

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

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

| <b>Member</b>           | <b>Constituency</b> | <b>Political Affiliation</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.   | Transcona           | NDP                          |
| ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.   | Union Station       | NDP                          |
| BALCAEN, Wayne          | Brandon West        | PC                           |
| BEREZA, Jeff            | Portage la Prairie  | PC                           |
| BLASHKO, Tyler          | Lagimodière         | NDP                          |
| BRAR, Diljeet           | Burrows             | NDP                          |
| BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.       | Keewatinook         | NDP                          |
| BYRAM, Jodie            | Agassiz             | PC                           |
| CABLE, Renée, Hon.      | Southdale           | NDP                          |
| CHEN, Jennifer          | Fort Richmond       | NDP                          |
| COMPTON, Carla          | Tuxedo              | NDP                          |
| COOK, Kathleen          | Roblin              | PC                           |
| CROSS, Billie           | Seine River         | NDP                          |
| DELA CRUZ, Jelynn       | Radisson            | NDP                          |
| DEVGAN, JD              | McPhillips          | NDP                          |
| EWASKO, Wayne           | Lac du Bonnet       | PC                           |
| FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon. | St. Johns           | NDP                          |
| GOERTZEN, Kelvin        | Steinbach           | PC                           |
| GUENTER, Josh           | Borderland          | PC                           |
| HIEBERT, Carrie         | Morden-Winkler      | PC                           |
| JACKSON, Grant          | Spruce Woods        | PC                           |
| JOHNSON, Derek          | Interlake-Gimli     | PC                           |
| KENNEDY, Nellie         | Assiniboia          | NDP                          |
| KHAN, Obby              | Fort Whyte          | PC                           |
| KINEW, Wab, Hon.        | Fort Rouge          | NDP                          |
| KING, Trevor            | Lakeside            | PC                           |
| KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.    | Dauphin             | NDP                          |
| LAGASSÉ, Bob            | Dawson Trail        | PC                           |
| LAMOUREUX, Cindy        | Tyndall Park        | Lib.                         |
| LATHLIN, Amanda         | The Pas-Kameesak    | NDP                          |
| LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.      | Flin Flon           | NDP                          |
| LOISELLE, Robert        | St. Boniface        | NDP                          |
| MALOWAY, Jim            | Elmwood             | NDP                          |
| MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon. | Notre Dame          | NDP                          |
| MOROZ, Mike             | River Heights       | NDP                          |
| MOSES, Jamie, Hon.      | St. Vital           | NDP                          |
| MOYES, Mike             | Riel                | NDP                          |
| NARTH, Konrad           | La Vérendrye        | PC                           |
| NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.      | Wolseley            | NDP                          |
| NESBITT, Greg           | Riding Mountain     | PC                           |
| OXENHAM, Logan          | Kirkfield Park      | NDP                          |
| PANKRATZ, David         | Waverley            | NDP                          |
| PERCHOTTE, Richard      | Selkirk             | PC                           |
| PIWNIUK, Doyle          | Turtle Mountain     | PC                           |
| REDHEAD, Eric           | Thompson            | NDP                          |
| SALA, Adrien, Hon.      | St. James           | NDP                          |
| SANDHU, Mintu           | The Maples          | NDP                          |
| SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.    | Rossmere            | NDP                          |
| SCHOTT, Rachelle        | Kildonan-River East | NDP                          |
| SCHULER, Ron            | Springfield-Ritchot | PC                           |
| SIMARD, Glen, Hon.      | Brandon East        | NDP                          |
| SMITH, Bernadette, Hon. | Point Douglas       | NDP                          |
| STONE, Lauren           | Midland             | PC                           |
| WASYLIW, Mark           | Fort Garry          | Ind.                         |
| WHARTON, Jeff           | Red River North     | PC                           |
| WIEBE, Matt, Hon.       | Concordia           | NDP                          |
| WOWCHUK, Rick           | Swan River          | PC                           |

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, October 3, 2024**

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

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** On House business.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Brandon West, on House business.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Honourable Speaker, I would like to table some documents that I spoke to this morning during the private member's resolution on Justice for Jordyn.

**The Speaker:** We thank the member for that.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 221—The Earlier Screening  
for Breast Cancer Act**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I move, seconded by the member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram), that Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Cook:** This bill will require the Minister of Health to develop and implement a plan to lower the age for routine breast cancer screening to 40 by the end of 2026 and would also require the minister to report annually on the number of screening mammograms completed in Manitoba. It's the right thing to do for Manitoba women, and I look forward to the bill being passed by this House.

**The Speaker:** Any other introduction of bills?

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

Introduction of any other bills? Seeing none, tabling of reports? None?

Ministerial statements? Day two, and I still haven't got it figured out yet.

Committee reports? There are no committee reports.

Ministerial statements?

The honourable member for Assiniboia.

**MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia):** Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On a point of order?

**Point of Order**

**MLA Kennedy:** Yes. I would like to rise on a point of order.

Yesterday, when I was delivering my member's statement, I misspoke and instead of stating that I was the first Muslim woman elected to the Manitoba Legislature, I inadvertently said that I was the first Muslim person, which is incorrect. So I'd like to correct the record and let it reflect that I am the first Muslim woman elected to the Manitoba Legislature.

And it is such an honour for me to be here and represent my community. To be able to have my voice around the caucus table is a pleasure and privilege.

Thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** I'll just point out to the member that it's not a point of order, but we thank you for the clarification and correction.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Clarence Woodhouse**

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, yesterday was International Wrongful Conviction Day, a time for all of us to take stock of the impact caused by wrongful convictions on individuals, their families, and society.

Fifty-one years ago a miscarriage of justice took place in our province with the conviction of Brian Anderson, Allan Woodhouse and Clarence Woodhouse, for the murder of Ting Fong Chan, all of whom were innocent.

Last year, Brian Anderson and Allan Woodhouse were acquitted. This morning, Clarence Woodhouse was also acquitted by Justice Joyal, recognizing that he too was wrongfully convicted in 1973.

While nothing can be said that will bring back the years lost of freedom or the time away from family and friends, as the Attorney General of Manitoba, I offer my heartfelt apologies to Mr. Woodhouse and his family.

There were many injustices experienced by Mr. Woodhouse, but let me highlight one: Mr. Woodhouse is a Saulteaux speaker, yet the trial was conducted in English, without the aid of any interpreters. This was not a fair trial. It exhibited bias against Mr. Woodhouse and his co-accused, based on their Indigenous identity. It is the type of trial that has absolutely no place in our province, where every citizen is entitled to equal and fair treatment before the law.

Let me acknowledge that there has also been hardship caused by the wrongful conviction to the family of Ting Fong Chan, who have sought justice for their loved one and mourned his passing for five decades. What the family was given was not justice at all, but a false justice that robs them of the closure that they deserve. This miscarriage of justice compounds the suffering of the Chan family as well, and as Attorney General, I regret and recognize this hardship.

Clarence, the system failed you. It punished you for a crime that you did not commit, and it stole from you the most precious gift of all: your time.

An apology cannot bring that back. It cannot undo the profound harm that it has caused. But what it can do, I hope, is provide a measure of peace and comfort to you and to your family.

It also reinforces what we knew in—what you knew in your heart all along: that you were right, and that the system wronged you. You were innocent. What you knew to be the truth is now recognized by law. It's recognized by our government, and it's recognized by me, as Attorney General of Manitoba.

Clarence, I am sorry. Our government is sorry. No one should ever have to endure the torments that you were subjected to. Together, I hope we can work together to ensure that no Manitoban ever does.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** You were wrongfully convicted. You were innocent. These words were spoken by Chief Justice Glenn Joyal to Mr. Clarence Woodhouse. For 51 years, he's been pleading to hear these very words.

On behalf of our caucus, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the exoneration of Mr. Woodhouse, an outcome that highlights the importance of reflecting on past decisions and the significant work being done by organizations like Innocence Canada, who continue to advocate and educate by giving a voice to

people like Mr. Woodhouse, whose voice was not heard.

Clarence Woodhouse, who was sent to prison 51 years ago, has now been exonerated. Though this exoneration is a representation of the justice system and how it continues to change, it remains a bitter-sweet moment. Due to this conviction, Mr. Woodhouse has lost 50 years of his life; 50 years of memories and moments with families and friends, that was taken from him by the very justice system that is there to protect him.

\* (13:40)

But not all hope is lost. There are situations that have the opportunities to right before years and lives fade. We have the opportunities to search and find the faults ingrained in our system that caused this wrongful conviction.

One of the major issues in the prosecution of this case was the supposed confession of guilt given, in fluent English, while Clarence Woodhouse's first language was Saulteaux. And he would—had limited knowledge of English.

Manitoba is home to many people from different backgrounds but it was first a home to the Indigenous nations. We need to not just look at the wrongful conviction but how the justice system can be accessible to all.

We need to put in place support systems that empower and help people like Mr. Woodhouse who are now not just elderly but being thrust into a world they have not been able to participate in.

We need to push for reform in our justice system and listening to advocates like Innocence Canada. We must ensure that our justice system is truly just, capable of self-reflection and open to correcting its errors and the lives of the citizens of Manitoba who depend on it.

This case challenges all of us to take a broader view, to question the status quo and to continue pushing for a justice system and a province that takes accountability for its errors.

Mr. Woodhouse, I want to add my and my colleagues' commitment that every day, we will work with yourself and justice advocates to not only recognize the legal shortcomings inherent in our justice system but work to eliminate them.

Mr. Woodhouse, the justice system failed you, your family and the family of the victims. I am truly sorry.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Honourable Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

**The Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Tyndall Park have leave? *[Agreed]*

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank our Justice Minister for bringing forward today's ministerial statement.

The words, you were wrongfully convicted, you are innocent, are important and critical words that Clarence Woodhouse waited 50 years to hear. I think it is extremely important to recognize and commend Mr. Woodhouse for his courage and resilience throughout the past five decades while maintaining his innocence.

I'm so sorry for what you, Mr. Woodhouse, had to endure because of the systemic racism and violently forced and entirely manufactured confession that played heavily in your convictions and those of the other co-accused. The convictions were a huge injustice to you.

Mr. Woodhouse lost his freedom because our justice system failed him. No one can return him his past that he was robbed of and I can only hope that the redress and compensation for this travesty will begin to scratch the surface to make amends for the injustice and the way that it affected his entire life.

My hope is that the families and individuals involved are not retraumatized by the situation and that they, too, recognize the importance of this acquittal and that all involved can feel some sense of relief.

Thank you.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Honourable Speaker, I'd like to ask leave of the Legislature to include the names of Clarence and his guests as well as his family in the permanent record of Hansard.

**The Speaker:** Does the honourable minister have leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*Clarence Woodhouse, Annie Anderson, Dorothy Anderson, Linda Anderson, Amanda Cummings, Justin Frizzly, Jerome Kennedy, James Lockyer, Andrew McKelvey-Gunson, Pamela Zbarsky*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Gift of Love & Hope

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** Honourable Speaker, a year ago, Manitoba–Manitobans elected us with a mandate to move heaven and earth for our kids.

Today, the landscape supporting youth in this province looks vastly different. Child-care facilities are receiving more funding, jurisdiction of care is being transferred back to home communities, unhoused children are being sheltered, and, for the first time ever, hungry kids are being fed in schools across Manitoba.

There are many to seek—there are many who seek to nurture life in this world that face barriers to do so, no matter how ready they may be. Here in Canada, infertility affects one in every six couples, presenting them with a physical, emotional and financial price to pay for something that many get for free.

To help families who are experiencing these barriers, our government is doubling the fertility tax credit and listening to grassroots advocates who have come together to overcome these challenges.

Founded just last year, the Gift of Love & Hope is a non-profit organization comprised of women with their own stories to tell. They know the toll that infertility takes, because they and their loved ones have experienced it first-hand. Now, they choose to give back by bringing people together, spreading awareness and helping other future parents meet their rainbow baby.

We are joined online by Radisson constituent Anna Almojuela, the organization's founder Melissa Francisco, and fellow fertility advocates Cristal and Faith. I joined them this past Saturday for their inaugural fundraising walk at Kildonan Park. After only three months of preparation, these new advocates rallied over 100 participants and successfully raised \$7,000. Now they are only \$3,000 away from their goal of granting their first-of providing their first grant.

Many of us who sit in this Chamber had our start by advocating based on lived experience. To each of you in the gallery and those watching online today, it is your story that is your power, and this is a space for you.

### Breast Cancer Screening

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but for some women, every month, and every day, they are acutely aware of the risks and the reality of a breast cancer diagnosis.

These dedicated advocates, alongside organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society, Dense Breasts Canada and Breast Screening Advocates Manitoba have been passionately fighting for improved breast screening for women in our province.

They have been raising awareness about many aspects of breast health, but especially about the need for better screening options for women with dense breast tissue, and the need to lower Manitoba's breast cancer screening age.

Last week, the government announced some movement on this important issue. While it's a good start, age 45 is not enough. Manitoba women need a plan and a firm timeline to get to 40. Lives are at stake.

That's why I've introduced Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act. This bill will require the government to develop and implement a plan to lower the breast cancer screening age to 40 by the end of 2026. It's not as soon as we would like, but I believe this is a very achievable goal, and setting a deadline will ensure that Manitoba women will be able to access routine breast cancer screening services by age 40.

Joining us in the gallery today are a few of the women who have been tireless advocates for this issue, and I want to pay tribute to them. Shannon Coates, Mary Anne Henderson, and online, Jenny Borgfjord; these are just a few of the many Manitoba women who have turned their personal pain into something truly beautiful.

They've told their stories over and over again, spent countless hours working with advocacy organizations, meeting with politicians and talking to the media, all because they want to save other women's lives.

They are heroes, and on behalf of women across Manitoba who will benefit from your work, I say thank you.

Please join me in commending these women and all those organizations working on behalf of Manitobans who have been touched by breast cancer.

### U of M Student Union's Executive Team

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Today I rise to recognize the 2024 University of Manitoba Student Union's executive team for making history as one of the youngest and first fully racialized UMSU executive group.

Pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in global political economy, Divya Sharma serves as the youngest and 100th UMSU president. She is also the youngest board member of provincial women's advisory council, Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, CBC community advisory board, Association of Fundraising Professionals Manitoba, Asian Women of Winnipeg and Inclusion Winnipeg.

\* (13:50)

As the first turban-wearing executive of UMSU, Prabhnoor Singh serves as the vice president of external affairs while pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in political studies. He has previously acted as the founder president of U of M Punjabi Students' Association, co-chief events co-ordinator for racial equity and inclusion alliance and director of external affairs for the U of M Sikh Students' Association.

Rachhvir Dhaliwal is currently pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in political studies while also serving as the vice president of university affairs. Outside of university, Rachhvir is passionate about teaching Punjabi folk dances.

As an international student from Nigeria pursuing a nursing degree, Bolu Akindele serves as the vice president of student life. Bolu has been committed to fostering an environment that prioritizes mental well-being and empowering students to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

Carolyn Wang is serving as the VP of finance and operations while pursuing a degree in finance and accounting. She has taught nearly 20 courses at the Academic Learning Centre. Carolyn has also hosted treasurer training workshops.

Please join me in welcoming the UMSU executive and the guest, Thomas Blumer, whose names I would like entered into Hansard.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Chief Alain Nadeau

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to recognize an outstanding La Vérendrye resident for his tremendous contribution to Manitoba. Chief Alain Nadeau of the La Broquerie Fire Department, who we have with us here today, has recently hung up his helmet after an astonishing 45 years of service.

Chief Nadeau responded to his first call on May 10, 1979, at the young and energetic age of 19. He says he joined the fire department in search of something different than farming and a bit of an adrenaline rush, but I think his wife Anne is far more accurate when she says that the many years of service comes from a strong desire to help people and a passion to serve the community. This commitment to community was recognized in 2017 when he was named Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year by the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs.

I have seen Chief Nadeau's dedication and capabilities first-hand at a large-scale wildfire in the municipality I served on council. This fire included one of the largest demonstrations of mutual aid efforts. It was here where his natural leadership capabilities and passion to help shone through as he managed dozens of other chiefs and hundreds of firefighters, not because he was asked to, but because he wanted to provide help where it was needed. I, along with thousands of other southeast Manitoba residents, will forever be thankful for his passion and leadership.

I am glad to say that not only has he left the La Broquerie Fire Department with a brand new hall, he has also left them with three of his children who will be sure to represent their father's good name while keeping the residents of La Broquerie safe.

Please join me in congratulating Chief Alain Nadeau on his well-deserved retirement while also welcoming his wife Anne, sons David, Darrel, Alex, as well as their daughter Janelle.

Thank you for sharing your husband and father with the community and all the best in the future.

### Corporal William Benjamin Cunningham

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** Honourable Speaker, today I rise to speak to the story of a Manitoban a long way from home. It's a story of bravery, sacrifice and unwavering dedication to the ideals of freedom and democracy.

Corporal William Benjamin Cunningham, born in Hayfield, 1895, was a soldier who served in the 44th Infantry Battalion.

Before joining the army, he was a clerk in Brandon. He fought in the Battle of Passchendaele, near Ypres, Belgium, where he made the ultimate sacrifice. Corporal Cunningham was killed on the battlefield in 1917 and buried as an unknown soldier in Tyne Cot Cemetery, on the other side of the world, like so many other Canadians who had the courage to serve their country and preserve our freedoms.

Corporal Cunningham, like so many Canadians past and present, deserves to be recognized for their dedication to risking life and limb in some of the most dangerous places in the world.

We must never forget the horrors of war and the friends, family and strangers who have served our country together, and who protect the peace and freedoms we enjoy here in Canada.

The courage, selflessness and valour of all Canadian veterans and CAF members from past and present conflicts should be commemorated and remembered always.

For a century, Corporal Cunningham's burial site was a mystery. But thanks to the co-ordinated work of historians, the Casualty Identification Review Board, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Canada's Directorate of History and Heritage and the Canadian Museum of History, Corporal Cunningham's story is being brought back home.

He's getting the recognition that he deserves now, and we are learning more about his life, understanding his experiences and honouring his sacrifice. And we hope that this newfound knowledge brings his descendants the closure they deserve, knowing that he has been found and his story is being told.

Rest easy, Corporal. We will remember.

And I would ask for a moment of silence to reflect briefly for—on Corporal William Benjamin Cunningham and his ultimate sacrifice made for our freedoms here in Canada.

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

*A moment of silence was observed.*

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Premier of Manitoba Leadership Concerns

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, the Premier ducked and dodged during debate about his dysfunction. He dodged media questions yesterday. He stands accused of bullying and now physically assaulting a fellow MLA. But when the Premier is called to account, he refuses to answer the bell. That's not leadership; that's cowardly.

Honourable Speaker, can the Premier explain to this House why, despite the serious allegations aired in this Chamber, as well as the 2018 NDP harassment report I'll table once again, why does toxicity still persist in the NDP?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Honourable Speaker, a year ago today the people of Manitoba made history. They made history across the country by doing something here in little old Manitoba that they've never done in those big cities across the country: they rejected the forces of division and they embraced a message of unity.

The campaign waged by the PCs last year brought a darkness and a divisiveness into our politics that Manitobans would rather soon forget. Our team campaigned on a message of unity, fixing health care and making life more affordable.

On this, our one-year anniversary in government, what else can we say in the face of this awesome task, other than thank you for the honour of having the chance to serve you, the great people of Manitoba, and we look forward to continuing to keep our word to you.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

I would just caution the Leader of the Official Opposition on the use of the word cowardly. In the past it's been ruled as unacceptable, so I caution the member to choose his words more carefully.

**Mr. Ewasko:** The Premier should read that report again and refresh his memory. The last time it was on his desk, he said his party failed and deserved to lose. Does he have any self-awareness at all in this present moment?

\* (14:00)

The NDP House leader is the only one who attempted to defend the Premier. Did she speak to his character or even deny the allegations of assault? No,

she deflected. No NDP MLAs stood up to defend their leader.

Honourable Speaker, what does the Premier have to say about the allegations of assault that came forward from his former friend and colleague yesterday, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv)?

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, you know, our team is not the only one to make history. Just yesterday, the opposition made history in this Chamber. For the first time in the history of Manitoba, the opposition ran out of questions.

Yesterday in question period, we got to question nine; any PC members stand up? No, nothing to ask. We get to question 10; any questions to ask? No, none whatsoever.

I guess even the Progressive Conservatives agree that we're doing a good job at the one-year mark here leading your provincial government.

Health care—we've brought down inflation by cutting the provincial gas tax and we're hiring teachers in schools right across the province.

Now, I realize that the member had a day to come up and work up a new line of questions, but admit it: They agree, the Manitoba NDP—

**The Speaker:** The Premier's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** There was almost an ethics investigation into the Premier's behaviour. The vote yesterday was probably too close for comfort for this Premier.

By now, the Premier knows which of his MLAs falls into which category: complicit or scared. Manitobans don't know which one the Premier himself falls into for sure. He has a chance to end the cover-up by embracing an investigation into the very real facts—effects of his dysfunctional, toxic leadership.

Will he do so today, Honourable Speaker?

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, Honourable Speaker, the PCs made history yesterday when they ran out of steam halfway through question period.

Question period is supposed to be 40 minutes long, but under this leader, they could only sustain 20, 25 minutes, was it, yesterday? Again, I'm not surprised they don't want to talk about health care because we've hired 873 new front-line workers in the health-care system.



I'm surprised that they don't want to talk about the education system because we've hired 630 new educators in the classroom right now.

And, of course, I'm not surprised that they don't want to talk about bringing down inflation and cutting the gas tax, because even they have a smile on their face every time they fill up at the pump and they say thanks, NDP; you're doing a great job.

And so, regardless of the huffing and puffing and the unparliamentary words we hear from the leaders opposite, we on this side of the House know how he really feels.

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

### Health-Care, Education and Taxes Government Performance Record

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, dysfunction, self-serving and showmanship is again alive and well in the NDP.

I'm not done yet. Progressive Conservatives will not let the Premier's behaviour be swept under the rug. The NDP wants us to leave it alone, change the channel, but we are not going to back down, Honourable Speaker. We will shine a light on the real costs of the NDP dysfunction: real people at risk of homelessness; real patients waiting longer in pain; real children learning in hallways. MPI rates, hydro rates, property tax, income taxes and gas taxes, too, are set to go up.

The Premier might want to dodge, deflect and deny when it comes to his own behaviour, but what does he say about these early failings of the NDP government to real Manitobans just one year into his mandate?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Well, I suppose I should give credit to the Leader of the Opposition for keeping a straight face while he asked those questions.

We know that he's got a smile, though, when he gasses up at the pump and saves 14 cents a litre just like everyone else in Manitoba. We know that he has a smile on his face when he hears about 873 new people on the front lines of the health-care system.

We think that he might even have a smile on his face when he hears about kids at school who last year, under their watch—his watch as Education Minister—were going hungry, this year show up and they get a healthy, nutritious meal each and every day.

So again—yes, no, I'll grant him the bold pronouncements as if he's going to hold us to account, yes, every day except the first day of session, when he ran out of questions halfway through question period. We're the ones who show up to work every day. We're fixing health care. We're making life more affordable—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, there are real costs to a government prioritizing popularity over professionalism. Real children attended the Premier's dishonest school meal session, featuring sandwiches, fruit, vegetables, milk and more, but that's not a real meal for kids in most Manitoba schools.

Did the Education Minister not stand up to the Premier? No, he did not. He could have said the program is not universal—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** This feels dishonest, Honourable Speaker. But he is in the complicit camp. Real families are let down by the NDP in a new way each and every way.

If and when an independent ethics investigation supports the claims of misconduct, will the Premier do the right thing and resign, or do Manitobans need to wait for him to call an early election to hold him accountable?

Honourable Speaker, I'll table the picture of them with sandwiches and cookies at a table.

**Mr. Kinew:** I wish the PC members well as they go to the doors in the next election and try to lecture parents about how giving our kids sandwiches and vegetables is not a real meal. This continues the long tradition of the PC caucus trying to throw shade at the idea of feeding hungry kids.

Their former colleague, who we defeated last year, said it was a bad idea. Brian Pallister, who is the only reason many of them were ever elected, though they did turn on him in the end, said that we had to think about the unforeseen consequences of a school food program.

Well, you know what? We thought about it. We think it's a great idea to feed hungry kids at schools, sandwiches and vegetables included.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final—[interjection]

Order. Order. Order.

**An Honourable Member:** Well, I thought you said I could speak.

**The Speaker:** Order.

I don't know if perhaps maybe the Leader of the Official Opposition didn't hear me say order three times because it was too loud in here that I couldn't hear and neither could he, obviously. So I'd ask everybody, just tame it down a little bit.

Now, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Oh, Honourable Speaker, real Manitobans attended but were let down by the Premier's announcement in Carberry. They gave him and the Health Minister real cookies, but they got false advertising in return. That emergency room is closed most of the time.

The NDP should be sending doctors and probably some cookies down to that hospital. Yesterday we heard a real story about a real person's real experience. From yesterday, I quote the member from Fort Garry: And then he snapped. He lunged at me. He grabbed my right arm and yanked it down. He screamed at me, I'm the leader. You do what I tell you, said the Premier.

Honourable Speaker, how can Manitobans trust this Premier will ever show accountability ever again when he won't even take ownership of his role in the experiences of those he interacts with on a daily basis.

Ask the Premier today, Honourable Speaker: Stand up and apologize to all Manitobans.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Kinew:** Here's the thing that the member opposite should know from sitting in the failed PC Cabinet: it is going to take years to fix the damage that they caused with their cuts to health care and to schools across the province of Manitoba.

But the good news is that one year ago today, Manitobans said, yes, let's work together and do that. Let's stop the cuts of the PCs and let's start to invest in our kids; let's start to invest in the front lines. And so I am so very grateful that the member tables proof of the fact our school meal program is in effect, that the kids have vegetables, that they have sandwiches, that they have smiles on their faces.

I also want to thank the member for reminding Manitobans of the good work that we did to reopen the Carberry emergency room. We're not done, but of the emergency rooms that they closed in one year,

we've already reopened one, and there's many more to come.

### **Death of Jordyn Reimer Request for Out-of-Province Review**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** This morning my colleague from Lac du Bonnet brought forward a resolution that called on the government to seek Crown attorneys from another province to review the evidence of the decision not to prosecute the accomplice in the death of Jordyn Reimer. We were joined by her family and friends here in the gallery. The government chose to speak out the resolution and denied leave to give all members an opportunity to seek—to speak and call a vote.

Can the minister explain why he and his colleagues shamelessly denied leave to allow others to speak to this important resolution and bring it to a vote?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, once again, I want to offer our condolences on behalf of our caucus, on behalf of every MLA in this Legislature, to the family of Jordyn Reimer, to the whole community who has been impacted by her tragic death and to thank the family and the advocates who have stepped up and once again came to this building to advocate for stronger impaired driving laws and legislation throughout the country.

I offered this morning that I'm willing to work with all members and all members of the public to do that work, and I invite members opposite to—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Honourable Speaker, if the minister wants to work with this side of the House, all he needs to do is send a letter. The Minister of Justice still has the opportunity to do the right thing. The exoneration of Mr. Woodhouse has shown us that justice delayed is justice denied. I encourage the minister not to find himself in a situation in 50 years where he's reflecting back and regrets what he and his colleagues did today.

I'm giving the minister another chance.

Will he support the Reimers' call for an out-of-province review of this case today?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Once again, I invite the member opposite, all members of this House, to work together with us to enhance our impaired driving legislation. And I

would invite the member opposite, if he wants to be taken seriously on issues such as this in this House, I hope that he would take the time to read the clear statement that was issued by Crown prosecutors that was communicated directly by myself to the family, to the community and has been put out to the public. And I hope that he would appreciate the work that's been done by some of the best legal minds in this province to ensure that justice is served for Jordyn.

We'll continue to do that work. I'll do that work as Attorney General, and I hope he'll join me as Justice Minister in—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I will take the minister up on that offer as I did today, and I will even write the letter for him that he can send to the Crowns.

Public safety and public interest are paramount considering all of our justice system in terms of maintaining trust. The Reimer family has lost faith in this government, this minister and the justice system and the refusal to reconsider and refer this case for a second opinion to an outside Crown. We have seen the value of apologies. The minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) are getting used to apologies.

So today, will you reconsider sending this for a review, apologize to the family, and will you commit to that today?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Once again, Honourable Speaker, this is about action. And one of the first bills that I brought forward in this Legislature—one of the first bills that was brought forward in this Legislature was regarding impaired driving, closing a loophole and ensuring that everyone is held accountable who has been charged with impaired driving in this province.

I've committed to bringing forward new legislation. We're working right now with MADD Canada and other stakeholders. I've met with the families—I've met with the families, the victims of impaired driving from across this province, and I'll continue to do that. But I'm going to do that in a way that makes our roads safer and keeps people alive. That's going to be my goal as Attorney General, and I hope that members opposite take that role seriously and join me in that work.

### **Prairie Mountain Health Region ER Services**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Honourable Speaker, over the summer, we have heard from countless rural Manitobans expressing their concern about the impact of ER closures in their hometowns. They are not sure if ER services will be there for them when they need them. Rural Manitobans don't have access to another nearby option. The nearest open ER could be hours away.

Can the Minister of Health please tell the House how many days over the summer that emergency departments in the Prairie Mountain Health region were closed under their watch?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I thank the member opposite for that question.

You know, our government has worked very, very hard since being afforded the great privilege of serving Manitobans one year ago today to fix the damage that was done by the previous government to Manitobans' No. 1 priority, and that's health care.

We were really proud recently to share with Manitobans the progress we've made in probably the most important area for our ability to be able to make sure that ER rooms—or ER departments, rather, are able to be open, and that's staffing. Our government has successfully staffed a net new 873 health-care workers on the front lines of our health-care system, many of those folks working on the front lines of our EDs.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Cook:** Well, since the minister can't or won't answer that question, I will enlighten them.

Eleven facilities in the Prairie Mountain Health region, including Roblin, Souris, Boissevain, Minnedosa, Carberry, Grandview, Glenboro, Treherne, Killarney, Deloraine and Hamiota, between them a total of 391 days of closures occurred between June and September. I will table the full summer schedule for each facility that I listed.

Can the Health Minister please explain why they apparently found it acceptable to leave rural Manitobans with this lack of care under their watch?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our government has done the work—started doing the work of

repairing the damage the previous PC government did to health care.

Under the previous PC government's watch, they cut the rural recruitment and retention fund. They cut the very fund that rural Manitobans depend on to recruit physicians. Our government restored that fund.

Our government went even further. The emergency room that was closed by the PCs, Carberry, our government was able to recruit physicians to reopen. Now, as the Premier has already stated, it is going to take us years to fix the damage done to health care by that member and members around her. But our government's going to work each and every day to strengthen health care and reopen the emergency rooms—

**The Speaker:** The time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Cook:** I'm glad the minister mentioned Carberry. The Carberry emergency department is one of the NDP's biggest broken promises. This summer, the Carberry ER was closed more than 50 per cent of the time. And this was after the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Health Minister had a splashy news conference in the town of Carberry and declared it mission accomplished. Honourable Speaker, 65 total days the Carberry ER was closed this summer.

Somehow, the minister and the Premier still feel comfortable claiming they're keeping their campaign promises. But rural communities are left scrambling to find doctors with no support from this NDP government.

When will rural Manitobans, including those in Carberry, be able to expect stable and predictable ER services?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I'll remind that member that under the previous PC government, that ER was closed 100 per cent of the time.

\* (14:20)

Honourable Speaker, I want to be very clear. It is going to take us years to fix the damage done over seven and a half years of cuts and closures, disrespecting health-care workers by that previous PC government. Heather Stefanson didn't care about health care in rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba or Winnipeg.

On this side of the House Manitobans made a choice to elect a government that cares about health care all across our great province.

### Portage Place Redevelopment New Health Centre Costs

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, this government has refused to be open and transparent on the cost of the planned health centre that will replace Portage Place. This Premier needs to follow proactive disclosure rules that require any contracts over \$10,000 to be disclosed each month. I table this requirement to refresh the Premier's memory.

Will the minister and Premier commit today that all of the costs for the lease contracts with True North will be disclosed publicly and shared publicly; the true cost of operating the new health centre? *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, I am so proud to stand up in this House as the MLA for Union Station, where the current Portage Place resides, as the Minister for Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care and as the former bear that represented the IMAX theatre in that building—just saying—that our government, through historic partnerships with True North and the Southern Chiefs Organization is making investments that are going to move our province and our downtown Winnipeg in the right direction by bringing health care to communities downtown in Winnipeg.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Stone:** Let the record show that this Premier is still not being truthful with the cost and the disclosure of these lease contracts. The Premier said that the operating cost of the new health centre would be \$77 million in April; now it's \$106 million annually. Those costs in a matter of six months have—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would remind the member, ask her to withdraw her comments where she said the minister is not being truthful. That's not parliamentary language, so please withdraw your comment and apologize.

**Mrs. Stone:** I apologize for using the word not truthful and withdraw that.

In just six months, the costs have escalated by almost 32 per cent. By the time this health facility is built, what will the cost balloon to? Is that just the leasing cost of the building for the next 35 years? Does that mean it will cost \$3.7 billion for the duration of that lease?

Taxpayers deserve fiscal transparency and accountability from this NDP government in how their dollars are being spent.

How much more will it cost to run the medical services in the building, and will these services be new or moved from elsewhere?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, Manitobans deserve a government that invests in strengthening their health care, and that is exactly what our government is doing.

Yes, we are investing in bringing primary care to downtown residents. Yes, we are investing in historic partnerships that advance economic reconciliation. Yes, we are investing in making sure that mental health and addiction services are going to be right downtown where people can access them.

Yes, we are doing the things that Manitobans sent us here to do last year on this very date, and we'll continue to do that despite members opposite who still don't understand the importance of investing in health care.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Midland, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, three—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** —questions and the NDP still refuse to disclose the costs. What are they hiding? Both the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said the government is not being transparent on the true cost of this lease and the new health operations. I table that article for the House.

I question, why won't the Premier (Mr. Kinew) just disclose those details? Was he just making it up on the spot because he didn't know what else to say? Does he not know the law, that they're required to disclose contracts over \$10,000? He is spending over \$106 million of taxpayers' dollars, so there should be an even greater level of transparency.

Will this Premier stand up today and commit that all public contracts will be tendered through a competitive process and the result—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I don't know if that member opposite missed the first press conference we had with True North, with the Southern Chiefs Organization. Maybe she also missed the

second press conference that we had to share the good news. She clearly hasn't been paying attention to what this investment is going to do for health care in this province and for the residents of downtown Winnipeg.

We are bringing services that people count on from Pan Am to downtown Winnipeg. We are making sure there's improved access to dialysis, casting. We're making sure that there's improved access to primary care.

We're investing in a state-of-the-art facility that's been a bridge, a divide geographically between the north and the southern parts of downtown Winnipeg, Central Park and those on the south side of Portage Avenue—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

#### **Death of Myah Gratton Status of Family Services Review**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** As a new critic for Families, I am deeply troubled about what happened to Myah Gratton.

To quote her mother: They failed her. I want accountability for my daughter's life. These are the words of Juliette Hastings, whose 17-year-old daughter Myah was one of five people brutally slain February 11 of this year.

The minister assured Manitobans that a fulsome review would occur, including why a phone message from Myah begging for help was ignored.

I'm asking today: What is the status of this departmental review?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** I want to welcome my colleague to her new critic role.

Again, Honourable Speaker, as many of us on this side of the House, including the Premier and myself as minister responsible, we offer our profound condolences to the family of Myah and the whole community of Carman and all of her friends and family extended.

It was an absolute tragedy. It is a tragedy that we are very cognizant of and take into consideration in all of the work that we're doing in our department and, quite honestly, across all of our departments.

I ordered the section 4 review; that section 4 review has been completed.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, the minister's been sitting on this review for the last six months without a single recommendation shared in this House, without a single legislative or regulatory change to enact—enacted in response to this tragedy.

My question is simple: What reason could the minister offer for this secrecy?

**MLA Fontaine:** Just to correct the record, the section 4 review is not a secret. We have already been doing work that we've learned in the section 4 review.

I also just want to ensure that the member opposite knows that there's a variety of different reviews that are done in the death of a child, including a review and a report that will be done by MACY. We're working very closely with MACY in respect of some of the things that we've learned and some of their concerns.

Collectively, our department is working together with child welfare to ensure that what we found out in the section 4 review is immediately being adhered to.

Miigwech.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, to quote: You didn't listen to me, and my baby is dead. End quote. These words were shared by Juliette Harris [*phonetic*]-Hastings, the mother of Myah.

Accountability cannot occur without transparency. We need to ensure these tragedies never happen again.

This—will this minister share the department review today, yes or no?

**MLA Fontaine:** I think the member and I absolutely agree on the same thing on—that this can never happen again.

And one of the things that is very clear is that this tragedy shows that we need more supports for our intimate partner violence, and that's exactly what our department is doing. And I just want to share with the member some of the work that we're doing.

We have \$22 million to help Manitobans experiencing gender-based violence connect with those supports that they need. We've got \$13.7 million in new funding that helped women escape intimate partner violence and find immediately a place to live safely with their children, and they're able to access those dollars within mere days. And we have \$20 million towards a new MMIWGS2 strategy that

we are very, very soon going to be sharing with the public.

\* (14:30)

There's a lot of work that we need to do in respect of tackling IPV and gender-based violence. Our team is committed to it, and I as minister am committed to that.

Miigwech.

**The Speaker:** If we could pause the clock for a moment, please.

I would ask the member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert) if she was quoting from a private document, and if so, would she please table it.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** It wasn't a private document.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### **Nominee Certificates for International Students Application Processing Time and Number Issued**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Last year, Manitoba lost the opportunity to hand out 2,000 nominee certificates. Think about the thousands of post-graduate students that have been working here in Manitoba, many of them for three, some for even four, five-plus years, Honourable Speaker.

These individuals have been contributing to our economy, our communities, and many have even purchased homes and started families here.

Can the minister give the House an update as to how many certificates have been issued thus far this year?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** It is my extreme pleasure to give this update to the House, that we are completely on track to fulfill our full federal allotment of 9,500 nominations to Manitoba. That's 9,500 newcomers and their families.

According to the former PC Immigration minister, they couldn't possibly do that last year, because that goal was only aspirational.

We're turning their hopes into reality. That's—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a supplementary question.

**MLA Lamoureux:** The Minister of Immigration here in our province should be able to provide us with the

number of how many nominee certificates have been distributed thus far. Very basic.

International students that have graduated and have been working here in Manitoba for an extended period of time should be a priority in receiving Manitoba nominee certificates.

Does the minister agree, and if so, will she provide the assurances that these workers will be made a higher priority?

**MLA Marcelino:** To be clear, the complete number is under 7,000, but at my last update, we were at about 6,700 or so folks. And I can certainly give the member opposite the complete number as of today, but we are fully on track.

And not only are we on track to fulfill that full federal allotment, we are actually planning to ask the federal government for even more, if there are any federal allotments that there—that we can have for Manitoba, because we are so much on track at this point.

As for the member's other query regarding temporary residents, I can assure the member that of all of our nominations this year and probably for next year as well, 85 per cent of them will be from the temporary residents that are in Manitoba, folks that are already working here. The other 15 per cent we are going to be getting from overseas skilled workers—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to sincerely thank the minister for that direct answer.

There is a great deal of concern in terms of the length of time it takes to process an application for a nominee certificate. Often people are waiting well over a year now for something that should be processed within three months.

Will the minister agree to set a target of three months in processing nominee certificate applications and indicate by when she plans to achieve this goal?

**MLA Marcelino:** I thank the member for that question.

It's going to take us a long time before we can dig out of the hole that the previous PC administration dug for our Manitoba Immigration Department.

It was over six years that they didn't even have a stand-alone immigration and labour department. Our

government, in this short amount of time, one year later, is now on track to fulfill a full federal allotment.

Our government has hired processing officers who are on the ground right now doing their best to do this, and we're hiring even more next year so that we can make that happen.

On top of that, we were able to accommodate 6,700 workers who would have otherwise had to leave our country. By working with the federal government to—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

### 2023 Provincial Election Government Record

**Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park):** Honourable Speaker, one year ago today, Manitobans rejected division and fear, and chose instead to vote for hope and change.

One year ago today they elected Wab Kinew's NDP as the government—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

When the Speaker stands up and asks for order, everyone else should be quiet. And I would remind the member not to use a member's name; use their title or their constituency name.

**Mr. Oxenham:** My apologies.

Okay. We elected the Premier (Mr. Kinew) of the Government of Manitoba and it's been a remarkable year. Our government has worked to rebuild health care, make life more affordable and make our communities safer and restore financial credibility to the office of government.

Can the Deputy Premier please share with the House some of the many ways Manitobans are better off since this historic election day one year ago today?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I thank my friend from Kirkfield Park for that excellent question. One year ago today, Manitoba began making progress on issues that matter to the people of our great province.

And while members opposite decided to spend last year mudslinging, here is what we are doing as a government: we hired 873 net new health-care workers; we cut the gas tax to save Manitobans money at the

pump; we launched the universal nutrition program to feed hungry kids, something the PCs said was a bad idea.

Honourable Speaker, I could go on and on and on and on, but my time is running out. But I think it's really clear, it is still a new day—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is up.

And I'm going to add one more question onto the rotation simply because we used up some time with clapping and with correcting some misstatements.

### **Seine River School Division Need for New Investments**

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** During a recent meeting with the Deputy Minister O'Leary, the Seine River School Division discussed critical educational needs, including full-day kindergarten, the need for a new school in the division and infrastructure repairs.

Will the Minister of Education commit today to actually prioritizing these issues and meeting directly with the school division, not just sending his deputy minister, to ensure that critical concerns are adequately addressed?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Our Minister of Education is doing remarkable work: 600 more educators in the classroom, a school nutrition program and we're building schools right across this great province. He is doing an amazing job and he shows up for the people who run this province.

I want to say to the people of Manitoba: on this, the first anniversary of the greatest honour and responsibility that anyone on our team could've ever imagined, we are so greatly humbled. We are humbled by the opportunity to serve, but we're also extraordinarily inspired by the open heart and by the open mind that you have greeted us with.

\* (14:40)

We show up for work each and every day to deliver for you on health care, to deliver for you on the economy but perhaps more importantly to honour that sacred responsibility that politicians have a responsibility not to inflame divisions in society but instead have a responsibility to bring people together.

We will keep showing up for you each and every day and we look forward to serving you—

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

The time for oral questions has expired.

## **PETITIONS**

### **Breast Screening**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths each year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age. Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.



### Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

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

(3) Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

(4) A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an update consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

(5) There are—hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia and Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

(6) Audiologists are hearing—are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

(7) The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog

programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors, representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population, are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

(9) Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners, do not have access to health insurance plans.

(10) The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive living—listening devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

(11) Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and older and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

(12) New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

(13) Manitobans over age the 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental and social health and well-being.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** No further petitions?

Grievances?

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**  
**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):**

Could you please call debate on second reading of Bill 7, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Repeal Act; followed by debate on second reading of Bill 9, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; followed by second reading of Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act; followed by the second reading of Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will now call second reading of Bill 7, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Repeal Act—*[interjection]*—that we will now continue debate on second reading of Bill 7, the public sector construction projects (tendering) act—repeal act; followed by second reading of Bill 9, The Employment—*[interjection]*—followed by debate on—continuing debate on second reading of Bill 9, the Employment Standards Code act—amendment act; followed by continuing debate on second reading of Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act; followed by continuing debate on second reading of Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**

**Bill 7—The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Repeal Act**

**The Speaker:** We will now resume debate on Bill 7, the public sector construction projects tendering act, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe).

The honourable Minister of Justice is not standing, so we'll move on to the next speaker in—*[interjection]*

\* (14:50)

Is there leave for it to remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Justice?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** No? Leave has been denied. Therefore, the minister will not get to speak again on second reading of this bill.

The floor is open.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** As MLAs, we all know that summer can be a busy time of year—busy time for MLAs to visit community events in their constitu-

ency: festivals, fairs, different family events. And through that time, we get to speak to the constituents on a few issues that concern them.

This past summer, I attended many of my communities and their fairs and heard a lot of concerns, some of which were the cost of groceries; health care, of course, came up numerous times; concerns from seniors; rural roadways and infrastructure; immigration concerns; and, of course, concerns related to this very bill here, Bill 7, The Public Sector Construction Projects Repeal Act.

And I am proud to stand here today and represent my constituents and speak for the many Manitobans that are not just the taxpayers in our great province, but also the employers and employees who oppose Bill 7.

This bill will have a negative impact on Manitobans and that includes not just the contractors and employees, but all of us here: us taxpaying Manitobans.

This act, which seeks to repeal the public tendering act, has garnered significant attention and concern across the construction and contractor industry in our province of Manitoba. I believe it will undermine the trust, confidence and welfare of our great province.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, it was our PC government that brought in The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act in 2021. This ensured that employees and employers had equal opportunity and equal access to bid on work on public projects without the requirement of forced union participation.

This bill that we had introduced provided equal opportunity to contractors. It brought equal access and opportunity.

The NDP Bill 7 that they're introducing takes away that equal opportunity and it does not provide equality across the board. I will tell you what it does provide, and that is the opportunity for this NDP government to control the union base and line the pockets of union leadership and gain control of election votes and manipulate and coerce a workforce.

The NDP government likes to speak of equality in many other portfolios, but it's becoming clearer every day that this government does not consider all of Manitobans and equality is not something that they truly believe in. But they—what they are doing is creating divisiveness with winners and losers.

What the NDP do believe is that by joining a union, you become middle class. Well, I'd like to know what the NDP think about those that do not belong to a union and what classification they are.

Bill 7 forces contractors to pay the fees associated to the union dues, and this clearly puts all control and restrictions in the hands of the government to be able to garner favour with their union friends and family.

The very day this bill was introduced, I had calls from my constituents, absolutely horrified, when Bill 7 was brought up in this House. It changes the environment, negatively, for so many across our province of Manitoba. A lot, or most, of construction businesses and industry choose not to belong to a union. And, again, this is their right of choice.

Why does the NDP feel that the rules need to change for a small percentage of the industry? Who's really asking for this change to be made?

*Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Many of the industry and business employees choose to work in an environment where unions are not present. They do not have to pay the required union dues and many can't afford to have their hard-earned paycheques be swallowed up by the required payment of these dues, especially now with the extra costs of groceries, fuel and the average family has in—the costs for the average family have increased significantly.

Many of our Manitoba business owners and contractors and big industries provide community employment, a workforce diversity and apprenticeship spots to train generations in the trade fields relevant to their business.

Let's talk a moment about apprenticeship ratio, the—what the government is changing and had recently announced on that. This may project costs going up on a project. It will impact these projects no matter what way you look at it. It will have a negative impact on industry, apprenticeship, trades, colleges and Manitoba in general in such a way it can only set our province back.

I've heard from workforce and industries that this means—or, what this means for their business and the contracts that they have—submit. This means there will be layoffs, as they will no longer be able to find the journey person that's required to be the extra one on the job. How is this good for our province?

Comments from this government have left many of these very successful Manitoba employers questioning

what is the NDP planning to do. These are owners and operators of businesses. They have excellent and reputable companies, all of which, I might add, contribute to the economic growth and the economic fabric of our province. What is the NDP government doing for these businesses and industries and contractors that are not involved in organized labour or belong to the union? Are they going to ignore them like the MPNP files and the backlog there?

The NDP are insinuating that non-unionized workers and the open shops are incompetent. Many contractors provide excellent wages and often pay more than what unions pay and also provide employees with great benefit packages, and not only that, but they also get to take home a full paycheque. More of their hard-earned dollars without the added costs of union dues.

These employees are also provided adequate training, including safety training, and most often safety certified with certificate of recognition, or better known as core certification. Employers in this industry value their employees and their safety and require this training. For the NDP to suggest this new legislation will improve the safety of any worker in this province is completely unfounded and misleading and insulting to the many businesses in the industry who go above and beyond to ensure the safety of all their employees.

The current process and requirement for bidding on projects requires core safety certification and the stringent certification process provides the guidelines and follow-up for all safety-related matters to the employer.

Creating false fears and statements regarding the safety of workers when we know that this bill is only designed to funnel money into the pockets of union leaders: this only inflates the costs and the backs of every taxpayer here in Manitoba. These projects will escalate due to the unrequired, fictitious, bogus union cash grab.

There is not a fair and competitive tendering process that goes along with Bill 7, and will in fact increase these costs to taxpayers, like I've just said. The cost of every tender goes up to accommodate for these union dues that are required on these projects.

For the NDP to present and enforce this bill to bidding companies in our province with statements indicating that it will somehow improve the quality of lives for Manitobans is ridiculous and, again, insulting to the intelligent and hard-working labour force and

the professional business people that make our province great.

I've witnessed countless projects across this province that were awarded to companies not subject to the union rules and legislation, companies that have been non-unionized. These are contractors and businesses who built daycares, schools, hospitals, water treatment plants, big industrial facilities. These huge projects were completed with employees and employers working together for a common goal and accomplishing the project successfully with great outcomes. There were no interruptions related to strikes. All received good paycheques and the facilities were built on time and built within budget. There's many examples of valued workers and exceptional employees and industry coming together for a common goal.

\* (15:00)

In addition to these excellent wages that employers offer, there's specialized workforce. They also get promoted and provided access to the apprenticeship program in their related fields of expertise.

We all understand that increasing the workers' knowledge, skills and value directly impacts their earning potential in their perspective fields. Manitoba needs enough qualified and willing journeypersons in the queue to accommodate for this ratio change, and reducing these numbers, again, puts huge strain on this industry and potentially reduces the number of folks enrolling in the program and could lead to a steady decline of tradespersons.

Again, I've met and spoke with contractors and leaders in the field regarding Bill 7 and the impact that it could have on their workforce and also the changes that it can put into their working environments. There's growing concern for many. I've spoken to these businesses that provide the great wages. They even provide pension plans—locally owned and some by Métis and staffed with 100 to 200 employees but do not belong to a union. Therefore, it makes me question, would they even be considered for some of these projects that go up for tender.

Employers continually invest in their employees and recognize them for their greatness and asset to their business. Without their employees, there would be no company. Employees showing great potential invest in themselves and have the ability for rapid advancement based on their skillset, personality and drive, something that they would not achieve in a unionized environment based on the time and seniority.

I've seen so many people grow and advance in their line of work and become very successful. I know of many contractors and businesses alike that have provided opportunity to people who are perhaps less fortunate and vulnerable in today's society. I have witnessed employers hiring people who just need the opportunity to be recognized and valued in the workplace and for their contributions not only to the work but in their community. These employees learn and understand their true value and potential for growth in themselves.

I'm sure we all know business owners and many entrepreneurs who have started their own business and have extremely successful—and have been extremely successful here in Manitoba. Many have chosen to come to our great country and have made significant investment in our province. These business owners, and not just the new owners but those who have lived here, are experienced and knowledgeable in the construction industry, the workforce and the demands of the trade. These are the people who say they will leave if there is union involvement or collaboration with such. Many, and again I say many, do not want to have unions get involved with their business, their employees or their decision making.

Bill 7 sets the stage for a bigger goal for the NDP. It will allow opportunities for the unions and their representatives to dictate and perhaps threaten their employee base and work environment. I've heard directly, and I was told, I need to vote the way my union tells me to. That is not democratic, Honourable Speaker. This does not illustrate democracy as I understand it. What it does illustrate is a level of corruption, deceit and coercion. This is a concern, and what is more concerning is what this NDP government has planned for the future of our province of Manitoba and the workforce behind it.

Bill 7 clearly overlooks important perspectives and considerations and will have consequences Manitobans would have to bear. Think what this will do for those men who may be considering a business opportunity here in Manitoba. This will eliminate potential future investment and economic growth. Having forced union is not a choice, and many are not willing to be a part of it. Manitobans want equal opportunity and fairness in business practices.

I'm going to close with comments I've made before and I'll use again in the future. Manitoba continues to be an important part of the economic fabric of our wonderful country, and we want to continue to be a leader in our business, employment opportunity,

equality and equal access to public projects and future investment.

Bill 7 takes away equality, equal access and opportunity for economic growth and future investment.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** It feels, again, like a little bit of déjà vu here in the House. I was trying to remember when we had this debate over forced unionization, so I did a quick Google search, as sometimes we do these days, and one of the first things that came up on the search was a petition that I read in April of twenty—sorry, April of 2004.

So 20 years ago, reading—*[interjection]* I know. The member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) is saying, what are you still doing here? And I might ask myself that sometimes too. But the bigger question is, why are we still debating this issue?

In April of 2004, I and many of my colleagues at that time were reading petitions against forced unionization of a project labour agreement that had to do with the expansion of the floodway. Now, we, of course—and the member for Concordia remembers this as well; there are a few of us who remember that debate—but the floodway expansion, which was something that was agreed to by all members of this House, it needed to be expanded of course; it's a recommendation coming out of the 1997—then called flood of the century.

So the expansion of the floodway was done under a PLA, a project labour agreement, where all of those who are participating had to pay union dues. And members may remember that the cost of the floodway expansion significantly increased. At that time, part of it was being paid for by the federal government and part of it, of course, was being paid for by the provincial Treasury, and there was significant cost overruns. The federal government essentially said, well, these are your cost overruns and the Province will have to pick up those costs. And a lot of it was attributed to the fact that there was this project labour, this master labour agreement.

The premier at the time, Gary Doer, indicated that he felt the PLA, the master labour agreement, which forced unionization, would provide certainty in terms of construction, even though there's many different ways, of course, to get certainty when you're tendering out a project. All it did was inflate the cost of the floodway expansion significantly. So at that time, Manitobans were very concerned about forced unionization because they saw it as an issue that wasn't fair but ultimately was affecting their pocket-

books with the additional cost to the expansion of the floodway.

So members of the Progressive Conservative caucus at that time brought forward petitions, and there was great—a number of debates regarding forced unionization.

Fast-forward to 2016 and a new government who had committed then—over the course of the election period and previous to that—to do away with forced unionization came forward. And that time there were surveys of Manitobans done, as there were before, and the vast majority of Manitobans agreed that you shouldn't have to be a member of a union to participate in a Manitoba construction project. That just makes intuitive sense I think, to Manitobans, not that you can't be a member of a union or that you shouldn't be a member of a union. We all, of course, have great respect for workers who are in construction whether they are unionized or non-unionized. It's difficult and honest work on behalf of all Manitobans. It is important work, the work that our construction workers do, and we see them each and every day, this year in many different places and previously. Driving around Manitoba, you see construction workers who are either doing road work or bridge work or other sorts of construction work, and we value the work that they do because they keep Manitoba moving on our highways and through our infrastructure.

But whether or not, as you're passing those construction workers—and you're passing them safely I hope, and you're pulling to the side to give them room and going at the posted speed limit in those construction zones—whether or not those workers are unionized or not unionized, who are working on those roads I don't know. And, frankly, it doesn't matter to most Manitobans, they just want the work done. And broadly, they want the work done in the most economical way that is possible because if you're doing that, that leaves more money for the provincial Treasury to do more construction; that just makes sense.

\* (15:10)

So Manitobans, from their perspective, they simply want the work done, the construction work done. They want it done well and they want it done at the best possible price so there can be more of that work done.

And what the NDP are doing now in the same way they did it 20 years ago—and it's just like the old NDP—are going back to a system to try to force unionizations

onto Manitobans, to force those construction companies to either sign into a PLA and sign and pay the union dues or be forced to unionize, even though many, many companies in Manitoba aren't.

And that has a number of different impacts. Of course, one of them that I raised specifically was the economic impact. And at a time when the Province is running a record nearly \$2-billion deficit, a record non-pandemic deficit in the Province of Manitoba, and at a time when the Premier (Mr. Kinew) indicates in the media at least that he's looking for ways to save money, this one seems like an easy one; an easy one to be able to save money for Manitobans by not forcing a higher cost, by forcing unionization and perhaps taking some companies out of the bidding process. So an easy opportunity for the government to ratchet down that nearly \$2-billion record deficit that they are foisting onto the backs of Manitobans.

So why they haven't changed course on this in recent days or over the summer when they recognized that their deficit continued to grow despite promises to the contrary, that this is something that they should take on, is difficult to understand.

We've heard the Premier (Mr. Kinew) at different times use the whimsical analogy of the economic horse pulling the social cart. And I see the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is now riding a fanciful horse. Well I can see he's sitting—he's not actually on a horse, because the horse has died under the NDP. There is no economic horse anymore, because they've killed the economic horse.

Now they would probably try to unionize the economic horse and require that the horse be unionized, but regardless, moving off of the—moving off of their analogy of the unionized economic horse, they should be looking for every opportunity they can to be able to grow the economy, because we know that the NDP won't do anything on the cost-control side of things, despite what they might say. And the last year has been evidence of that in their record deficit.

So if they're not going to actually look at any sort of cost controls, then they have to be able to grow the economy. And discouraging construction companies from either coming to Manitoba or businesses from coming to Manitoba by putting this pail of a forced unionization regime on the province will do nothing to grow the economy.

**An Honourable Member:** How many billions did you leave on the table? What happened with Borland Construction?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) is now wondering why he's going to waste billions of dollars by going down this path. And it's an excellent question, and I hope, if he has the nerve to be able to go into his caucus—he might fear getting kicked out of his caucus like my new seatmate has been kicked out of his caucus, but I won't go so far as to say that he might be assaulted; I'll leave those allegations for others to figure out. But he might be wondering, the new member for St. Boniface, if I go into my caucus and I say to our Premier, we are going to be losing billions of dollars by forcing construction companies to unionize and we should move away from this, he might fear that even in his early infancy of his political career, however long it might last—he might already be a quarter of the way through it, I don't know—but he might fear that he's going to get kicked out of his caucus.

I would say to him to put that fear aside and to actually do the right thing and to say the right thing. Because a lesson that is 20 years old is that Manitobans don't want this. They don't want it, and they didn't want it in 2004 when me and some of my former colleagues were raising this through petitions, and they don't want it now.

They want fairness when it comes to tendering, when it comes to construction. When they're driving down Highway No. 75, when they're driving down Highway No. 1 heading to Falcon Lake or to the Whiteshell, when they're heading out to Brandon on Highway No. 1, or when they're going to Dauphin, they want to see that that construction work is being done and being done well. And it doesn't matter to them if the individuals who are doing the work are unionized.

**An Honourable Member:** Workers should be safe.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, the member—the Minister of Justice says we want them to be safe. So now he's suggesting that non-unionized work is not safe. If that is actually his position, then he should put that on the public record, if he doesn't believe that people who aren't in unions aren't actually safe.

That's quite a leap for him to make, because in the history of our province, we've seen many companies—unionized and not unionized—perform good work for the province. Now, that's a long way away from, of course, the year ago when others were talking about one Manitoba. One Manitoba is isn't symbolized by trying to split companies between unionized companies and non-unionized companies.

That doesn't feel like one Manitoba at all. That feels like one NDP government that hasn't learnt a lesson from 20 years ago. I look at the member for— or, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), who may not have been here 20 years ago, but he was here for a while anyway, under the Greg Selinger government.

And he would remember this debate about forced unionization. And the interesting thing is this is the sort of thing that the NDP does but they don't run on beyond the union hall. So you won't see on any of their literature that goes out to their public—to the public generally that they're forcing unionization.

I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), he might prove me wrong; he may bring in some of his literature that he sends out to his constituents where he brags about forced unionization but he won't, because he doesn't do that. He'll—might do it in the union hall because it plays well to a small group of union bosses and union leaders, but it doesn't play well to Manitobans generally.

Well, I see him nodding his head so I think he's in agreement with me that he wouldn't say this in a more broad form. So this isn't one Manitoba. Doing something that divides construction companies into unionized and non-unionized, winners and losers, that increase the costs on Manitobans that ultimately results in a higher deficit, that ultimately results in less projects being done, isn't about good governance in the province of Manitoba.

I would've hoped that the NDP would've learnt a lesson in the last 20 years. Seemingly what is old is new again. We have allegations of abuse that happened, of course, under the Greg Selinger government; now they happen today under the Kinew government. We have forced unionization that happened under the Gary Doer and Greg Selinger government—now it happens under the Kinew government.

I don't know what other old hits they're going to be bringing out of the NDP playbook from the Greg Selinger era; I'm sure we'll see them pretty soon. But this is certainly not what Manitobans voted for a year ago.

So I'll—

**An Honourable Member:** Can't wait to hear about the Pallister era.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Oh, well, and I continue to hear the relatively new—or, the maybe not new—year, the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), talking

about an era. And he's—and he wants to know why it is that he isn't free to be able to go into his caucus and speak freely.

That's a very good question that the member for St. Boniface should raise within his own caucus. I would start almost a hashtag: free the member for St. Boniface. He should actually be able to go and raise those issues.

Here in the House he has said that his government is wasting billions of dollars on forced unionizations. Now, if I understood him correctly, he says he can't free—speak freely in his own caucus. I will start this afternoon a hashtag: free the member for St. Boniface and let him speak freely.

But as I conclude my comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to implore the NDP not to follow the path of the Greg Selinger NDP. They continue to do that through their actions when it comes to how they treat people in government, in their caucus, in their party. They're now today doing it in how they treat Manitobans, dividing them between unionized and not unionized.

They can look in the history books to see what that does. It divides a province, it divides a caucus, and they can look up the term rebel four and they'll understand what that is, and it's hurtful to Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers for debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 7, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Repeal Act.

\* (15:20)

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** I think we had it by a landslide, so I'm going to request a recorded vote.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Recorded vote has been requested, call in the members.

\* (15:30)

So the question before the House is second reading of Bill 7, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Repeal Act.

#### Division

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

#### Ayes

*Asagwara, Brar, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliv, Wiebe.*

#### Nays

*Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.*

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Ayes 30, Nays 20.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed.

#### Bill 9—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will now resume second reading of bill 9, the men's health—the men's mental health awareness week act, commemoration of days, weeks and months act amended. Debate stands in the name of the MLA for Riding Mountain, with 19 minutes remaining.

Apologies. We will now resume second reading of Bill 9, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, standing in the name of the MLA for Riding Mountain, with 19 minutes.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** The government has introduced Bill 9, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, to extend the length

of the leave for serious injury or illness from 17 to 27 weeks.

The federal government, under the Canada Labour Code, increased the maximum length of unpaid medical leave available to federally regulated private sector employees from 17 to 27 weeks in 2022. Currently, an employee working for a provincially regulated employer may be eligible for 26 weeks of employment insurance sickness benefits, but they may not be entitled to an equivalent amount of unpaid job-protected sick leave under the applicable provincial legislation.

Our neighbours to the west in Alberta and Saskatchewan allow 16 and 12 weeks, respectively, of unpaid medical leave. Why the rush here in Manitoba? Supposed Alberta and Saskatchewan are consulting on this issue. New Brunswick undertook a lengthy review and engaged the public on the proposed changes. We haven't seen any evidence of this minister consulting with labour on this change to Manitoba's regulation.

Approximately 90 per cent of Manitoba workplaces fall under the Manitoba Employment Standards Code. The other 10 per cent fall under the Canada Labour Code. If this bill is passed, Manitoba would become one of the first jurisdictions to match the federal changes. Stable and consistent employment is critical for Manitobans to provide for themselves and their families.

We want all Manitobans to feel supported and that their jobs are protected. Serious injuries and illnesses require time to heal and recover with the supervision of health-care professionals. These injuries and illnesses may require more than 17 weeks. However, there is potential for abuse of the program. Employees can benefit from the extension of this time but should only take the necessary time for recovery and care.

At a time when there is pressure on the labour force and shortages across many sectors, this bill could potentially further exacerbate the pressures that business and industry face with staffing. Extending the leave can create uncertainty for employers on staffing. Small businesses count on each and every employee to make their operations work. Being without an employee for 10 additional weeks or trying to find a term employee to fill the role has a potential to cause additional headaches for business owners.

As I said, if this bill is passed, Manitoba will be one of the first jurisdictions to match the federal program. Being a leader means being susceptible to



unintended consequences. Other jurisdictions have done consultation but have not implemented the policy at this time. Why are the NDP rushing this policy?

When bringing in new labour-related bills, it is critical that due diligence and consultation is done with both public—the public and employers. There is labour legislation included in the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, where labour and the public will have no say. At least, this bill, if passed today, will be able to be addressed at committee.

We have not heard from the minister as to whether or not a comprehensive consultation process informed this policy. Manitobans are rightfully concerned about any legislation that impacts their rights as workers, and employers are concerned about changes that will impact their workforce.

I urge the minister to put the brakes on Bill 9 and do a fulsome consultation with labour.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

\* (15:40)

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there—anyone else up to speak to debate? Question?

Question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

All those in favour, say aye. *[interjection]*

Oh, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the bill—motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No? I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I believe the Ayes have it.

The honourable leader—official House—Official Opposition House Leader.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Recorded vote, please.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested, please call in the members.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act. Is it—sorry.

#### Division

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

#### Ayes

*Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliw, Wiebe.*

#### Nays

*Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.*

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Ayes 30, Nays 20.

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly carried.

\* (15:50)

#### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill 16—The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act

**The Speaker:** We will now begin second reading of Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act.

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Wiebe:** I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act. This bill brings forward amendments to provide an efficient and effective regulatory accountability scheme for all Manitobans.

Let me be clear, Honourable Speaker. The government of Manitoba continues to be steadfastly committed to the principles of regulatory accountability, which are: achieving balance, identifying the best options, assessing the impacts, consulting and communicating with stakeholders and the public, evaluating effectiveness and efficiency, monitoring and minimizing the number of regulatory requirements and streamlining design.

Because of this, it's incumbent on us to look at efficiencies throughout government, and this includes The Regulatory Accountability Act itself. This law is on the books to impose counting and offset requirements to public servants, especially a law that has resulted in an overwhelming amount of internal red tape. Countless staff hours, across government, have been devoted to this counting exercise that lacked any context or results.

The Regulatory Accountability Act will therefore be repealed. In its place will be The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act.

Under the new act, the government must report to the public each year on its strategies and initiatives. This will eliminate duplicative and inconsistent regulatory and administrative requirements and will evaluate the effectiveness of those required—requirements in achieving public policy outcomes. This reporting obligation is similar to the approach that has been taken in other provinces, such as Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The bill also makes amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act and the process for consulting on proposed regulations. This aspect of regulatory accountability is preserved, as the government of Manitoba remains committed to public consultation.

The amendments streamline the process and make it more efficient, for example, by clarifying when consultation is required, and setting the minimum period for consultation at 30 days rather than 45. Experience has shown that this is—this time period is the appropriate amount of time for consultation, balanced with the needs to make a law in a timely fashion to bring forward in the province of Manitoba.

This government is choosing to focus on qualitative, not just a quantitative, approach to regulatory accountability. It's no longer just about the numbers, Honourable Speaker; it's about what it means to Manitobans when we enact a new law, when we make a new regulation or when we roll out a new policy or program. How do these initiatives help them, affect them and protect them?

We are keeping the successful parts of regulatory accountability, we are streamlining the process and we are making it more efficient. Importantly, we are freeing up the public service to focus on what matters: Manitobans. Not numbers for numbers' sake.

This concludes my remarks on Bill 16. I thank you for the time today, Honourable Speaker, and I look forward to working with all members to ensure that our province becomes more efficient going forward in the future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Is the minister aware that reducing unnecessary regulations has been a top priority of small businesses, with over 90 per cent citing the need for a reduction in red tape, and that by repealing The Regulatory Accountability Act, he's gutting red tape reduction in Manitoba and shifting that burden to small businesses?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, the member is just wrong, Honourable Speaker. What we're in fact doing today is cutting red tape by a massive amount in the public service.

And she doesn't need to take my word for it. She can go out and speak to any of the public servants in the province of Manitoba. She can ask them how many hours, how many days, how much loss of productivity was wasted on simply counting a—the

number of regulations, rather than actually getting to work to making Manitoba a better place.

**Mrs. Cook:** Why, after referring to this Canadian Federation of Independent Business as the pre-eminent voice for small businesses, did the minister fail to even speak to them about his intentions with respect to red tape reductions?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Honourable Speaker, the member opposite is just wrong. We met with CFIB. We—they are very well aware of the legislation before us, and I think they understand the importance of having meaningful work done to reduce red tape.

Rather than simply counting numbers, we're going to make progress in making our province more efficient by working with business, working with government and ensuring the steps we take make sense for everyone.

**Mrs. Cook:** Is the minister aware that under the previous PC government, Manitoba went from an F grade to an A grade in red tape reduction according to CFIB's annual red tape reduction report card?

\* (16:00)

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hour being 4 p.m., I am now interrupting debate in accordance with subrule 2(17). Within two sitting days of the resumption of the fall sittings, the question for second reading of designated bills must be put.

On this day, the minister moving the second reading motion can speak for a maximum of 10 minutes followed by up to 15-minute question period. Critics of recognized parties and independent members may then speak for a maximum of 10 minutes per bill. If such a bill had been previously called for debate, all remaining actions just identified will be dealt with before the question will be put. The House will not adjourn until second readings are completed.

Accordingly, I will now call for resumption of second reading of Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act, and we'll resume the question period.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, Honourable Speaker, after the bill has been introduced and the text made public, we took the opportunity to meet with CFIB and other stakeholders to ensure that they understood the content and context of the bill.

They understand that regulatory accountability goes deeper than just the numbers—just—deeper than just a simple counting. That's why other provinces, including the province of Alberta, have this model. This is the model that we're following. I'm surprised members opposite aren't on side with the work that's being done in the province of Alberta.

**Mrs. Cook:** Will the government's new regulatory accountability initiatives include any form of regulatory budget or any form of measurement on which to base progress?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Yes. Absolutely, Honourable Speaker.

We have some incredible folks within the civil service who are doing this work to ensure that regulatory accountability continues to be a priority of our government, that it's reported in a way that is understandable to Manitobans. The members of the opposition, I'm sure, will take time to pore through that document; hopefully, learn about some of the good work that's being done.

Ultimately, we want this work to continue. We believe in reducing red tape. And one of the first and most important steps that we can take is by passing Bill 16 to reduce a whole bunch of red tape within government on this needless red tape counting and actually move to real accountability from government.

**Mrs. Cook:** I am surprised to hear the minister referring to regulatory accountability as needless. I think small-business owners would disagree with the minister's characterization.

Is the minister aware that Manitoba went from an F grade in 2016 under the previous NDP government to an A grade in 2018—an enormous increase in regulatory accountability and red tape reduction—and why is he prepared to go back to an F?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, it's surprising to me that the member would be so offside with the CFIB that she didn't even take the time to speak with them and understand that we have met with them, that we've gone through this legislation; they understand the content. And I would imagine that they're probably going to be very appreciative of the work that's being done by this government to cut this red tape that's been created by the previous government, unnecessarily, Honourable Speaker.

And I would invite the member opposite to spend some time with our fantastic civil servants. Public servants across this province are telling us that this is freeing them to do the real important work of serving

Manitobans. That—we want to work with our civil service because we appreciate and understand the value that they have to Manitobans.

They were disrespected by the previous government. They won't be disrespected by us.

**Mrs. Cook:** Is the minister aware that red tape comes with a real cost to small-business owners—a financial cost to small-business owners, who don't have compliance departments, who often don't have HR departments and who are forced to ensure that they're complying with every government regulation that they put in place?

**Mr. Wiebe:** So we're excited by this new regulatory regime in the sense that this allows for better consultation with the public. In fact, what this new bill will enact is give the opportunity for business who want to be partners with us.

When they find a piece of regulation or other hinderance to the business that they want to do in the province, they will be ultimately allowed or able to give that information to government and we'll be then be able to act. Rather than just waiting for this needless counting and then saying, well okay, we need to reduce it by one or two or three, this government's going to get to work with business and with all Manitobans to make our province more efficient.

**Mrs. Cook:** The minister keeps talking about regulatory accountability initiatives but he's gutting the regulatory accountability legislation with this bill.

So I'd like the minister to advise the House in detail what exactly—what regulatory accountability initiatives is he proposing?

**Mr. Wiebe:** The member opposite is confused about the legislation and so I'm happy to help her understand it a little bit better.

Ultimately, this is getting rid of the needless qualitative counting that was done throughout government that really, I think, all—you know, certainly across government, but I think all sectors across Manitoba understood that there really wasn't much value to that and that's why we're aligning ourselves better with other provinces.

We're understanding that the actual data needs to be backed up with how this is going to affect and impact small businesses, large businesses and Manitobans in general. So that's the work that we're going to be doing, and ultimately we're accountable to the Legislature and to the people of Manitoba.

So we're going to be bringing that information forward and be happy to continue the conversation how we can make our Province more efficient.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I'm wondering if the minister realizes that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business previously celebrated Manitoba's lead on this file, issuing its Golden Scissors Award in 2018, the ability to cut red tape.

Will this minister be satisfied with a tarnished set of shears?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, of course, Honourable Speaker, the member opposite knows a lot about cutting and he knows a lot about cuts from government because of course he ran for a PC party that, in the last seven years, have decimated so many parts of our Province and decimated so many important services that people count on.

What we want to do is we want to restore the ability of public servants to do the work that we've tasked them to do to improve the lives of Manitobans, not to simply spend hours and hours and days and days simply counting regulations. We want them to make a real difference in making things more efficient in our province.

**Mr. Balcaen:** With those hours and hours and hours spent calculating his time, can the minister advise us what redeployment will happen with that staff, and what efficiencies will be noted in government because of that?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I can pass along some phone numbers for some public servants; maybe he can just start dialing 945 and fill in the blanks and I'm sure he's going to get public servants across this province who are telling him that this has made their lives more efficient in the sense that they are able to now work on the important tasks that they have to make our province a better place.

We ask a lot of our public service and they've been doing an amazing job, and of course, under seven and a half years of cuts under the previous government, disrespect at every turn, they found a new partner in our government who wants to work with them, understand how we can make the work that they do more efficient and we're absolutely using that horsepower to make lives better here in Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

### Debate

**The Speaker:** Then the floor is open for debate.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I was very concerned to see this bill, and we held it over for good reason.

As members may be aware, I was previously provincial director for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and in that role I worked with small- and medium-sized businesses across four provinces and territories. And let me tell you, small businesses across Canada cite red tape as one of the biggest hurdles to their growth—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mrs. Cook:** —as businesses and Manitoba became a leader in red-tape reduction among all the provinces in Canada. As I mentioned during the question period, Manitoba went from an F grade in 2016 under the previous NDP government to an A grade just two years later under a PC government that was committed to red-tape reduction.

\* (16:10)

I find it interesting that the NDP Justice Minister argues that these changes will result in less bureaucracy. Less bureaucracy for whom? He will be shifting the burden of that bureaucracy from government employees to small businesses. And he and his party may be comfortable with that approach, but I'm not, and I would suggest that small-business owners in Manitoba are also uncomfortable with that approach.

Having government officials counting regulations is not needless, as the minister asserted multiple times. I think small-business owners would agree with this—would agree with me on that. The—it's much easier for government to add regulations than it is for them to take them away.

One of the things that Manitoba did that made it a leader in red tape reduction was pioneering what's called a regulatory budget. That's where, for every regulation you put in place, you also remove one. Manitoba took it one step further with a two-for-one rule. For every regulation they added they took two away. And it resulted in a significant reduction in red tape for small businesses.

And the minister doesn't seem to be aware, so I'm going to let him know, you know, when CFIB puts out its annual red tape report card, it grades three major areas of regulatory performance. The first is regulatory accountability. The second is the total regulatory burden. And the third is political priority.

Now, it may not matter to the Minister for Justice, but by gutting the regulatory accountability legislation

in Manitoba, he's going to send Manitoba's grade back into the toilet, first of all because he won't be prioritizing red tape reduction at all. Secondly, there will be no measure of the regulatory burden because he will have repealed the legislation that required civil servants to count it.

Governments with the highest overall scores in red tape reduction are the ones that have a comprehensive measure of their regulatory burden, and, yes, that requires counting. The minister may not like math. The NDP might not like having to do it, but it's required in government.

Other provinces that do well in red tape reduction, they maintain some form of regulatory budget. They're making efforts to minimize red tape, and they're making red tape reduction a priority. I think it's clear that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is only concerned with reducing red tape for his government employees. He doesn't care about the small-business owners in this province that are going to pay the price for his decision.

Red tape prevents growth. It hinders businesses from operating in Manitoba. You think about the average small-business owner, Honourable Speaker. They don't have a compliance department. They don't have an HR department. In most cases, it is a small-business owner sitting there late into the night, poring over their computer, trying to make sure that they're in compliance with every regulation that the government has put into place.

That's why there's a real cost, a financial cost, with dollars and cents attached to it, to businesses for the regulatory burden. It's not some airy-fairy non-tangible; it's a real cost to small businesses, and that's why reducing that red tape is so important.

And one thing that the previous PC government did that enabled that widespread red tape reduction across government was taking that whole-of-government approach and applying that red tape reduction lens to all of government's operations. It was a co-ordinated effort to reduce regulations across departments.

And from that they were able to build into other initiatives. For example, reducing red tape for physicians, which physicians have consistently cited administrative burden and red tape as two major issues that hinder them in Manitoba. And the previous PC government took action on that.

And I'm concerned, Honourable Speaker, that with the gutting of the regulatory accountability legis-

lation we could see the new NDP government abandon those efforts as well, abandon the work of the physician Red Tape Reduction Task Force. I don't think that's out of the question given their attitude towards counting regulations, characterizing it as needless.

When I did work for CFIB, I would travel to other provinces and territories where I was responsible, and I would meet with their finance ministers. I would meet with their ministers responsible for regulatory accountability and hold up Manitoba as the example. And my colleagues across the country did this as well: held up Manitoba as the example of what it looks like to put a priority on red tape reduction, on helping small businesses and reducing the regulatory burden for small-business owners because Manitoba was a leader.

The NDP and this NDP Justice Minister are going to take Manitoba from being a leader to being a failure, and that's going to have a real impact on small-business owners. He can say he's met with CFIB. We'll see what they say at committee. I'm sure they're going to come and present on this bill because this bill directly impacts their members; small-business owners who are forced to carry the burden of red tape that this minister is going to shift to them because it's too much work for his department. It's shameful, Honourable Speaker, and I think it's a huge step backwards, a huge step backwards in Manitoba.

Reducing unnecessary red tape doesn't cost the government a lot of money; red tape costs small businesses a lot of money. Reducing red tape is a low-risk, high-reward endeavour. It's worth the work. He might not like the work, he might not like the math, but he's here to do his job on behalf of all Manitobans. He's here to make life better for all Manitobans, especially small-business owners who provide the majority of jobs in our province.

The NDP appear to be more interested in removing accountability measures than reducing red tape or growing the economy, and that's so troubling, Honourable Speaker. Over and over again, small- and medium-sized businesses cite red tape reduction as a priority, and this minister just turns his back on them and says, that's needless, that's unnecessary. Small-business owners would disagree.

In fact, the CFIB actually noted that this announcement is particularly troubling for Manitoba small businesses, 90 per cent of whom want the government to commit to red tape reduction. The absence

of regulatory accountability measures will undoubtedly exacerbate the burden of regulation, posing a significant concern for many entrepreneurs. I'm not quoting from private correspondence; that's from a CFIB news release.

I truly can't understand, and I'm just a little lost for words, Honourable Speaker, because it's such a step backwards and such a slap in the face to small-business owners who were seeing gains under the previous PC government, who were seeing movement in the right direction, red tape going down.

And the—how do we know it was going down? Because we were measuring it. You have to measure it. You have to count it. You can't know if you're improving if you don't measure your performance. And this minister's saying that performance measurement, that accountability, not a priority for our government. If that impacts you as small-business owners, too bad.

It's really troubling to me, Honourable Speaker, and that's why we'll be voting against moving this legislation to committee, and ultimately voting against this legislation.

Thank you.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'm happy to rise and just put a few words on record here at second reading for Bill 16.

I want to be clear that I am supporting this bill going to committee, but from what I have heard thus far from Manitobans, whether that be through email, conversations, debate here in the House, there is a severe lack of consultation on this bill.

And so I would like to hear from presenters at committee first-hand what their thoughts are on this bill, whether it should be moving forward, what the concerns are on this bill, and make a decision at that point on if we should be proceeding through third reading, Honourable Speaker.

My hope is that the minister did his diligence, and he did in fact do a lot of consultation, but there has been a lot of he-said, she-said back and forth, and I would like to hear directly from those who were apparently consulted.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other further members wishing to debate?

Seeing none, the question before the House is passage—second reading of Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act. All those in favour of the—

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I heard a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Speaker:** All those in the House in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** Oh, I think the Ayes have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Yes, I think we had it, but I guess we'll check with recorded vote, please.

**The Speaker:** A recorded vote has been called for. Please call in the members.

\* (16:20)

Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to Statutes and Regulations Act.

#### Division

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

#### Ayes

*Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lamoureux, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliw, Wiebe.*

#### Nays

*Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.*

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Ayes 33, Nays 20.

\* (16:40)

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed.

#### Bill 21—The Public Schools Amendment Act

**The Speaker:** We will now move on to second reading of Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Dauphin, that Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. *[interjection]* Sorry. I'll try that again.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

And Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

**MLA Naylor:** The Manitoba government prioritizes the educational success of all Manitoba students. The proposed amendments will support the enrolment of students in their local schools.

Bill 21 is proposing amendments to The Public Schools Act to address issues with the school board's enrolment obligations and to change the right to attend at school age and compulsory school age.

In Manitoba, every child has the right to attend their local public school based on their parent or legal guardian's residence. The Public Schools Act sets out this residency requirement, however, this requirement can contribute to enrolment challenges for families who have other living arrangements. Such living arrangements can include students who do not live with their parent or legal guardian, and who live with family friends or relatives where there has been no legal transfer of guardianship.

The current residency requirements can also create enrolment challenges for children whose parents are temporary residents in Canada under work or study permits and whose primary place of residence is Manitoba. Children, in these instances, also have the right to receive education in Manitoba and not be changed—charged tuition.

In response to these concerns and in discussion with sector stakeholders, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning is proposing amendments to the legislative framework to better support students. This bill was informed by discussions with the sector, reflecting on what was learned during those consultations.

Bill 21 will formalize divisional enrolment obligations around children of temporary residence to include a child who lives with a parent or guardian who is a member of a visiting force or holds a work or study permit, and a child who is a refugee or a child of a refugee. It will also expand the obligation for school boards to enrol students based on their residency when they're not living with their parents or legal guardians in the absence of transfer of legal guardianship.

Honourable Speaker, the proposed amendments align with the 2023 policy directive and action plan to enhance student presence and engagement that reflects the department's commitment to ensuring that all children can and are attending school.

This bill also proposes to change the compulsory school age from seven to six years old, and the right to attend from six to five years old. Changing the compulsory school age to six years old will better align Manitoba with other Canadian jurisdictions.

Honourable Speaker, addressing enrolment obligations will contribute to a more equitable and inclusive public education system. This bill ensures that more children will start school on time, will receive an education no matter where they live in Manitoba. School attendance is directly linked to student achievement, graduation rates, transition to post-secondary education, employment and social inclusion.

By delaying this bill, the opposition have delayed access to education for some Manitoba children. I hope today that we can agree that increased access to education, including school nutrition programs, has no downside, and we can agree unanimously to pass Bill 21 on second reading and send it to the committee stage.

Thank you.

## Questions

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

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** The minister will know that we were not, and are not, opposed to this bill in principle, but the reason for delaying the bill was that the Minister of Education could not provide any numbers as to how many students this would add to the public education system when he introduced the bill. So we held it over the summer to allow him to go away and do that work.

And so my question now is: How many students will the implementation of this bill add to the public school system, broken down by each school division?

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Well, I thank the member for that question. I'm sure he'll be disappointed to know that I cannot provide that number today, and—but I would like to suggest that, you know, some of this information will be better understood as children begin to enrol.

\* (16:50)

It might be very difficult to know the numbers on how many children aren't in school if they're not of compulsory age as it stands right now or their families haven't chosen to enrol them in school or they haven't thought that they were qualified to enrol in school.

But I will take that back to the department, and I'm certain that the Education Minister can follow up with that member.

**Mr. Jackson:** Well, I thank the minister for her honesty that she has no idea how many students this is going to add by school division.

So I'll broaden the question and ask: How many students will this change add to the public school system overall?

**MLA Naylor:** Well, Honourable Speaker, I think the member understands that I don't have that data in front of me. But it's safe to say that this will affect all the



children in the province that are currently not accessing school that need to.

**Mr. Jackson:** Again, I thank the minister for being honest with Manitobans that they have no idea how many students a bill that they've brought before the Legislative Assembly will add to the public school system.

After cancelling nine new schools and introducing hallway education to Manitoba, how many new schools does the minister of public services and procurement plan to build to house these students who will come into the public school system next school year?

**MLA Naylor:** I think the member's asking financial commitments for next year's budget, if I'm understanding correctly. But I know that we can count on this government to ensure that there are spaces for every student in this province that is ready to learn and whose families want to enrol them in school.

**Mr. Jackson:** I'm glad the minister put that on the record, but she can't even make that guarantee now with the standards as they are, because there are students learning in hallways all across this province. Over a thousand more students showed up in the Winnipeg School Division this year in that division alone than was projected.

So how many schools is she going to have open their doors by next fall when this bill will be in effect?

**MLA Naylor:** You know, we're here to debate Bill 21. There are some really critical elements to this bill. It's disappointing that the members opposite delayed this bill so that they could—I don't know what. They had some homework they wanted to do, something they wanted to understand about this bill. This final opportunity they're—before it gets voted on and goes to committee, they're not asking a single question about this bill.

I'm excited to answer questions on this bill when they come forward.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It's interesting that the minister puts on some false assertions on the record earlier on. But what is disappointing, Honourable Speaker, is the critic for Education asked these specific questions to the Minister of Education. So they had multiple months to actually come up with this answer, so the minister who is responsible for actually building schools can't answer a thing.

So one more question to the minister—give her another chance. Can you please answer the question as far as why they've increased the new term hallway education in Manitoba under the NDP government?

**MLA Naylor:** Well, I was here to present on Bill 21, which I hoped was kind of a non-partisan bill that we could all agree on. But what the members opposite are doing are pushing me to remind them that they cut school funding for seven and a half years, that they underbuilt and underspent in education, that they refused to feed children, that they promised nine schools that they didn't put in the budget, and they left our government with a \$2-billion deficit.

They can stop asking questions about what we're doing to fix their mistakes. It's very clear.

**Mr. Jackson:** I understand that the minister across the way is in a difficult position, and it's really unfortunate that the Minister for Education didn't inform her that these questions would be coming up, because this certainly wasn't a secret to him. I have been asking these questions for several months now. And so her team didn't ensure that she was prepared for this discussion. That's really unfortunate for Manitobans.

This is a non-partisan bill. We do want to see this proceed, but we want to make sure that the students who will be impacted by this have space in classrooms, not in hallways.

When is the minister going to get those classrooms built?

**MLA Naylor:** Well, this is a good opportunity to just remind folks of the purpose of this bill: to ensure that children are able to attend school in the division where they reside, where they're living with a legally responsible adult. It also clarifies that school division enrolment obligations for children of temporary residents.

It does many good things to support children's opportunity to attend school, to attend at an earlier age, to clarify residency requirements as well as to ensure that, you know, if children have to move homes during a school year that they can be guaranteed to stay at the same school that they were at.

It's a really important bill, and I'm not interested in being sidetracked.

**The Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, this is another good example of the dysfunction under the NDP government. I'm not actually blaming the minister for

procurement to not know these answers. It's unfortunate that her teammates are not helping her along these lines, communicating with. It's just unfortunate that there is a level of dysfunction that we're seeing witnessed here again.

The minister talks about good education and students attending and so that people know where they're attending so they don't have to move homes during the middle of the year. How many schools is she building? That's her department. She should have those answers.

Honourable Speaker, how many schools are you going to build and when are they going to be open to—  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

I'll remind the Leader of the Official Opposition to firstly direct his comments through the Chair, not directly at a member opposite, and I will also ask the Leader of the Official Opposition to please use the proper ministerial name and not make up a name.

**MLA Naylor:** Again, this is an opportunity to say, first of all, how delighted I am that I have the opportunity to stand here on behalf of the Education Minister today. It is good to be part of a unified team that works together on bills across our departments. It's good to be part of a team that wants to feed children. It's good to be part of a team that is passing legislation to make school more accessible to more Manitoba children.

**The Speaker:** If there are no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have one—a couple more questions for the minister.

You know, it's interesting, she talks about being a member of a dysfunctional team that couldn't get her the data to answer these questions properly despite being given months to do the homework and prepare the data. So that is what we're seeing here on display today, very little else.

So we've gotten clear answers from the minister that they have no idea, and the opposition has given them all the time we can to do their homework to ensure this is implemented properly. So Manitobans have their answer there.

I would ask the minister a couple other questions, the first of which is: What impact, if any, will this bill have on home-schooling options in the province?

**MLA Naylor:** I will just comment, regardless of whether this affects five students or 500 students, I hope that the opposition would not stand in the way of a bill that allows access to education for more students in this province.

\* (17:00)

The most—my understanding is the most significant impact on home-schooling families would be the compulsory age of education would start at six rather than seven. So families who are enrolling their children through home-schooling would need to make—do that kind of official process, starting at age six rather than age seven.

**Mr. Jackson:** I would hope that the minister has undertaken some consultations with Manitoba home-schooling families on that impact, but we'll see, I guess, when the bill moves forward to committee about their support or not for this bill.

A similar question about our fellow Manitobans who live in Hutterian brethren or Hutterite colonies: What impact will this have on their schools who are—that are not part of the public education system?

**MLA Naylor:** I will have to say that I'm going to have to ask to—the department to get back to the member to answer this question.

**Mr. Jackson:** I think the minister opposite, well, may agree or may not, depending on how briefed she is on the bill, understands that this is sort of a part of a process towards full-day kindergarten.

And so my question to the minister is: How—have they begun discussions with every school division about the implementation of full-day kindergarten in every public school across the province, and what have those discussions been?

**MLA Naylor:** Bill 21 is about children of the age of five having access to school and compulsory education starting at age six in Manitoba.

I am sure there is an incredible amount of work going on in the Department of Education. I know that the Education Minister is in—very hard at work engaging with school divisions, with—both within private and public school system and I may not be privy to all of that work that's happening but I trust that that information will be unfolded in due time.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I understand that the minister cannot provide us with the number of students to be expected moving forward with this legislation, but can she provide the House with

confirmation with some confidence that we in fact have the infrastructure, the physical spots available for the intake of the new students?

**MLA Naylor:** The infrastructure is in place to enrol the students in Manitoba who need to be in school.

### Debate

**The Speaker:** If there are no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

No one wishing to debate?

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** You know, this has been a fairly enlightening last 10 minutes here in the Legislative Assembly with respect to the contents of Bill 21, so I'd like to share a few observations.

We have a minister responsible for the construction of schools in this province who has admitted on the record that they have no idea what the impact of their own government's legislation will be on student populations less than 12 months from now. That is a pretty stark realization for someone who is responsible for ensuring that there is adequate space for students to learn. *[interjection]* And the MLA for Seine River loves to heckle—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

I would remind members that it doesn't really add to the debate if we're hollering across the way from our seats, so I'd ask the member to please not do that anymore.

**Mr. Jackson:** I know the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) just can't help herself, and we're frustrated too. We really are that her own government with a caucus full of educators cut nine new schools and hundreds of daycare spaces on day one in office. We're disappointed as well.

And it is critical to this Progressive Conservative caucus that that government starts to take some accountability and starts to build some schools in this province.

And so like our colleague from Steinbach mentioned earlier about the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), we hope that these members in the government backbench find some freedom to speak up at their caucus table and say to their front bench that they need to get some of these items done.

And so, Honourable Speaker, we are left to wonder what is going to happen at the beginning of September next year. We know they've got a majority. This is a

specified bill. It's going to pass, and it is going to be in effect for the beginning of the next school year.

And we have got hallway education—*[interjection]*—yes, they cheer now, with kids taking their classroom lessons in the hallway, in the library, in the shops classroom, in the music room. They're cheering. The educators over there are thrilled, I guess, about the fact that they're not building any new schools, that they're not building any new expansions to the schools that were proposed. They're very, very happy with their government's plan for education, which is having no plan to ensure that your students and your children have adequate classroom space to learn.

That's the record of this NDP. A year in office.

And so—*[interjection]*—oh, the member for Seine River wants to know how many schools we built in our seven years in government? We built 14 schools in seven years. That's how many. That's how many. She can drive around and count them up if she so chooses.

And so I would love to keep talking about our record about building schools, but they're in government now, Honourable Speaker, and they need to keep building schools. And they have failed miserably in that responsibility.

And so we are going to hold them accountable for hallway education in this province. We will hold them accountable, and we will wait to see in Budget 2025 whether they can address these mistakes or not. And so I look forward to some better collaboration and information sharing between the Education Minister and the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure, Consumer Protection and Government Services to make sure that she is building enough schools for all of the additional students that this bill is going to bring in to our public education system, Honourable Speaker.

It is important to make sure that they have the adequate space to learn. That's what our Progressive Conservative caucus believes, and that is what Manitobans expect this government to get done.

And with that, Honourable Speaker, we've made our points known on this. We understand that this government has failed to build schools for Manitoba. They are going to add further students to the public education system. We agree students deserve to have a high-quality public education, and they belong in our public school education system, but that government needs to make sure they've got the space to be

able to deliver education successfully, and they are failing miserably to do that right now.

We will see in Budget 2025 whether they can step up their game and get some schools built for all of Manitoba.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'm glad to be able to rise this afternoon and put a few words on record about Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

Honourable Speaker, it's been said here this afternoon that in theory, in principle, this piece of legislation is a very good piece of legislation. I think it's of utmost importance that any child, any student here in Manitoba, they have the right to education. And I believe that this bill, this piece of legislation, helps enable that.

And we want to encourage families, students, children, to pursue education from a very young age, and ensure that every single child in Manitoba is in fact accessing education. And I think that this legislation, again in theory, does assist with that.

The biggest concern of this legislation, Honourable Speaker, and it's been discussed here, and we talked about it during the bill consultation, we've asked about it here at second reading throughout the question portion of this debate and, unfortunately, we didn't receive very many answers.

How many students is this actually going to affect? How many students are going to be welcomed into our education system?

\* (17:10)

We already are hearing, Honourable Speaker, that we do not have the spots for students. And here we are. We're in Manitoba. We want to make the spots. We want to make sure education is available for every single student.

But we have a government who is currently cutting schools here in Manitoba. I know in the constituency that I represent, up until last year, there was going to be a brand new school, and then this government came in and they cut it.

We needed these spots, Honourable Speaker. We know that students are already packed. They're jam-

packed in classrooms. We know that portables are being built and brought on to different school grounds, because we do not have the school space.

It would provide us, as MLAs, a lot more confidence if this government would be able to either continue on the track of building more spots for students or at the very least provide us with what we should be expecting, because infrastructure is going to need to be built. I asked about this during the question portion just 10 minutes ago, Honourable Speaker, and the minister responded and said that there's infrastructure for enrolment. Well, that's the easy part.

Where is the infrastructure for students to come in, sit down at a desk, be able to learn from teachers, be able to socialize with classmates? Is the infrastructure put in place for this?

And it's hard to believe that it is in place when what we are hearing from Manitobans is that there aren't enough spots. There aren't enough educators. How are we going to make and create more spaces if we're already lacking and failing in these areas.

My hope is that at committee, a lot of these questions are going to be answered. My hope is that the minister responsible will be able to actually answer the questions and that we'll be able to move forward on this legislation, because, in theory, it is a very good piece of legislation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

All those in favour of the motion—

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** Agreed and so—

**An Honourable Member:** No, I said no.

**The Speaker:** No—I heard a no. I'm sorry.

**Voice Vote**

**The Speaker:** So all those in the House in favour of passing the motion, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** I think the Ayes have it again.

**Recorded Vote**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, please.

**The Speaker:** A recorded vote has been called. Call in the members.

The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

**Division**

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

**Ayes**

*Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lamoureux, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliv, Wiebe.*

**Nays**

*Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.*

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Ayes 33, Nays 20.

\* (17:20)

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The hour being past 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 3, 2024

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