

Fifth 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
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
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, Hon.	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>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 41—The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 41, The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill contains amendments that will modernize The Occupiers' Liability Act to ensure that occupiers receive timely notice of a personal injury claim related to snow or ice on private property. This will ensure that the issue can be remedied quickly to prevent further injury from somebody who's also entering that particular property.

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

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 43—The Provincial Offences Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the minister of Indigenous affairs, reconciliation and northern relations, that Bill 43, the provincial offences amendment act, be now read for a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable minister for Indigenous reconciliation and northern affairs, that Bill 43, The Provincial Offences Amendment Act (2), be now read a first time.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill contains amendments to The Provincial Offences Act that will enable First Nations to have contraventions of First Nations laws dealt with under the act. These amendments have been requested by MKO and on behalf of the 26 northern First Nations. In particular, MKO has identified the need for the extension of the ticketing regime in The Provincial Offences Act to First Nations laws to make enforcement more efficient, which will also effectively

enhance and support compliance and public safety in First Nations communities.

And I want to thank and welcome representatives from MKO who have joined us here this morning—this afternoon.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Khalsa Aid Food Drive

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard work of Khalsa Aid Manitoba and Sikh Heritage Manitoba.

In honour of Sikh Heritage Month in April, Khalsa Aid Manitoba and Sikh Heritage Manitoba partnered up to donate 10,000 pounds of food to food banks across Winnipeg and Steinbach.

Stewardship and guidance are core principles of Sikhism. This is reflected in the core value of selflessness service, known as Seva. The Khalsa food drive initiative demonstrates that members of the Sikh community in Manitoba are committed to providing aid to those in need. This dedication to community building aligns with core values that unite all Manitobans.

The Khalsa food drive initiative went on to collect over 10,000 pounds—nearly 11,000 pounds of food. My colleagues and I were proud to contribute with a pickup truck full of food to donate to this worthy cause. The food was distributed to Bear Clan Patrol, Helping Hands Steinbach food bank, Main Street Project and Harvest Manitoba.

Sikhs living in our province continue to contribute to our communities in many ways. With over 35,000 Manitoba residents identifying as Sikh,

the community continues to grow and enrich Manitoba every single day.

Our province is proud to celebrate the many people that call Manitoba home. By welcoming diversity and working together, we ensure our collective success. Diversity is our province's greatest strength, and we are stronger together, and the hard work of Khalsa Aid Manitoba and Sikh Heritage Manitoba is a shining example of this.

Madam Speaker, as we recognize the contributions of Khalsa food aid drive, I extend my warmest regards to the Sikh community for their continued support to make Manitoba better.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to ask for leave to table the names of all the wonderful volunteers from Khalsa Aid and Sikh–Manitoba who contributed to the success of this project, and I ask that—all my colleagues to welcome those from Khalsa Aid Manitoba and Sikh Heritage Manitoba who contributed to the success of this project.

And I ask that—all my colleagues to welcome those from Khalsa Aid Manitoba and Sikh Heritage Manitoba who have joined us here today, and they've just showed up now.

Thank you all so much for your continued work and making Manitoba better.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows—oh.

Pardon me, I'll just revert back. Is there leave to include the names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Khalsa Aid volunteers: Varinder Kaur Ghuman, director, Winnipeg chapter; Gurcharan Singh Bhaini, Harjinder Kaur Brar, Jujar Singh Brar, Rupinder Kaur Brar, Gurpreet Singh Deol, Kuljit Singh Ghuman, Prabhjot Singh Ghuman, Ajaypratap Singh Gill, Gurpreet Singh Gill, Rajbir Kaur Gill, Sarbjit Singh Gill, Bhupinder Kaur Grewal, Parminder Kaur Grewal, Sher Singh Grewal, Hartej Singh, Maildeep Singh Toor

Sikh Heritage Manitoba volunteers: Parminder Singh Gill, president; Guruch Singh Buttar, Gurpreet Singh Deol, Jasmine Kaur Dhalla, Mahekleen Kaur Gill, Navraj Singh Gill, Anmol Singh Gumber, Kiratveer Singh Hayer, Gurkirat Singh Nagpal, Gurmehar Singh Nagpal, Baldev Singh Ramgotra, Nimmi Ramgotra, Esha Kaur Rooprai, Subhdeep Singh Sidhu

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, the Khalsa Aid Manitoba has emerged as a beacon of

hope, compassion and community empowerment. With a relentless commitment to serving those in need, this initiative has gained recognition for its remarkable efforts in combating food insecurity and fostering a sense of togetherness among diverse populations.

Khalsa Aid, a UK-based 'humanitarian' organization rooted in Sikh principles of selfless service, extended its reach to Manitoba with a mission to alleviate hunger and provide relief to vulnerable communities. The food drive in Manitoba embodies the organization's core values of recognize the whole human race as one and dedication to serving humanity by organizing events and initiatives that address food scarcity and support those facing difficult circumstances.

The Khalsa Aid food drive, organized by Khalsa Aid and Sikh Heritage Manitoba, has fostered collaboration between volunteers, local businesses and community members. Through partnerships with local food banks such as Winnipeg Harvest, shelters and community organizations such as Main Street Project, the initiative has created a robust network of support. The food drive engages volunteers from all walks of life, breaking down barriers and uniting people in the common purpose of eradicating hunger and ensuring everyone has access to nutritious meals.

Through an extensive outreach program, the Khalsa Aid food drive and the Sikh community have made a positive impact on Manitoba through distributing food, organizing fundraisers and holding awareness campaigns to combat food insecurity. These initiatives have offered relief to individuals and families facing economic hardships and actively empower them by helping to meet their basic needs and restore their dignity.

The Khalsa Aid food drive in Manitoba stands as a shine example of community empowerment, compassion and unity. Through its unwavering commitment—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Is there leave to allow the member to complete his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Brar: Through its unwavering commitment to eradicating food insecurity, the initiative has not only provided relief but has also fostered a strong sense of belonging and hope for a brighter future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Khalsa Aid is a global movement as well as a local movement. It provides phenomenal support not just here in Winnipeg but around the world, and particularly in areas where there's food emergencies. It recognizes the Sikh tradition that the whole human race is one and that everybody needs a chance, and those who are less fortunate need help and, particularly, food.

I understand in the Golden Temple in India that food is available for those who need it 24-7. It's just one small example.

But what is happening here in Winnipeg, in Manitoba, is incredible. We are extremely thankful for all your efforts to raise food, this incredible food drive. It is—you are a community which really looks out for others and does tremendous things for all of Winnipeg.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

John Taylor Collegiate

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): Today I rise with a great pleasure and pride to recognize the significant accomplishments of the students and staff at John Taylor Collegiate in my constituency of Assiniboia.

John Taylor students and staff have heightened awareness of the value of stem cell and blood donations. They experienced first and—first-hand the deterioration of a fellow classmate as she battled aplastic anemia, a rare, life-threatening bone-marrow-failure disease.

Madison Claven-Enns had battled the disease for seven years with multiple drug therapy treatments and two bone marrow transplants. It was Madison's hope to graduate and receive her diploma.

* (13:40)

In true Piper passion, this high school rallied in support and came together for a blood donor drive and stem cell clinic, which has helped bring forward the treatment of so many—80 diseases and disorders that require stem cell transplants.

Sadly, our community lost Madison just two weeks after receiving her high school diploma, but her legacy lives on at John Taylor Collegiate.

Now, annually, the Madison Claven-Enns memorial blood donor drive continues and students have learning disabilities—in tissue and organ donations, which these gallant students help.

In the gallery today we have biology teacher Sara *[phonetic]* Shepherd; student representatives Juan Pedri *[phonetic]*, Becky Imasuen, Jayme Fickes; and Kristine *[phonetic]* McFee from the Canadian Blood Services.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the selfless and heartfelt efforts of the students and staff of John Taylor Collegiate in the memory and inspiration of Madison Claven-Enns.

MACY Report Recommendations

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Last year, the Manitoba advocate for children youth—child and youth released a special report on the government's compliance with their recommendations. Unfortunately, they found that only 12 of the 67 recommendations were complete. On recommendations related to mental health and addictions, nearly half had not been completed.

Earlier this year, the advocate had also raised concerns about how youth are being discharged without a plan to address the full scope of their mental health needs, including families struggling to navigate systems and provide care to their children without support. In some communities, mental health services and resources are not even available.

Mental health resources for youth have been scarce for years, and the impact of the pandemic has only made it worse. This is particularly true in rural and northern communities. Sadly, we know that one result of this is the crisis of youth suicide in our province.

The government's lack of action to provide adequate resources and supports for youth in Manitoba is an irresponsible failure and is costing lives. And the crisis of youth mental health is only growing. In 2021 and 2022 year alone, the advocate's office received nearly 3,000 requests for services, and 59 per cent of the young people they served were experiencing mental health and substance abuse issues.

Our youth deserve better. They deserve to have resources and supports they need to grow and thrive,

regardless of where they live or what challenges they've experienced.

To everyone who works on the front lines preventing—providing mental health care to youth, I want to thank you for the incredible heart—work that you all do.

To those youth who are struggling with their mental health, know we see you, we support you, we love you and you are not alone.

Election Campaigning

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Madam Speaker, spring has sprung and with it we see the usual grass greening, flowers blooming and, of course, politicians door knocking. There is no better avenue to connect with constituents than through door knocking.

With this in mind, the NDP—specifically, the MLA for Fort Garry—has been out and about offering their three-point plan. So, let's review what their commitments should be, if they formed a government.

Firstly, they are promising Manitoba Public Insurance rebates, despite their leader calling previous MPI rebates, and I quote, not the most effective way to reach people. End quote.

And despite decrying the financial foundation of MPI almost daily, they want to dip into reserves to lubricate their voters. With this so-called commitment, the NDP are making their disdain and hostility to the Public Utilities Board public.

Secondly, the MLA for Fort Garry is knocking on doors telling Manitobans that an NDP government will somehow lower grocery prices through regulations. This commitment reinforces just how to touch the NDP are in terms of actually running a lemonade stand, much less a grocery—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martin: —store. How many grocers, who are already surviving on razor-thin margins along with assortment—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martin: —of additional expenses, were actually spoken to about this commitment? I can answer: zero. For the NDP, apparently, running even more small grocers out of business, creating more food deserts and less options for consumers is how they will address the affordability crisis.

Finally, according to the MLA for Fort Garry, and I quote: newcomers will make us all wealthy. How

very offensive and typical of the NDP. They have no interest in actually breaking a sweat and building our economy. Instead, it appears that the NDP have ripped a page from the Simpsons, when Homer ran for office on the mantra, can't someone else do that? That, Madam Speaker, is the epitome of laziness and colonialism.

We on this side of the—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martin: —House work with newcomers to ensure their success while the NDP MLA for Fort Garry insists that newcomers only exist for his success.

Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, it's been a tough time in the mineral sector in Manitoba for a few years now, and we need to talk about how important it is to engage with and respect all Manitobans because of the—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —enormous potential for resource development of critical minerals—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I'll call the member to order.

I would point out we haven't always followed the order that's on the papers. Many people have stood up at different times. If you want to do it today, then I would apologize to the member for St. Boniface and recognize the honourable member for Transcona.

Jason Butchart

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a Manitoban—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —who was raised in Transcona and whose story was in the news recently. His name is Jason Butchart.

On Wednesday, May 10th, Jason passed away while driving back to his job at Percy E. Moore Hospital in Hodgson, Manitoba, where he worked as registered nurse, after fulfilling his duty as a volunteer firefighter that very same day.

Jason had been on call as a volunteer firefighter for the RM of Fisher. He was the first responder to reach the scene of a car accident that occurred on Highway 68.

With the help of his fellow volunteer firefighters, Jason provided medical treatment to the injured, which included an infant who was 10 months old. As always, due to his experience as an RN, Jason was a calming presence while they waited for the paramedics and STARS ambulance to arrive.

Jason was 54 years old.

Jason spent time in the military, loved motorcycles and played the bagpipes.

On behalf of all Manitobans, I want to thank Jason for his commitment to his duty, his dedication to being there when we needed him most.

I want to express my appreciation to all volunteer firefighters in Manitoba. Many RMs rely on individuals like Jason who take the time out of their busy lives to volunteer, to receive training and make themselves available and alert for those unexpected moments when we are in danger and distress.

While we grieve for Jason and his family, we also want to provide them with support, just like Jason selflessly provided support to others when they needed it most.

Today in the gallery, Madam Speaker, I have his mom, Mary; his father, Ken; and his sister, Michelle.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I ask for the indulgence of you and members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly for a moment of silence to honour the memory, the work and the life of Jason Butchart.

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

Please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

* (13:50)

Mineral Industry and Economic Reconciliation

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's been a tough time in the mineral sector in Manitoba for a few years now, and we need to talk about how important it is to engage with and respect all Manitobans because of the enormous potential for the resource development, especial of critical minerals.

To achieve our potential for shared economic growth, we have to rebuild trust, capacity and infrastructure to make it happen. If we do, we can not only create jobs and long-term prosperity, but Manitoba's minerals can play a role in moving to a

greener economy that's less reliant on fuel and energy that we as Manitobans pay billions of dollars to import.

In particular, we have to be willing to show respect to First Nations in their say, over their territory, and work with them in partnership. I will say that attempts to do this have been tried and failed for too—far too long.

I'll just give one example dating back to 1970. Métis leader Jean Allard was a new member of the Manitoba Legislature and legislative assistant to Premier Schreyer. He was given the special responsibility in the new NDP government then for developing innovative job programs for people in northern Manitoba, about 90 per cent of them Indigenous.

With the support of the then Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, the Manitoba Métis Federation, mining interests and unions, Allard worked hard to pull together a new commuter flight service in the North that would allow Indigenous men to fly in and out of a newly opened mine operation on a two-week cycle so they could earn good money and still remain in their home communities. But just as the new program was about to be announced, the NDP caucus pulled the plug and decided instead the government would build a brand new town from scratch in the wilderness near the mine.

Allard was furious. He had spent two years arm-twisting stakeholders and fellow legislators, only to see his plans for developing a regular income stream that would suit Indigenous people thwarted. He eruptly and bitterly quit the NDP in April 1972 and sat as an independent.

That is the kind of partnership that we've seen lost and needs to be regained, along with a commitment to environmental restoration and mitigation, all as part of economic reconciliation.

As for the Progressive Conservatives, as I once asked Brian Pallister, why is it that the Saskatchewan prospector says it'll take 250 years at the current rate to have a sustainable mining industry in Manitoba?

Indigenous participation and ownership of these resources is critical to our capacity to grow and maintain new wealth in Manitoba. I look forward to seeing more of it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you. We have seated in the public gallery from École Selkirk Junior High 80 grade 9 students under the direction of Joan Cooney. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Public Insurance—Project Nova Cost Overruns and Autopac Rates

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the PCs have caused the crisis at Manitoba Public Insurance. The responsibility lies with them. They are the ones who are supposed to be the stewards of MPI, and it's costing Manitobans money. Every Manitoban now has to pay more on their Autopac premiums.

Now, new information now shows when the PCs became aware of the problems at MPI—I'll table them—it shows that the PC government became aware of the \$200-million cost overrun at MPI two years ago, in the summer of 2021. And yet, the Premier has done almost nothing for two years.

Will the Premier tell the House why, for two years, her government let Project Nova go \$200 million over budget?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): See, the Leader of the Opposition knows that when the NDP was in government, that they didn't actually put in a new IT system or oversee that at Manitoba Public Insurance. So, we continue to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government, Madam Speaker. It's important that we move forward with those projects.

But what I will say, Madam Speaker, is that I do want to welcome our new board chair, Ward Keith, to his role as the chair of Manitoba Public Insurance. I also want to welcome the new interim CEO, Marnie Kacher, at Public Insurance.

Clearly things are moving forward in the right direction, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I don't think Manitobans believe things are going forward in a good direction,

when the PCs have overseen a cost overrun of \$200 million and is forcing Manitobans to pay more on their Autopac rates starting this past April 1st.

Now, of course, the Premier does acknowledge that there's been chaos at the top of MPI. They had to let go, first, the chair of the board; now they had to let go of the CEO. This is an absolute mess, and it's not an internal mess like we usually from—see from the PCs. It's a mess that's costing the people of Manitoba money: business owners who have to deliver transportation, consumers—the average Manitoban who needs to commute in order to get to work.

Will the Premier tell the House why she authorized all of the mistakes that have cost Manitobans so much money on their Autopac premiums?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, certainly Manitobans should know that when—while we're continuing to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government when it comes to Manitoban Public Insurance, at this time we know and recognize that there's no financial concerns at MPI. In fact, financials are strong, as we understand.

And I will also say for the record, because the Leader of the Opposition won't, that there were two rebate cheques that were given out to Manitoba Public Insurance ratepayers, Madam Speaker. And that was done under our watch, not theirs, where they jacked up fees for MPI clients.

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

McKinsey Consultants—Payment for Services

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, it strains belief to hear the Province say there are no financial concerns at MPI when Project Nova is \$200 million over budget. That's money that the people of Manitoba should have been getting reduced rates on this year, but instead they have to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —pay more because of their mismanagement.

Now, the financial concerns at MPI, they go beyond the \$200 million cost overrun and they include the \$12-million untendered contract that was paid out to McKinsey. We've asked questions—very serious concerns brought up about this consulting firm and their activities not just in Manitoba but across the country.

And yet, the Premier insists on signing off and ensuring that McKinsey gets paid.

Will the Premier tell the House just how much money is being paid to McKinsey in the end for the work that they may not have even done on Project Nova?

Mrs. Stefanson: While we continue to clean up the mess of the NDP government, Madam Speaker, we want to ensure that there's an IT system at Manitoba Public Insurance that's there for those ratepayers, for Manitoba Public Insurance clients.

And so, we'll continue to move forward on that, as I understand that the financials are sound. Of course, we're looking at the overall financials of Manitoba Public Insurance, to make sure that they are sound. That is our concern.

And I will say to Manitobans that the fear mongering by the NDP is unwarranted at this time. We recognize that the financials are stable, and that is the important thing here.

The important thing here is that we have given record payments out to Manitoba Public Insurance clients under our watch; two rebate cheques, Madam Speaker. We gave money back to Manitobans when it was appropriate to do so, as we understand that we're moving forward in the right direction with MPI.

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

Health-Care Services Contract with Private Clinic

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, before we move on, let's just make sure that the situation at MPI—let's just make sure people understand the situation at MPI is an absolute mess and it was created entirely under the PCs' time in office.

Another area where they've made a complete mess of things, and everyone in Manitoba knows this, is in our health-care system. In fact, just within the past number of weeks, they've turned around and rejected proposals from surgeons at the Grace who wanted to invest in our public system. They've turned around and attacked physicians who've spoken out publicly with recommendations for how to improve public health care in Manitoba.

And why did they do that? Well, we now know it's because they went and signed a private contract with the Cambie medical centre out of British Columbia.

For those who don't know, this is one of the leading proponents of privatization of health care in Canada. They tried to go to the Supreme Court—this clinic did—to attack the Canada Health Act, which guarantees universal coverage for all Canadians.

Is the Premier trying to fund the Cambie clinic's next court challenge with this contract?

* (14:00)

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): The Leader of the Opposition is all over the map with his questions.

He started off with MPI, and I feel obliged to correct the record, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition knows that when the NDP government was in power, they did nothing to upgrade their IT system—absolutely nothing.

What we did is we took action when we got into government to make sure that there is an IT system there for Manitoba Public Insurance, Madam Speaker, and we'll continue to move forward to ensure that that job gets done.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, it seems like the Premier doesn't want to talk about health care, and who can blame her? After being Brian Pallister's failed Health minister and we saw such terrible outcomes during the pandemic, now she's implementing a privatization agenda.

The thing that compounds the travesty here is that this PC government—the Stefanson government—is rejecting solutions from local doctors who are telling us how we could improve and increase capacity in our local public health-care system in communities like Winnipeg, Selkirk, Brandon. And instead, they're signing contracts with private companies outside of Manitoba, including one that is trying to privatize health care across the country.

Why is the Premier undermining public health care in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and members of the NDP, we are focused on getting better results for patients. We won't take an ideological approach when it comes to ensuring that patients get the health care they need.

And, Madam Speaker, I will point out to the Leader of the NDP that the NDP government in British Columbia is also contracting out these services. Breast and prostate cancer patients are waiting for radiation. We'll have cross-border option.

BC Cancer will start sending eligible breast and prostate cancer patients to Washington state for radiation treatments. Patients will be offered the choice of going to one of two clinics. They will be given choices.

There's an NDP government in BC, Madam Speaker, who understands the importance of getting their health-care services for Manitobans when they need it. In their case, for BC patients.

The Leader of the Opposition and NDP don't get it in Manitoba.

We will continue to do what's in the best interest of patients.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

We have some young minds in the gallery that are very interested to learn how a democratic debate works, so I would like to see them impressed by what they see here.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, the Premier really is all over the map with that purported-to-be answer.

But here's the thing: We're talking about the Cambie medical clinic. She's talking about a completely different surgical arrangement.

What we're talking about with the Cambie medical clinic—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —is a company that tried to go to the Supreme Court of Canada to get public health care dismantled in this country.

The PCs don't seem to understand that universal access to public health care is a fundamental Canadian value. They've signed a contract, they've gone into business with a company that is trying to attack that fundamental Canadian value.

So I'll repeat the question: Is the Premier trying to fund this company's next court challenge against public health care in our country? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is so obsessed with ideology that he refuses to put patient care first.

We will always put patient care first, as will, and I will note, the premier of British Columbia, Madam Speaker.

And because the Leader of the Opposition perhaps hasn't seen this article, I'll table it for him today. But the article is entitled: Breast and prostate cancer patients waiting for radiation will have cross-border option.

The BC government even gets it, Madam Speaker, that it's more important to put patient care ahead of their own ideology.

We will always put patient care first in the province of Manitoba.

Health-Care Services Contract With Private Clinic

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Instead of investing in our public health-care system, the Premier is yet again choosing to send money out of province to private, for-profit providers instead. And this time, the Premier has signed a deal with none other than Cambie surgical centre.

For the last decade, Cambie's CEO has led the crusade against our public health-care system, even going so far as to bring this to the Supreme Court of Canada.

On this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we don't think the government should give money to providers who are actively fighting against public health care.

Will the Premier simply admit that giving Cambie public dollars was her mistake?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I'd like to table again for the House the Winnipeg Free Press article, and continue to remind members of this Chamber what happened when the NDP tried and failed to run Manitoba's health-care system.

The headline, Madam Speaker: NDP gets failing grade. Manitoba's NDP government has broken more election promises than it has kept on the eve of the party's first year in office. Premier Gary Doer's team got its worst marks in the area of health care, where it made sweeping promises. After one year, the NDP government has broken more than half of 20 top pledges.

Manitobans couldn't trust them then, Madam Speaker, and they certainly can't trust them now.

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

MLA Asagwara: For a decade, the CEO of Cambie surgical centre has been leading the charge against our public health-care system. He's repeatedly tried to argue in court that we should have an American-style, two-tier health system, and he's repeatedly lost, Madam Speaker.

Despite his crusade against our public health-care system, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) thinks it's a good idea to send him public taxpayer money. On this side of the House, we think that's wrong.

Will the Premier simply admit that paying a company that's argued against public health care—a system that the vast majority of Manitobans and Canadians depend on—is wrong?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, members opposite can feel free to read along in the article I tabled on some of the broken promises.

I will list them: failed to end hallway medicine in six months; failed to open 100 hospital beds immediately; failed to reduce the wait-lists for diagnostic testing; failed to immediately implement the nurses-first program; failed to end the practice of sending patients to Grafton, North Dakota; failed to cut the prostate cancer wait-list in half; and failed to establish a comprehensive—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —cancer centre.

Failed, failed, failed, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, it's embarrassing that this Health Minister is failing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —so badly at health care right now in 2023 that she is quoting an article from 23 years ago, instead of focusing on the fact that this Premier is excluding and ignoring solutions being brought forward by doctors right now here in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: Cambie's CEO has spent the past decade attacking public health care across Canada. He's repeatedly tried to argue in court against public

health care in our country. Thankfully, he's repeatedly lost, Madam Speaker.

Can the Premier or the Health Minister explain why they're giving taxpayer dollars to a company that's trying to tear down our public health-care system?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I'm sure the members opposite are wondering what the Manitoba Nurses Union president, Maureen Hancharyk, had to say about their NDP-managed health system.

When talking about the nursing shortage during their government, which nearly doubled in a single year under their watch, this is a direct quote: The vacancy rate is getting higher. I don't think anyone has any idea how bad it is out there.

* (14:10)

That is their legacy, Madam Speaker. Broken promises—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —no plan, no solutions. The NDP of yesterday is the same as the NDP of today.

Brandon School Board Meeting Premier's Position on Book Bans

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, in 2023, it should not be difficult for the leaders of this province to stand up and say that books should not be banned.

But this Premier has refused to do so. Instead of unequivocally supporting the 2SLGBTQ+ community, she has said it should be up to school divisions to decide whether or not to protect Manitobans' human rights.

School board trustees in Brandon will be hearing public presentations tonight, and Manitobans deserve a clear answer on where this Premier stands.

Does she condemn banning books, yes or no?

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I'm not sure how many more times, on this side of the House, we can say it. I myself have said it, the Premier has said it, the Minister of Education has said it, the minister of status of women, now called GEM, has said it, we have all said it on this side of the House, that we condemn acts of violence and hate towards any community, especially targeted currently at the LGBT+ community.

We've also said, on this side of the House, that there is no provincial book ban in this province.

So, my questions for the members opposite: Why do they continue to put false information on the record and cause more fear in Manitoba when we should all be coming together in unity to stand against book bans?

We are not for book bans, and we stand against all acts of hate.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am going to have to call the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) to order. I could not even hear the minister's ending of his statements.

So, I'm going to please ask all members—*[interjection]* And I'm going to call the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) to order now, too.

I'm trying to maintain some decorum in here, and when I can't hear answers and I can't hear questions, then we have a problem.

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

Ms. Naylor: The question at hand here is whether the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) will condemn banning books without qualifying her answer.

Her record of disrespect speaks for itself. She was banned from speaking at Pride after disrespecting organizers by not showing up for them when she said she would. And even this morning, all the Premier would say about the situation in Brandon is that they're monitoring the situation.

Well, the issue is coming—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor:—before Brandon school trustees tonight, and Manitobans deserve an answer.

Will the Premier condemn banning books today?

Mr. Khan: Madam Speaker, this is really sad and embarrassing for the member from Wolseley.

I was there myself, and I listened with my own two ears when our Premier stood up and said there is no book ban in the province of Manitoba, and she will not allow any book ban in province of Manitoba.

I was there; I heard it, along were dozens of other—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—people.

Now, the member of Wolseley wasn't there, but the member of Wolseley—and I will quote—on May 17th said, the PC government needs to unequivocally speak out against book banning and condemn attacks on Riverbend. To do so is to fail support—the LGBT+ community.

Madam Speaker, we have done that. We have done that over and over again. On May 16th, in Hansard, I said it. On May 16th, the Minister of Advanced Education said it. And today, our Premier said it.

So, when will the members opposite stop fear mongering in Manitoba?

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

Ms. Naylor: At no time has the Premier of Manitoba stood in these Chambers and said that book banning is wrong, and that is what we're asking for. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor: School trustees are meeting tonight. This is not just a hypothetical, this is happening.

Manitobans want a clear statement from the leader of the Province about what is happening. It matters to Manitobans.

But the Premier still won't say the words that book banning is wrong. She needs to clearly condemn the banning of books, no ifs, ands or buts.

Will she finally stand in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor:—this House and do so today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Gender Equity): As the first minister in this province's history responsible for Gender Equity, it was such an honour this morning to be at an announcement with the Premier establishing this new enhanced mandate of the Manitoba government to ensure equity and diversity in our province.

And at this announcement, our Premier was unequivocal, where there is no place for hate in our society, there is no place for book bans in our society.

On this side of the House, we are very clear that there is no room for that in society, unlike members opposite, who have failed to apologize for homophobic comments that they have made on the record.

Education System Funding Concerns

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Instead of properly funding schools after years of cuts, this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has sent out a letter offering custom graduation videos. This makes the Premier's priorities abundantly 'clealer'—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare:—Madam Speaker. She's more worried about campaigning to Manitoba students than supporting them in the classrooms.

Students don't need an empty grad video, they need more teachers, more supports and more essential funding in their classrooms. The Premier should stop politicizing education and fund it instead.

Will she commit to doing so today? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Once again, it gives me great pleasure to stand up and put some facts on the record, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the member that represents Transcona, again, is talking from those self-serving talking points from his—from their—his leader. It's a bunch of fear mongering, fear that they're spreading all across this great province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, \$100 million this year alone to K-to-12 education. That's a 6.1 per cent increase.

In my next answer, I'll be talking about those wonderful graduations that are coming up for the K-to-12 system, Madam Speaker, so I appreciate the member from Transcona standing up and asking me a question on this topic.

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

Mr. Altomare: You know, they can't run on their record. It's been six and a half years of underfunding education, 0.5 per cent every year. And now they think—now they think, Madam Speaker—that school divisions and school systems can turn on a dime when they get a couple of extra dollars.

That is not possible, Madam Speaker. They know that, and that's also affecting—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare:—recruiting and all the clinical supports in class.

But let's get back to the videos. It's clear the Premier is hoping to get re-elected so that she can keep underfunding education. We, of course, on this side of the House, think that's wrong.

Can the Premier explain why she's putting her own needs ahead of Manitoba student needs?

Mr. Ewasko: It's nice that the member from Transcona stands up and admits and puts on the record that we are increasing funding to education, Madam Speaker. Even though the member from Transcona and his NDP colleagues feel that \$100 million is crumbs. Crumbs.

Well, that \$100 million is making sure that we have success for all students in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, no matter where they live, their cultural background or their own personal circumstance.

* (14:20)

We're on the side of student success and funding education, whereas the NDP are on the side of fear mongering all across this province, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Altomare: The cumulative effect of underfunding isn't fear mongering. It's factual right now.

There are school divisions that can't buy school buses because of the increased costs due to the pandemic and due to years, Madam Speaker, of underfunding by this government. It's a cumulative effect, and they know it.

And it's clear that these videos aren't going to meet the needs of students. She's made that abundantly clear over the past seven years as being of a government that has underfunded education consistently, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier now simply admit that cutting education has been wrong, and will put Manitoba students ahead of her own political aspirations?

Mr. Ewasko: The member from Transcona and his NDP colleagues are just plain wrong, Madam Speaker.

Twenty–23 per cent increase to education since we've taken office in 2016, Madam Speaker—23 per cent. That's not crumbs, as the member from Transcona continues to put on the record.

It's unfortunate that they—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko:—continue to vote against the \$100-million, 6.1 per cent increase this year alone in education.

On that point, Madam Speaker, I would like to wish each and every graduate this coming—during June from high school, all the best in their future endeavours. And I know many of us in this great Chamber of ours are going to be attending those graduations.

So, thank you, Madam Speaker, for your time.

Manitoba Hydro Rates Increase Concerns

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): This PC government's plan for Manitoba Hydro is clear: they want to raise rates as quickly as possible, regardless of whether or not hydro rate increases are actually needed.

They've hiked up rates over 20 per cent since 2016, and now they want to do it again by 2.4 per cent in September and then another 2.4 per cent next April. These hikes put a massive burden on Manitoba families and small businesses.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business wrote a letter to the minister asking him to cancel his rate hike.

Will he listen, and will he commit to stopping the PC government's rate hikes today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Madam Speaker, I think Manitobans should appreciate the situation the NDP left Manitoba Hydro in.

In fact, even under their watch, they had—Manitoba ratepayers suffered through 11 increases in 12 years under the NDP, Madam Speaker.

And you know what else they did, Madam Speaker? When they first got elected in 2001, the—one of their first orders of business: double the water power rental rates to Manitobans, Manitoba Hydro. That had a direct impact on the rates for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, at that time, \$52-million increase on the backs of Manitoba Hydro ratepayers. That is the legacy the NDP have left.

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

Mr. Sala: High electricity costs means small businesses will have fewer resources to create jobs, invest in their businesses and contribute to the provincial economy. Small businesses are still struggling to

recover from the pandemic. The last thing they need is another rate hike from this PC government.

CFIB says that the PC government's Bill 36, quote, draws serious concern, end quote, for how it limits the Public Utilities Board's ability to independently review rate increases.

Will the minister change course today, listen to small business owners and stop hiking up their hydro rates?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, the only people that have been hiking rates for Manitoba Hydro were the NDP. In fact, they also doubled the debt guarantee rate for Manitoba Hydro—again, forcing increased rates 11 out of 12 years on the backs of Manitoba Hydro ratepayers.

We, our government, recognized that was the wrong approach. That is why we reduced both the water rental rates and the debt guarantee rates in half, saving Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Hydro ratepayers \$185 million this year alone.

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

Mr. Sala: Manitobans know that it was this government that wrote legislation explicitly designed to raise hydro rates on Manitobans. They should be ashamed of that record.

This PC government didn't like the Public Utilities Board independent oversight of hydro rates, so they rewrote the law to let them hike up rates by 5 per cent every year. This is hurting Manitoban families, and it's hurting Manitoba businesses.

I'll table the letter from CFIB calling on this government to cancel their planned 5 per cent rate hike over the next year.

Manitobans are in a cost-of-living crisis, and they need support now.

Will this minister do the right thing for struggling Manitoba families and small businesses and stop hiking hydro rates today?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, the NDP left Manitoba Hydro with a legacy of \$24 billion in debt because of their boondoggle and because they completely ignored the Public Utilities Board when they started to building Bipole III and Keeyask.

Madam Speaker, we believe in a strong Manitoba Hydro, and we believe in a strong Public Utilities Board. That's why we're taking these steps to reduce a

debt guarantee and water rental rates to Manitoba Hydro. As well, we've added \$2 million in this year's budget to strengthen the oversight of the Public Utilities Board.

Manitoba Public Insurance Work-From-Home Policy

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): After months, even years, of controversy, the CEO of MPI has been replaced. While there have been hundreds of millions of dollars in Project Nova cost overruns and millions more in contract consulting, we've heard that's only the tip of the iceberg.

We've heard that one of the current issues at MPI is that workers were promised a flexible back-to-work plan, which was suddenly revoked. Some folks working remotely were much more productive. We heard that after a visit to MPI by the minister, this plan was suddenly scrapped. Some workers were in tears because they'd already rearranged their lives, including cancelling child care based on the plan.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) confirm that the minister was the one who instructed MPI that all workers had to come to work in person?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Well, it seems that half the questions are that we're either too involved with MPI or not involved enough with MPI, Madam Speaker.

I do want to take this opportunity, though, to welcome the new interim CEO, Marnie Kacher, who has 15 years of management experience at MPI, along with Ward Keith, the new board chair, who has 30 years of experience at Manitoba Public Insurance.

We know they'll bring solid leadership to the organization, and we look forward to seeing that leadership in action, Madam Speaker.

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

Release of Third-Party Review

Mr. Lamont: One of the things I've seen since becoming MLA is the incredible power that our Crown corporation monopolies hold and why they need independent oversight while still being accountable to the public and stakeholders, and still having ministerial accountability.

In the last few years, MPI went after brokers. They threatened the Automotive Trades Association; if they didn't sign a lousy contract, they pulled their

licences. Its coffers were plundered so the PCs could send out cheques for pandemic relief. By any measure, this is a fiasco. Manitobans have the right to know exactly what went wrong at MPI.

Will the Premier commit to releasing the third-party review findings before the general election this fall?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, no pun intended, but that was a bit of a drive-by smear at MPI by the member for St. Boniface.

Madam Speaker, we are very pleased that the corporation's under strong and new leadership, both at the board level and also at the executive management level. We know that their financials are on solid footing. We know that they're transitioning to a new online system to provide better servers for Manitobans.

We also know that we have historic low rates when it comes to MPI and historic rebates. When the NDP were in government, the only thing that they did was demand free Jets tickets.

Shaw Internet and TV Prices Bulk Pricing for Low-Income Rental Housing

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, an Indigenous-led volunteer expert group has had meetings with Shaw to look at the possibility of negotiating bulk TV and Internet prices for low-income rental housing properties. Bell was not interested.

Headquarters office representatives from Shaw in Calgary said Shaw could provide this service at \$20 per unit, per month, an outstanding value for tenants. Of particular interest is the possibility of including Manitoba's approximately 13,000 public housing units and more than 3,000 not-for-profit, predominantly seniors' housing units.

* (14:30)

I ask the Premier whether she would agree to meet with the representatives of this volunteer expert group, who are in the gallery today, to take advantage of this possibility?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government is working hard to ensure that everybody has a safe and affordable place to call home and that they have the ability to provide for services for their family.

And that is why our government has increased investments. We have raised the EIA rate. We have continuously invested in our public housing in

Manitoba. This is something, by the way, that the member opposite has voted against, each and every time.

But, Madam Speaker, there is an opportunity. If that member really is concerned about affordability in Manitoba, about ensuring that everybody has an equal opportunity in this province, he'll vote in favour of a budget which has historical investments for all Manitobans, particularly those with low income.

Brandon Police and Bear Clan Funding Announcement

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, our government continues to prioritize public safety by investing and providing supports in our police and in our community organizations.

We know that the NDP don't believe in funding our local law enforcement. Instead, they would rather defund the police and any other safety initiatives.

Can the Minister of Justice please share how our government continues to focus on making our streets safer?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'd like to thank the extraordinary MLA for Brandon East for that question.

On this side of the House, in our government, we support front-line officers. We support emergency responders. We support community groups who are out there working to make the streets safer.

We know that on the other side of the House, like the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), they said the police don't need more money. They've said it on the record. Our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) in contrast, was in Brandon last week and provided \$349,000 of support to the Brandon Police Service and to the Bear Clan.

On this side of the House, we have the back of the police and the Bear Clan. On that side of the House, they've turned their back.

York Factory Cree Nation Youth Mental Health Supports

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): York Factory Cree Nation's chief, Darryl Wastesicoot, is raising the alarm about the urgent need for youth mental health supports.

Recent youth suicides and suicide attempts have prompted a state of emergency in the community. Chief Wastesicoot says that isolation and a lack of

infrastructure are contributing to the crisis and that previous calls to government have failed.

Thoughts and prayers are not enough, Madam Speaker. They need action now.

What is this PC government doing to address the crisis in York Factory Cree Nation?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I first want to begin by thanking all the front-line workers, the counsellors, the teachers, those who work at the crisis stabilization, the mobile crisis units, who are working and providing services for individuals living in the northern parts of our province. Also, the tele-psychiatry services that are provided through the psychiatrists.

They're all working together to provide supports so families are able to get the help they need, when they need it.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social-economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level

could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction would help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and 'dake'-take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Lynda Loftus, Roxanne Cyr and Manpreet Kaur Brar, as well as many other Manitobans.

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

Louise Bridge

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 112 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it has deteriorated extensively, is now functionally obsolete, therefore more subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, City of Winnipeg, City, has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new Louise—the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed that residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives such as the new Louise bridge came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government of 2016.

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to a new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

(10) The City expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn Avenue from Watt Street to the 112-year-old bridge is complete.

(11) The new City administration has delayed the decision on the Louise Bridge for at least a year, possibly up to 10 years, unless the Province steps in on behalf of northeast Winnipeg residents and completes this overdue link.

(12) The Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link in northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction; and

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping the old Louise Bridge open for active transportation in the future.

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

* (14:40)

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Couple of announcements before calling business for the afternoon.

Pursuant to rule 34(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere). The title of the resolution is Thanking Those Who Have Been a Part of the Forty Second Legislature.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Selkirk. The title of the resolution is Thanking Those Who Have Been a Part of the Forty Second Legislature.

Mr. Goertzen: I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, May 25th, 2023, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 218, An Act respecting the Title "Associate Judge" (Various Acts Amended); Bill 230, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act; and Bill 237, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, May 25th, 2023, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 218, An Act respecting the Title "Associate Judge" (Various Acts Amended); Bill 230, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act; and Bill 237, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please resolve into—resolve the House into Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Estimates this afternoon. This House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Legislative Assembly.

Does the honourable Speaker have an opening statement?

Hon. Myrna Driedger (Speaker of the Legislative Assembly): I do.

I am pleased to be in attendance for consideration of the Legislative Assembly Estimates in my capacity as Speaker of the Assembly.

I have served as Speaker for the past seven years, and it has definitely been a highlight of my career as an MLA to serve in the role of Speaker. I take considerable pride in the work done by Assembly staff and the various initiatives that have been undertaken for the Assembly during my tenure as Speaker.

Once upon a time, the government House leader used to defend the Assembly Estimates. However, for the past 22 years, the Assembly Estimates have been presented in the Committee of Supply by the Speaker, which demonstrates the separation of the Assembly from executive government.

In my role as Speaker, I take my responsibilities for the Legislative Assembly very seriously. I work hard to ensure that good services are provided to members, and that the independence of the Legislative Assembly is respected. Over the years, the Assembly has been able to accomplish many good things for members, and we hope to continue this in the future.

Today I will be noting some of the initiatives undertaken during the previous fiscal year. During this time we saw society begin to return back to normal activities, as vaccines and increased knowledge about the transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus, as well as changes in public health orders, made the transition back to regular activities a more viable option.

Some of the highlights undertaken in the return to normal operations over the year—this past year include: all MLAs being present in the Chamber to participate in proceedings, instead of having reduced capacity numbers for social distancing reasons; the retention of the virtual participation option for MLAs to attend sittings of the House and committee meetings for circumstances where travel or health concerns made it prudent for some members to

participate virtually; the return of the appreciation lunch held for Assembly staff by human resource services; the resumption of MLAs attending parliamentary conferences and professional development learning opportunities in person; the holding of a Christmas lunch for staff of the Legislative Assembly by the Speaker; the return of the Speaker's appreciation lunch for staff and presentation of service awards; the use of the Assembly Chamber for holding the annual sessions of the Manitoba Youth Parliament, and Parlement jeunesse franco-manitobain.

* (14:50)

In addition, other important initiatives undertaken over the past year include: the release of the second Legislative Assembly annual report, covering the years 2020 to 2022; the hiring of a second staff person to augment the Assembly's Digital Media Branch; the recruitment and hiring of an IT manager and a senior technical support person for the Assembly's new IT branch for the Assembly offices in the Legislative Building; a change to the rules of the House where traditional Indigenous and traditional cultural or ethnic clothing can now be worn in the Chamber without requiring special permission; and the election of the first Muslim MLA in Manitoba's history.

Another significant milestone for the Assembly took place with the passage of and coming into force of Bill 26, the officers of the Legislative Assembly, various acts amended, on June 1st, 2022. This legislation changed the responsibility for appointment and remuneration of officers of the Legislative Assembly to the Legislative Assembly Management Commission. Previously, these appointments had been made by order-in-council with remuneration set by executive government.

The Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs continues to be the body tasked with conducting the hiring process and recommending a candidate for appointment in relation to the Advocate for Children and Youth, the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Information and Privacy Adjudicator, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner—ethics commissioner, after the next provincial election—the Lobbyist Registrar and the Ombudsman, while the commission has the responsibility for their recruitment and recommendation of a candidate for the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Previously, the name of the recommended candidate would be provided to the Clerk of Executive Council to confirm the offer and salary and then prepare the appointment order-in-council. Now, in all

cases for these officers, the salary and benefits will be established and approved by the commission. The names of the candidates recommended by the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs for these positions will be reported to the Assembly, reported from LAMC in the case of the Clerk, and the successful candidates will then be appointed by resolution of the Assembly.

In addition, on the recommendations of the Advocate for Children and Youth, Auditor General, Chief Electoral Officer, the Information and Privacy Adjudicator, the Lobbyist Registrar, the Ombudsman and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, duties for those offices can be appointed with the prior approval of the commission.

This is a significant step for the Assembly, as it places the responsibility for appointment and remuneration of the officers of the Assembly firmly under the control of the Assembly as opposed to executive government.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of the Legislative Assembly for all the hard work and dedicated service they provide on behalf of members. I know it will be a busy year ahead for them with the provincial general election taking place in October, and I know they are up to the task of orientating new MLAs and preparing for the 43rd Legislature.

And I would also like to just put on the record my thanks to the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for their work over the past number of meetings that we have had over the past year and for their collegial discourse in order to ensure that we moved items along in an expeditious manner. So, my gratitude goes out to LAMC for the amount of work that they put in to do the job as commissioners.

And I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Speaker for those comments.

Does the official opposition representative have any opening comments?

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I would just like to say miigwech to all of the Legislative Assembly staff and clerks.

As many of us have said in this Chamber, there is a lot of work that goes on in respect of running and administering the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and there is extraordinary expertise and historical knowledge that many of the clerks and staff hold that

allow us to be able to do our jobs as MLAs and allow us to serve Manitobans, particularly in these roles.

And so, I want to say a profound *miigwech* for all of the work and—that goes on, the work that we don't even really see behind the scenes. I know that there are phenomenal clerks that do just amazing work that we don't see on the daily basis. We see folks that are in the Chamber and we are always in awe and appreciative of those folks, but also the clerks that are behind the scenes. And, again, all of the staff that help run this Legislative Assembly.

And as we move out of this 42nd Manitoba Legislative Assembly, I think it's important for us all to reflect on how—what a privilege and honour it is to be able to sit in this Chamber and do the work that we are elected to do, which is to serve Manitobans, to serve in the best of our abilities, and working towards the best province that we can have.

And it is quite an honour and quite a privilege, and I just want to say, from the bottom of my heart and on behalf of our NDP caucus, we take that responsibility very, very seriously and we say a profound *miigwech* to be in these roles.

Miigwech.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the representative from the official opposition for those remarks.

At this time we invite staff to enter the Chamber and I would ask the Speaker and the official opposition representative to please introduce their staff in attendance.

In accordance with subrule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning shall proceed in a global manner with questions put on the resolutions once the representative from the official opposition indicates questioning has concluded.

If the honourable Speaker wishes to introduce her staff, she may do so.

Mrs. Driedger: I would, indeed, like to introduce my staff.

I have in attendance with me today Ms. Patricia Chaychuk, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and Ms. Deanna Wilson, the executive director of administration.

Mr. Chairperson: The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): More of a comment than a question; a comment to my friend from Charleswood, my long-time colleague in a different time. We've served together now for, well, 20 years—it'd be 20 years for me early next month—and, of course, you were elected before that.

And, of course, I enjoyed our time together in opposition. I think you were sitting about there, too, when we were, yes, in opposition, and you withstood and, I think, suffered some of my own comments sometimes from the opposition benches.

But I wanted to say, because I know after the 2016 election we had the opportunity to have lunch at a little restaurant in Assiniboine Park, and we were both sort of talking about where things had gone in our lives. And I know you probably didn't expect to take on the role of Speaker after 2016. It's probably something you hadn't thought about or maybe dreamt about when we were in opposition.

But I want to say you've done an extraordinary job, and I look at not only the way that you've handled the House, but equally and maybe more importantly, outside of the House, some of the connections that you draw. I know pushing and advocating for a lot of the issues on women in politics have been very, very important, the connections through things like our midwest legislators conference and the importance of having those interjurisdictional discussions, some of the challenges at LAMC, and, of course, those are all internal so they'll remain internal. But you stick-handled those well, always advocating for the Office of the Legislative Assembly, but knowing that the challenges that come with having to fund some things, too.

And so, I just wanted to say, because I know there won't be many more opportunities for me to say it, and maybe not any more opportunities in the next seven days before we conclude the session and go into the next election, that I've not only enjoyed serving with you as a colleague, but you've done an extraordinary job as Speaker and any uncertainties or insecurities you may have had at that lunch we had at the Assiniboine Park that day many years ago, you certainly have overcome and done it with elegance and class.

* (15:00)

So, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I'm going to take this opportunity to comment, as well, and to thank you, Madam Speaker, for your efforts.

I know it's been a challenge here with all the heckling that often goes on sometimes. But I think you've done a very credible and forthright job, and I want to thank you on behalf of the Manitoba Liberal caucus for all you've done.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

Seeing none, we will proceed with the resolutions.

Starting with resolution 1.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,307,000 for Legislative Assembly, Other Assembly Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,801,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,638,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Ombudsman, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,733,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,510,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

And finally, resolution 1.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,365,000 for Legislative Assembly, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Legislative Assembly. This also concludes the consideration of

departmental Estimates in the Committee of Supply for this session.

And I would like to thank all those who participated in this process for their dedication and diligence.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted certain resolutions.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'd like to call Main and Supply.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will now consider this afternoon the Committee of Supply to consider the concurrence motion.

And the House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move that the Committee of Supply concur in all supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024, which have been adopted at this session whether by a section of the Committee of Supply or by the full committee.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is in order.

For the information of all members, on Thursday May 18th, 2023, the Official Opposition House Leader (MLA Fontaine) tabled the list of ministers to be called for questioning in debate on the concurrence motion. As per that list, all members of Cabinet will be questioned concurrently.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Wanted to follow up in that concern that was brought to my attention by some students in post-secondary institutions.

Now, this is—I'm not sure if it's related directly to the Minister of Advanced Education or perhaps the Minister of Government Services, but it's regarding the STEP program—that's the Student Temporary Employment Program. And when we looked up some of the concerns the students were raising, they—we popped on to the website and we were concerned by what it says here when it comes to the wages that the government advertises on the website.

According to the government website, which I have printed out and which I will table for the minister, it says, quote—here, under the wages section—quote, hourly wages are determined by the complexity of the job duties and range between \$11.95 and \$14.34. End quote.

So, that's the quote on the government website. Now, as the minister would note, that's significantly below the minimum wage set as of August 1st, 2023.

* (15:10)

And so, I would like to know from the minister why he's proposing to pay students below the minimum wage for the STEP program. That seems like it's a—directly in contravention of the government's own policy around minimum wage and a dis-service to students.

And I'd like to know what of the minister—how the minister plans to address this on the website.

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister responsible for the Manitoba public service): Hello. Yes, happy to address this question for the member, and accidentally summoned a page and so attracted the attention of the Deputy Speaker. But, in any case, I'm now happy to field the question.

As the member does understand, I think, that I'm not only in charge of Government Services and Consumer Protection, but also the Manitoba civil service, the public service, which—and I can assure the member—does abide by minimum wage legislation.

So, I appreciate what he has pointed out, and I will bring that back to the department to ensure that accurate and timely information is being shared on our website.

And, in the meantime, I can assure the member that we do abide by minimum wage legislation.

Mr. Chairperson: Just a friendly note to all ministers to be mindful if you're raising your hand to get the attention of a page, you may inadvertently volunteer yourself to answer a question that is being asked.

So, forewarned is forearmed. Let's try this again.

Mr. Moses: Just, you know, to—as obviously, the minister would know that those rate—'wates'—rates are significantly below minimum wage—a full \$2.20 below minimum wage, is significant.

And so, it's certainly concerning if that's the offer the government is putting on there. And even if it's not, if it's a mistake on the website, that, you know, would dissuade some good applicants from applying for those if they see this listed on the public website.

So, I'd wonder if the minister has a particular time frame of when this might get fixed so that students who are looking for employment can—have ensured that they're going to get paid at least at minimum wage, although, I think, we know that working for the government, many employees might deserve to get paid higher and oftentimes significantly higher above minimum wage, based on the jobs and tasks that they're required.

And so, wonder if the minister can (a) commit to when that's going to get fixed and resolved, and (b) also be able to ensure the current and correct wages for students and whether he's reviewing increasing them, given cost-of-living impacts.

Mr. Teitsma: Yes, thank you very much, appreciate the question. I think what I heard the member saying was that our government has put forward unprecedented increases to the minimum wage lately, and certainly, the minimum wage has gone up significantly in the last few years.

And I hope that the member can appreciate that that was done and that that is also very beneficial to students who are often the ones who do make minimum wage, that they're now able to make a more significant income when they pursue summer employment or temporary employment or even employment during their studies, as many students do.

So, yes. No, what I would just suggest to that member is yes, I will give it my attention. Given that I have not spoken with my staff about what it will take to update this website and what timeline I can—might expect, I'm not going to make any specific commitments, but I will hope that by the time he's ready to leave this Legislative Assembly for the summer, that

he should check the website again and hopefully everything looks good by then.

Mr. Moses: During my Estimates period with the Minister of Advanced Education, I tabled a report on advanced education, the—building the best education—adult education system in Canada, a roadmap and action plan for Manitoba.

Wondering if the minister had an opportunity to read and review the report and whether she is planning on acting on any of the recommendations in the report.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Can I just have the member just repeat or clarify which report he's referring to?

Mr. Moses: I'm referring to the report that I tabled during our Estimates committee, that's the report on adult education called Building the Best Adult Education System in Canada: A Roadmap and Action Plan for Manitoba, authored by Jim Silver. It's a report that I tabled during our Estimates committee to you.

Wondering if you've had a chance since our Estimates discussions about a month ago to read and review the report and to—my question for you is if you have, what recommendations are you looking at implementing from the report?

Mrs. Guillemard: Yes, I appreciate the clarification.

Yes, I know that my department was very familiar with the report, and they were happy to share some of those details with me. It has been considered when we are looking at some of the refinements we are making to some of our plans and—in consideration with our post-secondary planning.

Specific recommendations, at this point, I'm not able to identify to share with the member. But I don't think there was any recommendations within the report that we disagreed with.

Mr. Moses: And I also wanted to ask the minister—actually, the minister responsible for Research Manitoba regarding—because during the Estimates period, I spoke with the Minister for Advanced Education, who referred to me—referred me to the Minister of Economic Development, as she said that Research Manitoba was now under the responsibility of Economic Development.

So, I wanted to ask the Minister for Economic Development regarding Research Manitoba and to clarify the funding for Research Manitoba.

Obviously, the funding has gone down for Research Manitoba under this current government—

significantly down—about \$5 million, which is about a third of their total funding from the Province.

So, can the minister explain the sort of impact that cutting the funding for Research Manitoba has had on Manitoba's competitiveness?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): I thank the member from St. Vital for that question, and certainly a good question.

And I would like to ask the member—I'm going to, because of the adoption of a number of areas within our department and Research Manitoba being one of them, I'd like to ensure that I provide him with the exact details. So, I will do that—I will endeavour to do that post this meeting.

* (15:20)

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): On July 8, 2021, the Province announced an online portal launched to connect IENs to licensing process services and supports, including a grant of up to \$23,000 per IEN for financial assistance for assessment and training costs and other costs that come with obtaining licensure in Manitoba.

Since that date, I'd like to ask the minister how much money has been spent on these grants and how many IENs have qualified for these grants.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to talk about our government's investment in internationally educated nurses and the work that is being done across many departments, really a whole-of-government approach to addressing the needs of internationally educated nurses.

First, we created the portal where individuals can access up to \$23,000 to support them on their journey to licensure, Mr. Chair. And I understand that several hundred individuals have taken advantage of that funding and are at various stages in their licensure journey.

Since then, we have moved forward with even more supports, hiring nurse—internationally educated nurse navigators in the department of—in Manitoba Health, Mr. Chair, and ensuring that there—recently, there was a online virtual presentation that was made available to all internationally educated nurses that are in the portal to help them to understand the changes that have been made through the various colleges responsible for nursing licensure—the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, the College of

Licensed Practical Nurses and the college of psych nursing—to make it easier for internationally educated nurses to get licensed.

So we've worked very closely with all of those colleges. In fact, CRNM has made seven modernizations that will allow for internationally educated nurses to participate in a program that has received rave reviews and—which is the undergraduate nurse employee program.

It initially started out as an offer to college of nursing students at the University of Manitoba who were in their third and fourth year of the program. They were given an opportunity to get paid employment in our health facilities while being mentored by senior nursing staff and gaining critical clinical hands-on experience in the workplace, a very competitive wage. And what we've found is that a high percentage of those individuals remain working here in Manitoba and receive job offers at various facilities, community and acute care.

So, the changes and the modernizations made by the CRNM will allow internationally educated nurses to now participate as uncertified nurse employees. They will also have an opportunity to do that while they're in the bridging program. Many of them are in the bridging program that's offered by Red River College Polytechnic, and while they are in that program completing their bridging, they'll be able to get this hands-on clinical experience, Mr. Chair.

And so, our internationally educated nurses are a valuable asset to this province. We want to ensure that Manitoba remains a welcoming place for internationally educated individuals. We are modernizing pathways. We are making it easier for individuals to complete their clinical competency assessment.

University of Manitoba College of Nursing is pilot—is in the midst of a pilot with the Philippines, where we did some recruitment this spring to have—to provide the ability for individuals to complete the clinical competency assessment testing while they are in their homeland.

And so we are certainly streamlining not just here in Manitoba, but for individuals before they even arrive in Manitoba, so they can—more streamlined licensure, more streamlined supports. Once they arrive in Manitoba, those nurse navigators will be assisting them through their walk, their journey, to licensure. And the \$23,000 per IEN will be available and so much more, Mr. Chair.

So, I look forward to welcoming more IENs to Manitoba.

MLA Marcelino: I just wanted to make sure that I got that number straight, that there's about several hundred IENs that have been able to access this specific grant at \$23,000 each, and possibly at a cost of over \$16 million.

Is that correct?

Ms. Gordon: So, my comment was that there are several hundred internationally educated nurses that have taken advantage of applying through the portal. I do not have the exact number of how many have actually accessed the \$23,000 that is available per IEN, but I do know that there are several hundred individuals who've taken advantage of joining the portal.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: I see three hands raised. I'm going to acknowledge the honourable member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino), who's been asking the last few questions.

MLA Marcelino: Yes, this is just the last question.

So, yes, my question was, how many IENs have actually been able to successfully access that \$23,000 grant?

Ms. Gordon: Again, several hundred individuals have applied to the portal, and applying to the portal gives each and every individual an opportunity to access up to \$23,000 to assist with costs associated with their licensure, be it supports for rent or for child care while they are undertaking their bridging program.

How many of—how many individuals have taken up that offer, I do not have that information available. But if we're talking about access, Mr. Chair, every individual who applies to the portal has access to the funding that is available.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'd like to ask the Health Minister about the safety issues that nurses are reporting at Health Sciences Centre.

So, we raised this in question period a couple of weeks ago, and the minister is well aware that the nurses and health-care professionals and staff at the hospital are really struggling with these challenges around safety getting to and from their vehicles before and after work. I spoke with a nurse over the weekend who had just gotten her vehicle back from having windows smashed and belongings taken. Her day

back to work with the same vehicle, her vehicle was vandalized yet again, windows smashed.

And these folks have been reaching out, asking for government support in addressing the safety concerns they have. I'm wondering, since this issue's been raised and brought to the minister's attention, if she's taken any action to provide supports to those nurses and staff at HSC to help deal with the immediate safety concerns they've been dealing with that have been increasing.

* (15:30)

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question, and they raise a very important issue and one I know that we've heard specifically from the health community but also more generally in terms of public safety from other individuals as well.

And the member will know that the government created the institutional safety officer program, created the training program and has had a number of different individuals who've gone through the program and have been hired by institutions. I believe one was trained for the health-care sector specifically; there might be others in the queue. There's a number that have been trained for the—for University of Manitoba in particular, I believe. Might be other institutions—post-secondary institutions who are looking to hire individuals as well.

Of course, these would be employees of the individual regional health authorities, not the Department of Justice specifically. But the government did respond to the ability to have individuals trained. And I do believe that there has been training for individuals within the health-care sector. And I think we certainly would hope that there'll be more.

MLA Asagwara: Well, I thank the Minister of Justice for that response. I do think that clarity around this issue is really important.

These issues are reportedly escalating, and it's a deterrent for us not only recruiting nurses to the health-care system, of which we have a tremendous shortage, but it's also a deterrent from nurses remaining in the health-care system who are currently working there. I've spoken with nurses who are 22 years into their careers and are feeling very much like they need to leave their jobs at HSC because of the safety challenges.

So, while I hear the minister talking about institutional safety officers who have been trained and are

being hired elsewhere, this is not something that benefits the nurses at HSC. Those officers are not on site.

And so, what I'm seeking is clarity. What can I bring back to these nurses and health-care workers who are asking us to advocate on their behalf and for the government to take action? Has any action whatsoever been taken to help improve the safety concerns at HSC for these nurses and health-care staff?

Mr. Goertzen: Certainly, there has been an action taken, and I appreciate the member's concern. And I believe, you know, they raise it with the right concern because we don't want to see individuals leaving the health-care field for reasons of security—or, frankly, for any reason, if they would prefer to be in that occupation.

The realities around the institutional safety officers is the program took some time to not only develop but then to provide the appropriate training for the individual institutions. That was completed, I think, a few months ago. There have been some graduates that have been—completed the program. For—the university was obviously more aggressive in terms of putting people through the program, but there have been some training for health individuals, I believe, so my expectation would be that there would be more.

So, I think that the member can take back to those that they are speaking with that this is an important issue for the government. It's been signified as being important through the creation of the institutional safety officer program, a program that didn't exist before, just as safety is more generally. And there's other safety issues that are being addressed downtown, but, you know, I'll leave that maybe for the Justice critic to ask directly.

But I think the member can take back that there's been steps taken, and I would hope that there'll be more training through that program through officials within the regional health authority.

MLA Asagwara: Can the Health Minister advise if she knows of what the wait times are right now for those who are waiting on gender-affirming surgeries, procedures?

So, I've been hearing for quite some time—and I know I've written the minister on this issue—that there are folks who have had astronomically long wait times for gender-affirming surgeries.

Now, I know that there was an announcement made today, but there was nothing in that announcement that speaks to actually the folks who are currently waiting for surgeries being able to get them in a more timely manner. The wait for gender-affirming surgeries, those wait times are not on the government website.

And so, this is a really important health-care issue. We know that gender-affirming health care is life-saving health care. I'm specifically asking about surgeries.

Can the Health Minister advise what the current waits are for those accessing gender-affirming surgeries and procedures—the specific—the surgeries and procedures themselves, not access to referrals?

Thanks.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister for gender equality.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Gender Equity): I appreciate the member's question about our announcement this morning, as it does give me an opportunity to put some information on the record as to what we were announcing at The Forks this morning.

And that was really about expanding the mandate of the women secretariat to include gender diversity as well, and that we renamed the gender—the Manitoba status of women secretariat is now called the Gender Equity Manitoba Secretariat.

And the announcement today included enhanced funding for the secretariat to hire two additional FTEs to the secretariat. One will be two-spirited, and one will be someone who is from the 2SLGBTQ community at large to provide expertise and advice to the secretariat.

As well as—we announced three new positions on the newly renamed advisory council to ensure that we've got perspectives from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. So, there'll be a youth person appointed to this council as well as someone from the two-spirit community and someone from the LGBTQ community. That was what we had announced this morning.

We had also provided \$250,000 in dedicated annual funding to Pride Manitoba—Pride Winnipeg, pardon me, so that they could ensure that they've got ongoing operating dollars for hiring an executive director and office space and to just internalize—to have annualized funding so that they can strengthen their internal organization and better support the

more-than-25 Pride organizations throughout the province.

And so, this funding, after—in—well, in the president, Barry Karlenzig's, words, he said, after, you know, 36 years, it's truly amazing to finally have core funding from the Manitoba government. And he personally has been asking for over a decade to have funding for that event that attracts over 80,000 people annually. And so, we were very pleased to make that announcement today.

So, that concluded the announcement today, and we have certainly more to come in the days to come, including a flag-raising ceremony that will take place on Friday, this Friday, at—in Memorial Park.

MLA Asagwara: I'd just like to get some clarity in specifically regards to the wait times for gender-affirming surgery.

* (15:40)

This is really important. I spoke with a number of people—I was approached, actually, by a number of folks over the weekend who are panicking because they are likely, due to some changes that are happening, not going to receive gender-affirming surgery in a timely manner. It already wasn't timely; the wait times that they'd been provided are astronomically high.

Gender-affirming health care saves lives. Access to gender-affirming surgery prevents suicide, prevents suicide attempts. You know, we see the attacks that are happening on trans people, the rhetoric that's taking place, legislation, laws that are being passed that target trans families and communities.

Just heard the news of a trans youth throwing himself off a bridge. Left school, walked to a bridge and threw himself off the bridge and died. That is the direct result of governments who bring forward hateful rhetoric and—by way of laws, et cetera. It's also the result of governments who fail to listen to those who depend on them to establish gender-affirming policies that save lives.

And so, the question I'm asking is—so that I can go back to folks who are coming to me asking, what are the actual wait times? Because there's nothing on the government's website about them. We don't actually know what this looks like. To me, this is an area of concern that's been brought forward enough to the Health Minister where she should have an answer for it.

So, I'm really seeking just clarity here because this is truly a life-or-death health issue. Can we get some understanding around what the current wait times are for gender-affirming surgeries in Manitoba? We know they're long, but I'd like to be able to provide some clarity to folks who are waiting.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister for gender equality.

Ms. Squires: I do want to express my appreciation to the member for raising this issue and bringing forward this very important topic.

And we did recognize today with the establishment of this new secretariat that there's no place for hate in the province of Manitoba and that all members of the—of our province need to be supported and be treated equally, and that includes a myriad of initiatives, including health initiatives.

And so the specific wait times that the member is asking for, I do request leave to—I'm not sure if I need to request leave, but I would like to have a little bit of time to compile the information that she's asking—

An Honourable Member: They.

Ms. Squires: —they are asking for because I don't have that information available to me right now.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the minister for her willingness to undertake to provide that information. It is really important information, so I look forward to receiving it.

I do want to point out, and it's certainly not to be antagonistic by any means, that this minister has, you know, been vocal about supporting queer communities, 2SLGBTQ+ communities. I do think it's really important that, especially given the climate that we're in right now, you know, certainly I'm a person who grew up believing or not believing that I could have a particular kind of life, because we didn't have certain laws established for people like me. Gay marriage, queer marriage, is a good example of that. That didn't come into effect legally in Canada until I was, you know, beyond childhood.

And so, I do think that it's important that people see folks in leadership roles being able to answer questions within their portfolios that are important. And so I do think that this is an important question that should be answered by the Health Minister.

Again, I appreciate that you're willing to undertake to provide that, but this is information that the Department of Health, given the concerns that had

been brought forward for some time, that the Health Minister should be comfortable providing a response to these questions. And I am disappointed that she has not, but I appreciate the undertaking.

I do have a final question regarding the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program. We know that there have been some changes recently. I raised this in the House as well. Again, while I'm hopeful the Health Minister will answer this question, I guess we'll have to wait and see. But the manager who was hired to work remotely from Alberta resigned recently, and so with that in mind, and knowing the number of resignations that have happened within that program at HSC, I'm asking now specifically about the infrastructure at SANE at HSC, at that site.

That is a really important site. It delivers a lot of care—critical care—to folks no matter where they're coming from.

Can the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) provide an update on the status of the SANE program at HSC? So, at that location, has there been a new manager hired? Has there been a replacement of the—I think about 10 nurses who have resigned from that program? Where are things at to date?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister for gender—

An Honourable Member: Equity.

Mr. Chairperson: —equality.

Ms. Squires: First of all, I want to start by offering an apology to the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) for incorrectly using the pronoun. I'm on a learning opportunity and have been for quite some time, and I've endeavoured to be, you know, correct in that—in the language, because language matters. And so, I appreciate the member's patience on that front.

* (15:50)

In regards to the sexual assault nurse examination program, we recognize that the demand was certainly overwhelming and that there needed to be two established programs: one led by the health authority and then another led by community.

And, therefore, we had announced recently that we would be moving forward with a \$1.2-million commitment for a community-led program this year, which is very uniquely structured. It has a circle of survivors that are offering guidance to this—the infrastructure of this clinic, and there will be a mobile

clinic as well. We believe that that is a lot more trauma informed than—and available for those who seek that option, and that will be up and running very soon, I understand.

In regards to the program at HSC, again, I want to express my gratitude to the nurses involved in the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program at HSC, and it does continue to be supported by a mixture of nurses—experienced nurses picking up the shifts, physicians and nurse practitioners, and that right now there are four—a nurse 4 educator position is being posted to support new staff. Two additional permanent nursing positions have been posted and recently hired permanent staff continue to be trained, with two more expected to be ready for independent work in June and three others in July.

We have 11 individuals from HSC participating in a 12-week sexual assault nurse examiner course offered by the Northwest Polytech, and nine nurses from other regions have also expressed interest in participating. So, again, we're very grateful for the number of nurses that are taking the training, or who have taken the training, and who are offering this vital service so that all survivors of sexual violence can receive the best care possible for them.

And again, I want to commend all the survivors for expressing that courage to come forward at a very—at the most tragic time in their lives.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I would like to ask the municipalities minister this question.

The Auditor General has opened investigations into a number of municipalities this past year, and their financial dealings.

Can the minister tell me what role the department has played in these investigations?

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Municipal Relations): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. And we do appreciate the opportunity to have the investigations—or rather, the report from the Auditor General; we take him and his entire team very seriously when they report on any dealings in our communities and certainly in our municipalities across the province.

I know that, as the member knows—member opposite well knows—that municipalities are independent of the provincial government here, so they do have the ability to operate on their own court. However, that—when the Auditor General does rule on

any activities that they deem to be an issue, we appreciate that and respect the findings of that office.

We also ask that our department and the government of Manitoba work closely with municipalities and certainly look at addressing the issues that are in our municipalities, whether they are financial or any other issues. I know that municipalities have come up with a number of issues in different municipalities throughout the province here, and, of course, financial being one of them.

We respect the outcome of the Auditor General's report and look forward to working closely with all of our municipalities to make sure that the issues that are addressed in the report be dealt with and come to a resolution.

Ms. Naylor: I'm not sure that I got a clear answer about the role the department played.

But did the minister request the auditor to investigate the municipalities of WestLake-Gladstone, St. Andrews, West St. Paul and Swan Valley West? And if he did so, can he tell us why?

Mr. Smith: The Auditor General does operate independent of the provincial government, and that's the whole role of that office, is to make sure that there's an independent audit, as the name suggests.

So, we do respect the role—the critical role—of the Auditor General and the critical work that they do in that office to make sure that not only the ethical guidelines are followed, but certainly, we respect the taxpayers' hard-earned money that are often collected through the various levels of government taxation that make sure they're respected. So, we respect the Auditor General's report and appreciate the Auditor General bringing to light certain issues across the province.

As in any Auditor General report, there's always going to be room for improvement, and that's why we appreciate that being brought to light and looking forward to working with municipalities across the province. I know municipalities right across the province face various issues, some more—some larger communities, some smaller communities, they all seem to face certain issues and certain similar issues.

We respect the Auditor General's report, and looking forward to working with municipalities to address any of the issues in the Auditor General's report that has been outlined.

Ms. Naylor: The minister's correct that a lot of municipalities do face a lot of different issues when it

comes to administrative and financial oversight. It's certainly my understanding that the minister's department assists municipalities with their administrative and financial oversight and governance issues.

So, why was the department unable, if that's accurate, to assist the above-noted municipalities with these issues—the municipalities that I already mentioned?

Mr. Smith: Well, I thank the member for the question. And, there is a number of municipalities that have a number of issues, and the member is correct in that, with the respect to the Auditor General's report, we respect the Auditor General's report, and we will endeavour to work together with our municipalities to make sure that any issues that are identified are dealt with.

With respect to—I know that there's been a number of municipalities, in some cases, that have financial—you know, they have certain financial requirements they have to meet. And if there's a request for an extension to a deadline, often, they will ask for that. And, you know, the government of Manitoba is willing to work with these communities to make sure that they're able to meet the deadlines and, if not, that at least they have the foresight to ask in advance and look forward to helping municipalities meet these financial goals.

We know that it's never—it's a challenging time to be a municipal level of government, particularly smaller municipalities. Smaller municipalities do have, typically, city councils or town councils that are not full time; they are part-time councils, often having other jobs, families and other demands on their schedules. So, having them come forward and put their name on the ballot is incredibly important. And to be able to represent their constituents and their residents in a respectful and—manner, I think, is really important.

And we have made sure that our municipalities are made whole through various levels of funding and increased funding—permanently increased funding—so that they are able to meet some of the challenges. A lot of them have financial challenges that these communities will inevitably continue to face if it were not for the actions taken by the government of Manitoba.

But the municipalities will continue to report to the province of Manitoba when it comes to financial dealings, and we will continue to work with all our municipalities to make sure that they're able to serve

their constituents and their residents in the best possible way.

Ms. Naylor: Does the minister believe—or, does the minister have a sense of the timeline for this reporting from the Auditor General and, you know, kind of, what are his hopes on when that report will be available?

Mr. Smith: I did reference this earlier, but we are at arm's length—so the government of Manitoba is at arm's length from the Auditor General. So, I wouldn't want to prejudge the—anything that the—or, question anything that the Auditor General and his office is undergoing—undertaking.

* (16:00)

But I do say, and I say this in all honesty and seriousness, that our government takes the recommendations and the findings of the Auditor General very seriously. Always have and always will. And I know that all members in this Chamber would agree with me on that and take that same approach; that the Auditor General is independent by its very nature and not—the position itself is independent by its very nature, that office is independent by its very nature and important to be so, that it's free of interference from government.

And so, I do look forward to the—to working with municipalities and working with them on any issues that they have, particularly the ones outlined by the Auditor General.

Ms. Naylor: Certainly appreciate the work of the Auditor General's department and, as a long-standing member of the Public Accounts Committee, I have learned a great deal about the departments and government as a result of those reports. And I really appreciate that work.

My question for the minister is: Does he hope for there to be broader lessons for administrative governance for municipalities that come from this report?

Mr. Smith: I ask the member if you could repeat the last part of the question, I didn't quite hear it.

Ms. Naylor: Yes, I can.

Does the minister hope that there will be broader lessons for administrative governance for municipalities that come from this report?

Mr. Smith: Of course, any time an Auditor General report comes out and—with a list of recommendations or findings, I think it's important for every government to take that as a learning opportunity. There's always

room for improvement and there's always room for growth, and I think that's the whole point of this Auditor General, is learn as you go.

And we know that, as times change and issues change and challenges change, so, too, do the nature—in this particular case, the nature of municipal governance changes. So, I would say that it's a continuous learning ability and learning program for us, as the Province.

And, of course, like I said before, the Auditor General, we do take that seriously, we take their findings very seriously and we'll continue to work with municipalities to make sure that they are—they're in compliance and that they are able to govern and represent their residents and constituents in a way that certainly would be more than satisfactory to the Auditor General and his staff.

Ms. Naylor: I just have a final question.

I had the opportunity to ask a number of questions about the Fire Commissioner during Estimates, but one that I missed asking is: Can the minister tell the committee why the government decided to end the special operating agency status of the Office of the Fire Commissioner, and what were the issues that led to that decision and what improvements have been made by bringing this former S.O.A. into government as part of the department?

Mr. Smith: To answer the member opposite's question, and I know that some of that—the reason would have been because the government did do something very similar to other special operating agencies across government.

Ms. Naylor: That was my last question, Mr. Chair, but it wasn't fully answered.

So, the second part of that question is: What improvements have been made by bringing this former S.O.A. into government as part of the department?

Mr. Smith: That would really—for ongoing learning opportunities, really.

We, as a government, are continuously learning from decisions made. And any decisions that we do make we continue to monitor and make sure that the intended outcome is what we had hoped and anticipated.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I was just—I was going to ask a question of the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), if possible. I know that we're near the end of session.

I know the minister has received an interim report on The Link. There was supposed to be a third party—I understand Deloitte was doing it. The minister has received an independent—an interim report.

I was wondering if there was any update on when it might be released.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I'll be certain to update the member as well as this entire House when that report is ready to be revealed.

Mr. Lamont: Yes, thank you.

Just a question for the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen). I know that in November, we asked for—whether it would be possible—I understand that there were Crown prosecutors coming from Saskatchewan to look into why charges in—against Peter Nygård had never been laid in Manitoba.

I was just wondering if he can—I know that I've asked about this before, and it's not that we want to—is there any timeline when we might be able to expect a report on that, as well?

Mr. Goertzen: My understanding is that prosecutions in Saskatchewan has completed their report and provided it to Manitoba prosecutions and they're currently reviewing it. And my expectation is that we'll be able to speak further about that relatively shortly.

Mr. Lamont: Yes, just one more question. It's about—I know that there's a very—a very exciting project has been proposed for the revitalization of Portage Place, and the Pan Am Clinic is part of it.

I understand—I'm just trying to understand that Dr. Peter MacDonald's—the head of the wait times task force—is involved with the Pan Am Clinic. I'm just wondering, how did—how does this work in terms of, how did Shared Health and the owner of the Pan Am Clinic navigate this—being part of this deal, while also providing advice to government based on the wait times?

I'm just—my concern here is just about the independence of the in—the task force on—be independent, and I'm just wondering if there's an issue there with the perceived independence of the wait times task force with Mr. MacDonald being—or, Dr. MacDonald being part of the—this proposed deal?

Mr. Chairperson: Just before I recognize whichever minister wishes to speak, just for the clarity of the House, just checking a rule on the nature of question rotation for this section. This is obviously a little bit

different to how things normally operate, and want to make that sure that we're abiding by the rules, also that everybody who wants to ask questions is—will get their turn. So, I—just checking procedure on that and will endeavour to do things the right way.

I think we are, but if we're not, we'll adjust.

* (16:10)

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Just clarifying the question for the member—from the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont).

And the member is correct, Mr.—Dr. MacDonald is certainly associated with the Pan Am Clinic. He's also willingly agreed to chair the—to the committee on the diagnostic and surgical task force.

And, I will say, we looked at an expansion of the Pan Am Clinic. And, you know, during that discussion about an expansion of the Pan Am Clinic, the conversation around a potential redevelopment of downtown Portage Place came up. So, it seemed—you know, obviously, Dr. MacDonald is involved on that side and then offered his advice and expertise on the project downtown, as well.

Clearly, True North were an integral part of those conversations, and through that dialogue, clearly, Shared Health had to be an integral part of the conversation. As well, the WRHA was an important part of those conversations.

So, it really was a matter, when we looked at the expansion of Pan Am and then we looked at what could happen for downtown and downtown revitalization. So, quite frankly, we got all of those players around the table to have the initial conversation and it—the conversation grew from there.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): So, I have a couple of questions specific to health in the North.

The first question I have is in regards to air ambulance and cost remuneration. I'm not sure if the minister's aware that Flin Flon is a border community—border between Manitoba and Saskatchewan runs through the middle of the community—and any number of people get medical attention in Prince Albert or Saskatoon, which are in Saskatchewan, because that's where they have family; it's closer to get to; there's a bunch of reasons.

So, over a year ago, I had written to the minister and contacted her office about reimbursing an air ambulance cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$5,000 for someone who had a heart issue, and the

local doctor sent him to Saskatoon because that's where his original heart surgery was done, so it made sense to get the follow-up done there. Since that time, I haven't been able to get an answer from the minister. The last time I talked to someone in her department and actually spoke to a human was February of 2023.

Since then, there's another case, a gentleman, same circumstance: air ambulance bill; flown to Saskatoon for follow-up heart stuff. The last time I spoke to someone in the minister's office, the first case was still under review. I'm not sure I understand why it takes well over a year to review this. Certainly, it's an issue that was covered previously.

And so I'm wondering if the minister can answer that. Will those air ambulance bills be covered for folks that are, through no choice of their own at the end of the day, sent by a doctor out of province?

Ms. Gordon: I thank the member for the question, and certainly appreciate all opportunities to talk about our government's commitment to ensuring that Manitobans living in the North receive the health-care services they need.

Our government is committed to equitable health-care services, regardless of which region or which community a Manitoban lives in. And when they are required to travel for medical services, our government is also committed to ensuring that their expenses are covered and are dealt with.

There is a process through the department to recover—to be reimbursed for those expenses. And I agree; it should be done in a timely manner, and where expenses are not going to be reimbursed, an individual should be provided with an explanation and the reasons for that. But our government, indeed, remains committed to processing reimbursements and ensuring the department does so in a timely fashion.

Now, I'm not aware of each specific case that has been mentioned by the member opposite, but certainly an overall commitment by our government is to enhance critical-care capacity in Manitoba and, as well, in the North.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MLA Lindsey: So, will the minister ensure that those two cases in particular are looked after and that people aren't out of pocket \$5,000, which is just going to add to their already stressful situation when they're flown by air ambulance from Flin Flon to Saskatoon, in this case?

I didn't hear the minister say yes, that that would be looked after, and I have been trying to follow up with the minister's office through multiple phone calls, letters. I did talk to her assistant in February of this year. Since that time, no one ever gets back to me.

So, can the minister answer simply yes or no, and preferably yes?

Ms. Gordon: I appreciate the follow-up question from the member opposite with regard to his constituents.

I will certainly take this back to my office and have discussions about—I don't have the names or the particulars related to the cases he's brought forward. You know, we do say quite often that discussing specific cases on the floor of the Legislature, that is not the place to do that. The member has said he has brought this forward to my office, and I will certainly—I commit to the member that I will take this back and have discussions with my staff, as well as with the department.

I—the criteria for reimbursement of air ambulance services is applied to each case on its own merit, and it's certainly not decided by myself or here in the Manitoba Legislative Building. But as the minister responsible, I commit to looking into the cases that the member has brought forward today, and I thank the member for advocating on behalf of his constituents.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MLA Lindsey: I appreciate that the minister has committed to looking into it.

One of these cases, someone in her department has been looking into it for over a year now. I don't think it should take that excessive amount of time to come up with the right answer. So, can the minister give me an idea of how long it's going to take her to come up with the answer to these cases?

People are worried. People are financially stressed because of this. It shouldn't have to come out of their own pockets. And if there is a policy in place that covers it, it shouldn't take this long to get an answer.

So, can the minister tell me how long it's going to take for her to come up with the answer?

Ms. Gordon: In follow-up to the member's question, I commit to taking his inquiry back to my office and back to Manitoba Health.

This is—it's not standard. He has said—and I can't verify, but I'll take—certainly take his word for it—that

it has been over a year for one of those cases. That is out of the ordinary, and I certainly want to delve further into these two cases and what might be delaying either a reply or reimbursement to the patients in question.

* (16:20)

And I agree with the member that we certainly don't want Manitobans to be out of pocket, and the stress of having to wait long periods of time to receive an answer or reimbursement. And so, I commit again to the member that I will raise this with my office and with Manitoba Health.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MLA Lindsey: Thank the minister for that.

One of the other issues that's been taking place in Flin Flon is relating to seniors' dental care. We have one senior that has mobility issues and some cognitive issues, and because we don't do surgeries in Flin Flon anymore, trying to get someone to take care of her broken teeth has proved problematic. And just keeping a senior doped up on painkillers clearly isn't the answer.

And now I have another senior without means who has broken a tooth and, in fact, only has six teeth left. Had a top plate since she was 15, doesn't have private insurance.

So, can someone tell me how those seniors should get the dental care that they should be entitled to? Because it's not classified as an insured service, they don't have private insurance, can't get surgeries in Flin Flon anymore.

So, could someone tell me how those seniors should get the care they're entitled to?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'm aware of the—one of the issues that the member had brought forward some time back in regards to—excuse me—in regards to dental service for an individual who had, certainly, some issues.

Did further pursue that with Northern Health, and it was my understanding that Northern Health did do some further investigation and the individual in question was also, too, brought to Winnipeg for some further health care, and the issue was further dealt with.

But I can't say as the ultimate result, because that really is with the Department of Health and the health authority that looks after that particular area. So, I would indicate that inquiries had been made; it was

my understanding that further follow-up with the individual took place.

In answer to the member's question in regards to overall dental health of seniors, I know that that was an issue that was brought forward when we did our seniors strategy discussions. And our department continues to review areas of need within the North, as well as everywhere else in the province of Manitoba.

So, I—you know, I—in order to give you a general answer to your question, I can't do that. What I can do is I can look into specifics based on the information that's provided, and follow those up with the Department of Health.

So, if there's another situation that the member wants to bring forward with some detail, be happy to look at each individual issue as individual issues.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

Seeing none, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the motion pass? *[Agreed]*

This concludes the business before us.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a motion regarding concurrence in Supply.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Concurrence Motion

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House concur in the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence and all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'm seeking leave of the House to not see the clock

until all stages of the appropriation act have been completed, including royal assent.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to not see the clock until we've proceeded through all the stages and royal assent? *[Agreed]*

Supply Motion

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that there be granted to His Majesty for the Public Service for the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of \$16,802,673,000, as set out in part A, Operating Expenditure; and \$1,002,855,000, as set out in part B, Capital Investment; and \$494,794,000, as set out in part C, Loans and Guarantees; and \$913,907,000, as set out in part D, Capital Investments, by other reporting entities of the Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 42—The Appropriation Act, 2023

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), that Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 42—The Appropriation Act, 2023

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: This bill is intended to provide expenditure authority for the amount shown in the Manitoba Estimates of Expenditures for 2023-24.

Madam Speaker, this budget provides historic health for Manitobans, and it also provides record investments in services for Manitobans all across government.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Do members wish to ask questions of the bill?

If there are no questions, is there any members wishing to debate the bill?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023, be now read a second time and be referred to the Committee of the Whole.

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

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023, for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 42—The Appropriation Act, 2023

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): The Committee of the Whole will come to order to consider Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 42 have an opening statement?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Bill 42 provides spending authority for the departments of government for the 2023-24 fiscal year as set out in the Manitoba Estimates of Expenditure, which were tabled in the Legislature on the 7th day of March, 2023.

And I will reiterate, this legislation provides historic assistance for Manitobans and also provides record investments across government to support government services on behalf of Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Seeing no statement, does the honourable—
[*interjection*]

We will now, then, begin clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. During the consideration of this bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; clause 7—pass; clause 8—pass; clause 9—pass; clause 10—pass; schedule—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business before us.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (16:40)

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Chairperson): The Committee of the Whole has considered the following: Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Cox), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 42—The Appropriation Act, 2023

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: I will conclude my remarks on this bill today.

The Appropriation Act, 2023, provides historic help for Manitobans. It provides historic tax reductions for hard-working Manitobans. This budget also includes record investments for the services that Manitobans have come to rely on and have come to expect. This budget provides increases in every department across government.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the passing of this important legislation.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure—*[interjection]* Oh, yes.

The honourable member for River Heights, to debate the bill.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thought there would be somebody from the official opposition, but I at least want to rise and make a few comments.

We're now coming to the end of the budget process. We'll have it completed fairly soon. We have major concerns with the overall budget process, as we have outlined in the debate that has led up to this, and I just wanted to put those on the record, Madam Speaker.

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

Is the House ready for the question, then?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

* (17:00)

The question before the House is Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023. All those—*[interjection]*—oh, concurrence and third reading of Bill 42, The Appropriation Act, 2023.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Gerrard, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Moses, Naylor, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 34, Nays 15.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly passed.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The House will now prepare for royal assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cam Steel): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

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

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

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

* (17:10)

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Vanessa Gregg):

Bill 42—The Appropriation Act, 2023; Loi de 2023 portant affectation de crédits

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In His Majesty's name, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

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