let Manitobans know.

It's tragic and it's an alarming rise, but a situation we can learn from. We can let the public know, we can put it on a government website, we can tell people what the drug is that people are overdosing on so that we can save Manitobans' lives.

So I'll ask the minister again. I put forward Bill 217. Will the minister support that bill and allow that to pass so that we can have accurate reading—reporting in Manitoba?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Again, I do appreciate the member's comments and the request to sit down and have more discussions on these ideas.

Madam Speaker, I was happy to join the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre graduates last night. I heard

personal stories of their journeys for healing and recovery, the devastation that families experience through addictions, but also the hope and joy that can come from recovery.

I know it's very important and I know this is a very serious issue that our province is facing—multiple provinces are facing, and the more that we can do together to help those who are in need, that is the—that will be—the benefit of Manitobans.

\* (14:20)

Thank you.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Just like Brian Pallister, the Stefanson government keeps delaying much-needed action to help those suffering with addictions.

But not only are they delaying action, they continue to refuse to publish the data on this crisis. Provincially, we are the only province that does not do this. It's embarrassing, to say the least, when you open up that and look at all of the other provinces showing the data and making informed decisions through that data.

So I ask the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) today: Will she allow Bill 217 to go through and report and be transparent to all Manitobans on how many deaths are happening here in our province and what are they overdosing on?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** It's unfortunate we didn't get a chance to sit down and talk before the bill did come forward. But, again, I'm happy to hear more details about the bill that the member has brought forward and discuss different options we have moving forward to help those who are suffering with addictions issues and certainly to enhance our mental health system to support them better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### **Financial Aid for Ukraine Matching Provincial Program**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** Ukraine is under a vicious attack. Unfortunately, the Stefanson government commitment to the people of Ukraine is insufficient. Their financial contribution thus far represents less than \$1 from every Manitoba of Ukrainian descent. That's nowhere near enough. Government must match the resolve of Manitobans.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) create a matching program where cash donations from the

people of Manitoba are matched by contributions from this provincial government?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Our government is pleased to be taking this step to provide immediate support to Ukrainians who are suffering right now through our donation—that was made public almost a week and a half ago—of \$150,000. The member is mistaken, though, if he believes that this will be the only act of support this government is making.

Our Premier has been clear: we are concerned; we are responding; we will continue to respond.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a supplementary question.

#### **Provincial Immigration Applications Fee Waiver for Ukrainian Refugees**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** You know, it's sad, Madam Speaker, that this government always has to be shamed into doing the right thing. So I look forward to their announcement shortly about what other help they're going to give.

There is—1 million Ukrainians have already fled to other countries. This is going to be the worst refugee crisis in the 21st century. Stefanson government must do everything in its power to help those fleeing devastation.

We're calling on them to fast-track their immigration processes, and that means greatly expanding the number of people processing provincial immigration applications. It means waiving fees for prospective nominees.

Will they do this today?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, the NDP—the spend-and-tax party; government for 17 years—when they were in government had thousands of applications—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Reyes:** —backlogged when they ran the Manitoba Provincial Nominee program, which, I may add, is a program that a PC government created.

Madam Speaker, we are having proactive talks with the federal government and we'll make sure that we're working with them to ensure that we expedite those Ukrainians that are in need to Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a final supplementary.

#### **Conflict in Ukraine Request for All-Party Committee**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** Madam Speaker, people are dying by the thousands, and the best this government can do is take a cheap political shot at this party, right?

Manitoba has the largest Ukrainian community outside of Europe. We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** —and the Ukrainian community here in Manitoba.

I really wish they would take this seriously, the members of this Chamber would speak with one voice in unanimous support. That means we need an all-party committee. Let's put aside these petty partisan differences and work together and call an all-party 'commillee'.

Will the Premier commit to that today?  
*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, here we go again. The same old NDP spend-and-tax party—so called champion for immigrants. All they do is talk, talk, talk and no action.

Well, what is action? Action is a record number of provincial nominee applications processed last year, in spite of a pandemic: just under 6,300 applications. I'm proud of our civil servants with these record numbers.

Action is reducing processing times. Under the NDP, they had to wait three years. For us? Six months or less. That's action. So, Madam Speaker, we're going to continue to be proactive. You might as well call them the NAP, the no-action party.

#### **Changes to Public Health Orders Vaccination Requirement Concerns**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** On health care: two years ago this week, there was not yet a single case of COVID in Manitoba, and Manitoba Liberals

called on the PCs to show they had a plan. They did not.

After the first wave in June 2020, the PCs basically declared the pandemic over, even though week after week people warned them to prepare.

Every wave since then in Manitoba has been a disaster. The second, third and fourth waves were all worse than the worst-case scenarios. And last spring, with—the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), who was Health minister at the time, said the ICU capacity was no problem, and a week later, we started shipping 57 people out of the province.

Now, 50 per cent of Manitobans don't have a third booster. We know from Omicron that vaccines fade. Cancelling vaccines in health-care and long-term care facilities puts vulnerable people at risk.

Where is the modelling and evidence to back up these decisions? What if this government is wrong again?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for St. Boniface for giving me the opportunity to stand in the House today and congratulate our Vaccine Implementation Task Force, led by the very capable Dr. Joss Reimer, for all the work that has been done over the past four waves.

And today, I'm so pleased to rise in the House to announce that total doses administered to date: 2,838,901. And I thank all Manitobans that rolled up their sleeves, not twice, but three times to get the vaccines to protect themselves, their family members and all Manitobans.

Let's focus on the positives. Let's continue to give Manitobans—

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

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

#### **Health-Care System Use of Agency Nurses**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Under this government, nurses are being driven out of our public health-care system. Their wages were frozen, they were treated with contempt and forced to work 20-hour shifts.

Nurses are the key to health-care recovery. Doctors Manitoba says dealing with the nursing shortage is the—at the top of the list to address the surgical

backlog, and rural ERs had to be closed because of missing nurses. Many have gone to work for agencies. I table documents showing that from July 2021 to January 2022, Interlake RHA alone—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** —spent \$4.79 million on agency nurses.

Agency benefits aren't as good. They cost the Province more to cover private profits. But nurses who work for agencies can't be mandated to work overtime. They still have a say in their own lives. This isn't about money; it's about respect.

Will this government settle the many outstanding—

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

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I just want to say that, while the member continues to approve post—despicable posts regarding red dresses and fundraisers for his party, we will continue to build and monitor our ICU capacity. We'll continue to recruit and train nurses. And we'll continue to make improvements to patient flow, and ensure services are there for all Manitobans.

#### **Cataract Surgery Backlog Request to Address Wait-Time**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, close to 10,000 Manitobans are waiting for cataract surgery. Delays means the cataract gets denser and harder to operate on, and the affected person, usually a senior, is more likely to have a fall, which can be life-limiting, as indeed it was for my mother.

Why is there not yet a plan or a timeline to address the current average 37-week wait at Misericordia Health Centre? Why is the centre still not operating at full capacity? Was it—why was there not even an ophthalmologist on the task force when eye surgeries are so important and delays such a problem?

\* (14:30)

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, after riding out the fourth wave, the second most important issue for our government is the diagnostic and surgical recovery backlog.

That is why our government committed \$50 million in the budget to tackle the backlog. That is why we established a Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force, and that's why tomorrow at the

update, Manitobans will hear about the great work that is being done by the task force.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Foot-care Services

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition was signed by Monica Duncan, Ivan Agecoutay, Jeff Tait and many other Manitobans.

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

### Abortion Services

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to detrimental outcomes and consequences for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion services for individuals regardless of where they reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to detrimental outcomes and consequences for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion services for individuals, regardless of where they reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

This is signed by many Manitobans.

### **Cochlear Implant Program**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

There are no upfront costs to Manitoba residents who proceed with cochlear implant surgery, as Manitoba Health covers the surgical procedure—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —internal implant and the first external sound processor. Newfoundland and Manitoba have the highest estimated implantation costs of all provinces.

Alberta has one of the best programs with the Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts

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

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

\* (14:40)

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Bridie Ritchie, Don Smutko, Judy Smutko and many other Manitobans.

### Quality Health-Care Access

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or urine sample.

(4) Further travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing with the

attendant affects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patients outcomes.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further petitions?

### Health-Care Coverage

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care: migrant workers with work permits less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

(2) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(3) Without adequate health-care coverage, if they are ill, many of the uninsured will avoid seeking health care due to fear of being charged for the care, and some will fear possible detention and deportation if their immigration status is reported to the authorities.

(4) According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care to undocumented irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(5) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

(6) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba, regardless of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependant children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to inform all health-care institutions and providers of expanded coverage for those without health insurance and the details on how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

(4) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to create and enforce strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with training to protect the safety of residents with precarious immigration status and ensure that they can access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

### **Eating Disorders Awareness Week**

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

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

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

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

The development and treatment of eating disorders are influenced by the social determinants of health, including food and income security, access to housing, health care and mental health supports.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Kara Zerbin, Adam Taplin, Lori Mott and many other Manitobans.

### **Road Closures**

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba Infrastructure has undertaken the closure of all farm-access roads along the North Perimeter Highway, forcing rural residents to drive up to six miles out of their way to leave or return to their property.

(2) The provincial government's own consultations showed that closing the access of some of these roads, including Sturgeon Road, was an emerging concern to residents and business owners, yet the North Perimeter plan does nothing to address this issue.

(3) Residents and business owners were assured that their concerns about access closures, including safety issues cited by engineers, would be taken into account and that access to Sturgeon Road, at least, would be maintained. However, weeks later, the median was nonetheless torn up, leaving local residents and businesses scrambling.

(4) Closing all access to the Perimeter puts more people in danger, as it emboldens speeders and forces farmers to take large equipment into heavy traffic, putting road users at risk.

\* (14:50)

(5) Local traffic, commuter traffic, school buses, emergency vehicles and commercial traffic, including 200 gravel trucks per day from the Lilyfield Quarry, will all be expected to merge and travel out of their way in order to cross the Perimeter, causing increased traffic and longer response times to emergencies.

(6) Small businesses located along the Perimeter and Sturgeon Road are expecting to lose business as customers will give up on finding a way into their premises.

(7) Residents, business owners and those who use these roads have been left behind by the provincial government's refusal to listen to their concerns that closures will only result in worsened safety and major inconveniences for users of the North Perimeter.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to leave residents access to the Perimeter Highway at least every two miles along its length, especially at intersections such as Sturgeon Road, which are vital to local businesses; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to listen to the needs and the opinions of the local residents and business owners who took the time to complete the Perimeter survey–safety survey while working with engineers and the technicians to ensure their concerns are addressed.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Any further petitions? If not, grievances?

If there are no grievances, we will move to orders of the day, government business.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Could you please call for second reading this afternoon, Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act; Bill 5, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act; Bill 7, The Police Services Amendment Act; and Bill 10, An Act respecting Amendments to The Health Services Insurance Act, The Pharmaceutical Act and Various Corporate Statutes.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider the following bills this afternoon: second readings of Bill 4 and 5, followed by debate on second reading of Bill 7, followed by second reading of Bill 10.

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 4—The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act

**Madam Speaker:** I will now call second reading of Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act.

**Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** The Path to Reconciliation Act was unanimously passed in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly in 2016. Currently, the act sets out the government's commitment to advancing reconciliation guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The act defines reconciliation as the ongoing process of establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in order to build trust, affirm historical agreements, address healing and create a more equitable and inclusive society. The definition was developed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and has since been adopted by the government of Manitoba.

Under the act, the minister of Indigenous and northern relations is assigned responsibility for reconciliation and must guide the development of a provincial reconciliation strategy that builds on meaningful engagement with Indigenous nations and Indigenous peoples, ensures that survivors of a residential school have a role to play and fosters the involvement of all sectors of society in the reconciliation process.

Madam Speaker, during my visits to the Indigenous people of Manitoba, I have listened, and there's a lot of suffering and pain that has occurred over missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, 2-LGBTQQIA+ peoples.

Almost every day, we hear of individuals who are reported as missing, and you don't need to go far in Manitoba to find somebody who has a story.

Madam Speaker, I think back to November 13th, 1971. The body of a 19-year-old Cree woman from Norway House was found brutally murdered at the pump house at Clearwater Lake. I remember my mother immediately putting us into lockdown. She wanted to know where I was, where my sisters were, 24-7. And that continued for years.

This November, I was joined by our Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, Grand Chief Settee and Grand Chief Dumas at the 50th healing and memorial ceremony held in the The Pas for Helen Betty Osborne.

Madam Speaker, that is why, on November 26, 2021, our government introduced amendments to The Path to Reconciliation Act that would establish the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, MMIWG, as a key component of the government's approach to advancing truth and reconciliation.

It is necessary that Manitoba acknowledges the Calls for Justice within The Path to Reconciliation Act to ensure all government departments understand the importance of addressing the systemic causes of all forms of violence, including sexual violence, against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples and are prepared to take the action needed to address the calls to justice.

We recognize that there is lots of work that remains to end violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. All Manitobans must play a role in addressing these harms. Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people are disproportionately affected by gender-

based violence, and it's the government's priority that everyone has the right to safety and the right to live free from violence.

Madam Speaker, this legislative amendment affirms that the Manitoba government will be guided by the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into MMIWG alongside the calls for action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Madam Speaker, on February 1st of this year, I had the honour of attending the Northern Manitoba Engagement on the 231 Calls for Justice. This meeting was broken into three sessions and we all got to participate in every session.

The sessions were very engaging. They included survivors, family and facilitators. It was broken into three areas. We discussed intervention. We discussed support. We discussed prevention.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to working together to keep women, girls, 2-S-L-I-G-B-T-Q-Q-I-A+ people safe and to support families and survivors who have been impacted by these tragedies. I would like to acknowledge and honour the women, girls, families and Indigenous communities who have shared their personal tragedies and grief as part of the national inquiry.

Madam Speaker, we honour their pain and commitment to continue working together to meaningfully address the Calls for Justice. We are committed to honouring the memories of those who have lost, and I offer my deep respect to the Indigenous women and girls, men and boys and two-spirited peoples who have taken—who have been taken from us far too soon.

Madam Speaker, everyone has the right to safety and everyone has the right to live free from violence. We acknowledge that there has been great pain. We are listening to Indigenous peoples. We have heard from Indigenous peoples, and we continue to listen and hear them.

We are taking steps in reconciliation. We know this is not the end. It is just the beginning of the ongoing work that needs to be done for reconciliation. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

\* (15:00)

I will now cede the floor to other members. I understand there are a lot of people who want to speak in support of Bill 4.

Thank you, miigwech.

### Questions

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

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** The MMIWG report was released in June 2019. Why is this action only being taken now?

**Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations):** The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is a national tragedy, particularly here in Manitoba, and I thought it was appropriate that our government take the actions needed to bring this—these 231 Calls to Action in line with our Path to Reconciliation Act.

*Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

**Mr. Bushie:** Again, the PC government has been in place now since 2016. The MMIWG report was released in June 2019, but yet, why is this the only update and change made to The Path to Reconciliation Act since 2016?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** We all have a shared responsibility and accountability for ending all forms of violence, and every day that we wait for action, Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals go missing or experience violence. The political and social will is imperative for success of an action plan to address the calls to justice.

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I'd ask the minister, will the government restore funding to the family liaison worker that was in this—that was brought through the government?

I, myself, as an MMIWG family member, worked collaboratively with that person who was appointed by the government. They supported me not only through my healing but through advocacy and the work that I was doing in the community, but also when I would go meet with police to get updates. It's very important for families to make sure that they have those supports, and since your government has—came to office in 2016, that position has been

eliminated. So I'd like to ask if that position would be reinstated and if families could get that support—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** As a government, we think it's important to engage with all of our Indigenous leaders and with all of the groups that support the MMIWG and the 2-S-L-I-G-B-T community, and with regards to that, we will continue to work with them and continue to support them in their efforts.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I know the minister's aware of the Clan Mothers Healing Village and its importance to the MMIWG2S community. Will the Province commit to providing operational funding to this crucial community support?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** I thank the member for that question, and I don't know if she's aware, but our government has provided funding to Clan Mothers, a grassroots Indigenous women's-led organization, to support the construction of a healing village that will provide supports for women who have been victims of multi-generational trauma, sexual violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

**Mr. Bushie:** Does the minister have a timetable for when this action is to be addressed for the recommendations to MMIWG inquiry?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** I thank the member for the question, and I think the most important thing we can do right now is add the 231 Calls for Justice to The Path to Reconciliation Act to ensure that government can now develop a plan for dealing with the 231 Calls for Justice as well as the path to reconciliation.

**Mr. Bushie:** So, again, I'll ask the question: What is the timetable, besides just talking about it or adding it to the bill? What is the actual timetable for action to address the recommendations in the MMIWG inquiry?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** So we are working on getting the amendment to The Path to Reconciliation Act put forward. We have worked with the Department of Families, and we have provided \$130,000 to the Ma Mawi organization for them to work on a plan to support the co-development of the plan that we need to have a pilot project here in Manitoba and raise awareness and end violence here against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQ individuals in Manitoba.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

**Mrs. Smith:** There's another position that's sitting vacant—and I think the funding actually was cut by this government—which was a family liaison info worker. And, again, this worker worked directly with police, with RCMP, with Project Devote and worked directly with families as well to help them get updates on their cases but also attended different meetings in the community to support events, and it was a very—a crucial position in terms of government representation and the link to families.

Right now, there's no government support, and I can speak from, you know, family members, because I've received zero support since your government's taken office—2016. So will—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** We will continue to work with leadership, with survivors, with family and individuals from the community, and we will follow the recommendations when we receive them from the Ma Mawi organization as to how we can proceed with addressing the 231 Calls for Justice.

**Mr. Bushie:** The minister had mentioned \$130,000 to Ma Mawi. I was wondering what other government—or what other government support and what other organizations will also benefit from a financial injection to help with this.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** As I said earlier, that we are supporting the Clan Mothers in the construction of the Healing Village in Manitoba here. We have also provided funding for Manitoba Moon Voices and Two-Spirited People of Manitoba. We have provided funding to the Soles on Fire. We have providing—we have provided funding to the Gaynor family library, the Sacred Spirits of Turtle Island mural, and we have provided funding to the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak memorial walk and candlelight vigil. That's just to name a few.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister tell us what actual supports are going to families who have someone missing that is waiting for answers, that is—that needs desperate help from this government? He talked about Soles on Fire, which is an important, you know, run that brings awareness. Manitoba Moon Voices also does some great work in supporting.

\* (15:10)

But I want to know exactly what this government is doing to prevent the violence that's happening against Indigenous women in this province and what

supports are being given to the families who are left wondering what's—where their loved one is.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** The member opposite is not the only one who has received those calls in the middle of the night that say, do you know where so-and-so is? I've received those calls. To this day, there's still people in my family missing. RCMP investigations have turned up nothing.

I remember my uncle taking time away from work so he could try and find out where these lost individuals were, to no avail.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Bushie:** I thank the minister for sharing those comments.

The budget for consultation reconciliation was underspent by 23 per cent last year. We're just wondering, why is that the case and why aren't this government's actions matching its statements.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** Last year was a very trying year for us to engage with a lot of individuals due to the COVID, and when we reached out to a lot of Indigenous communities to try and take advantage of even Teams meetings or Zoom meetings, we found that they were very busy with addressing outbreaks in communities. They were very busy trying to co-ordinate vaccine rollouts and supports for their communities.

So we have been actively engaged again. We have been in communication regularly and we're working on plans to move forward quickly.

**Mr. Bushie:** The minister talked about actively engage in communication. Can he share with us those organizations, please?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** I think the first group that I contacted were the grand chiefs: Grand Chief Dumas, Grand Chief Settee, Grand Chief Daniels and asked them how we could proceed in a collaborative fashion to address issues and concerns with MMIWG.

Certainly, Grand Chief Settee shared a lot of data with me about the seriousness of MMIWG in northern communities and the disproportionate number of individuals from the North that would—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Bushie:** Out of the funds that were put forward to search the graves for—of Indian and residential

schools, can the minister tell us how much that fund was and how much has actually been spent?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** I assume the member is talking about the \$2.5 million that the Manitoba government committed to support the search for potential graves here in the province of Manitoba.

We are still in discussion with the Indigenous leaders and—as to just how the money can best be allocated and to which area the money would be allocated to get the best benefit, and we continue to support them in their efforts to do the searches in these—I think there's 14 individual areas that they're looking at searching.

**Mr. Bushie:** So if I'm hearing right, the commitment was \$2.5 million, and to this day, then, zero has been spent? Is that accurate?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** The member is correct; the money has been allocated. We continue to work with the Indigenous leaders to—the Indigenous leaders, the survivors, their families, to come up with a plan that they feel will maximize the effectiveness and the best use of the funds that are available.

**Mr. Bushie:** And we all know that those searches are already proceeding today and they're—were proceeding without any support from this government.

I'm just wondering, how will this bill now change your government's approach to Indigenous relations?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** The political and social will is imperative for the success of any action plan to address the Calls for Justice, and the action plan needs to be—it has been described in the past it needs to be ever-green and that it is continually evolving, continually changing and adapting to the changes when needed, and that's what we will be committed to.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Time for questions has ended.

### Debate

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The floor is now open for debate.

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me a chance to put a few words on the record.

Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act, and let's be clear, it's two paragraphs long. So, since 2016, when the PC government took office, this is really the only major—and they'll call it a major change to The Path to Reconciliation Act. And while it's a big step to recognize the report of the MMIWG,

it is something that's—they're going to continuously call it a start.

But we're here now, five years later, still talking about being at the starting gate on this path to reconciliation, which is just absolutely unacceptable. We shouldn't have to wait until there's an inquiry done on Indigenous peoples. We shouldn't have to wait until there's a protest or a demonstration or a rally before we start talking about the path to reconciliation. We shouldn't have to wait until we discover mass graves, and there weren't a discovery; our people always knew that they were there. So it wasn't a secret, according to our people, but it was a secret, from the schools, from the church and from the government.

So when we get into the reconciliation talk and talking about the path to reconciliation, the TRC calls to action, the UNDRIP, the MMIWG, those are all reports that are designed as a—almost like a reactionary, and it's causing a reaction from the government, and there's no proactive effort to do that.

So, even to implement the MMIWG report into now The Path to Reconciliation Act, again, is reactive. It's not a proactive approach on behalf of this government. It is something that they have that obligation to do. And that report is out there, and, again, those are not secrets to Indigenous people. Those are things that we've known, our mothers, our grandmothers have known for a long, long time, but, again, a reactionary approach from this government.

So when I go back and I look at the path to reconciliation that was passed years ago, I look at the word and I see the word recognizing—and it's in there a number of times: further recognizing, further recognizing—further recognizing that the Government of Canada also has a significant role in advancing reconciliation.

But the Province of Manitoba also has a significant role in passing and advancing reconciliation. And I almost want to say, especially in Manitoba, with the large Indigenous representation that we have, that it's even more so an obligation on the Province of Manitoba to be able to do that.

But we know, under this government, and under Brian Pallister, who still has those remnants there, who Brian Pallister appointed the minister of Indigenous relations and reconciliation. We know what his views were, we know what his thoughts were towards Indigenous people and he continuously spewed that rhetoric and those racist comments

towards Indigenous people, which was very unfortunate.

\* (15:20)

And I want to be very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when Brian Pallister stood in that seat across the way, or he stood out in the halls, or he stood out on the steps, or he stood in front of the media, that he had the backing of that entire PC caucus.

I heard the applause. I heard the jeers and the cheers on that side when it came time to him looking for a pat on the back, when it came time to him talking down to Indigenous people here in Manitoba. When it came time to him deflecting away from the real issues that arose, the systemic racism that exists within this government. And that systemic racism exists in all levels of government here in Manitoba.

And systemic racism is not just a matter of the Indigenous Reconciliation Department of the government. It's in Conservation, it's in Justice, it's in Education. That's a true system. And it's not a matter of just plugging Indigenous faces into those same roles. That entire hierarchy has to change and that way of thinking has to change.

And while the PCs look at Bill 4 as a step towards that and a start, it's shameful that you even use the word start when you talk about this—considering you've been sitting across that way, in government—for now going on six years. That's shameful to think that now we're going to start this.

And I understand that the minister is new to his role over the last few months and it didn't come off on a great start when he referred to the residential schools as trying to do the right thing. That just shows the uneducated part of PC caucus on Indigenous issues.

And again, Bill 4, while it has the intentions and the start—and again, there's that word start—this should've been—this Bill 4 should've been a priority from day one of that government if you truly believed in reconciliation for Indigenous people.

But what is this coming from? Is this coming from the toppling of the statues out front? Is this coming from the discoveries of the mass graves? Is it coming from the MMIWG report?

Again, all reactionary. There's nothing proactive to do that. If this was proactive, this should be an encyclopedia thick, and it's not. It's a two-paragraph—I don't want to say two-page document, it's a two-paragraph document to be able to address an issue that's so vast here in our province. And it's unfortunate

that the government doesn't acknowledge and recognize the importance of what that is.

We talk about being able to be at a start—and this government always has that word, we're going to start doing this, we're going to start doing that. Well, again, years and years have gone by, so is this now a campaign effort now, now being in campaign and election mode to be able to say, we're going to do things for Indigenous people. Now we are because we need your vote. Now we are because we didn't realize exactly how much you're representative here in Manitoba. But that rally outside showed us, and it showed the entire province of Manitoba, exactly how strong the Indigenous voice is here in Manitoba.

So when I look and I read initial Path to Reconciliations Act and the intent of what that was going to do, it talks about recognizing and acknowledging and recognizing. And again, more words just like the word start: recognizing and acknowledging. That's all this government has been doing. There's no commitment to be able to do that.

In the question part of this debate, I asked a question about exactly what was being committed for the search for residential school gravesites and, again, the commitment of \$2.5 million. But the actual expenditure to be able to do that is zero.

Let's be clear, all of—Manitobans need to know that this government has made that announcement, has made that commitment and has spent nothing—nothing at all. When the people of Long Plain and Sagkeeng have already begun those searches—Sioux Valley—they've already begun those searches. They can't wait for this government to make that—I don't want to call it a commitment—to make that actual step. They're going to be waiting forever because that's simply not going to happen under this government, and it's going to come that this big grandioso announcement to say we're going to do this as a 'reactiony'—as a reaction approach to be able to say we're doing something.

But the reality is there is nothing being done. There is nothing being invested in this department and we've had a number of issues that—raised that show there's going to be nothing done in this department.

We've had the government on the other side now change the premier. Brian Pallister is out the door, or so they say, because he's still there. *[interjection]* Even the jeers as I speak to this shows that exactly his rhetoric is still inside all of you. It's clearly still inside

all of you, to be able to jeer and heckle when we're talking about these kind of things. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

Just a reminder to all members, particularly those speaking, to address comments through the Chair, not directly to other members.

**An Honourable Member:** So, again, the so-called change that's arising from this government, the shuffling of Cabinet—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I don't know that Hansard has turned your—turned the mic on of the member who is speaking. I did not recognize the member. That was my error.

So, I recognize the honourable member for Keewatinook.

**Mr. Bushie:** And, again, we talk about the change that this government wanted to do and kind of put a new face and to get themselves and separate themselves from the rhetoric of Brian Pallister. So they did the Cabinet shuffle on that side of the Chamber, but did they shuffle everybody? Absolutely not. They did not shuffle or make any changes to the Department of Indigenous Reconciliation and that tells me that they think what they're doing is good enough, and that's absolutely not true.

There's been a number of changes on that side, but at the same time, that department stays the same. And it did take—and I will throw out credit where credit is due, and I do credit the member from Agassiz for speaking up to Brian Pallister—one voice to be able to deal with that, and we all know what that effect had.

So you can still all do the right thing. You can still collectively join that voice and that voice joins with ours, to be able to say we are going to truly do what's right by Indigenous people here in Manitoba. Let's make these changes to the act. Let's make some positive changes, not just ones to put our words on the record to say, oh, I've created this bill, I've done something towards Indigenous reconciliation. Again, that is the bare minimum that you could do; the absolute bare minimum that you could do.

There is no financial commitments behind this. There's no timetables behind this. And those are simple questions to ask. When do you expect to see some deliverables out of your actions? You ask that at all your departments whenever somebody puts a proposal in front of you. You consistently ask, what's the deliverables, what's the timeline, when are are going to see results.

So is it not fair for Indigenous Manitobans to ask you that same thing? To ask: where's the results; where's the deliverables; where's the timetables; when do you expect to see something actually moving; when do you expect to see that change that we're all talking about. Because right now, it's non-existent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

While Bill 4 addresses an issue, it addresses an issue that was brought forth by Indigenous people. It was not something driven by the government. It was not something implemented on behalf of the government just because they knew it was the right thing to do. It was a reactionary approach to an inquiry that was made.

And again, that emergency, as the government may call it, was something that our people and Indigenous women, girls and grandmothers and mothers knew; they absolutely knew what was happening, and it's still happening to this day and we on this side of the Chamber will always have that voice and represent that voice.

So I ask members opposite to do that same thing: to speak for those that can't speak for themselves; to sit there and work collaboratively. We talk about all-party committees and all-party issues and non-partisan issues. Why is this a partisan issue here in Manitoba? Is it simply because Indigenous representation in this Chamber is not what it should be to clearly represent the population of Manitoba? Or because on that side of the Chamber those voices don't matter?

\* (15:30)

We've all heard stories. We've all heard from elders. And I know the ministers, the current minister and the former minister of Indigenous reconciliation, has heard those voices, has heard those stories. I've heard the current minister and the former minister speak in this Chamber, speak publicly, about hearing and listening to families of M-M-M-I'm-MMIWG victims, and the impacts that that has across Manitoba.

So how can you not do more? How can you only do the bare minimum? How can you do nothing but make announcements and recommendations and recognitions without following that up with concrete actions? To concrete commitments; to actually make that change, to make that difference.

Instead, we have Bill 4 brought forward, which is, at the very least, a bare minimum requirement of what's asked of you. And is that, now, the new direction under the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)?

The bare minimum? Because we know under the old premier there wasn't even the bare minimum. In fact, it went absolutely against that.

So, Manitobans in general—Indigenous and non-Indigenous Manitobans—also stood outside here, also came to rallies, came to demonstrations, came to protests. And, also, they're not even demonstrations and protests. I know we call them that, but they're Indigenous people wanting to bring awareness.

Members opposite—and I know some have and I know many others haven't been to First Nation communities, have never sat down with First Nation mothers and grandmothers to hear their stories, to hear their life, to actually realize and recognize the impacts that colonization has had here in Manitoba.

And it's very hurtful to be able to see this government call out some of those actions, and say what you're doing is not fair, what you're doing is not right, I can't believe it, that you're taking political shots at us. Including this government, when the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Fort Rouge, had performed his duty as the honorary member of the TRC in correcting the ministers and the PC caucus when they tweeted the political showmanship of storming into someone else's press conference to bully a minister who was sworn in only 10 minutes earlier does nothing to invest that reconciliation.

What did he do? He spoke up. He spoke up in his duty as an—witness to the TRC, to be able to say: I do not agree with those comments being made. Those comments being made now by a person in a political position to actually do something, to actually make a difference, to actually make those changes, to make those governmental changes that are necessary and needed and asked for.

So, the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Fort Rouge, was then called out to be a bully for speaking up. Is that accurate? No, it's not. Because you know why? Not too long after, that tweet was taken down. But, again, that's the knee-jerk reaction to be able to say, this is what we're going to do. So that's the knee-jerk reaction to the comments made, to the questions that are asked, to the emails that are sent, to the phone calls that are hung up on.

I asked them simple questions yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the Keeyask agreement and the First Nations in northern Manitoba that are partnerships to that, just asking about questions to get answers. And it was just kind of—those are happening, those are happening. Well, no, they're not happening.

They sign on to blank Zoom screens for these meetings that are taking place, and then being told that they're talked to, they're consulted with, and that's further from the truth than anything I've ever seen.

We talk about the UNDRIP legislation, the TRC Calls to Action, and what do we see from this government when it comes to doing that? Nothing.

What do we see when we have actual legislation brought forth—and it's being brought forth by this side of the Chamber, that actually has meaning to it, that actually has more than just recognition?

And I understand on this side of the Chamber we can't bring bills that advocate for funds and advocate for dollars, but we all—we bring forth bills that advocate for reconciliation that steps and takes steps towards that truth and that true reconciliation for Indigenous people here in Manitoba.

This past session, I brought forth The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act, and it was talked out. Yet we talk about being able to do that. And it wasn't about—instead, members opposite took it off like it was going to be implemented to be a holiday. Those kind of things are not meant to be a holiday; it's meant to engage that discussion, engage that communication with Indigenous people, engage our young people.

And it's not just Indigenous people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It comes down to educating all of society on what's been going on, what's been happening. And again, those are secrets that we know have always been there, they're not something we would call new, not something we would call a revelation all of a sudden or out of the blue.

When we debated a MUPI yesterday about the issues in Ukraine and the sovereign nation of Ukraine, and we talked about the importance of being able to acknowledge and deal with that. Things like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're calling the government, we're calling on the provincial, the federal government to be able to act.

But in all fairness, how can we can we truly expect our Manitoba government to act and our federal government to act when those same issues and those same oppressions have been happening to Indigenous people here in Manitoba and across Canada all the time?

So when we talk about being able to bring those kind of things forward and bring those issues forward, this government just sticks their head in the sand and hopes it all goes away, hopes somebody else will deal

with it. I believe it was the Infrastructure Minister yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who said, well, I hope this war in Ukraine goes—doesn't last more than a couple of months. Well, why can't it end today? Why isn't the wish to end those things today? Why isn't the wish to end and do concrete actions today? Why do we have to wait?

So when we talk about Bill 4 and The Path to Reconciliation Act, why can't those be done today? We know the issues. You all know the issues. You all have constituents—and maybe they're not even constituents, just public—all across Manitoba talking to you about the issues that need to be addressed, But where down that list of priorities do we get to the Indigenous part? Do we get to true Indigenous reconciliation?

Today, it was on the sheet with the same issue as dealing with Peak of the Market structure, does that show us the importance and where that priority is? If we ended debate on this today we're going to be discussing putting a polar bear on the coat of arms of Manitoba. Again, where's the priority and where's the commitment to be able to do that?

When we brought forth orange shirt reconciliation—orange shirt statutory holiday act, it was talked out by members opposite. Yet I truly believe that that in fact was going to be a non-partisan issue. But again, an issue that they hope will go away. That we hope we won't talk about again until September 29th, then they'll be scrambling around to make it a holiday. Well the feds are going to do this, the province will do this and then everybody just gets a big huff about it and nothing happens.

Let's have those discussions now. Let's pass that act now and then work now towards educating our schools, educating our people, educating ourselves on what true reconciliation could mean for Manitoba because we're not seeing it today. And we're seeing a lot of people that are trying, a lot of people that want to do it, a lot of people that are banging on the doors to say I want to help, but they're not getting any help.

Those doors are locked on that side. Those doors are not being opened. Those windows are not being opened. Those phone calls are not being answered—and for the most part, that's all Indigenous people ask for. Let's begin that communication. Let's have that dialogue.

\* (15:40)

So Bill 4, the changes that are being made—again, want to use the word start on that side of the Chamber. To me, that's not even the starting point yet. That's just

kind of a motion that's wont to be brought forward to say we're doing something, to say we're addressing this issue, we're addressing the Indigenous issue. And there's so much more to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than just being able to put a two-paragraph amendment to a current bill. There's so much more to that.

Let's sit there and truly engage Indigenous people, not just after an inquiry, not just after a piece of legislation or going to court. Because we're still having those issues today. And maybe it was because governments and governments previous and governments before have always thought Indigenous people will not speak for themselves, they will not get up and fight, they will not argue, they will just accept what is being told.

Well, that is absolutely not the case anymore, and we can see that. Indigenous peoples are far more educated, are professionals of doctors, lawyers, teachers. Every profession you could think of, there's now strong Indigenous people in those positions.

So when we get into having these discussions, those Indigenous people and our Indigenous people now have that educated collective voice. So what happens at that point? We fight. We fight in court now. CSA dollars that are being taken, again, before the court right now. Over \$300 million taken from Indigenous children, that was meant for Indigenous children.

I've mentioned it many, many times. I believe the goal of people that work in a child-welfare sector is to work themselves out of a job because those reunifications and those unifications and those family units have stayed strong.

But instead, we've now taken it upon ourselves in this government to be able to say, well, we're just going to take this money, take this money. We're going to take your money and fight you with your own money. And how is that reconciliation? How is that working together? It just simply isn't, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, again, Bill 4 does not do enough. And as previous legislation has been passed, it just simply doesn't do it. Another missed opportunity by this government to actually put a piece of legislation that could actually make some real change. While there is one implementation in this, there is still no definite. So when we talk about UNDRIP and the TRC calls to reconciliation, why aren't they mentioned in there exactly, then? Why aren't they mentioned by number?

Why aren't the Calls to Action mentioned by number to say, we're going to do this?

And I understand you have no intentions of putting a timeline on things. But you also have no intentions of even mentioning it, to say we're going to do this, to say we're going to do this, other than saying, we're going to recognize; we're going to acknowledge; we're going to work together. Well, what's that timeline look like?

We've asked for timelines many, many times, and perhaps the timeline is to stall, to stall until now, that issue of the day will go away. Because we've had many issues of the day, as people would call them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The discovery of graves at the graves in Kamloops became an issue of the day. And then it got to be days, and then it got to be weeks. And this government did nothing—did absolutely nothing—in hopes that that issue of the day would now become a day where it wasn't an issue for them.

And sure, that issue—every single day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every day, for I don't even know how long—was the first thing everybody talked about, was the first thing on everybody's mind. And then, one day, it was the second. Then the third. Then the fourth. Then, all of a sudden, the only people talking about it now are Indigenous people, again, banging on that door to say, what are we doing? What is this government going to do?

So, I've heard it today. I've heard the government say, we're committing 2 and a half million dollars. But when asked, okay, that's fine, but what's been spent? Zero. Not a penny has been spent so far. Again, pawing that off to say we're working, we're recognizing, we're going to work with all levels. There's organizations, communities, elders, victims, victims' families that are up there saying, we're ready to work now. Let's do this action today. Let's not talk about it anymore. Let's just not be something that's talked about. Let's not wait until there's another major issue of the day.

And since the Kamloops discovery, there's been other discoveries, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, again, not a peep from the members opposite, not a mention of it from the government to say, oh, by the way, we're doing something here. Instead, just a 2 and a half million dollar announcement. Well, that's fine—I can write 2 and a half million dollars on a piece of paper, too, and give it to you and that's as far as it goes. It doesn't go anywhere. Nobody spent a dime. Nobody gave closure to any families; none at all.

I think to a little screenshot that I seen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when all this was going on and it was just simply a little voice said, they found us. So that's what we asked for. We asked for Bill 4—any amendments to The Path to Reconciliation Act to actually have bite to it, have merit to it, have actions to it; not just one or two paragraphs of saying we're going to commit or we promise to, we're going to recognize. Let's have action.

The TRC Calls to Action—action is the word that we need from this government—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** It's my pleasure to rise in the House, as always, and put a few comments on the record, obviously in support of Bill 4.

Bill 4, which amends The Path to Reconciliation Act, we need to look, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this act as a living act; something that needs to be reviewed, acknowledged and reacted to on a regular basis through discussion with Indigenous leadership, with Métis leadership and with Inuit leadership.

I've heard a lot of comments this morning. I strongly believe that—in the encouragement in the House that there is support for this amendment, that it is necessary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think that much is clear.

We've heard some comments made in reference to the war in Ukraine and I think, actually, the timing of this debate today is actually very relevant. Oftentimes, we see women and girls being weaponized at the front lines of military actions, whether they be overt military actions—as we're seeing in the case of Russia and Ukraine—or whether it's more subtle military actions that you saw here in Manitoba and Canada through the forced removal and colonization of our country.

But that being said, as I've noted, women and girls often found themselves at the front line and weaponized as part of the—any kind of conflict and no different in the situation when it comes to murdered and missing Indigenous girls and women. The statistics are very, very clear. I think it's incumbent upon all of us as legislators and as Manitobans to be aware that Indigenous women make up approximately 4 per cent of the population. But during that time period from 1980 to about 2010 they actually made up about 16 per cent of missing women—four times the rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, if that doesn't send a chill through all of our collective spines, I am not sure what will because in a great many instances it comes down to power or place, and in a lot of cases institutions don't want to recognize a woman's power or place within an institution.

And it is so—it is my hope that by ensuring and putting references to the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls into the legislation, we can ensure that these errors are not followed up, that we can ensure that that voice of women and Indigenous girls, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is heard when they talk about the need and the right to culture, the right to health and wellness, the right to human security and the right to justice. Because these are all rights that all Canadians and, indeed, all individuals deserve.

\* (15:50)

But as we talk about reconciliation, what has always struck me as I read the TRC report and other literature, is the point that reconciliation is really an issue of self-determination. It is not incumbent upon me to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or any of my colleagues what reconciliation looks like to them.

Instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's important that we encourage people to have that voice. We need to work together as legislators to make sure that the multi-generation and intergenerational impacts that we have seen resulting from the TRC report is accounted for and is acted upon collectively from a legislative point of view.

Our government and, indeed, our society, we continue to see, on an ongoing basis, the legacy left over from residential schools. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've heard my colleagues across the way make reference to it as well as recent discoveries. In fact, just the other day, 169 potential unmarked graves were found by a First Nations band just approximately 200 kilometers northwest of Edmonton.

Now, again, for any of our colleagues that have actually read the TRC report, you would see in section 70, it makes specific reference to historical knowledge of unmarked graves, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the need to work with Indigenous leadership on locating these graves and, more importantly, returning these individuals to their family so that they might find that collective closure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation is something, as I indicated, that I strongly believe that we could all support. The issue of murdered and missing

Indigenous women and girls is a stain on our collective soul. Anything that we can do to highlight their stories, to share their information, not just so that we as a society, as we as Manitobans can learn from that, but that we could share it beyond our own borders.

We've had a lot of discussion, as I alluded to earlier, about the situation, the unparalleled acts of aggression that we're seeing in Ukraine by the Russian forces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there is no doubt that women and girls are disproportionately being affected as civilians in these conflicts. And reconciliation—we had some discussion about when the war will be over, and I agree, it would be great if the war ended today, but at every point—or at any point when this war, conflict, ends in Eastern Europe, reconciliation is going to be necessary.

So, it is through—it is my hope that, through the passage of this legislation and through not just the passage of this legislation, but the actual use and utilization of this legislation, that we can show countries around the world how to address the issue of reconciliation in a meaningful, long-term manner, because it will no doubt be necessary.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt that there's a number of colleagues that wish to share some comments on Bill 4, so I will just simply end with a—by sharing a comment by Marlene Jack. She was the sister of Doreen Jack, who was missing in 1989. And of the missing, she says, and I quote: I just want to bring them home, find them and bring them home where they belong. End quote.

I do believe, as legislators, that's what we all want. That's what we should all do. And whether that is achieved through this act or whether it is achieved through subsequent amendments, it is incumbent upon all of us to support Indigenous women and support the efforts to reclaim those lost lives.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I'm pleased to get up this afternoon in the House to put a couple of words on the record in respect to Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act.

Deputy Speaker, the bill the—amends The Path to Reconciliation Act, which folks in the Chamber will know is a bill that the NDP brought forward in respect of our commitment, as the NDP, to reconciliation, understanding that the quintessential way to move forward as a province, as a myriad of different peoples, is to commit and dedicate ourselves to reconciliation. And I would suggest to the House that

certainly, if the last year has not taught us anything on the importance of reconciliation with the discoveries of unmarked graves across our territories—even just last week—if that has not taught us anything, it is that we should be even more committed and more diligent to upholding the spirit and intent of reconciliation here across our territories in Manitoba, but not only here in Manitoba, certainly across the country, coast to coast to coast.

So while I'm pleased that the minister has brought an amendment which would include references to the national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit, it's not enough, Deputy Speaker, just to amend a bill and not have actions that are attached to those amendments.

I want to thank my colleague for his comments that he just put on the record. And he spoke about, you know, it's—he—I am reiterating what my colleague said, that it's not enough just to make these changes or it's not enough just to say, you know, to express breath and say that we support reconciliation when there's actually not a co-ordinated, comprehensive, strategic action plan across Manitoba in how to realize reconciliation here in Manitoba, and, you know, a good—I guess a good starting point would be in respect of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

And I've touched base with several MMIWG2S families in the last 24 hours in preparation for today because, of course, we knew that Bill 4 was coming up for debate. And I wanted to double-check with family members to see if there's been any action by this government.

And I'll remind the House that prior to 2016, the NDP government had one of the first provincial strategies on MMIWG2S across the country. And that strategy was developed in November of 2010. And before that, the NDP government had committed to establishing a special adviser on Indigenous women and girls and specifically to look at MMIWG2S. And so I was appointed in November 2010, but there were actually two other previous special advisers before that. And so, you know, MMIWG2S had been a priority of the NDP government.

And again, you know, the appointment of special advisers was also the first of its kind across the country. And even prior to that, even prior to the appointment of a special adviser on Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit, a variety of different departments within the NDP government had undertaken a different environmental scan of many of the different

issues that affect Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited.

\* (16:00)

And so I'll share with the House today that most notably was the consultations that took place in 2008, I believe, under the—under my predecessor, who at the time was the Justice Minister, I believe, or the CFS minister but I'm—no, I believe he was the CFS minister at the time, Gord Mackintosh. I may have my dates wrong, Deputy Speaker, but at the time, he undertook a review and consultation across Manitoba in respect of Tracia's Trust.

And so the House will recall that Tracia Owen was a young Indigenous girl who died by suicide, who had been sexually exploited and died by suicide. We had an inquest; there was an inquest into Tracia Owen's death.

And from that—as I said, Gord Macintosh, in concert with other community organizations, including the Southern Chiefs Organization, of where I was the director of justice at the time, and MKO and AMC and MMF and other community-based organizations, undertook this consultation to look at the gaps in respect of the sexual exploitation of children.

I would also add that it also came on the heels of the death of Fonassa Bruyere. So Fonassa Bruyere was murdered in August of 2007. Her body was found on just shy of the city limits. And Fonassa was from my First Nation community of Sagkeeng First Nation. And, actually, Fonassa's body was found where, I believe, it was four or five other women, Indigenous women's bodies were found.

And immediately after Fonassa's body was found, community organizations from across Manitoba but certainly here in Winnipeg, organized ourselves and created what was called the Sexually Exploited Youth Community Coalition. And I remember that first meeting—again, I was at Southern Chiefs Organization for 10 years, so I was still at Southern Chiefs—and I remember that first meeting, we held our first meeting at Sage House and there were about 40 different stakeholders at that meeting, including the WPS, government—there was government representation, NDP government representation, Judy Wasylcia-Leis was there, Sage House, Ka Ni Kanichihk. Like, all these stakeholders came together to develop this community coalition, which still exists today, actually, Deputy Speaker, and continues to do really good work.

So then, in 2008, when Gord Macintosh kind of undertook this review of Tracia's Trust, we as the SEY committee also participated in those consultations. In fact, I remember getting asked to speak as a keynote at one of the consultations in the RBC Convention Centre.

And from those consultations with all of those stakeholders, both in the south and in the North of Manitoba, under the NDP government, they renewed Tracia's Trust. And from there, you got StreetReach, you got HOME, Hands of Mother Earth, which is actually out-located outside the city of Winnipeg, and it's for sexually exploited girls, that they can go there to heal, and a variety of other things that developed out of that consultation process.

Now, why am I bringing that up, Deputy Speaker? I'm bringing up that history first off for the record of Hansard, but I'm also bringing it up because, as I said, the NDP government were—was one of the first governments across the country to commit to action on MMIWG2S. And that was some of the—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

If we could keep the level of chatter to a respectable level, that would be appreciated.

**An Honourable Member:** So that was some of the—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns.

**Ms. Fontaine:** So, that was some of the groundwork. And that's only one of the commitments that the NDP government undertook when it was in power. But it was one of the foundation and the groundwork moving towards an MMIWG2S strategy, provincial strategy, here in Manitoba.

And in that strategy we did a myriad of different things, and I'm going to list off some of the things that I did as the special adviser on Indigenous women's issue. I think I've probably mentioned them a couple of times here.

One of the things that I'm most proud of that will be there for years and years is the MMIWG monument at The Forks—thank you—and that was done in consultation and leadership and vision and direction with MMIWG2S families. We actually had an advisory committee and, actually, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) at the time was part of that advisory committee as a family member. And we had other family members that participated on that advisory committee.

And the discussion and the vision for a monument came from a day that I spent time with the family of Cherisse Houle. And I had picked them up earlier in the day—often, when I was a special adviser, I was all over, you know, meeting with MMIWG families or going with them to court or going with families to deal with the myriad of issues that MMIWG families deal with.

On that particular day, I picked up Cherisse Houle's mom and sister because Cherisse was buried outside the city, kind of like past Tinkertown, and they didn't have a vehicle, and there's no bus that takes you out there. And so I picked them up. We went out for lunch. We—well, we went out for lunch afterwards. We went to go visit Cherisse and, on the way back, Cherisse's mom started talking about, you know, it would be nice to have somewhere where we can go as MMIWG family members, that we could have somewhere that we could honour MMIWG family members because, often, if your loved one is missing, you actually have nowhere to go. And as human beings we do have this need to connect still with our loved ones who have passed.

And so, from there—I believe that was in—that first conversation was in the summer of July—yes, July of 2011. And so that was part of my strategy; that was one of the things. It took us four years, or about three and a half years, to get the monument, and the monument was dedicated, I think, in August of 2014. I'm very proud of that.

And what I'll share with you, Deputy Speaker, is that monument was actually—again, like everything that we did back then—was actually the first monument across Canada that was dedicated to MMIWG2S families and to their loved ones, obviously. That was the NDP government that did that.

We hosted every year Wiping Away the Tears, which was a two and a half day gathering with MMIWG family members where we would have—I mean, over the years, we had, you know, we had different elders, we had different folks to talk about trauma and how to work through your trauma. We had different exercises where we did quilt projects with them. In fact, Deputy Speaker, you'll remember that I've hung those quilts in the rotunda when the member for Point Douglas and I host our October 4th, which we haven't had in a couple of years, obviously, but—and so did a variety of different activities with families over the many years.

We—in fact, it was the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) that took a lead on creating a tool kit, and

it was the NDP government that gave the dollars to be able to help families create this tool kit if you go missing.

We hosted the second national round table on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Deputy Speaker, right before I won the nomination—in fact, my nomination was in March of 2019. January, I hosted a justice practitioner summit here at the Delta—no, at the Clarion Hotel and we brought in justice practitioners from across the country. We brought in police. We brought in defence, prosecution, victim services, and it was an opportunity to try and bring everybody across the country, to get everybody on the same page in respect of, you know, all of the outstanding cases in respect of MMIWG2S.

\* (16:10)

And, in fact, one of the experts that we brought, which I am hoping that when we become government we will look at implementing, is ViCLAS. So ViCLAS is actually a tool that's used by police that was developed, actually, through the Bernardo case, believe it or not—and it's a system that if you put the information in there, those jurisdictions that are a part of ViCLAS, you then have access to that information across the country.

Not every province and territory does that. And, like I said, that came out of the inquiry into Paul Bernardo because, in fact, the commissioner in that inquiry said that the two neighbouring police—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just like to comment to all members. We are discussing some rather sober matters this afternoon, and if conversations could be taken outside the Chamber if they do need to happen, that would be, I think, appreciated.

If momentary conversations need to happen inside the Chamber, I think we all understand that, but the level of chatter is more than it has been all afternoon. So I just remind members of that in light of this afternoon's subject matter and the decorum that we all strive to keep. Thank you.

The member for—honourable member for St. Johns.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech, Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that.

So, as I was saying, that was in January. We hosted the justice practitioners' summit. And then in February, we hosted the second national roundtable

on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. And you'll recall, Deputy Speaker, that in fact, it was a year previous that the first-ever, first national round table on MMIWG was hosted in Ottawa.

And that was really important because that was the first time in Canadian history that MMIWG family members, provincial and territorial governments, the federal government—which, you will recall, Deputy Speaker, was Stephen Harper at the time, which was also extraordinary because it was also around the same time that the prime minister said that MMIWG2S wasn't on his radar, as Stephen Harper said in the media—and also with our Indigenous political organizations. It was the first time that we all gathered in an attempt to address and tackle the issue of MMIWG2S.

And so Manitoba hosted the second national round table. And that was in February—I think it was, like, February 25th and 26th of 2019. And I was the lead co-ordinator for that. We had over 500 delegates, including ministers and premiers and MMIWG family from across our territories.

You know, again, why am I bringing that up? Because it's not enough just to say or reference MMIWG and not do the work. And I'm proud of the work that the NDP did. In fact, one of the other things that we did just before I got elected—so that would have been January and February, then I won the nomination in March, got elected.

But in the—September, we hosted a national Wiping Away the Tears gathering. We brought in MMIWG family members from across the country. And M-M-I—those MMIWG family members still talk about that Wiping Away the Tears. And recently, I introduced a bill about criminal—the criminal forfeiture—anyways, the dollars that are—I'm having a—

**An Honourable Member:** I'm trying to help you, but—

**Ms. Fontaine:** Yes. I know.

Anyways, the dollars that come from proceeds of crime. And one of the things that I'm—I put forward in that bill is that actually, those dollars would only be accessible to community organizations and those folks that work with victims. In fact, the national Wiping Away the Tears gathering that we had, we were able to access those dollars from—to be able to support and execute this national gathering from proceeds of crime. And so that's how we were able to do it.

And, actually, my budget was not that big. It was \$125,000, I believe, and we were able to bring in—I think we had almost 250 MMIWG family members from across the country.

The NDP was—and is still—committed to MMIWG and we put our money where our mouth is. I think that's the saying? I always get those sayings wrong. But—and so, you know, I appreciate the reference to the national inquiry, but it's not enough. We haven't seen since 2016 nearly anything compared to what the NDP was doing prior to the change in government. We haven't seen anything.

And, you know, when I was talking with MMIWG family members in the last 24 hours, one of the things Gerri McPherson-Pangman, whose sister was murdered in April of 2014, she said to me—and I want to put her words in the record here. She said that they need—this province, this government needs an action plan involving families, survivors and two-spirited, and they need a family advisory committee that will advise the government in respect of MMIWG2S and reconciliation. So I put that on the record. I hope that the minister will hear the words of one of our MMIWG family members and, you know, again, put their money where their mouth is.

It's, you know, I appreciate that, you know, the building, the Leg. was read on February 14th. I appreciate that. I think that's great, but that's not nearly enough. And I think my colleague said it that this government is doing the bare minimum. And I will reiterate what my colleague said, that this government is doing the bare, bare minimum.

And so, you know, I want to just, you know, end my comments, Deputy Speaker. I feel it's important to again remind the House and, you know, for folks listening that, you know, there is an incredibly strong and dedicated and committed community here in Manitoba on all fronts, MMIWG family members, stakeholders, that are committed to addressing and dealing with the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

It's incumbent on the government to be working with those individuals and to bring them into creating a provincial strategy on MMIWG2S like we had when the NDP were in government, because those individuals are the ones that on the front lines. It is family members that deal with the consequences and know intimately, tragically what the issue of MMIWG2S does and they have the expertise and the knowledge on what has to be done.

And again, you know, we have the national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two spirited which is the blueprint, which is the framework from which every single province and territory can draw upon and develop their own plans of actions and provincial strategies. And thus far, we haven't seen anything from this government. It's been three years after the national inquiry deemed it a genocide of what is happening to MMIWG2S families, or women—to Indigenous women across our territories.

And sometimes I wonder, you know, you know when we—when—do people really understand what that means? Do people really appreciate what it means to be an Indigenous woman on your own territory and to know how unsafe you are intrinsically, to know that there's actively taking place a genocide against your body, against your right to just exist and live? I don't think that people fully appreciate or understand that.

\* (16:20)

I know even with the enormous privilege that I have: I have a house, I have a car, you know, I have good supports. I know that when I—I'm always, always aware of how at risk I am as an Indigenous woman, just simply being an Indigenous woman. And so it takes more than just amendments to bills; it takes more than just throwing a little bit of money here and there. It actually takes the dedication and commitment of a government to do what it takes—to do what they need to do to address the issue of MMIWG2S.

You know, I've said it a couple of times in this House that even during the last two years, even when we were all in lockdown, Indigenous women lost their lives. Even when we were in lockdown, Indigenous women still lost their lives, and young Indigenous women. You know, I think of a 19-year-old woman who lost her life. I think of a 23-year-old woman who lost her life.

And so it takes a lot more than what we're seeing from this government, and I hope that this government, in the short time that they have left as government—and I don't know what that is, what—18 months, maybe? I hope that in the last 18 months, they decide to appoint a special adviser on MMIWG2S to work with families, to execute the vision and the knowledge and the expertise of families for what we need on the national inquiry's framework.

Again, this government doesn't have a lot of time left in the roles that they have. October 2023 is coming faster than any of us can imagine, but they still have

time while they're still in government to make some of those changes that they need to, and I would suggest to the government, I would suggest to the minister, to reach out to MMIWG family members and to reach out to all of them. I know that right now, the minister is working with one set of grandmothers, and that's amazing. I think that that's great work that's going on there, so I do want to congratulate them on that.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

And again, that work comes from the grandmothers themselves, the grandmothers that have, you know, decades of experience and knowledge and have pushed for what they know they need to be able to work with Indigenous women and girls and Two-Spirited. And I believe that it was the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) today that said, you know, the government doesn't do this on their own—or, somebody said—I can't remember who said it, but that often the government has to be pushed to do what's right, but here's an opportunity; we're debating this bill; here's the bill that's come before us, to do that work and not to—not wait to be pushed to work with all of the different groups that are involved in MMIWG2S.

Now, Madam Speaker, there's a whole host of other issues when we talk about reconciliation, and I wanted to concentrate my comments on MMIWG2S because, as I was thinking about this—like, again, as I was reflecting in preparation for this, I'm really proud of the work that we did when we were government, and I don't know if I've ever said this in that Chamber, and I wish them—the member for Point Douglas will remember this—and I really want to give credit to the former premier, Greg Selinger, because when we were coming back from the first national round table and we had brought—I think there was, like, eight family members and, of course, some staff and the minister, Minister Eric Robinson and the premier.

When we were coming back, we were at the airport in Ottawa and some of our family members, we were all talking and, in fact, it was the member for Point Douglas that said, you know, we should host a national families gathering because we saw what we had here in Manitoba that other family members didn't have across the country. And, of course, that's changed now, but we saw that they didn't have special advisers; they didn't have their elder support; they didn't have that. And yet we did. We showed up to the first national round table with all of these supports and

all of this infrastructure to support MMIWG family members that other jurisdictions did not have.

And I remember the member for Point Douglas went up to Greg Selinger and said—she said, hey, we want to host a national families gathering because of, you know, A, B, C, D. And he said, yes, let's make it happen. And it was as easy as that, and that was because, you know, we were committed to it. The NDP was committed to it. And so I want to acknowledge him for that, and I want to acknowledge the member for Point Douglas for all of the work that she's done on this issue as well for MMIWG2S.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'm glad to have the opportunity to share a few words this afternoon about this bill and how it amends legislation by including references in the annual progress report about the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Presently, the annual report covers a wide array of important topics, from education to health to justice and many more. With that said, there's a lot that needs to be clearer and actively worked on immediately. I think about calls for action, so many of which this government could work towards implementing and have yet to take action on.

Madam Speaker, the specific amendment of adding, and I quote, the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls annually, is a strong and important amendment. In addition to this, and very importantly, Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit individuals have historically not been provided the recognition they deserve. It is very important that MMIWG2S are properly recognized in legislation along with being recognized today here in the debate.

This bill is a step towards advancing reconciliation, and I want to take a moment right now to recognize that Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people have been doing phenomenal work in the community, and sometimes this has been with government support and sometimes it has been without government support, Madam Speaker.

I think about the Clan Mothers Healing Village north of Winnipeg. It's a result of the perseverance and resilient of MMIWG2S. Madam Speaker, I asked about this during the question portion of today's legislation, and I asked about if there would be continuous funding towards this group and, unfortunately, I didn't get an answer there.

Elder Mae Louise Campbell and her daughter, Jamie, understood the need for a healing lodge for—  
[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** —MMIWG in Manitoba. They ran Grandmother Moon Lodge for 18 years, and since that time, their work expanded as the need in the community was evident. In conjunction with Elder Campbell, Elder Belinda Vandenbroeck established the Clan Mothers Healing Village and Knowledge Centre. And I want to acknowledge and thank the Province for providing funding to the construction of this extremely crucial project.

The member from St. Boniface advocated for the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations (Mr. Lagimodiere) to do this, and I'm very proud of our caucus' work to ensure that the funding was, in fact, provided, Madam Speaker.

In closing, I'd like to thank the Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations staff for preparing the path to reconciliation annual report, and I look forward to future versions reflecting today's amendments.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** If I could just have everybody's attention for a minute, please.

There are numerous conversations going on in the House, and I'm finding it difficult to hear the members speaking in debate. If people want to have conversations and the loges are occupied, can you please take the conversations into the hallway so that those of us that need to hear the debate can actually hear it.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 4.

So, we understand that this bill amends The Path to Reconciliation Act to include references to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, in addition to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Calls for Justice in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls are to guide the government and Manitoba's commitment to reconciliation.

Madam Speaker, I think it's really important for—especially for non-Indigenous people—to recognize the role and responsibilities that we have in advancing reconciliation. It is really important for us, and I—this is something that I've learned throughout the years and something I take very seriously as a non-Indigenous person, as someone whose parents immigrated here in the '70s, as somebody who recognizes the genocide that has occurred in Canada and the ongoing colonial constructs that harm Indigenous communities, that I have a responsibility to listen to Indigenous communities, leaders and act. Act on what is being brought forward by Indigenous peoples in terms of how to actually advance and achieve reconciliation.

\* (16:30)

That's a responsibility that is incumbent on anyone in Manitoba, anyone in Canada, who is non-Indigenous. And, certainly, as legislators, we have an incredible, I would say an additional, burden of responsibility. We're very privileged to be in this place and to be in roles and positions where we effect laws, we effect policy, we effect, you know, what it is that can perpetuate harm or advance reconciliation in Manitoba.

And so, when we talk about reconciliation, I would think everyone in this Chamber would recognize that colonization and the impacts of colonization are ongoing, and that the choices that we make today can either reflect the ongoing harms and can perpetuate harms, or can be coming from a place where Indigenous folks have advised and instructed and asked for us to make decisions from. And that it's from a genuine place of wanting to understand and wanting to effect positive and necessary change.

And so, when I think about that, Madam Speaker, and I reflect on the roles and responsibilities that we all have as citizens, and the roles and responsibilities that are greater as legislators, it's important that we're honest about decisions that we've made, ways that we've engaged in or participate in—participated in, rather, perpetuating harms even in our time as legislators. I think that's really, really important.

I don't bring up—and I'm going to bring up a couple of examples because I think they're important, Madam Speaker. I don't raise these things because they're nice things to talk about. I don't raise these examples because I want to shame or embarrass anyone. I raise them because they are current, they are recent, and the impacts are still being felt.

So, I think about the fact that on the 150th anniversary of Manitoba's entry into confederation, the PC government chose to leave out any mention of Louis Riel and the Métis nation, and their major contributions to the founding of Manitoba. The PC government opposed the use of the term systemic racism in a declaration from the Prime Minister and other premiers condemning discrimination.

You know, Madam Speaker, the PC government even refused to support the North American Indigenous Games, which is one of the 92 TRC Calls to Action. I don't really see how anybody can oppose the—sorry, not support the North American Indigenous Games. It's an incredible event. If anybody here has ever had the opportunity to see those athletes, you know, performing at their best and witness, it's incredible. It is truly spectacular.

And, you know, these are recent actions or inactions by this government which perpetuate a harm that is inexcusable, Madam Speaker.

I mean, there are—I won't repeat the comments made by Brian Pallister but I certainly remember—you know, I'm pretty recently elected—being in this Chamber and seeing the former premier sitting in that chair, making some of the most grotesque comments, anti-Indigenous comments, that I had heard in this place. In a place where we are to carry ourselves at a standard that most Manitobans would believe is of the highest, given the roles that we all represent.

I still shake my head when I think about those moments.

And, the thing about it is this: I've actually had conversations with a couple of MLAs across the way, PC MLAs, and I asked very directly, how could you possibly have sat in this Chamber when those kinds of comments were being made? How can you—how could you possibly, you know, like a seal, just clap, stood up and applauded, when that kind of harm was being done?

And there were folks who told me, you know what, like, things are different now—this was after the former premier had left. Finally, disgracefully left. Things are different now. Things are different. That's what I was told.

Well, Madam Speaker, I don't see that being reflected by way of action. I don't. You can't simply say that, well, because this person was here and, you know, I supported all of the horrible things that they did, but now that they're gone, things are different. Then prove it. At the bare minimum, you can express

an apology. That's a great place to start, isn't it? That's pretty basic. I think we all learn at a very young age that when you harm somebody, when you do something wrong, a simple step you can take to try and make it right is to say you're sorry and to mean it. And we have yet to hear that from any member of that side of the House in regards to terribly anti-Indigenous sentiments that were expressed in this House with their full permission and enthusiasm behind it.

So I would encourage members opposite to take that step, that if they're serious about reconciliation, take the step of saying you're sorry. Apologize for participating actively in perpetuating anti-Indigenous sentiments in this House. No one's going to be critical of you for that. People will applaud that. That's what people need to see. I would argue, in fact, that if Manitobans of any political leaning were to see members opposite take that step, they would be encouraged in their own lives, in their own communities, to do the same.

We all, throughout our lives, we've grown up—for those of us who've grown up here—are exposed to narratives, harmful or otherwise, and we absorb that. And sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, we perpetuate things that are not okay. But that saying of when you know better, you do better is so important. And so if members opposite are serious when they say things are different, they need to reflect that by action. And the first step, and easy step—I would say probably the easiest step of all—is to start off by saying that you're sorry. And I actually happen to have a little tutorial on my Instagram page—I know they check out my social media—that can walk you through how to provide a good quality apology. So I encourage them to take a look if they're unsure how.

Now, Madam Speaker, this is a really important subject. This is—we're talking about subject matter that is still affecting families and Indigenous women and two-spirit folks in our province every single day. This is a really serious subject, and it's one that is not just about Bill 4. We have to be able to also look at all areas of legislation, you know, government departments, and recognize that there are decisions that we can make, there are considerations we should have in each and every aspect of government.

And so, you know, when we talk about truth and reconciliation, when we talk about this specific act, we have to also look at areas like housing and education, health care. We have to look at the arts and culture in this province. We must look at all of these

areas and make sure that we're applying our—the mentalities, the attitudes, the learnings, the teachings that speak to reconciliation in all of those areas as well. All of those areas reflect that some communities, some people, are more targeted than others.

And we see that in different—whether it's health outcomes, whether it's access to housing, whether it's access to education from K to 12—pre-K, actually—K to 12 and post-secondary. So we have to look at this holistically. That's the approach that we need to take, and all of us in this House have different responsibilities that, you know, we take very seriously. And all of us in this House can actually work together with that approach in mind to make a difference.

This House debated a matter of public importance on May 31st, 2021, after the graves of 215 children were discovered at Kamloops Indian Residential School. The discovery of this mass grave clearly shows that we have no idea how many children died and were abandoned in similar unmarked graves across the country.

We have seen since then a wave—a devastating wave—of discoveries across the country of unmarked graves of Indigenous children. It is something that every single time—I know on this side of the House, every single time we see another announcement of unmarked graves found, it is absolutely gut-wrenching. It is devastating. Every single time we think of those families, we think of those communities, we think about those little ones whose lives were stolen from them and about what that means in terms of our responsibility to bring some sort of reconciliation to all of this.

\* (16:40)

In the summer, this past summer—feels like so long ago already—I was able, with our colleague, the MLA for St. Johns, to visit the school. A woman named Nikki Fraser was kind enough to meet us, and with her was her daughter, her mother and her grandmother. Her grandmother was someone who had been forced to attend that school. Her grandmother very patiently walked us through the grounds, very patiently pointed out to us different areas of where she had different experiences there as a child, pointed out to us where the apple trees on the grounds were. And she explained that the children at that school knew not to eat the apples from that tree because there were children buried there.

That was an incredibly impactful experience. I'm forever grateful that they took the time to walk with

us and share with us. And it really, really drove home—I—although I can never fully grasp just how horrifying all of that was and is, but it really drove home the importance of each and every one of us taking the time to listen, learn and then, again, take action.

And that action has to be consistent. It's not enough to, you know, show up once in a while, talk about this every now and again, debate this a couple of times a session. We must challenge ourselves to take this on every single day, whether or not we're in here wearing suits as legislators or in our constituency offices doing work; it's got to be a personal practice.

The reality of this government is that what we know definitively is that the act and intention of reconciliation has not been a practice of this government. It's been a political talking point, not one they performed very well, quite frankly, but it certainly hasn't been a consistent practice. This government has had six years to take many concrete steps, many concrete opportunities, to advance reconciliation.

My—our colleague, the MLA for Keewatinook, spoke to this earlier that, like, the government could do a number of things right away to effect change immediately to make a difference. They choose not to. They simply choose not to. And, again, it's a systemic issue. It's not just about this bill. It's not just about what this bill says it intends to do. It's about all of the areas that this government is responsible for and failing to address.

Madam Speaker, obviously, we've all been paying attention to the news recently. We've all been affected by the news around occupations in different parts of the country, in my own constituency of Union Station dealing with, you know, an occupation right outside the Legislature unfortunately affecting residents in the area for—who for weeks could not sleep—I'm—babies unable to be put to bed by their parents and caregivers because of the incessant honking, people setting off fireworks, train horns, elderly people who live on Kennedy unable to get any rest or reprieve. I had constituents reaching out to me unable to walk to their medical appointments in the area due to being harassed. And a constituent sent me a message, actually several, and I was surprised to see it.

When we talk about reconciliation, when we talk about actions this government can take, there are a lot of principles in the United Nations declaration of the rights of Indigenous peoples. You know, the Calls for Justice of the national inquiry for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls—there's a guide that's laid out, right, for us to follow. I mean,

foundationally to these principles and these Calls to Action is respecting the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, is recognizing the right—their right to protect their land, their right to protest, Madam Speaker.

And something that was really interesting—it was a contrast that somebody shared with me that I actually wouldn't have been able to see, I wouldn't have known. But they shared with me several screenshots of PC MLAs' social media when these land protectors were protesting, how quick PC MLAs were to condemn those folks, how quick they were to plainly criminalize these folks. I was actually surprised because I don't go on their social media. I was actually surprised to see these tweets condemning land protectors.

And the reason why this constituent sent this to me was because she was thinking about the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, the right to protest and what they're protesting for, and recognizing that while this occupation was going on and these convoy protestors were here and blocking all kinds of things, these same PC MLAs were silent—either silent or celebrating these convoy occupations when they had not long ago condemned Indigenous protestors for standing up for their inherent rights, for protecting the land. Criminalized versus capitulation, Madam Speaker.

I think that says a lot. I think that when we look at bills like Bill 4, we have to also take a look at the actions of PC MLAs that are actually pretty inconsistent with recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples. That contrast was so obvious and so concerning that a constituent took the time to capture screenshots of that—those social media posts and shared them with me. She was that distressed.

Madam Speaker, when I talk about ongoing colonization, when I talk about anti-Indigenous discrimination, I'm talking about moments where political leaders choose to criminalize one group of people and capitulate to another instead. There's a clear reason for that difference, and unless the government side, that side of the House, the opposite side of the House, PC MLAs, are willing to address their own biases and the reasons for those differences in approach, the road to reconciliation they claim to be on is going to be much slower than it should be.

People are paying attention. People see very clearly whether or not they're genuine in their proclamations. And their record speaks for itself.

And unfortunately, very recently, we saw crystal clear who members of that side of the House believe are entitled to act some type of way in our communities versus another, how quick they are to criminalize one group of folks versus another, whose freedom they actually think is worthy of support and effort. I mean, that conversation is a whole other nonsensical to even—but I think you take my point, Madam Speaker.

We—we're in a very unique time where many people are talking about—many, many people have, for quite some time now, actually, have been talking about reconciliation, an awareness around MMIWG2S, in a new way, in a really important way. Folks who maybe didn't have the same language or information around these issues have it. And that's really good. That's important.

\* (16:50)

You know, like everyone else, I saw folks walking all around Union Station in orange T-shirts this summer. Not just on September 30th, but, you know, throughout the summer. And well beyond it, I saw folks with orange T-shirts in their windows—apartment windows, you know, home windows—Every Child Matters stickers and posters. You know, all of that is really important. There's a heightened awareness right now, and a lot of folks are talking a lot about unity, talking about the importance of not being divided.

And what is foundational to that, Madam Speaker, is to recognize that there are groups of people in our province, in our country, who have been on one particular side of a divide that has been killing them. Like, we have to recognize that if we're not willing to do the work, like really dig into it and do the work of making sure that we're advancing reconciliation and that MMIWG2S is a matter that we're taking seriously foundationally and systemically, we're not going to be moving in a direction that is about healing divides. We're not. We have to be able to get to the root of a lot of issues. And this matter, this bill, actually speaks to a root issue that needs to be addressed.

So, Madam Speaker, you know, I wanted to put on the record today not a condemnation of this government; I wanted to articulate the importance of honesty in doing this work, in bringing this bill forward, that this government has to account for the decisions that they've made, the actions they've taken, what they have posted on social media about this very issue, whether they knew it or not, whether they knew

or not that they were posting about reconciliation. You know, when you criminalize one group of people who are disproportionately targeted and then at the next, you know, breath, celebrating, capitulate to another, and the only difference is one group is Indigenous and the other is white, that's a problem. You have to account for that.

And again, people are paying attention. We are in a critical time in this country and in this province. People are listening. And people don't want to hear, you know, empty promises and empty rhetoric. They want to see action—meaningful, intentional action.

I sincerely hope that this government makes a shift. I do. I have no interest, Madam Speaker, in standing in this House having to criticize a government for anti-Indigenous racism, for refusing to take the necessary action to stop an ongoing genocide against Indigenous girls, women and two-spirited people.

I would much rather that we get to a place where we can debate and discuss and stand in this House on other issues. In order for that to happen, the government needs to sincerely take steps to address this. They have to incorporate this into all departments, into their personal practices, and they must do that consistently.

So that's my hope, that's my challenge, my ask of this government. I know that, you know, many of them are not listening right now. I think a couple of them are, maybe, and they'll find if they are serious, and if they really take this to heart and they want to move in the right direction, there isn't a single person on this side of the House that wouldn't be willing to work with them and support those efforts.

We know what we're working for on this side of the House. Our caucus, our NDP team are committed to doing this work. Our team, my colleagues, I can look each and every one of them in the face and know they take reconciliation and the issue of MMIWG2S as seriously as one can take it in the role as a legislator and in their personal day-to-day practice.

So, Madam Speaker, I hope that through this debate we are able to come to a consensus in this House and move in the right direction and make sure that all of those families and individuals across Manitoba who are affected by this heartbreaking issue have the supports and resources and action that they deserve from government.

Thank you.

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** It really is my privilege to stand up and talk about this bill and put a few words on—about reconciliation for many of the city MLAs that have no concept of what a constituency like Flin Flon or Thompson or The Pas-Kameesak look like.

Probably in my constituency, a conservative estimate, 75 per cent of it—of the people in it are Indigenous. Thompson, the number is probably 80 per cent; The Pas-Kameesak, it's probably higher than that—98 per cent in the other one. And yet, I have the honour and privilege of trying to represent those folks, and it is an honour and it is a privilege.

It's also a challenge and it's a challenge made even worse when we talk about reconciliation, about doing things differently, about respecting people. But then when it comes to a community like Norway House that's trying to build a hospital, one of the fastest growing communities in this province, and they ask the Province for help—no, nothing to do with us. That's not reconciliation.

Just down the road, communities Cross Lake and Pimicikamak trying to build a hospital for Manitobans, for people that live in Manitoba, but they happen to be Indigenous people. They asked for help to build a hospital. Not from this government. No; there's no money to be had. Go and ask the federal government. We don't care about the people of Manitoba.

And that is not reconciliation. No, the four northern MLAs all happen to be—sorry, three northern MLAs—there was four—all are or were NDP MLAs because people in those communities are smart enough to realize that the members opposite, the PC caucus, does not care about them, not one little bit.

They're outside of their sphere of friends, friends who drive big trucks, apparently, and they won't stand up and support those people.

We've had a couple of ministers of Indigenous and northern affairs, now Indigenous Reconciliation, and I remember being at an Estimates meeting and the member from Thompson asking the previous minister question after question after question to deal with things that would come under Indigenous and reconciliation, and not once did that minister say it was her responsibility.

What's wrong with that picture?

Now, we haven't the opportunity to really question the present minister, but it'll be interesting to see what his response is when we ask about all those issues that affect Indigenous people.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 26 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 3, 2022

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