

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, 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 24, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 227—The Turban Day Act

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I move, seconded by member for The Maples (Mr. Sandhu), that Bill 227, The Turban Day Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Brar: As the first turban-wearing Sikh elected to the Manitoba Legislature, I am honoured to present Bill 227, The Turban Day Act.

Sikh Canadians represent a growing and dynamic population in Manitoba. Sikhs in Manitoba and around the world continue to face violence and discrimination because of their religious identity. The turban is not only a symbol of Sikh heritage and culture, but also a symbol of courage and equality.

Bill 227 will recognize April 13th as turban day and allow us all to celebrate the rich culture of the Sikh community in Manitoba, and educate Manitobans on the importance of the turban, helping combat racial discrimination.

I look forward to unanimous support for this bill.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Madam Speaker: And I do have a report to table.

In accordance with section 28 of The Auditor General Act, I'm tabling the Auditor General's report entitled Aging Information Systems, dated February 2022.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice

prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Spring Break

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, spring break is next week, March 28th to April 1st, and I want to wish all educators, students, principals and administrators, school staff and bus drivers a wonderful and safe week off. The commitment and resilience you have demonstrated have resulted in a safe and healthy learning environment for our children. You have been able to react and adapt to changes while maintaining continuity of learning for your students.

I also want to pay tribute to all the child-care workers that I have worked diligently—that have worked diligently to keep our child-care centres a safe and supportive environment. Your efforts are significant and very much appreciated.

It is an exciting time in Education and Early Childhood Learning as we are investing in our most precious resource in Manitoba, our children. With records amount of funding into education, I am pleased to stand up today and say that Manitoba has the second-highest spending per pupil in Canada at \$15,412 and we are maintaining this position at the national level with a further investment of \$120 million this year alone, Madam Speaker. As announced in February, funding for the Manitoba school system has increased by 120, which includes \$43-million increase in annual funding, plus one-time funding of \$77 million, to address incremental wage costs and other measures.

Our government will continue to consult with school divisions, school staff, parents and students to hear what is working and what we need to do to support them as we move forward to continuously improve and strengthen the education system.

In addition, in 2016, our government committed to building 20 new schools over 10 years across Manitoba that will provide nearly 13,000 new classroom spaces along with 1,450 child-care spaces, at a total investment of over \$550 million in capital costs.

Six of these schools have been completed, and several more are in progress and ahead of schedule. This investment will ensure that more students have the opportunity to learn and grow in high-quality learning environments and minimizes transportation costs and overcrowding of existing schools in growing communities.

Our government has listened to the struggles schools have faced over the past two years and they've been on all Manitobans and educators. This is why we have increased funding to our education system by 17.2 per cent over the last two years, Madam Speaker. We will continue to listen to our education partners and strive for a better education environment for all.

As a parent and former teacher, I understand and appreciate the dedication to students that our educators have shown, and I thank you all for your hard work to ensure our children continue to be engaged, supported and encouraged to do, and be, their best.

As we head into a well-deserved spring break, I hope everyone has the chance to relax, re-energize, and reconnect with friends and family, and, as always, we continue to encourage everyone to continue to follow the public health fundamentals to stay safe and healthy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, we all remember counting down the days before spring break, feeling excited to hang out with our friends outside the classroom for a week. We wish students all the best as they spend time outdoors in the warming weather, and hope that teachers, support staff at least get a bit of well-deserved time off.

We also know that our custodians will be working extra hard this week to clean and ensure a safe learning environment for our students.

We also hope that this government will use next week to reflect on their cuts to schools, cuts that have forced Seven Oaks School Division to cut eight teaching positions and 20 support staff, Brandon School Division to cut 10 teaching positions and programs for speech-language, psychology, reading recovery, to name just a few.

Madam Speaker, it's a bit surprising to listen to the MLA for Lac du Bonnet wax eloquent about students when he continues to make their experience worse through callous cuts during the pandemic. The PC record on this file is embarrassing, and one might

assume they would want to avoid the subject entirely but perhaps he gave his ministerial statement because, due to his government's austerity agenda, words are all that he has to offer children.

We hope that the Education Minister also takes some time next week to reflect on the damage this government has done to the system since 2016 and commit to rehiring the staff that have been cut over the past few years. It will be nice to see kids, of course, having a much deserved break, but we'd like to see properly staffed classrooms and a system in place when classes resume on April 4th.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the ministerial statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: I'm happy to rise today just to share a few thoughts as schools head into spring break.

First and foremost, we are still in a pandemic, and although restrictions and people being diagnosed with COVID differ from place to place, schools have had to remain diligent, without breaks, for over two years now. And because of this, I want to thank our schools, and this includes teachers, students, administration, custodial staff, and everyone, Madam Speaker.

Every single time I talk with a teacher I hear stories about how they have had to adapt their curriculums. They've had to switch from virtual to in-person, sometimes both, sometimes from classroom to classroom, and having to make time in the curriculum to talk about public health, to talk about masks and educate students on safety precautions, Madam Speaker.

Our schools have been absolutely incredible through the pandemic, and I think there are a few things that our Province can do to help alleviate some difficulties and show appreciation to our schools. For example, funding for school supplies—many teachers have had to pay out-of-pocket, and this is an unfair request of our teachers and a position they never should have had to be put into, Madam Speaker.

I also know all MLAs are aware, through MTS, Manitoba Teachers' Society, of the need for a nutrition plan in the schools. It's devastating that there are children going to school every day here in Manitoba with empty bellies. This is something our Province could help with.

* (13:40)

Lastly, Madam Speaker, just this morning, we had a wonderful debate about the need for menstrual products in schools too. Menstruation is something all girls and women experience, and it should be treated the way our other basic needs are treated, and this means ensuring students in schools have access to feminine hygiene products. Again, the Province could help with this.

Madam Speaker, these are just a few ideas and ways that we can support our schools. And just before wrapping up, I want to send a special shout-out to the seven schools in my constituency: École Waterford Springs, Tyndall Park, Meadows West, Garden Grove, Prairie Rose, Shaughnessy Park and Stanley Knowles. I hope you all have a very well-deserved break. I hope you do lots of puddle-jumping, and this goes to the teachers, too, even us MLAs. I think it could be very therapeutic at times.

And I want to thank you, the schools, for all the work you're doing in support of Ukraine and fundraising too.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

College Béliveau Girls Basketball Champions

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the 2022 Collège Béliveau girls varsity basketball team located in the Windsor Park neighbourhood of the Southdale constituency.

After months of hard work and dedication, under the guidance of their coaches, Duncan Paterson and Ann Davey, the Collège Béliveau Barracudas varsity girls basketball team has won the championship title for their athletic zone with an undefeated record of 11-0.

The difficulty of achieving an unbeaten regular season record cannot be understated, Madam Speaker. This legendary accomplishment is literally what little girls' dreams are made of. This championship title earned the team a berth into the Manitoba High School Athletic Association provincial AAA basketball championship tournament held over the weekend of March 18th to 20th in Brandon, Manitoba.

There was fierce competition as the Béliveau girls went into each of their three games over the weekend: first, against the Steinbach Christian School Flames; next, the St. James Jimmies; and finally, it was a

challenging battle against the Neelin High School Spartans. Each player should be proud of themselves for earning their spot in the AAA provincial championship and their strong fourth place provincial ranking.

The friendships and memories you made this season will last a lifetime. Thank you to the parents, family members and school community for supporting the team throughout the season. I wish every player the very best during the off season. We look forward to you defending your title next year.

Please join me to congratulate the 2022 Béliveau Barracudas girls varsity basketball team on an exemplary season.

Félicitations aux filles. [*Congratulations to the girls.*] Congratulations.

Dauphin Kings Ukrainian Night

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Where can you find Ukrainian dancing, elite hockey and a kielbasa toss? Well, at the Dauphin Kings Ukrainian night, of course.

Several of my NDP colleagues and I were proud to join with nearly 2,000 of our fellow Manitobans for the first Ukrainian night with a large crowd since the pandemic began. Children's dance groups like Zirka performed on the concourse, ceremonial gifts of wheat and salt were presented prior to puck drop, and, hey, the Bombers and the Grey Cup were there for good measure.

The Dauphin Kings, wearing jerseys with the Ukrainian alphabet, sent their home fan happy with a 4-1 win.

Given what's happening right now, Ukrainian night might have meant something bigger this year. Vladimir Putin is waging a brutal war right now based on his attempt to erase Ukrainian language, culture and independence. So when you see young kids practising the dance of their ancestors, when you hear the language of that nation spoken at the rink and when you feel the people's music in the form of the Ukrainian national anthem alongside Canada's, it's easy to understand why that matters.

Manitoba has long been and must continue to be a safe haven for Ukrainian people as well as for the language, culture and identity that defines them, and if we can raise thousands of dollars, as the organizers whose names I will include in Hansard did, to help the heroes on the front lines as well as the refugees who

deserve safe passage in Ukraine, then that is all the more important.

For a community like Dauphin, which, like the rest of Manitoba, has felt the pressures of division these past few years, it's so important for us to be brought together, to be brought together for something bigger than ourselves, to be brought together against the common enemy and to be brought together by our national pastime.

Slava Ukraini [*Glory to Ukraine*], Dauphin and Manitoba.

Canada's National Ukrainian Festival board and volunteers: Kayla Gillis, president; Cory Lafontaine; Joan Smith; Britney Wilson

Volunteers: Ashley, Brent, Bryce, Dan, Darnell Duff, Father Oleg, Stephen Jaddock, Larry, Livia, Nick

Chad Posthumus

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour Chad Posthumus, who lives in East St. Paul. Chad started playing basketball when he was a young child. From the beginning, Chad excelled in basketball court and also at the local rink where he played hockey. At the age of 14, he chose to devote more of his time to basketball, even though he played hockey at a high level.

Chad started playing university basketball in 2009 and has continued to play at a high level since. He's been playing in the Canadian Elite Basketball League since the summer of 2019 and won the league champion as a member of the Saskatchewan Rattlers that same year. In 2021, he played with the Ottawa BlackJacks and set a new league record for 20 rebounds in one game.

Earlier this month, Chad was in Nicaragua, playing for the Edmonton Stringers, representing Canada in the FIBA Americas basketball championship league. Canada was an underdog going into the tournament. However, Mr. Potamus [*phonetic*] and the teammates surprised everyone by coming out in the first round 1-1 record, losing to Puerto Rico, but defeating Nicaragua on the—on their home turf, Madam Speaker.

Chad was named player of the game against Puerto Rico, with 18 points, 14 rebounds and a shooting percentage of 82 per cent. For Chad, playing basketball allows him to pursue his passion and see the world, Madam Speaker. He encourages kids to follow their hearts and pursue their love of the game.

I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Chad Posthumus and wish him well as he continues to pursue his career as a professional basketball player.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Support for Refugees

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, Putin's war in Ukraine has created a moment that shines a light on numerous global challenges, not the least how we respond to refugees. We must provide all of the possible support that we can. We must aid the millions of refugees from Ukraine, as well as the millions of refugees from other war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, Venezuela—the list goes on.

Support for refugees must not be based solely on an economic analysis and whether a refugee is able to immediately work, learn English or contribute to our bottom line. Refugee support must not be based on skin colour. We must apply a humanitarian lens and assist in settling all the world's refugees while global leaders and citizens work towards peace.

The war in Ukraine is but one global crisis, albeit a crisis that's bringing us on the brink of World War III. There are many critical issues requiring our full attention and action, like the climate crisis, food insecurity, the pandemic and the insatiable greed of multinational corporations, and local priorities like violence against women, addictions and overdose, policing and community relations, health-care access, safe and adequate housing, clean water for Indigenous communities and protecting the right to reproductive services.

All of this can be overwhelming, but we must rise to the challenge. We have the ability to change systems of power, particularly those of us in this Chamber.

For those that can, we can assist global NGOs supporting refugees. We can support local agencies doing critical work in our communities. No act is too small.

Miigwech to all of the generous Manitobans volunteering and donating to all of these causes, including those donating to the crisis in Ukraine.

Miigwech.

Support for Ukraine

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): The last two years have featured a continual onslaught of challenges, from the pandemic to economic upheaval and now to war.

It is now one month to the day that Russia invaded Ukraine, and the war in Ukraine is still very much on the minds of all of us and the minds of Manitobans.

I had the pleasure of meeting with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities this morning, and they departed from their agenda to ask questions about the crisis.

We all know that this is an issue that has united people across Manitoba and Canada, of all political stripes, in support of our friends and relatives who are of Ukrainian descent here in Manitoba as well as their friends and relatives who are fleeing terror and who are so bravely fighting back for their right to determine their own destiny.

* (13:50)

At this time, the bravery, sense of humour and incredible toughness of Ukraine has been nothing short of inspirational, because it demonstrates a righteous defence of democracy against tyranny, the importance of truth in reporting and solidarity in the cause of right.

It has resulted in an outpouring of help from every corner of Manitoba.

In my own constituency of St. Boniface, residents of Norwood have started a group in support of Ukraine. Ukrainian-born web designer Andriy Rudnyk and supporters have launched a website that guides people, through a single page, to donate to one of three causes, as well as petitioning MPs to advocate for support for Ukraine, and to several pro-Ukrainian news sources.

That site, mbhelpsukraine.ca, lists those three causes as: financial aid, political aid and informational resources.

Callum Morrison was inspired to hold a fundraising concert in Altona which raised an incredible \$18,000 for the Mennonite Central Committee's humanitarian efforts in Ukraine.

And of course, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has been extraordinary and they, along with the MCC, are a trusted place to make donations for humanitarian aid.

We all wish we could do more, and we will. Ukraine, this is not your fight alone. To Ukrainians across Manitoba, Canada and around the world, we stand with you and we stand with Ukraine.

In this dark hour, you have been a beacon of inspiration to the world. Together, we will prevail; together, we will rebuild.

Slava Ukraini. [*Glory to Ukraine.*] Merci.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Spending Limits Pandemic Management Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, health care is so important. We just have to get it right. And yet, over the past few years, Manitobans have learned that they just can't trust this government when it comes to health care.

The former Health minister, who's now the PC Premier, is making it harder for our front-line health-care workers. Now we're starting to see more and more reasons why.

I'll table internal documents from the Stefanson government about the health-care budget in this current fiscal year. The spending is capped, Madam Speaker: a 1.4 per cent cap on health-care spending during a pandemic.

Why did the Premier refuse to give our front-line health-care workers the resources they needed during COVID-19?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will know that there was a settlement with the nurses union that—for many years of more resources for those people who have been working on our front lines, and we thank them for the incredible work that they've done.

But the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely factually incorrect, as usual, Madam Speaker. In fact, over last year alone, we have increased the budget to Health by more than \$156 million over last year. We have another budget coming up. Stay tuned for more good news.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, this past year has been one full of challenges for our health-care system. We've seen heroic efforts from nurses and physicians and health-care professionals, health-care aides.

Manitobans from all walks of life have been asked to sacrifice, have been told that we have to use any means necessary to combat the pandemic. And then, it turns out this government won't even provide the necessary resources to the front lines of that COVID-19 fight.

We tabled a document that says this government put a cap on health-care resources of 1.4 per cent this year. That puts a limit on the resources devoted to the front lines, Madam Speaker.

After everything that Manitobans have sacrificed, why can't this Premier simply match their commitment?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the litany of false accusations in the members opposite—I think it's important that we put the facts on the record.

The fact is is that our government has invested more than \$1 billion more than the NDP ever did in health care, Madam Speaker—than the NDP ever did when they were in power.

Madam Speaker, over last year alone, \$156 million more in the budget for health care, \$812 million more in a historic capital funding that was announced last year, \$50 million more in the budget to address the surgical and diagnostic backlogs.

Madam Speaker, the investments go on and on and on in terms of what we have invested in health care in the province of Manitoba. And stay tuned for more good information in the upcoming budget.

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

Mr. Kinew: We tabled a government document that shows they put a cap on the health-care system of 1.4 per cent. That's in the current fiscal year, Madam Speaker.

They cannot disprove this. All they have are talking points. Just like Brian Pallister, it's money before people.

Manitobans would be reasonable to ask, is this why our health-care system ran out of capacity during the third wave—because there was a cap on spending in the health-care system? Is this why we had such poor outcomes during the fourth wave?

Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve an answer. Why did this Premier cap the health-care system during our time of need? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition obviously doesn't understand the true numbers of what we're talking about: \$156 million more spent this year in health care over last year.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, but we spent more than \$500 million more in COVID relief and health-care-related expenses over last year as well, and that's something that the NDP is not taking into consideration.

These are the facts. These are the increases in the health-care budget that we have put into place to ensure that those health-care services are there for Manitobans when they need it, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, I will just review the document that I tabled in the House today so that those folks watching at—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —home can see through the talking points, and can cut through the spin.

What it says is that in the current fiscal year, 2021-22—that's right now—that there's going to be a cap of 1.4 per cent. That's a cap on health care during a pandemic, the same pandemic in which Manitoba was the first province to run out of health-care capacity.

We see the impact today. We had a devastating fourth wave. That causes the surgical backlog to grow.

Why did they cap health-care spending? Why won't they do anything to fix the backlog?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, these are not talking points. They're called facts. The Leader of the Opposition could learn something about facts.

Madam Speaker, \$156 million more expended in health care and invested in our health-care system just over last year alone, and more than \$500 million expended and invested in COVID-related relief in—when it comes to health care alone. Those are investments that are made to ensure that the health-care services are there for Manitobans when they need them.

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

Mr. Kinew: But, Madam Speaker, those health-care services were not there when Manitobans needed them.

We had to send ICU patients out of province. We didn't have the capacity to care for the sickest Manitobans. We ran out before any other jurisdiction. That's why this is such an important question, Madam Speaker.

It's right there in black and white. The fiscal year 2021-22: 1.4 per cent. A cap on health-care spending in the fiscal year in which our health-care system ran out of capacity.

How does the Premier defend putting a limit on our ability to fight COVID-19?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, there were no limits put on. In fact, we spent—we invested more than \$1.18 billion more in COVID-related expenses in last year alone.

That is on top of the \$156-million increase in expenditures and health-care-related expenses over last year as well, Madam Speaker. There are a whole litany of investments that have been made in our health-care system.

We recognize because of COVID that there is more work to be done. We will continue to work with those in the health-care system. We will continue to make sure that health care is there for Manitobans when they need it.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Kinew: I just want to make clear that the Premier is not able to refute the fact that there is a 1.4 per cent cap in the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the document that we tabled. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: What happened in that fiscal year during the third wave, Madam Speaker? Our health-care system ran out of ICU capacity. The proof is in the fact that we had to send 57 ICU patients out of province.

What happened during the fourth wave? What's happening—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in the health-care system right now? Surgeries are not happening because we had to re-deploy—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —staff from surgical ORs to the ICUs.

Put simply, Madam Speaker, we ran out of health-care capacity again during the fourth wave, and the proof is in the fact that we—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —had to cancel so many surgeries.

This is not abstract. This is not talking points. These are Manitobans who are suffering and waiting in pain.

How does the government defend a 1.4 per cent cap on health care during Manitobans' time of need?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the only thing that I am refuting is the false accusations by the Leader of the Opposition.

The facts of the matter are—and I will reiterate this again for Manitobans so that they get the facts, Madam Speaker—\$1.18 billion invested last year in COVID-related—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —expenses, Madam Speaker, \$500 million of that alone in health care—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —also an increase of \$156 million to the health-care budget, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: And what I can say to Manitobans is that on April 12th, we will—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) will be delivering a budget in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, and there will be more good news for Manitobans when it comes to health care.

Madam Speaker: I just want to remind members again that, when your member is speaking, it's probably a good thing to support your member and not be heckling, to allow your member to get their point across.

So—and just a reminder to all members, give them a chance, please.

Health and Education Management Apology Request from the Premier

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Yesterday, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) finally admitted, when Manitobans have known all along. When asked if

the PCs have made some mistakes, she replied, I quote: Yes.

That's an understatement, Madam Speaker.

Let's count the mistakes this Conservative government has made: they fired nurses and attacked doctors; they sent patients, including seniors, hours away from their families and loved ones; they let the surgical and diagnostic backlog get even worse, Madam Speaker.

The first step would be an apology to Manitobans.

Will the Premier get up in the House and apologize for her mistakes to Manitobans?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I'm having a really difficult time with the line of discussion that the members opposite have started on today.

It's discrediting the good work of the health-care workers in this province, the individuals that have returned to surgical activity at various sites throughout the regions, Madam Speaker—also, the good work that has been done to increase our baseline for ICU capacity to 110 from the previous pre-pandemic baseline of 92.

And, Madam Speaker, to support the maintenance of reliable critical-care beds, additional staffing resources have been trained and recruited on an ongoing basis to ensure a long-term supply of trained critical-care nurses.

Those are—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier wouldn't say yesterday what her mistakes are, but she should be open with Manitobans. That's real accountability here.

We know that bill 64 was a mistake. A—failing on ICUs during the third wave was a mistake. Forgetting to declare \$31 million, even though it's a law, was a mistake, Madam Speaker. These are serious failings.

Will the Premier be accountable to Manitobans in this House today and apologize for her mistakes?

Ms. Gordon: Will the member for St. Johns apologize to Manitobans for saying that there are no surgeries occurring? Her leader has said today that all the good health-care workers in the system who are performing surgeries as we sit in this Chamber,

Madam Speaker, is not doing any surgeries. That is factually incorrect.

And will the members opposite apologize to Manitobans: \$70 million for the Brandon Regional Health Centre is what this government has invested; \$32 million for the Bethesda hospital; \$64.4 million—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —Boundary Trails; \$31.6 million, Selkirk; \$5 million, Dauphin; \$127 million, Neepawa; \$10.8 million in Ashern.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Fontaine: In what may be the first moment of clarity citizens have seen from this Premier, she told us yesterday, and I quote: I will continue to make mistakes. End quote.

We've seen enough from this Premier and this government to know that nothing has changed since Brian Pallister—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —left. It's just the same old, same old, Madam Speaker: cut health care, make life—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —more expensive for Manitobans. They could choose a different path if they wanted to: stop health-care cuts, stop hiking hydro, stop making the mistakes.

And we will apologize to all Manitobans for their mistakes that have made so much struggle in the lives of Manitobans.

Will the Premier get up today and do the same?

An Honourable Member: He's got the list of mistakes.

Madam Speaker: And I've got the list of members that are refusing to listen to me and be more considerate of people that are asking and answering questions. *[interjection]*

And I would call the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) to order on that. I was standing and I was expressing some concerns, and that is the most inappropriate time for somebody to throw

something back at the Speaker. That is totally uncalled for.

So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): And here we are again, the NDP with the campaign of fear, campaign of slander, preambles are completely dishonest, made up and completely misleading.

Madam Speaker, our government is focused on delivering what Manitobans has asked us to deliver on. We're committed to making those—making things positive for Manitobans. We know there's work ahead of us.

We know the NDP are fixated on the past, they're fixated on the negatives, but I can tell you, under this Premier's leadership, Manitoba's best days are ahead.

Collective Bargaining Negotiations Government Record

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This government bargains in bad faith. They interfere. They interfere in collective bargaining, clearly violate terms of contracts that have already been negotiated.

Just yesterday, an independent arbitrator sided with the workers again at Manitoba Hydro and against this government. They said the contract terms must be upheld. The government has repeatedly disrespected workers and their rights for fair bargaining. That's what the ruling said.

Will the minister and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) stop interfering in collective bargaining today?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, I'm sure the member opposite knows that we are not the employer. Manitoba Hydro is the employer. They are the body that negotiates with the union.

Collective bargaining works, and we continue to follow down that path with all of the employers, that they follow the collective bargaining process, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Lindsey: This government interfered with workers' rights at Manitoba Hydro. They did the same thing at the University of Manitoba. A court found this government undermined negotiations and interfered.

The Premier has said she and her party made mistakes. Well, this is just one more example of the mistakes that this PC government continues to make.

Will the minister and the Premier admit they are wrong to continue interfering in collective bargaining and stop interfering today?

* (14:10)

Mr. Helwer: Well, the member opposite seems to portray himself as an expert in collective bargaining, so I'm sure he knows that Manitoba Hydro is the employer, Madam Speaker. The Manitoba government is not the employer of the individual union that he speaks about.

We encourage—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: —the employers to continue the collective bargaining process, and we have faith in that process, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary.

MLA Lindsey: This government continues to interfere with Manitoba Hydro. They've once again found that they've disrespected contract terms at University of Manitoba. They've been ordered to pay millions for their interference.

Meanwhile, thousands of front-line health-care workers have been without a contract for five years because of this government's interference. They've been without a contract long enough. Enough is enough. Stop the interference. Get out of the way. Let collective bargaining do its job and work.

Will this government get out of the way, stop interfering today?

Mr. Helwer: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, the opposition can't have it both ways. They either want us to interfere or not interfere.

So, it's clear, Madam Speaker, all of the unions he spoke about are employed by bodies outside of the government. We are not the employer; they are the employer. We encourage them to follow the collective bargaining process, and we have great faith in that process.

Northern Health Care Staffing Level Concerns

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): We all know what the minister refuses to acknowledge: that northern health care is in crisis. I'll table documents provided through FIPPA.

Right now, Gillam, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake and Snow Lake are all missing more than half of the nurses they need. This just confirms what we have been saying to the minister for months and now years: northern health care is in crisis.

Why won't the minister give the North the supports that it needs?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I want to correct the false information that the member has placed on the record—\$4.3 million for 37 additional nurse training seats at the University College of the North. In Budget 2021, our government has also committed \$812 million, the largest health-care—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —commitment in Manitoba's history, to improve rural and northern health care.

More good news to come.

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

Mr. Bushie: Again, no acknowledgement of the crisis that exists in northern health care.

There aren't the doctors, health support staff or nurses needed to provide the support needed in the North. In the Thompson emergency room right now, the vacancy rate's 45 per cent. This is a regional hub for health care, and there's not another hospital just down the road.

Nearly half the positions aren't there. This is dangerous and unacceptable.

Why won't this minister take action?

Ms. Gordon: The member is incorrect. We are taking action.

The \$812 million will be used in the creation of a new intermediate health-care hub in northern Manitoba; build and expand 38 health-care facilities—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —across rural and northern Manitoba; improve access, quality and reliability of care; reduce wait times.

And Madam Speaker, I encourage the member to join me at the meeting that will be hosted where we will be looking at health—northern health-care sustainability in May.

We are about solutions; they are about problems.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Keewatinook, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Bushie: Again, no acknowledgement of the crisis.

The Thompson emergency room is missing 45 per cent of the workers needed. Obstetrics in Thompson is also short 45 per cent. I'll say that again, Madam Speaker: 45 per cent.

In Thompson, there's not another hospital just down the road if you're having a medical emergency or even having a baby. This situation needs to be fixed now.

Why hasn't the minister listened to our concerns and the concerns of northern citizens and addressed this crisis in health care in the North?

Ms. Gordon: Ensuring that there are services to Manitobans living in the North is a priority for this government.

That is why we've made this historic investment of \$812 million, and initiatives under the clinical and preventative services plan sets a great—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —foundation for moving our system ahead, especially in northern areas, Madam Speaker.

I'm in constant contact with stakeholders throughout the North, with the board of the northern regional health authority. We are talking about solutions. There will be a good meeting in May to look at more solutions. I encourage the member to focus on the positives and to support all Manitobans living in the North.

Action on Climate Change Government Spending Concerns

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, last week we showed that, by this government's own admission, their tiny measures on climate change—or,

sorry, their tiny measures on stopping climate change won't have a meaningful impact to reduce greenhouse gases. In fact, emissions continue to go up.

Now we've received new documents through freedom of information, which I table, that show that this government is just slow to take action. Nearly half of the funds allocated through the Low Carbon Economy Fund have not yet been spent.

Why won't this government prioritize action to address climate change?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Certainly, we'll take no lessons on the climate when it comes to members opposite.

We know that members opposite, their plan was born on a napkin and continues to be on a napkin, Madam Speaker. And we're certainly working with stakeholders across this great province and across Canada to ensure, Madam Speaker, that we will be on the right path with the support of stakeholders as we move forward to a green, clean economy.

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

Ms. Naylor: I hope the minister isn't planning to go out of town for spring break, because the deadline to allocate funds through the Low Carbon Economy Fund is eight days away.

Tens of millions of dollars remain unallocated. These funds are languishing because this government is so slow to take action—so slow we have to wonder if they care about climate change at all.

Madam Speaker, why won't this government prioritize action to address climate change?

Mr. Wharton: Action is exactly what our government is doing when it comes to climate, Madam Speaker.

We—in 2018, the Expert Advisory Council, Madam Speaker, was developed to ensure that we engage all stakeholders as we move forward with climate.

Madam Speaker, we know where the NDP was on climate when they dumped millions of litres of potash in Lake Winnipeg. That was their conclusion to ending the evasive species in Lake Winnipeg.

Where they failed, we'll get it right.

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

Ms. Naylor: I will remind the minister that his expert advisory committee has directed his government to have a water plan, has directed his government to have a clean transportation plan by the end of this year. There are so many directions they've provided, and any of these could have been—had money allocated to them from the funds that this government is sitting on.

The deadline is eight days away.

So, Manitobans' emissions are increasing, they will continue to rise under this government's approach. These are federal dollars that have been allocated that this government is just going to let slip through its fingers unless the minister moves his feet today and ensures that Manitoba takes real action to address climate change today.

Mr. Wharton: As a resident along Lake Winnipeg, we know the record of the NDP when it comes to ensuring that our jewel of—freshwater lake, Madam Speaker, is protected.

*(14:20)

We know that, for the 17 years in power, that they kept kicking the can down the road when it came to the North End treatment plant in the city of Winnipeg. We know that the City of Winnipeg—we know, Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —that the North End treatment plant has been an issue for years, Madam Speaker.

Our government is taking action in ensuring that the City of Winnipeg is compliant, and we will move forward in a sustainable way to protect Lake Winnipeg and our water, Madam Speaker.

Pandemic Spending Request for Audit

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): On Tuesday, I asked this government about three deals alone that cost Manitobans \$35 million in emergency pandemic spending with nothing to show for it: millions of masks we couldn't use cost \$26.6 million, \$7.2 million on a non-existent vaccine and \$1.2 million in unapproved hand sanitizer made from fuel ethanol.

Now, the minister told the House the hand sanitizer was approved by Health Canada and then it revoked. The letter I table from Health Canada shows that that is not the case. It was never approved.

How did the government end up spending \$35 million on products that couldn't be used and sometimes were never even approved by Health Canada?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, Madam Speaker, the member asked this question before, a couple times, and the answer is much the same.

We work with Health Canada. We buy products that are on their approved list. And when we bought—brought the product into Manitoba, it was approved, and then Canada rescinded their approval. They are within their rights to do that; they are the body that checks the veracity of the product, and we work with them to make sure that staff are not at risk.

We did put an order in for \$35 million, the first province to do so, with PPE—for PPE from the provincial—federal government, and they couldn't supply, Madam Speaker. So we had to go work with local companies to provide PPE for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Lamont: The hand—Madam Speaker, the hand sanitizers was from a Manitoba company; it wasn't brought into Manitoba at all.

And the fact that the—no masks were available from the federal government is no excuse to buy \$35 million—or \$26 million of—worth of masks that don't work.

With three deals costing \$35 million with nothing to show for it, we have to ask how much more this government spent—\$1.2 million on hand sanitizers that the US FDA recommends has to be disposed of as hazardous waste.

For 18 months, we've been calling for a public inquiry into the failed health response around the pandemic, but it's also clear we need a thorough audit of pandemic spending.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) ask the Auditor General to audit pandemic spending and business supports, or do we need to do that?

Mr. Helwer: Well, you know, the federal government was having trouble supplying PPE to all provinces in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. We asked them to help us do that, and they were not able to do so, so we went out and we bought on our own from all over the world and from Manitoba suppliers. In fact, when we finally

did get masks from the federal government, the boxes were stamped: donated by the Red Cross. And they were expired.

I know the federal government had a tough time getting PPE, but perhaps they could've got—given us something that was effective. We worked with them to get other products and they were very helpful in some of those regards. They had challenges, as everyone in the world did, Madam Speaker.

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

Ukrainian Refugees in Manitoba Government Housing Plan

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I've received emails from several individuals who have identified vacant housing units, homes, townhomes and so forth all over Manitoba. These homes could serve as a great place to help house Ukrainian refugees when they arrive in our province, and it provides the opportunity for the government to fix up some of these properties so they can be used as livable housing options.

What is this government planning for housing displaced Ukrainians when they arrive in Manitoba?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Our government continues to take action with the Ukraine situation.

Our government does take a proactive approach to assist them as they consider making Manitoba their home. Specifically, we are taking a whole-of-government approach in such areas as housing, health and mental health care, K-to-12 education, child care, English language services and job placements.

Madam Speaker, we'll always be the home of hope. That is why our government created a centralized website, the manitoba4ukraine.ca, to provide everyone with access to the necessary information and resources about the Ukraine situation and how great—our great province can assist at times of greatest need.

I'd like to thank all Manitobans who have offered their help and assistance through the website. I would also like to thank, most notably, my good friend Ab Chudley, who is actually registered and is offering help like many Manitobans are, Madam Speaker.

North End Women's Centre Funding Announcement

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Substance use and mental health challenges are often at the forefront

when providing community programming at women's resource centres. That's especially the case for women and families struggling with the impacts of domestic violence.

Can the Minister of Families, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, tell this House what is being done to support these organizations that help these women and children?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I thank my colleague for that question.

Women helping women: that is one of many mantras that this government holds dear. And to that end, yesterday we were very proud to visit the North End Women's Centre to provide them with \$400,000 to maintain continuity at their eight-unit transitional housing space that they have.

And one of the highlights of the day was meeting a woman named Stephanie, who shared her story of, after spending time in one of these transitional housing units, she not only got her children back that were in CFS care, she's 21 months sober, she's got a job and she's got housing, and that wouldn't have been made possible if it weren't for the wonderful efforts of the North End Women's Centre. And I'd like to thank everybody involved in their efforts there for the job well done.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Small Business Community Government Record

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, a new survey of Manitoba businesses showed nearly 80 per cent disapproval rating of this PC government's performance.

That's the worst approval rating—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —since 2017. And it's no surprise.

This government has simply abandoned small businesses. They failed to deliver the supports they needed. They failed to deliver sick pay. And now, when inflation is at its highest, the government is silent.

Will the minister give up the spin and finally admit their approach to small businesses is just one added to their long list of—record of mistakes?

Will they admit their mistakes today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): We certainly recognize the challenges that the business community has faced over the last two years.

That's why our government has invested more than \$650 million in 38,000 businesses and organizations over the last two years. We have offered direct financial assistance and tax relief—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —to help businesses survive the pandemic and prepare for post-COVID.

Madam Speaker, we're focused on getting people back to work. We're focused on helping employers find employees, and we're going to continue to work with business and academia and immigration services to make sure those needs are fulfilled, and we will continue to invest in Manitoba businesses and Manitobans.

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

Mr. Moses: Eighty per cent—80 per cent. The survey says 80 per cent of business owners say this government is doing a bad job.

They won't forget this government's mistakes. They won't forget this government's failures when it came to programming. And they especially won't forget \$500,000 handed out to the government's Fort Whyte candidate, all while local businesses in Manitoba struggled to survive.

Will the minister apologize for these mistakes to Manitoban small businesses?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Manitobans and Manitoba businesses will not forget the \$650-million investment that we made in 38,000 businesses and organizations.

* (14:30)

We've also set aside \$50 million for additional post-COVID recovery with Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. And the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and I actually met with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce board of directors this morning. We talked about the downtown recovery strategy that they have put forward.

We're hoping that—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —the business community and the federal government will get onside and help us move forward

in downtown revitalization and continue the work in revitalizing Manitoba post-COVID.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to members that it's not a very good idea to heckle down your own members that are trying to ask or answer questions.

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

Mr. Moses: Now, 80 per cent of business owners disapprove of this government's approach.

This government refused to bring back paid sick leave or targeted sector-specific supports to help small businesses. They ignored small-business owners during their pandemic response. And, in the last few weeks, they listened to convoys who blocked our borders and disrupted supply chains.

This government isn't on the side of small business.

So, will the minister today apologize to small-business owners of Manitoba for their mistakes?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we're never going to apologize for a \$650-million investment, the 38,000 businesses and organizations.

And speaking of businesses, the 'Manichober' of—Chamber of Commerce 2021 business outlook service, over 400 businesses said—64 per cent say the provincial government responded well; 77 per cent of respondents say they believe Manitoba's on the right track.

Madam Speaker, under this Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) leadership, the best days in Manitoba are ahead.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Health-Care Coverage

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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 of less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

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.

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.

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

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.

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:

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, dependent children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

We urge the minister of Health and seniors care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

To urge the minister of Health and senior 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.

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 they can access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

Foot-Care Services

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

The background to 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, the N-R-H-A, 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 the surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 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 service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond 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.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, 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 can also experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

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

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech 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, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 45 devices per year.

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

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

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —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 of age.

* (14:40)

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 a device upgrade.

It's 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 Bradon Carnegie, Karl Carnegie, Michelle Carnegie and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Abortion Services

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 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 a buffer zones are immediately legislated.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Miigwech.

Scrap Metal Legislation—Consumer Protection

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The spike in catalytic converter thefts occurring across North America has hit Winnipeg. The price of precious metals in catalytic converters, like rhodium, palladium and platinum, are worth thousands of dollars an ounce. Scrap-metal recyclers have catalytic converters priced to the vehicle, with some catalytic converters worth \$800.

(2) Organized groups of criminals are climbing under vehicles and cutting catalytic converters and selling them to scrap-metal recyclers for cash, without any record of these transactions.

(3) Catalytic converter thefts cost consumers about \$2,000 for each replacement. Manitoba Public Insurance charges a betterment fee for new replacements, so insurance doesn't cover the full cost.

(4) Currently, sellers do not have to provide government-issued photo ID and recyclers do not need to record and retain this information, or record details of the transaction.

(5) Scrap-metal recyclers do not report to police any transactions involving catalytic converters.

(6) Provinces like BC and Alberta have scrap-metal-recycler legislation requiring businesses to keep proper records.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to bring in consumer protection legislation requiring scrap-metal recyclers to keep proper records so only legitimate sales are allowed and criminals can be caught.

And this petition is 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 health issues affecting one's physical, 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 week.

This has been signed by Earl Coleman, Madison Vogan and Jo Anne Giesbrecht and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): So, I'm going to have a leave request on extending the Sessional Order that House leaders have been engaged in since the start of the pandemic and just extending issues regarding virtual sittings.

So, in accordance with section 36 of the Sessional Order passed by this House on October 8th, 2020, and subsequently amended, I'm seeking leave of the House to further amend that same Sessional Order so that in the first paragraph, April 4th, 2022, is replaced by June 10th, 2022.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to further amend the Sessional Order passed by this House on October 8th, 2020, and subsequently amended so that in the first paragraph, April 4th, 2022, is replaced by June 10th, 2022? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

* (14:50)

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business. Pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' resolution—or private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Raising Hydro Rates.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for St. James. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Raising Hydro Rates.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Tuesday, April 19th, 2022 at 6 p.m. to consider the following reports: Auditor General's report, annual report to the legislator, dated March 2014, chapter 4, Helicopter Ambulance Program, chapter 7, Manitoba's Framework for an Ethical Environment; Auditor General's report, follow-up of the previously issued recommendations, dated May 2014, section 7, Personal Care Homes Program, section 8, Pharmacare Program—Part 2, section 23, Wireless Network Security; Auditor General's Report, Manitoba Home Care Program, dated July 2015; Auditor General's report, follow-up of the previously issued recommendations, dated May 2015, section 10, Wireless Network Security; Auditor General's report, follow-up recommendations, dated May 2016, Wireless Network Security, Helicopter Ambulance Program; Auditor General's report, follow-up recommendations, dated March 2017, Helicopter Ambulance Program, Manitoba Home Care Program; Auditor General's report, follow-up recommendations, dated March 2018, Helicopter Ambulance Program, WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices, Manitoba Home Care Program, Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students; Auditor General's Report, Forensic Audits, dated October 2018, Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities; Auditor General's Report, Management of Foster Homes, dated November 2019; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Recommendations, dated March 2019, WRHA's Management of Risks Associated with End-user Devices, Manitoba Home Care Program, Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students; Auditor General's report, follow-up recommendations, dated March 2020, Improving Education Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students, Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities; Auditor General's report, follow-up recommendations, dated March 2021, Rural Municipality of De Salaberry: Audit of Financial Irregularities.

The witnesses to be called are: Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) and the Deputy Minister of Families.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in the Chamber on Tuesday, April 19th—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, could you please call for concurrence and third reading, followed by royal assent, Bill 4 and Bill 12?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider concurrence and third readings of Bill 4 and Bill 12 this afternoon, to be followed by royal assent.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 4—The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore start by calling concurrence and third 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 Justice (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lagimodiere: The final report on the National Inquiry into MMIWG comprises the truths of more than 2,380 family members. The reclaiming place reports contain over 1,200 pages, with 231 calls for justice. They contain content on many areas, including chapters on Indigenous recognition of power and place, colonization, as gender oppression, right to culture, right to health, right to security and right to justice.

Section 3 insists upon the need for self-determined and needs-based solutions that work to combat violence and addressing healing. This is why it is so important for our government and all governments to implement the calls for justice and this is why, on November the 26th, 2021, I introduced the 231 calls to justice as an amendment to be included in the provincial Path to Reconciliation Act.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It is necessary that Manitoba acknowledge the calls for justice within The Path to Reconciliation Act to shine further light on the importance of addressing the systemic causes of all forms of violence, including sexual violence, against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. We recognize that there's lots of work that remains to end violence against

Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples. All Manitobans must play a role in addressing these harms.

Our government is already actioning the 231 calls for justice. On December 14th of this—last year, our government introduced—sorry—announced that we are providing \$3 million in funding to the Clan Mothers. The Clan Mothers is an Indigenous woman-led organization. With this funding we are supporting the construction of a healing village. This village will provide supports for women who have been victims of multi-generational trauma, sexual violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we don't stop there. On February 14th, we announced that our government is partnering with Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre to provide \$130,000 in funding to support the co-development of a provincial implementation plan to raise awareness and end violence against Indigenous, women, girls and 2-L–2SLGBTQIA+ peoples in Manitoba. Our government will continue working in collaboration with organizations such as the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, and the Clan Mothers, known for their strong relationship with our Indigenous organizations and leadership. Our collaboration with groups like these will help guide the co-ordination of important projects that will further calls to action of the 231 calls for justice.

Projects like these are just the beginning, and I look forward to working with organizations in the future that are going to help us address the 231 calls to justice. It is up to every Manitoban to action the 231 calls to justice and to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples.

Thank you, miigwech.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a chance to say a few words at third reading on Bill 4, the path to reconciliation.

And I think it's worth noting that—and I will read verbatim the explanatory note of the bill: 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 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls are to

guide the Government of Manitoba's commitment to reconciliation.

And I would like to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's a start, but it's also very, very limited piece of legislation brought forward.

* (15:00)

The minister had made reference to the importance, and I think across all demographics and all Manitoba, it's very important to recognize the significance and the acknowledgement and the recognition of and the need to do more. So, this bill amends the fact of being able to get into the 231 calls to justice for MMIWG and incorporate that into, kind of, the framework of how this province is going to function, how this province is going to run on this path to reconciliation.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I see the word path, I mean, if you walk down a path in your life, you know, it may take your entire life to be able to do that. But it takes it one step at a time. And in this way, this isn't just a step, it's a baby step. And we need to do more. And there's so much more that needs to be done.

And we've all been over the last year, I mean, we had this COVID pandemic, but there's still been a number of different Indigenous issues that have come to the forefront. And they haven't been secrets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It—these are issues that Indigenous people here in Manitoba, here in Canada, have known for a long, long time, have known for generations that are going on, that are impacting. And the MMIWG families have known this to be an issue for a long time.

So, are their voices being heard through this piece of legislation? They are being heard, but they were being heard and being pushed because the families had called for that action.

So, let's get out there and let's be a province and a country that is now at the forefront, that is now proactive in getting that action established and getting that recognition and getting solutions so that an MMIWG-affected family, community, individuals do not have to go through that anymore, do not have to scream at the top of their lungs to be able to say this is an issue, this is something that needs to be addressed. This is help that needs to be made available for me, why isn't anybody listening? Those voices should not be silenced.

So, you hear the numbers: 231 calls to justice, 94 Calls to Action. So, let's do that. Let's do that more

than just baby steps. Let's do that in terms of real legislation and real actions. And we shouldn't have to just say our—we're going to put a piece of legislation before the House, before the Province, we're going to pass it and that's going to be the be all end all. We need to do more.

So this piece of legislation, like I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a start, it's a step, but it is a baby step. So, we need to do more.

Earlier on in this fall, this winter, there's been a lot of talk, and in particular in September, around Orange Shirt Day and The Orange Shirt Day Act that I brought forth before this Chamber. So, again, that was a way to be able to take another step on the path to reconciliation. And I would like to hope—and it's still before the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that this something that is something that encompasses all of us, that we can all take that.

And the point of that—and I have heard different comments out there, social media, in the public, to be able to say that it's about making a statutory holiday, and maybe that's not the words how we should have described that in terms of a statutory holiday. It's a day of acknowledgment. It's a day of education.

We shouldn't be limited to just the one day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is a start. It is a step. Is that a baby step also? I mean, we could argue whether that's a baby step or a bigger step; in the grand picture, it's a step in the right direction.

So, we need to be able to meet and maybe pass that piece of legislation. And will it be passed because it's brought up from a member of the opposition?

Perhaps, perhaps not. But at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those days and those acknowledgments need to be used as a day to educate.

We're not looking for it to be recognized as a let's take the day off work, let's go close up the cottage. We had those issue—had those discussions this past September, and there was even some confusion as to whether or not children were going to go to school or whether they're not going to go to school, or they're going to learn in school, or what they're going to learn, or if that—if the topic of Orange Shirt Day and the purpose and the events that led up to having that discussion were going to highlight and take over the day. And, rightfully, they should. They should take over that day.

So, that day is meant to be used as a day of education, of a day of information, not just from

Indigenous people but from Manitoba and society in Canada in general to be able to say, let's have this, let's talk about this atrocity that happened in society. Let's not say, oh, it happened years ago, it happened generations ago. We need to discuss that always.

We talk about intergenerational impacts of residential school and 'intergenerational' impacts of colonization here in Manitoba. Let's truly have that discussion. We're all going to have that, we're all going to have those discussions and be able to bring that forth and say this is what's there, because it is part of our history.

When we talk about, you know, talking about things that happened generations ago, we talk about great things, we talk about awful things, but they're still part of our history. So we need to be able to address that, and bringing something forth like Orange Shirt Day is something that goes another step towards Bill 4 and that path to reconciliation.

In my earlier debate and comments during one of the other readings, we had talked about, and this has been in place now for a number of years, you know, five-plus years. And there's only been one amendment that was made by the government, and that was just the translation component of that. So we need to do more. And I think government, and I think the minister also recognizes that more needs to be done.

So I do ask that let's do more. And whether or not everybody has seen the announcements, because I know in debate we had talked about the 2 and a half million dollars that was earmarked from the government to be able to search residential school sites for unmarked graves. And I know there's been now an organization and a committee and stakeholders and Indigenous leaders and community members and elders that are now going to be part of that process. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a step. That's a step in the right direction. But let's do more.

And that's something I'll always insist on and Indigenous people will always insist on and want to be able to do. Let's do more. There's been a lot of hurt and a lot of anger, but Indigenous people have been very resilient here in the—and they're very forgiving. And I can speak from experience in my community and my elders have been very forgiving. They just want to be able to share this knowledge, share the stories.

But at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that cannot be taken for granted. That ability to forgive cannot be taken for granted. That ability to be able to

say let's work together cannot be taken for granted. Let's truly work with Indigenous people here in Manitoba, wherever you may reside, whether it be in southern Manitoba, the city of Winnipeg, northern Manitoba. Let's have those discussions. Let's truly do something.

So the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Calls to Action, let's implement those. If we're going to sit there and throw out numbers and say, oh, this is Call to Action number whatever it may be, let's bring that forth, let's bring that, let's discuss that thoroughly. Because each Call to Action needs to be 'exacy' that, a call to action. Not just a report that gets filed away, that gets—gathers dust and is not—is only dusted off every time there's an Indigenous issue that's brought to the forefront in terms of a catastrophe or an emergency of the day that how people may view it, or a cause of the day, or news of the day. Let's do that always. Let's truly institute that in how we operate and how we function as society.

So there's a—been a lot of the TRC Calls to Action, the 231 calls to justice, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Let's start implementing that in how we function and how we act in—not just how we act as government, but how we act as society. Let's truly have those discussions and bring those forward in a meaningful way.

So as I mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the bill, Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act, it's a small amendment. It's a needed amendment, but a small amendment. But it needs to do so much more.

So, the minister had been appointed to his role some time ago, now, and I understand the nature of government sometimes is to have those Cabinet shuffles. So this minister, I don't want to use the word survived, but, you know, when the shuffle came, he kept his role.

So, that says either two things, Mr. Deputy Speaker: one, that they're thinking they're—it's good enough and we're doing fine, and that may be the case in some issues; or the other part is the potential is there. The potential is there in this minister to do the right thing by the portfolio. To do the right—*[interjection]*—To do the right thing by just the nature of the title of the portfolio: Indigenous relations and reconciliation.

And let's do that right thing. Let's bring forth these kind of things. Let's work together, let's work collaboratively on a number of different issues. Let's pass Orange Shirt Day, not just because it's from a member

opposite, but because it's the right thing to do to educate. Because that day should be about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That day and every day should be about educating society, education Manitobans.

I'm not going to sit here and say I'm the be all, end all knowledge keeper on Indigenous issues, because I'm not. I consider myself to be an elder in training, and I have been that way my entire life and I will be for my entire life.

* (15:10)

And I think that's the mentality that we need to take so that we can always learn. We're always learning, we're always listening, we're always paying attention and we're always looking to make that difference.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I do wanted to say I am ultimately in support of this bill because it is a step the right way, but it is a baby step. Let's take bigger steps. Let's take bigger positions to be able to say, let's truly get down this path of reconciliation. Let's jump down that path.

Let's not just go limited, let's do things entirely. Let's do things not because you have to, but because you want to and because it's the right thing to do.

So, with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, miigwech.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I rise just to speak for a moment or two and just in appreciation of the remarks being made today on Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act. And I'm really appreciative of what is being shared from all sides of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I don't want to repeat what has already been said. We want to get this legislation passed very efficiently here. But I did want to share a couple thoughts that had not been vocalized specifically this afternoon, but I know are shared by all members in the House.

I really want to commend the incredible work that continues to be done by Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And sometimes this work is with the governments and sometimes this work is not with the governments, and this is governments at all level. We need our municipal governments, our provincial governments and our federal governments to support this issue.

I also want to express gratitude for the Clan Mothers Healing Village as well as Elder Mae Louise Campbell and her daughter Jamie because they, very

early on, understood the need for a healing lodge. They ran Grandmother Moon Lodge for 18 years, and since that time, their work has expanded as the need for community was evident.

And this is how we know that the need is evident and still true to this day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We need more supports going into places of healing and at a provincial level, again, at a city level and federal level. We all need to be working together to create these supports.

We need to create tangible changes as well, and, you know, the member from Keewatinook started to make reference to this at the very end. This is a good piece of legislation that we're going to be supporting and we're happy to support. But it's just scratching the surface, and we're hopeful that a lot more is to come.

So here we stand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're very privileged to stand in this place and have the opportunity to debate this legislation. And our caucus is going to be fully supporting it, and we hope that there is much more to come.

Thank you.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I want to put a few words out from a non-Indigenous person who has the honour and privilege of representing so many Indigenous people in the Flin Flon constituency.

It's been a remarkable experience for me to learn from people throughout the North, and I would not, for one second, suggest that every one of those peoples have the same issues or are the same. There's different issues in so many of those communities that I have the privilege of representing.

Prior to being elected, my knowledge of issues related to reconciliation, related to Indigenous peoples, was very slim. So I appreciate what the member from Keewatinook has said about every day we should be learning. And every day that I do this job of representing people in that constituency, I'd like to think that I'm learning something more on how to better represent the people that I've been elected to represent.

So, when we look at this piece of legislation that's been introduced and it's more words on paper. But what I see from, certainly the current government, is a lot of words and very little action.

I know I've raised issues from some of those communities, whether it's assistance with the hospital at Cross Lake, and we get nothing from this government; whether it's the community at Norway House that's

trying to build a hospital, and they get nothing from this government. And this government says, well that's all the federal government's responsibility.

Which is completely factually incorrect because both of those communities have two communities. One community is the First Nations community, the other community is a northern affairs community made up primarily of Indigenous peoples who have not been able to satisfy the requirements to get status because of past racist policies of federal governments that denied those people status.

So in the process of saying, well, we're not going to help those communities because that's a federal responsibility, this government is continuing the racist policies of denying helping people that are very specifically this provincial government's responsibility.

And certainly when it comes to reconciliation, actions—and particularly in the two cases I've cited—actions could very well show that this government was interested in doing something different. But to date they have not.

Now it would be easy to blame the minister of reconciliation that it's all his fault, but clearly every department of this government needs to consider reconciliation when they make decisions about funding, about programs, about everything that they do. And certainly we've written to any number of ministers—the health ministers, multiple health ministers—and asked for assistance with different issues only to be ignored.

You know, we talk about trying to create equality for people in the North and the government made big announcements about fibre optic, that they're going to turn over the dark fibre from Manitoba Hydro so that communities can get high-speed Internet, and they give it to a company. And when I talk to that company and say, so, when can we expect to receive high-speed Internet in Tadoule Lake? And the answer's not any time soon because they have no intention of doing anything outside of rural Manitoba at this point in time.

So why is that? Why does this government allow that company to focus on people in rural Manitoba and continue to ignore people that don't just have poor Internet in the North, but have no Internet in the North? Well, one could possibly suggest that there was a racial bias in deciding who was going to succeed and who was not. That's not reconciliation. That certainly wouldn't be my understanding of what reconciliation is.

And that's what I was talking about—every ministry, every department of this government needs to look at what they're doing with that reconciliation lens so that they're putting things in place to address the issues of inequality that exist for people in northern Manitoba.

Health care is a disaster in northern Manitoba. I don't care what the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) says, and she can throw out numbers all she wants about how much money they're spending. If she comes to any community in northern Manitoba, comes and talks to people in those northern communities, they will tell her exactly the same thing: it's a crisis.

* (15:20)

Leaf Rapids shuts down for weeks at a time. And yet I learned after the fact that they actually had enough nurses scheduled, but they got reassigned to somewhere else because the people of that community didn't matter to this government. That's not reconciliation.

We need to make sure that education is equal throughout the province, and it is not. Throughout this pandemic, particularly First Nations communities, particularly First Nations communities in the North, have been locked down for months, have not been able to send their kids to school, and yet they don't have basic Internet services. How have they been able to keep up so that they can enter the world, enter the working world, on an equal footing with kids from the south, from non-Indigenous communities? There's been no thought to how that's going to work out. There's going to be long-term implications to this government's lack of resources for people in the North. And people in Indigenous communities in the North are still Manitobans and still need to be served by the government of Manitoba. And so far, particularly, this government is failing them.

We talked some time ago about the augmented flow program that Manitoba Hydro has that particularly affects communities like South Indian Lake, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, but also affects communities like Cross Lake, Norway House, when in a year like we saw this year, by this government allowing the Augmented Flow Program to not just continue but to actually grant a final licence that allows it to continue. Those communities saw their river system, their lake system possibly at the lowest level that they've ever actually seen.

Now, next year, the dams will open and levels have come up and all the erosion and all the negative effects will again change the quality of water, the levels of water. There has to be a way to listen to particularly the elders of those communities that can talk about a better way of managing those flows so that the augmented flow program doesn't have the wild fluctuations that destroy those communities. But this government wouldn't listen to them, and they need to. Those people, their knowledge needs to be recognized and respected and listened to.

Now, I could go on for quite some time about specific issues that the people I represent in the North have to deal with, but I think particularly the minister—and I appreciate that he's listening intently to what's being said, and I hope he takes it to heart and convinces the government that things need to be done differently in order to do more than just put words on a paper towards reconciliation.

So with those few words, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Seeing—is the House ready for the—*[interjection]* Just wondering if we're having some technical—okay, the honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to stand up today and put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 4. Just before my colleague for—the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) comes on.

I do really want to—I appreciate everything that my colleagues have put on the record here today. And particularly the member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey), I really do appreciate the words, as a non-Indigenous person, to stand up in this House and talk about the importance of, you know, equitable, respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples here in Manitoba.

And so, I'm proud to work with the folks on this side of the House that know reconciliation is more than just—as I've said many, many times over the years, reconciliation is more than just expressed breath. Reconciliation demands action. It demands that we dismantle the systems that perpetuate, you know, discrimination against Indigenous peoples, the systemic racism against Indigenous peoples that impact on all aspects of our lives.

Right from, you know, not having clean drinking water in 2022. We still have communities that don't have access to clean drinking water. And sometimes,

you know, Deputy Speaker, you know, you—it's almost unimaginable the things that First Nation communities are forced to live in and deal with. And my mind is often, you know, at a loss of how we can be, you know, year after year, still dealing with these same issues. So again, access to clean water.

We still have First Nation communities in Manitoba that don't have all of the schools that they need for their students to be able to finish school in their community. So we still have First Nation communities in Manitoba that families are forced to send their school—their children to the city to finish school.

I know that, you know, if those were my sons, I don't know if I'd be able to do it, Deputy Speaker. I don't know if I'd be able to at, you know, grade 8 or 9, send my babies to the city to finish their education, which is actually a human right. It's a human right for everyone to be able to access education.

I don't think I'd be able to do it. And yet, we have parents, you know, every September for—and, you know, I don't think I'd be able to do it particularly as the granddaughter and niece of residential school survivors.

But every September, we have First Nation parents who are also the survivors of residential—the residential school survivors—or the grandchildren, or daughters, or sons or whatever it may be, of residential school survivors—and they have to make that really difficult decision to send their children to the city, which we know is not safe for Indigenous peoples. We know that when youth are forced to come to the city to finish education, they are put at greater risk.

And so, you know, reconciliation means dealing with that issue. It means that Manitobans, Canadians and certainly members in this House fight for that right to access education, and not just with breath, not just with adding a couple of things to a bill, but with action. With strategic action, methodical action and equitable action for the next generation. So, you know, that's just one issue in respect of reconciliation.

* (15:30)

I know my colleague spoke about MMIWG2S, and I know my colleague for—the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) will probably talk about MMIWG2S as well. And, you know, reconciliation demands that we acknowledge that there is an ongoing genocide of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit in our own territories. Like I remind everybody, these are Indigenous territories. We have always been here since time immemorial, taking care of these lands,

ensuring that we lived in a equitable, symbiotic relationship with the environment. And, you know—so, in our own territories, we are at risk simply because we are Indigenous women, girls or two-spirited.

And, you know, since 2016 we haven't seen significant action on the file of MMIWG2S. I actually don't even know if I've seen any member opposite and certainly the minister responsible or even, you know, the premier—the previous premier—and our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). I don't know if I've actually even heard or seen any of them get up in this House and acknowledge that there's an ongoing genocide of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit. I don't think I've heard that.

And so, you know, that's actually something pretty simple that you can get up in this House and denounce an ongoing genocide of citizens that you are supposed to represent equitably, and I haven't heard that. So, you know, Deputy Speaker—and I know my colleague for Point Douglas brings this up repeatedly: you know, we have seen the exponential rise in unsheltered Manitobans, who are predominantly Indigenous.

And again, so I go back to this, you know, these are Indigenous territories, so if you're an Indigenous woman, girl or two-spirited, you're at risk for being stolen or murdered. And then in the last many years, we—like I said, we've seen this exponential rise of unsheltered Manitobans, predominantly Indigenous, so we're unsheltered in our own territories, in our own lands.

Like, it is something to behold and witness, day after day, seeing your people struggling, seeing your people, you know, recolonized space that was once ours, in bus shelters because there's nowhere for our people to stay. There's nowhere for our people to be safe. There's nowhere that our people can go to be sheltered in the dead of winter. Everybody knows Winnipeg is hell in winter. Those of us that have cars and boots and warm jackets and heat and all of this stuff, it's hard for us and here we are, year after year after year after year, those numbers of our unsheltered relatives go up and up and up and up to the point that bus shelters are now people's homes.

And we see no action from this government, in the same way that I don't think I've ever seen the Premier or any member get up on that side to acknowledge the genocide. I don't think I've really seen any member get up there except with, you know, again, expressed breath that really doesn't mean anything or platitudes about whatever. We've never seen them

really get up and talk about unsheltered Manitobans, which again, they have a responsibility. They also represent.

In fact, we've seen some politicians in the last little while—a municipal politician who went on social media to talk about our people in bus shelters. It's such a denigrating way. I'll never forgive that person for what they said about our people.

We're on our territories. These are Indigenous lands and for some non-Indigenous settler-politician to denigrate our people who are struggling because of the supports that are lacking is particularly grotesque. And in the same way, I haven't heard any of them get up. I haven't heard an apology from him.

So, you know, it is difficult as an Indigenous woman in this Chamber to get up to speak to these issues. It's important, obviously. That's why we're here. That's why the Indigenous members of this caucus were elected, among other things, but certainly to get up in the House and talk on behalf of our peoples who will never have that opportunity to be in here or never have that opportunity to speak and say the things that they would like to speak, and say things to the government that is currently in place.

But it doesn't mean that it's easy. It is incredibly difficult to stand up in here. And it is so frustrating, and it's so hurtful to see your people suffer so much, and to be so disregarded, and to be so silenced and erased by the colonial state, even in 2022.

But then, to stand up in here and to put words on the record of a bill in respect of reconciliation that, quite honestly, you know, does the bare minimum. They added a couple of words but no substantial action.

And so, Deputy Speaker, those—with those final words, I just want to say *miigwech*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there—yes, the honourable member for Point Douglas.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I apologize. I was on, but I didn't have my camera on.

So, it gives me great pleasure to put a few words on the record, you know, in respect to this bill that's being brought forward. And as my sister colleague alluded to, like, we need to do more than just put words on a sheet of paper.

Reconciliation, you know, means bringing truth forward. It's truth and reconciliation. And until we start to, you know, really unpack—and, you know, as

my sister colleague talked about, the genocide that's happening here in our province, in our country.

We have, you know—the RCMP documented 1,180 missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada, but we know that that number is much, much, much higher than that.

We had a group that came through Manitoba in 2017, the Walk4Justice Walkers, and they walked from coast to coast. They stopped in every community. They documented over 5,000 cases of loved ones either going missing or being murdered. And some of those cases where their loved ones were missing weren't even documented by the RCMP or the police.

And certainly, that group started to advocate to have those numbers included. And, you know, our province needs to do a better job at strategically creating a plan to keep Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit protected and *[inaudible]*

We, you know, every day, open your social media. Police are putting out, you know, bullets about our women going missing. But our government is nowhere to be found on this file.

You know, and I just want to talk about some of the things that our NDP government did while we were in government on this file.

In 2008, when my sister went missing, we actually had the first Wiping Away the Tears the next year, in 2009. And that, actually, was put on by family members. We got no funding from anywhere. Families just wanted to bring other family members together to support one another.

And the last day, we invited government officials to come. And it was our NDP government; they sent—three MLAs came. Actually, it was the premier who came as well, and two MLAs. They were asked to sit outside the circle and listen to what families wanted.

And they took that information. And the question that was asked of families is, what did you need before so that this could have been prevented? What did you need while this was happening, if your loved one went missing or they were murdered? And what do you need now in terms of justice or continued support?

And that government took that—those recommendations, and they went off and what came of it is there was a special adviser that was appointed to government to support families. And the member from St. Johns, my sister colleague, was actually the first—or, the fourth special adviser to women's issues. There were three others before my sister colleague.

* (15:40)

That is a hard position because you are supporting families who are going through grief, and we know there's, you know, many stages of grief. And one of those stages is anger.

And I remember, you know, supporting some of these families and the anger that they felt, and the rage and, you know, the range of emotions that they felt. Well, this is, you know, they went through three special advisors because that position was so hard. So, my sister colleague was the one who had stayed the longest and had supported so many families, including my family. And I probably wouldn't be in this Legislature today if it wasn't for the support that I received from her and many others.

And even though, you know, she wasn't the special advisor—she's now an MLA—she—my sister colleague continues to support, you know, those families and stay connected to them and still puts on, you know, the Santa's coming gathering every year. We haven't had it for the past couple of years, we've been able to, you know, put together some hampers and send hampers out to families in lieu of. But this is a time for families to get together.

It's a tough time at Christmastime, you know, families are struggling. There's that place at the table that their loved one used to sit at. And, you know, many children are missing their mothers, you know, many mothers are missing their daughters, their—and it's a really, really difficult time. And, you know, the member from St. Johns continues to do that work and bring those families together and help them feel supported.

You know, when I hear the members across say that the member from St. Johns did nothing. Well, I can tell you from experience that from a family member, and if he spoke to any family member in this province, they would all tell you that Nahanni—or, sorry, the member from St. Johns has supported every single one of them. Whether that's going to court with them; whether that's, you know, going to sit and get a report from the police; whether that's advocating, you know, for the police to put out a media release; you know, on so many other things, and those just are to name a few.

After our wiping away tears gathering, the government continued those gatherings every year. And thankfully, you know, this government has done the right thing because if they didn't, you know, there would be an uproar from community in terms of

continuing to support Wiping Away the Tears gathering.

So we now just, you know, had our 13th Wiping Away the Tears gathering. I, of course, attended it as a family member. And, you know, it's a time to bring families together to help them, you know, support one another, but also for self care. They bring many experts together that, you know, on many different issues and, you know, help families in terms of, you know, finding their voice, creating space for themselves, supporting their children or the children of those who have been murdered.

Another thing that came out of that was the monument. You know the monument at The Forks, and I know a lot of members across the way have also, you know, visited that monument. That monument wouldn't have been, you know, a reality had the member from St. Johns not made that a reality because the member from St. Johns listened to the families.

When the families said I need somewhere to go, you know, my family member's buried outside the city, I don't have access to get to my community, I need somewhere to be able to go and put my grief here in the city. Or my loved one's still missing, I don't know where they are and I need to, you know, have someplace to go to honour them.

A lot of our families have, you know, feasts there. A lot of our community members gather there, whether it's, you know, the memorial walk for—on Mother's Day or it's the February 14th day where families come together and community come together. And The Forks, you know, was a place that was identified by families because that was a gathering place for thousands of years for our people. And that very stone in that very shape, everything right down to every single decision that was made, was made by families because the member from St. Johns listened to the families.

And that's what needs to happen from this government. This government needs to put the families at the front. They need to start listening to families. And, you know, I hear members across the way say that they've, you know, invested money here, but they haven't invested money into supporting and really creating support for families.

There is no longer, you know, that special advisor to women's issues. Where do families go to get the support? Where do they go to get the advocacy? You know, the government's not listening. This was a place

where someone can go and, you know, make sure that someone was advocating for them, because often families feel like they're alone, that they don't have the support.

Victim Services was another area that our government opened up for families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit. At the time my sister went missing, we tried to access Victim Services, but because nobody was charged with a crime at the time, we couldn't access those services.

So, we lobbied—at the time, it was—Andrew Swan was the Justice minister. We'd had a meeting with him and he wasn't aware of it. He said, you know, we'll change that within 30 days. Well, even before the 30 days was up, and that was changed, and families who had someone missing were able to access Victim Services; families who had someone who was murdered but didn't have someone that was brought to justice was now able to access those services.

And those are just a few tangible actions, and that's all we're asking for from this government, is not to just simply put words, you know, on a paper and say that we're going to, you know, adhere to these 231 calls, but that you're actually going to put tangible actions in place.

And, you know, my colleague from Keewatinook spoke about Orange Shirt Day. Well, that's one tangible action that this government can do. This government can support that day. They can make that day a day of education for Manitobans to understand the breadth and scope of what actually happened to, you know, children in those places.

You know, as Murray Sinclair said, you know, it was meant to kill the Indian in the child, and it had detrimental effects and still does today. You know, there's intergenerational effects because of it, and we don't support, you know, those families that are going through that. You know, we have high incarceration rates. It's a suppressive model. We should be doing rehabilitation. We should be having reconciliation circles and figuring out a way to help, you know, those who are struggling, get the skills that they need to, you know, make amends to what it is that they did.

We also, during our time in government, created a task force. I remember, you know, the member from St. Johns advocating for this because there was a young girl, Cherisse Houle, who was found in Rosser, Manitoba, just outside Winnipeg; she was murdered. And to this day, nobody's been charged for her murder. And there was jurisdictional issues with the

RCMP and the Winnipeg police. Hillary Wilson was another young Indigenous girl who was also, you know, a cousin to my sister, Claudette [*inaudible*]

Again, there were jurisdictional issues and families were, you know, calling for this government to support and to bring the two policing together so that there would be no jurisdictional issues. And our government did that. Lots of tangible actions there.

Another one, you know, the member from Keewatinook talked about, you know, these actions that could be put in place to ensure that, you know, members are kept safe in our province. Our numbers are rising. We don't, you know, have—I don't open social media any day and don't see someone that's missing and, you know—or, hear someone that's been murdered. And a lot of those numbers are women.

Those are someone's family members. Those aren't, you know, just numbers. Those are people. Those are women.

So, I just wanted to take a few minutes just to, you know, say that we do support this, but there has to be tangible actions from this government and, you know, I just want to uplift the work that our NDP government did and especially my sister colleague, the member from St. Johns, and implore the members across to do the right thing and start investing and ensuring that there's a strategic plan in this province to keep Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit safe.

Miigwech.

* (15:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

An Honourable Member: Question.

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

Bill 12—The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will now move to concurrence and third reading of 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 reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development and be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I've said in the House over the past couple of weeks, this act is transformational legislation. It is legislation that will facilitate the entry of new potato and root crop producers and support the growth of the existing producers. It will also allow Peak of the Market to move from a single-desk marketing agency into an independent, not-for-profit corporation.

This will enable Peak to invest, grow their business, compete internationally and ultimately expand exports from Manitoba. This legislation will open up Manitoba's table potato and root crop industry to new markets, both local, national and international. This House has also heard from its members about the opportunities that will accompany this transformation.

The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act will facilitate investment in the potato and root crop sector that will spark growth and expansion of the industry and better serve the local and export markets.

Removing the quota restrictions and enabling producers to develop new businesses will open the sector to new producers, allowing for an increase in vegetable production and give consumers more choice. This legislation will encourage investment in quality vegetable production in the province while meeting the needs of Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 12, which is The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act.

Peak of the Market is a non-profit organization right now, and it's over 72 years old. It has been working in Manitoba that long. It had built itself. It had served Manitoba farmers. It has encouraged Manitoba businesses, and it has helped all Manitobans to get quality food, especially root vegetables, from our wonderful producers.

And this organization has been managing supply of root vegetables and used to monitor the quota system. The farmers, if they want to grow root vegetables on an area over five acres, they used to—they had to go through the quota system, get approval by quota, and then continue producing food for all of us.

This organization has contributed to the economy of Manitoba, and I want to mention that the annual gross revenue of this organization has been around \$120 million, which is huge. And Manitoba farmers, through Peak of the Market, they have been growing

about 9,000 acres of fresh market potatoes and about 600 acres of carrots.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

This organization did not just provide food to all of us but this organization, along with its producers, they generated employment, as well, in our province. And I'm happy to share that this organization and the producers, they are able to provide employment to more than 1,000 people in Manitoba. We should be thankful to all these producers who have been feeding us for years and continue to do so.

I also want to recognize this organization and Manitoba producers associated with this organization for their support, worth millions of dollars, to the community organizations, which is a social service. This is how we build Manitoba. This is how—this is why we are called friendly Manitoba.

I got a chance to talk to the team members at Peak of the Market. They are hard-working people. They shared how this organization has been working and what they are looking forward to. We discussed these changes that are proposed in this legislation, and they said they're looking forward to see this bill passed on time so that the producers, they have enough time to plan the next crop season. We did discuss a few concerns about how this change through this bill would impact the price of food in grocery stores. This minister did share with us that this bill is all about freedom of market—you can grow as many acres of root vegetables as you want without any quota restrictions—but wasn't clear—I would say was silent—on the issue of impact of these changes on the food prices for Manitobans.

We are still waiting for this minister to share how this bill would impact the food prices in the grocery stores. And when these changes are implemented in Manitoba, then the situation would be like small producers, relatively small producers who used to grow maybe four or five acres of these vegetables, these root crops. They could go up to seven, eight, nine, 10 acres, but they might be competing in the market with somebody who is producing 350 acres of the same crop. So it makes their negotiation power in the market—they put—this puts them in a weaker negotiation power, I would say. So we need to focus on that, and this government needs to address the issues that are likely to be faced by our small producers.

I've been talking to a few of them. Many of them, they are associated with a wonderful organization

called Direct Farm Manitoba. And what they say is that while these changes, while it lets them grow vegetables on more number of acres, it doesn't give them access to the contracts or the buyers that could—they would like to actually continue dealing with the big guys in the market because they have good market connections historically.

* (16:00)

So, it doesn't encourage small producers to be on the board of Peak of the Market or doesn't give or offer any support by the government for the young farmers or the small guys to be strong in the market and be able to sell their produce.

Historically, they used to sell their produce to small restaurants and small buyers, not the big businesses. So, there could be some challenges that these small producers continue to face. We expect this government to bring in some policies that support our young producers, our next generation producers who are willing to get into farming. So, these producers do need some concrete policies and plans, initiatives from this government, to survive in the market.

Whenever you talk to a producer who is about to retire, they would say that their sons and daughters, they don't want to stay in agriculture. They want to go to urban areas and find some other job. And, unfortunately, this is the scenario—not just in Canada, in many other countries where I got a chance to visit and talk to farming families and professionals and young students in agriculture. So, that's something that needs to be addressed.

These young farmers, they do want to start agriculture, entrepreneurship projects, but—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Brar: —actually they can't afford to. The price of the land is going up. They don't have enough money to negotiate or buy pieces of land that they can start their agricultural projects on, especially when you talk about Crown lands.

The recent changes by this PC government in the Crown lands system, it's actually against the interest of the next generation, small farmers—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Brar: —family farms, ranchers, livestock producers, because, first of all, the length of the lease that used to be 50 years has been reduced to just 15—just 15 years. This automatically discourages the producers to invest in that land. When somebody is

unsure about keeping that land after 15 years of lease, they won't be able to generously invest in that land—maybe in dugouts, maybe in fencing, or improving the land. So, that's the real scene on the ground, because I have talked to so many producers who are leasing Crown land right now.

Another concern that they share with me is rent increase. Rent has been increased multifold, even up to 300 per cent in some cases. These producers—while fighting with drought situations, while fighting with supply chain disruptions, while fighting with the pandemic—they're not able to afford that increased lease rate. They are requesting the government, on a regular basis, through emails, phone calls, meeting requests, but this government is not listening to those producers.

Some of them, they have also—they have agreed to pay the increased rent, but they're requesting to offer some payment plans because they cannot pay that huge amount before the deadline. Unfortunately, this government and the three ministers I have been dealing with since 2019, they refused to offer any support to such livestock producers, which is discouraging. They are totally broken.

So what's the result of these Crown land changes? The result is that people are being kicked out of business. They are selling 100 per cent of their cows, 50 per cent of their cows, 75 per cent of their cows, and they're trying to survive.

When the young producers see their parents struggling in this manner they automatically think of other options of employment. Even when they are willing to stay at the farm they decide not to because it's no more profitable.

So the end result is that land is being consolidated in Manitoba. So when the land is being consolidated you don't have any neighbours around, you don't have any communities around; that's impacting the local businesses, that is actually disturbing whole social landscape in Manitoba. I would say especially in rural Manitoba. And it encourages corporates to take over. It encourages those who have deeper pockets, who have huge money on their hands to be invested on these lands and take over these lands and do whatever they want to do with these lands.

Actually, the people who actually love land, the people who have been working with the land, who love water and other natural resources, they are being kicked out of business. It's highly discouraging.

So I think this government should take some steps to encourage those producers. I think this government should take some steps to improve our business risk programs. For example, AgriStability. In 2020, the federal government, they said, well, we want to support Manitoba producers and we want to offer our part, which is 60 per cent of the support for Manitoba producers, Manitoba should do their part, put their 40 per cent and let's improve the AgriStability program.

You know what, Madam Speaker? This government failed. Failed to avail that opportunity. They missed that opportunity because they didn't want to spend just 40 per cent of their share to improve AgriStability. This has disturbed so many producers.

There was a joint letter that was written by Keystone Ag Producers and other farm groups asking this government to jump in, to do their part and benefit the producers who needed support at that time. But, unfortunately, this government missed that opportunity and didn't invest when it was needed the most.

These business risk programs, they have been being implemented by MASC, but due to cuts in staffing, budget cuts in MASC, Manitoba ag services corporation and Manitoba Agriculture, this government has weakened our agriculture department and there's no service available for the producers that they need the most, especially during the COVID.

This government thinks that it takes just a phone call or an email to have a professional advice. No, agriculture does not work this way. You cannot solve the problem like the software problems. You cannot invite somebody over the shoulder virtually and fix their insect pest problems and help them deal with their drought situation. They need actual people on land advising them how to deal with these situations.

* (16:10)

I've been working with Manitoba Agriculture and sometimes, before telling—before advising a producer about a disease, about an insect, you have to walk a hundred acres and scout the fields. That's missing right now because this government has closed 21 Ag offices in Manitoba.

I repeat, Madam Speaker, 21 Agriculture offices have been closed. And many of them, they're not open to the public. There are people working in closed doors, but farmers are not allowed to enter that building and talk to somebody in person.

And I have talked to so many staff members in Manitoba Agriculture. Due to this change, now they have been relocated to new offices. Somebody who was driving seven minutes from their home for the last 36 years and now they have to drive 55 kilometres every day up, and 55 kilometres down every day.

So it's impacting their lives; it's impacting their retirement plans; it's pushing them, forcing them, to retire early.

When there's no Ag office, for example, in Teulon—I used to work in that office—there is no Ag office; there are no Ag employees. Those Ag employees—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I'm just going to indicate to the member that he is somewhat off track with relevance on this bill, and I would ask him to bring back his comments specifically to the bill that is before us for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Brar: I was trying to put the things in context.

When we talk about the producers, we need to talk about their issues. We need to talk about how these decision by this government—for example, this Bill 12, which is The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act—impact our people on the ground.

This bill is not just about reorganization of an organization. It's much more about that. It's not just impacting the producers. It also impacts the consumers, their choices. It also impacts our markets.

This bill also impacts the businesses. These changes could encourage some new businesses, new organizations, to open, and this bill can also result in some people totally getting out of business.

So what I was trying to say is, what I was trying to attract everybody's attention towards is, that this government should not just think about big producers. They could be root vegetable producers, root crop producers or they could be any other producers.

The policies of this government, including this bill, is encouraging consolidation of land. And it has been established fact; it has been published, researched, tells us that corporations are taking over the farmers—the farms are getting bigger and bigger. They're using big machinery. The machinery companies and the big guys, they are taking most of the portion of the revenue that used to stay at the farm.

What I'm trying to say is, we need to bring in policies to encourage our next generation to start

small farms, to start greenhouses, to start backyard gardens, to start community-shared agriculture and such small projects that we can bring in more people on the land, and we can see our next generation being connected to the crops, to the animals and our nature.

What's happening is that our next generation does not even know where our food comes from. So there could be some changes that could be proposed in this legislation that would say that here is a policy that would result in bringing in so many producers into root vegetable production. There is nothing like that in this bill.

This bill, while it opens up the market, it removes the caps on the quota system, but at the same time, this bill also discourages young farmers. This bill also puts them in a weaker negotiation power as compared to the big guys. So I would request this minister—he has a few more months in this role before the government changes and we take over—he should do something for Manitoba producers so that we can see these rural people, these towns in a happier mood. We can do that together. We are on board to support our producers—I would say our farmers, actually, who were feeding us for years and continue to feed us for future as well.

So, I would again invite this Ag Minister and PC caucus to do something better for our producers who are struggling with hundreds and hundreds of issues right now in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I stand to speak in support of this legislation related to Peak of the Market and, indeed, to vegetable growers and vegetable growing broadly and vegetable marketing. This legislation will open up the market. It will open up the market for opportunities for Peak of the Market. It is—will open up the market for opportunities for vegetable growers, whether large or small.

There are risks, but I have confidence in the excellence of the board of Peak of the Market, the CEO, Pamela Kolochuk, who talked to us at the committee meeting and the chair, Peter Loewen, of Garden Valley Vegetable Growers, who's the current chair of the board of Peak of the Market. I want to thank both of them for their clear presentations. They made it very clear that the changes have the support of the board of Peak of the Market and the growers, and for us in the Manitoba Liberal Party, that is sufficient for us to support this with enthusiasm.

Peak of the Market has an excellent reputation. There are over 80 years that Peak of the Market has

operated. It has supplied over 120 different varieties of Manitoba-grown vegetables, provides these vegetables—or, many of them—on a year-round basis. And the reason for that is that Peak of the Market has one of the most 'technologically' advanced storage programs anywhere in North America.

Not only has it great storage programs, but they have great products grown by Manitoba farmers and carrots which are the envy of the rest of the world. The storage facilities maintain temperature, humidity, air movement—all very carefully monitored so that the vegetables are maintained in the optimum condition to provide excellent quality and value to consumers for a long time. Potatoes, carrots, onions, parsnip, beets, cabbage, shallots are just some of those which are stored for many years.

I want to pay tribute to the former president and CEO, Larry McIntosh. Larry and his wife, Shelley, were really instrumental in taking Peak of the Market to the peak of the market in North America and to do that in a really excellent way.

* (16:20)

In 2011, Larry and Shelley went down and they got the best-of-the-show award at the Produce Marketing Association foodservice show in California. Larry and Shelley built a wall, 10-foot wide and eight-foot high, of fresh vegetables—approximately 2,000 pounds of fresh vegetables. And it was very impressive. They both wore jerseys with huge QR codes that when they scanned them, the smartphones would take them right to the staff contact information, and when the show was over they donated the 2,000 pounds of fresh vegetables to the food bank for Monterey County.

And that last donation shows something about Peak of the Market because not only have they been wonderful at donations to various charities in Manitoba, they have been extremely important for Winnipeg Harvest and many other organizations and been very helpful for those who are on very low incomes and don't have other food supplies.

So, a big thank you to Larry and Shelley and to all those at Peak of the Market who've done so well for 80 years, and I believe that with the leadership and with approach—this approach that they are good for many, many decades into the future and will put Manitoba vegetables at the very centre of high-quality vegetables in all of North America.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate?

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm pleased to speak on Bill 12, The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act. You know, this bill really looks at the way vegetable growing takes place in Manitoba, root vegetables, and take—and looks at the way that we market and sell them through Peak of the Market.

And I first want to begin by, you know, highlighting what a quality organization, what a well-reputed—reputation that Peak of the Market has, not only here amongst consumers but also amongst farmers and producers who are growing vegetables. And I think that I can say that Peak of the Market is having a reputation outside the province as well, and I think that's because of the (a) the good reputation of Manitoba vegetables and because of the hard work that they do to market and sell those vegetables. And that reputation is becoming known more and more.

And I think that this bill, Bill 12, which would allow producers to grow these vegetables with a larger scale by removing these quotas, these caps, and doing so in such a way that would give larger opportunities for these producers and give larger opportunities for Peak of the Market itself in terms of the types of sales and the types of work that it can do.

And so I applaud Peak of the Market for the great work that they do to market the produce of Manitoba producers, of Manitoba farmers to work to support them to ensure that they can earn a good living off of the work that they do as the farmers, as the—some of the, you know, the real basic, real fundamental parts of what makes Manitoba the place that it is.

And so I just want to speak a little bit about, Madam Speaker, the challenges that some of those producers, some of those farmers, face on every day and some of the work that we could do as government to support them, to support producers and support farmers every day. And some of this can be, you know, considered directly related to, and some of it is providing the scope and providing the contexts which—with which Bill 12 fits into.

And so I'll first say that, you know, when we look at the challenge of farming, we're looking at many of the challenges around inputs and the inputs—and the rising input costs that farmers are facing, whether that's things like, you know, fertilizer, ammonia, equipment costs. These are the sort of things that farmers have to invest in upfront when they're looking at their crop year and what their crop is going to look

like to ensure that they have those inputs available to them.

The challenge with that, often, in my view, is that (1) is the expense side of that, that these inputs have a significant cost which farmers bear, and to put in place, you know, of course, for—of course, the hope that they earn enough through the sale of their crop at the end of the year to help cover those costs and have enough for themselves and their family. But that input cost is rising. Those costs of those inputs rise each and every year, and we're seeing it even more so now. With the rising costs of inflation, the rising cost of living, the input costs for farmers are raising just the same.

And so as we see these costs rise, it means that the cost that we can expect as consumers buying vegetables from Peak of the Market in our grocery store, it's only logical, only reasonable for us to assume—and expect, quite frankly—the cost of our goods and our vegetables to increase.

And I think that the other part of that, the other challenge that we need to address is the environmental impacts of some of these inputs that farmers are putting in. And that's a challenge, I think, that the government does have a role to play in terms of improving and enhancing our agricultural system.

I think what we're looking at is trying to find ways to enhance that—the environmental impacts. When we look at input costs and we look at those inputs—fertilizer, ammonia—how can we as a government, how can this Province, support transitioning those inputs and the production of those inputs into clean investments? I know it's a challenge. The technology and the equipment might not exist right now to produce ammonia cleanly.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

There's a number of conversations going on in the House right now, and I'm going to ask members that are having conversations to either take it to the loge or perhaps outside because it's very difficult to hear the member who's worked hard to put a speech together here, and I would ask everybody for some respect, please.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you again.

And as I was saying, and it relates to Bill 12 and The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act, we're talking about how as a Province we can improve the

lives of farmers and specifically, the proves the lives of the inputs into agricultural work that they're doing.

Think about ammonia, for example. How can we as a Province ensure that ammonia is produced cleanly, with as little CO₂ emitted as possible? How do we ensure that the fertilizers that farmers use to grow potatoes and carrots are done in environmentally friendly way? Well, we can invest and start to invest in clean technologies which would allow the production of fertilizers to be done with emitting as little CO₂ as possible.

I know these technologies aren't prevalent around the province or aren't prevalent around the country, but this is work that we need to do. We need to have a clean environment not just in the cities, you know, not just buying electric vehicles, but it has to be done in rural Manitoba on the farms. It needs to be done on the farms. And one way that we can do that is by ensuring that everything we put into our agricultural production—you know, ammonias, our—everything that we're putting into our farms is produced itself in the most environmentally friendly way. And that takes investment. That takes leadership, takes courage to invest in an industry that isn't booming right now because that technology, that research, needs to get done, and by doing so, we would actually show leadership.

Now, this isn't in Bill 12, but the reason I talk about this now is because this is the type of bill I'd like to see from the Agriculture Minister, bills that would invest in the future of what our agricultural system should look like, invest in clean ways to make our—to grow the products we need in our province—the vegetables, the potatoes, the carrots—do this by supporting Peak of the Market the way we are with Bill 12, but also do it in a way that cleans up our environment, that reduces CO₂ from the emissions that we're all experience.

* (16:30)

Not only would this clean up rural Manitoba, this would also improve the lives of those who live in the city of Winnipeg to know that the vegetables that they're going to buy at their local grocery store, the ones in my constituency like, you have Food Fare, like Family Foods, Sobeys, FreshCo.

We have, in St. Vital, a lot of many independent grocers. It would give comfort to those in my constituency to know that when they buy carrots from Peak of the Market, when they buy potatoes from Peak of

the Market, those vegetables they know that they'll be grown environmentally friendly.

Unfortunately, we aren't seeing this type of investment from this government to ensure that we have a clean agricultural system. And that is the hope that I have for this government. I think that's the direction we ought to be taking in this government with types of legislation that go to improve the lives of vegetable farmers but also go to improve—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —the quality of the environment that have we have and that we are going with.

Madam Speaker, I also want to transition, not just speak about the inputs that farmers have and have to experience and pay for at the start of their farm year and as they're seeding, but also go through the risk that farmers take during their crop season. The risks that they take as those vegetables are growing in the ground and coming up, and they're looking at the risks of what that season might look like.

When they look and assess their risks, what are they really assessing or what are they really evaluating and looking at? Well, I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, that they look at many things. First they look at things like what is there—what is the rain going to be like? What is the water levels that they have, the moisture levels that the crops will receive during that season? Is it going to be sufficient enough for them to produce a good crop? Are they going to have the moisture levels necessary for their crops to survive and thrive? Is that going to happen?

Well that's a challenge and risk that they face every year. That challenge is exasperated, it's added on to every year because of climate change. Every year that goes on, our agricultural producers face further and further risk. And the risk it gets—the risk is even more challenging because of extreme climate changes, extreme weather events that are results of climate change. That cannot be ignored, Madam Speaker. That cannot be denied.

I think first-hand about the challenges that vegetable producers had last year, that all producers had last year with the amount of dry weather, the lack of moisture that we had in Manitoba. That dry year where we saw record forest fires across western Canada, where we saw very dry conditions with very little rain. It was a challenge for many producers. And I think specifically about those beef producers who are struggling to feed their animals, who are

struggling to find the feed to make sure that they had people around.

And so, Madam Speaker, you know, I want to say that those are real challenges for folks. Those are real challenges for producers.

Sadly, these—the government has not kept up to meet those challenges. Bill 12 does help Peak of the Market. It does help—the reorganization of Peak of the Market does help those vegetable producers and we want to know that this government, and call on this government to do more for farmers, more to ensure that their inputs are environmentally friendly, more to ensure that the risks they face are ones that the government is serious about dealing with, about dealing with climate change, about dealing with reducing CO₂ and we call on the government to do—to not only do Bill 12 but do more than Bill 12 and actually support clean agriculture in Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 12, The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

As indicated earlier, the House will now prepare for royal assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cam Steel): His Honour the Administrator.

His Honour Richard Chartier, Administrator of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour the Administrator in the following words:

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks Your Honour to accept the following bills:

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Vanessa Gregg):

Bill 4 – The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réconciliation

Bill 12 – The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act; Loi sur la réorganisation de Peak of the Market

* (16:40)

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour assents to these bills.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if there's a will to call it 5 o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? [*Agreed*]

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until April 4th at 1:30 p.m.

Have a good constituency week, everybody.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 24, 2022

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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