

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 29, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
Second Report**

Mr. Dennis Smook (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building

- November 19, 2021 (4th Session – 42nd Legislature)
- June 22, 2022 (4th Session – 42nd Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Recommendation for the appointment of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth

Committee Membership

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020, and subsequently amended, Rule 82(2) was waived for the November 19, 2021, meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Committee Membership for the November 19, 2021, meeting:

- Ms. FONTAINE
- Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. MICKLEFIELD
- Mr. SMITH (Lagimodière)
- Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)
- Mr. TEITSMA

Your Committee elected Mr. SMITH (Lagimodière) as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. TEITSMA as the Vice-Chairperson.

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020, and subsequently amended, Rule 82(2) was waived for the June 22, 2022 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Committee Membership for the June 22, 2022 meeting:

- Mr. BRAR
- Mr. GUENTER
- Mr. MICHALESKI
- Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)
- Mr. SMOOK (Chairperson)
- Mr. WISHART

Your Committee elected Mr. MICHALESKI as the Vice-Chairperson.

Motions

Your Committee agreed to the following motion at the November 19, 2021 meeting:

- THAT a sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs be struck to manage the process of hiring a Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, under the terms and conditions as follows:

(a) the subcommittee consist of four Government Members, two Official Opposition Members and one Independent Member;

(b) the subcommittee have the authority to call their own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process;

(c) the subcommittee may only report back to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs with a recommendation that has been agreed to by all members; and

(d) the Committees Branch staff as well as the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services staff be authorize to attend all meetings of the subcommittee.

Your Committee agreed to the following motions at the June 22, 2022 meeting:

- THAT the report and recommendations of the Sub-Committee be received.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Sherry Gott be appointed as the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.

REPORT FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEE

Your Sub-Committee presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings:

Your Sub-Committee met on the following occasions:

- February 28, 2022, at 1:00 p.m.
- April 22, 2022, at 3:00 p.m.
- May 27, 2022, at 12:45 p.m.

The February 28, 2022 meeting was held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

The April 22, 2022 meeting was held in camera in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

The May 27, 2022 meeting was held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration:

- Hiring process for the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth

Sub-Committee Membership:

Sub-Committee Membership for the February 28, 2022 meeting:

- Hon. Ms. CLARKE
- Mr. LAGASSÉ
- Ms. LAMOUREUX
- Ms. LATHLIN
- Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WISHART

Your Sub-Committee elected Mr. WISHART as the Chairperson and Mr. TEITSMA as the Vice-Chairperson during the meeting on February 28, 2022.

Sub-Committee Membership for the April 22, 2022 meeting:

- Hon. Ms. CLARKE
- Mr. LAGASSÉ
- Ms. LAMOUREUX
- Ms. LATHLIN
- Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WISHART

Sub-Committee Membership for the May 27, 2022 meeting:

- Hon. Ms. CLARKE
- Ms. LAMOUREUX
- Ms. LATHLIN
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WISHART

Staff present for all Sub-Committee meetings:

- Carrie Perumal, Director of Legislative Assembly Human Resources Services
- Deanna Wilson, Executive Director of Legislative Assembly Administration and Finance
- Katerina Tefft, Clerk Assistant / Clerk of Committees

Agreements by the Sub-Committee:

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on February 28, 2022:

- The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will deal with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, which includes the Advertising Plan, Selection Criteria, Paper Screening Criteria, and Advertisement.
- The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will conduct the paper screening of applications received and report to the Sub-Committee with all qualified candidates for review.
- The Sub-Committee will then review the list of qualified candidates and determine which applicant(s) will be interviewed by the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services.

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on April 22, 2022:

- To interview the three candidates that met the essential qualifying criteria.
- That each Member of the Sub-Committee shall be entitled to observe the interviews while having participation in the scoring process.
- The Sub-Committee will review the interview rating results and, pending successful reference checks, determine the candidate to be recommended for the position of Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.
- To adopt the following Terms of Reference:

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Terms of Reference for Hiring of Independent
Officers of the Assembly
April 22, 2022

Purpose:

On November 19, 2021, the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs passed a motion to strike a Sub-Committee to manage the process of hiring a new Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth. The Sub-Committee, consisting of four Government Members, two Official Opposition Members and one Independent Liberal Member, has the authority to call its own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfill its responsibilities in the hiring process. The Sub-Committee must report back to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs with a recommendation that has been agreed to by all members.

The Sub-Committee will be assisted in their duties by the staff from the Committees Branch and the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services who are authorized to attend all meetings of the Sub-Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities:

1. The Sub-Committee assigns the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services to deal with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.
2. The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will:
 - (a) devise a hiring process which includes an advertising plan, a paper screening process, an interview process and a selection process;
 - (b) draft an advertisement, paper screening criteria and selection criteria;
 - (c) print the advertisement as set out in the advertising plan;
 - (d) conduct the paper screening of applications received;
 - (e) report to the Sub-Committee all qualified candidates for review and selection to interview;
 - (f) conduct interviews on candidates selected by the Sub-Committee;
 - (g) report to the Sub-Committee, the interview rating results on the candidates selected by the Sub-Committee; and

- (h) conduct reference checks on candidate(s) and report to the Sub-Committee any issues or concerns identified.
3. The Sub-Committee Members will individually have the ability to view the list of qualified candidates along with their background paperwork confidentially at the Legislative Assembly Human Resources Services Office prior to the Sub-Committee's review.
4. The Sub-Committee will review the list of qualified candidates and select which applicant(s) will be interviewed by the Legislative Assembly Human Resources Services.
5. Each Member of the Sub-Committee shall be entitled to observe the interviews while having participation in the scoring process.
6. The Sub-Committee will review the interview rating results and, pending successful reference checks, determine the candidate to be recommended for the position of Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.
7. The Sub-Committee must provide a report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that includes a recommendation for the next Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreement during the meeting on May 27, 2022:

- Pending successful reference checks, the Sub-Committee agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Sherry Gott be appointed as the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.
- In the event that the chosen candidate declines or the reference checks are unsuccessful, the Sub-Committee agreed to meet again to discuss further options.

Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services Activities:

As agreed to by the Sub-Committee on February 28, 2022, the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services was tasked with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.

On April 22, 2022, the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee a list of three qualified candidates for review and selection to be interviewed.

The Sub-Committee considered applications for the position of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth follows:

- *Forty-four applications were received for the position.*
- *One individual was interviewed for the position on May 16, 2022.*
- *One individual was interviewed for the position on May 17, 2022.*
- *One individual was interviewed for the position on May 18, 2022.*

On May 27, 2022, the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee the interview rating results of the three candidates.

Mr. Smook: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLE OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following reports for the Department of Justice: The Manitoba Justice 2021-2022 Annual Report; The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba 2021-2022 Annual Report; Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation 2021 Annual Report; the Independent Investigation Unit of Manitoba 2021-2022 Annual Report; Victim Services Complaints 2021-2022 Annual Report and the regulatory accountability report for the Manitoba Government Regulatory Accountability Secretariat for 2021-2022.

Madam Speaker: Further tablings?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2021-2022 annual reports for Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration and the Apprenticeship and Certification Board.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Research Manitoba Annual Report for the fiscal year '21-22.

I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Opportunities Fund Annual Report for the fiscal year ending March 31st, '22, and the Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade Annual Report for the fiscal year '21-22.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the following 2021-22 and 2022-23 annual reports are being tabled by the Department of Finance: 2021-22 Manitoba Financial Services Agency Annual Report; 2021-22 Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board 71st Annual Report; 2021-22 Manitoba Enabling Appropriations, Tax Credits and Public Debt Annual Report; 2021-22 Manitoba Finance Annual Report, pursuant to Section 63.4 of The Financial Administration Act relating to supplementary authority and guarantee authority as of March 31, 2022; and 2022-23 Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Health Annual Report for the fiscal year 2021-2022.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the following four reports for the Department of Families for the fiscal year '21-22: the annual report, the Social Services Appeal Board Annual Report, The Accessibility for Manitobans Act Annual Report, as well as Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy Annual Report.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand today and table the 2021-2022 annual report for Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to table the Seniors and Long-Term Care Annual Report '21-22.

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): I'm pleased to rise today to table the annual report for Natural Resources and Northern Development for the year ending March 31st, 2022.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): I am pleased to table the following 2021-22 annual reports: the 2021-22 Manitoba Labour and Consumer Protection and Government Services Annual Report; the 2021-22 Manitoba Public Service Commission Annual Report; the 2021-2022 Manitoba Employee Pensions and Other Costs Annual Report; the '21-22 Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission Annual Report; the 2021-2022 Manitoba Residential Tenancies Commission Annual Report; the 2021-2022 Manitoba Education, Research and

Learning Information Networks, MERLIN, Annual Report; the 2021-2022 Public Utilities Board Annual Report; and the 2021-2022 Public Guardian and Trustee of Manitoba Annual Report.

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the annual report on the Manitoba Arts Council for fiscal year '21-22.

I am pleased to table the annual report for the Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain for our fiscal year '21-22.

I am pleased to table the annual report for the Manitoba Film and Music for fiscal year '21-22.

I'm also pleased to table the annual report for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for fiscal year '21-22.

Keep going here. I am pleased to table the annual report for the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries for fiscal year '21-22.

And, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the annual report for Travel Manitoba for fiscal year '21-22.

And, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the annual report for Sport, Culture and Heritage for fiscal year '21-22.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'm pleased to table the reports for the Department of Municipal Relations and the Manitoba Water Services Board for '21-22.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I am pleased to table the 2021-2022 annual report for the Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): I am pleased to table the annual reports for Environment, Climate and Parks and Efficiency Manitoba and the Clean Environment Commission for '21-22.

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): I'm pleased to table the '21-22 annual report for Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, along with the report of the same year for the Department of Agriculture.

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I am pleased to table the 2021-2022 annual report for the Department of Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I am pleased to table the 2021-2022 annual report for the Department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable First Minister please proceed with her statement.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I rise in the House today to honour both Truth and Reconciliation Week, proclaimed earlier this week in Manitoba, and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Earlier this week, our government proclaimed Truth and Reconciliation Week in Manitoba, and I know my colleagues and I will be attending events across the province tomorrow to recognize the harmful legacy of residential schools.

* (13:40)

Both Truth and Reconciliation Week and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation recognize the harmful legacy of residential and day schools and the harm, including intergenerational trauma, caused to Indigenous peoples in our province and country.

As a government, we all play an important role in the reconciliation process for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people who have suffered the physical and emotional trauma of the residential school system and that legacy of 'intergenerational' trauma that exists today.

Our government has had meaningful dialogue regarding the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We're also talking with Indigenous leadership about what this day means for residential school survivors and how, as a government, we can properly honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

National Truth and Reconciliation Day brings us one step further in the healing process. It is a day for truth-telling, for learning and reflection about the trauma faced by Indigenous people and their families, and to build a bridge to a healthier relationship.

These truths are painful to hear. Together, through respect, engagement, understanding and action, our government is committed to the ongoing path of reconciliation.

By taking part in meaningful conversations and activities, we all honour the healing journey of survivors and commit to the ongoing process of reconciliation. The advancement of truth and reconciliation is important for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Manitoba.

Economic reconciliation must be a critical component of this, which is why our government has taken action on a number of initiatives including: Arctic Gateway project, Norway House forestry agreement, Gambler First Nation and PADCOM first potash mine in Manitoba history, returning Northern Airports and Marine Operations, to name just a few, Madam Speaker.

This year, the Legislative Building is honouring this day by flying the Survivors' Flag in Memorial Park, projecting the Every Child Matters gobo, lighting Memorial Park fountains in orange and flying the main flags at half mast.

And tomorrow, I will be attending the Wa-Say Healing Centre pipe ceremony and survivors walk to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples on this sombre day.

I hope every Manitoba—every Manitoban takes the time tomorrow and this week to learn about residential schools and the impact that they had on Indigenous peoples.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to offer you a trigger warning, Madam Speaker. I'm going to speak about Indian residential schools.

In the Anishinaabe language the word *ode* means heart. The word for family in our language is *ningoodode*. You do not need to be a fluent speaker of Anishinaabemowin to understand that our families, from our traditional perspective, are our hearts.

As we reflect on the terrible legacy of residential schools, we reflect that, for the children taken away, for those who never came home, and for the parents and families left behind, they truly had their hearts taken away from them. And that is why we wear the orange shirt. That is what Orange Shirt Day represents.

Every Indigenous member in this Chamber has been directly affected by residential schools, this much we understand. But I also want to say that you have also been affected by residential schools because for the last 150 years you've lived in a country where Indigenous children were not permitted to reach their full potential, and we are all poorer for it.

I have a question for the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) today, even though it is not question period. I wonder why the Premier wears an orange shirt. Specifically, I want to know why the Premier wore an orange shirt when she voted against making Orange Shirt Day a provincial statutory holiday earlier today.

I say this without malice, aggression, or even partisanship. I ask why the Premier wore an orange shirt today. Presumably, the Premier has some desire to honour residential school survivors, and that's why she chose to—wore an orange shirt.

But I would like to remind the Premier, and everyone in the Chamber and across our province, that the residential school survivors of this land stood, for generations, for justice. And when finally this great nation afforded them that time in the sun, they said, we want an opportunity to share our stories. That was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC said that there should be a statutory holiday in honour of the survivors. The TRC also said that one of the mistakes we've made over the past is having an assumption of cultural superiority towards Indigenous people.

To hear survivors say that there should be a stat holiday, to hear business leaders, employers, labour, community folks saying there should be a stat holiday, and to ignore that consensus, to me seems to be an echo of that attitude of a government that thinks they know best. Put simply, this is a mistake.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to continue with the ministerial statement? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Kinew: I am reminded of a time some years ago when many of us in the community were fighting to have an extra year tacked onto the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission so that they could complete their important work in service of this country.

As we rallied at the Oodena circle—there's that word, *ode* [*heart*], once again—an auntie from the community that many of us know, Shahina Siddiqui,

came forward and spoke very powerfully. She said while governments may not see, the Creator sees. And so with great patience, I know residential school survivors will continue to push for a statutory holiday in their honour so that we may all properly commemorate and observe this time and their experience.

So tomorrow, along with many colleagues from all sides of the aisle, we will participate in Orange Shirt Day events. I will be thinking of many of my relatives, one of whom had the great honour of attending the papal mass, the Pope's visit, earlier this year.

This cousin of mine reflected that on the way home, her brother told her that he loved her for the first time in their lives. Politics aside, issues of the day aside, there'll be many moments like that shared on September 30th. And so I would ask for a moment of silence in honour of the residential school survivors and in memoriam of the children who never came home.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I seek leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: In 1922, 100 years ago this year, Dr. Peter Bryce self-published a book called a national crime, about how the federal government wasn't protecting First Nations children from tuberculosis at residential schools. He wrote at the time that it appeared they'd been designed to infect children. That's because his first report, from 1907, didn't result in any changes.

So imagine a school where new students died at a rate of 69 per cent in a single year. Imagine a school where people took it so for granted that children would die, they designed new schools with graveyards next to them, where they were forced to do unpaid labour to pay for their own schooling. That's what Bryce called a crime, and it happened right here in Manitoba at the Brandon residential school, to name just one.

As a country, and as a province, we are only beginning to start to start to come to grips with residential schools and the '60s scoop. We are nowhere near coming to grips with the fact that Canadian governments, especially provincial governments, never stopped tearing Indigenous families apart, and more children are affected now than ever. The national crime has never stopped.

* (13:50)

On Wednesday, May 18th, 2022, the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench delivered a critically important ruling that between 2006 and 2019, the Manitoba government violated the constitutional rights of First Nations children who'd been taken from their families.

The way they violated those rights should be a national scandal, and the fact that it's not getting the attention it deserves is the—denying justice to those Indigenous people, especially children.

Federally run residential schools started to give way to provincial Child and Family Services in the 1950s—about 70 years ago—and many, including Senator Murray Sinclair and Cindy Blackstock, have said that Child and Family Services are today's residential schools. Yet this is not reflected in our debates.

In addition to the intergenerational trauma from the harms of the past, there is new trauma, fresh trauma, happening every day, and the reason the first five of 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are about children in care in the present day.

What has happened in Manitoba to Indigenous children in CFS should be a national and international scandal. Birth alerts are a euphemism for taking a newborn baby from its mother, and at one point, on average, the Province of Manitoba was seizing an Indigenous newborn baby a day, every day, for years on end.

One of the most common calls—reasons for calls to the Winnipeg police is that a child in the custody of CFS is fleeing. There are hundreds of calls a month, and we know that every year hundreds of youth in Manitoba are sexually exploited and many are in the custody of CFS.

We have to shine a light on this because the silence around this issue is horrific. It means the thousands and thousands of Indigenous children in Manitoba and many thousands more across Canada cannot get the justice they deserve because the truth of this horror is still being swept under the rug.

The issue of children in care and making amends for this crime is the most important moral and political issue facing our province and our country. We must act together to address it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Please stand.

A moment of silence was observed.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister for Mental Health and Community Wellness—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

National Recovery Month

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): There is a lot of hurt in this world. There is also much hope. Today I rise to acknowledge that September is National Recovery Month, and I was happy to proclaim September 10th as Recovery Day right here in Manitoba.

National Recovery Month is an opportunity to highlight the success stories of people who have struggled with addictions to reduce the stigma associated with substance dependence and to give hope to others on their recovery journey.

I was pleased to attend Recovery Day at The Forks on September 10th and to hear the stories of individuals who have been impacted by substance use and addictions challenges, as well as the hope that drives them forward with recovery. I spent some time at this event learning about the community supports available to individuals seeking healing and health.

With our government's five-year road map under way, the focus is on the role and importance of mental health and wellness in the success of communities across our great province. I'm pleased that we have made significant progress towards achieving our vision that Manitobans experience physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual well-being across their lifespan.

Our government is committed to supporting people struggling with substance dependence through a continuum of services and supports that utilize a range of approaches to encourage individual recovery.

I would like to thank all of the organizations that assisted in the Recovery Day event earlier this month. To all of the mental health and addiction service providers throughout the province, I thank you sincerely for your dedication and the invaluable role that you play in Manitoba's health-care system.

Thank you, as well, to all of the guests who have joined me in the gallery today: from St. Boniface Street Links, executive director Marion Willis and Mario Chaput; from Tamarack Recovery, we have Lisa Cowan joining us; from Sara Riel, Tara Snider; and from St. Raphael Wellness Centre, Karen Burwash and Colleen Allan; and from Bruce Oake centre, we have Rodell Bautista; from Two Ten Recovery, we have Maureen Jones and Ian Rabb.

And finally, Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge those on their recovery journeys who will provide hope to those who are still struggling today. Your courage and your resilience is commendable.

I want to encourage every member of this House to also take some time this month to think of the families who are struggling today, to those who have lost their loved ones to mental health and addictions issues. And I really encourage everyone today to thank the members who have joined us and all who work towards recovery.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I just want to welcome our guests into the Chamber here, and thank you for all of your work that you do.

It's national recovery awareness month, and it's the duty of our Legislature to recognize and support Canadians recovering from addictions, as well as celebrate those who are on a difficult journey towards recovery. This month we recognize the challenges that those seeking recovery face, and acknowledge that there is more that we can do to assist them in overcoming addiction.

Addiction is a lifelong struggle and we must ensure that the supports are there when needed; 407 Manitobans died last year due to an overdose and 107 have already died this year. We're on track to surpass that 107 from last year. Forty-seven babies were born with congenital syphilis in this province. There has been a three-fold increase in the number of needles distributed in Winnipeg and 400 per cent in Brandon.

The pain and consequences of untreated addiction is all around us. That's why it has been so disappointing to see that this government's—their inadequate response has led to people losing their lives in this province.

This government froze funding to Addictions Manitoba during the pandemic and closed down

Manitoba's only long-term treatment centre for teens battling with addictions. They oppose safe consumption sites that have proven to save lives. Overdose deaths have surged 44 per cent according—compared to last year's terrible toll.

As this month is intended to spread awareness, reduce the stigma and strengthen community support, we must acknowledge that blaming individuals, defunding organizations and institutes, that is not the right approach. We must ensure that the supports are there to keep Manitobans safe and alive.

As I have said before, if Manitobans hope to even begin grappling with this crisis, a large intervention is needed. Manitobans must make—or Manitoba must make real investments in addictions services so Manitobans can get the supports that they need so that they can move on to recovery as soon as possible.

Safe consumption sites, barrier-free health care, more detox beds, treatment beds and wraparound services that include second stage housing and all necessary services the government must commit to supporting. As our commitment—or as our communities are in dire need, now, is not—it is not enough for the PC government to recognize this day. People are losing their lives and tangible actions need to be taken by this government today.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about the importance of talking and action during National Recovery Month to address issues of addiction and associated mental health issues, and to facilitate the recovery of individuals from addictions and substance abuse.

* (14:00)

As Manitoba Liberals, we are very concerned with the long-standing underfunding of mental health and addictions. This underfunding occurred under the NDP, and it is still occurring today under the PCs.

We are also very concerned about the fact that there is much that needs to be improved in addictions treatment. Many people are not able to get immediate access to addictions treatment when they need it. There are often long waits at RAAM clinics. There are, for those who do get access to RAAM clinics, too often a lack of immediate access to Suboxone

treatment where the individual cannot afford it or where it is not covered by insurance.

I have raised this issue a number of times—in letters, in press releases, in the Legislature, in Estimates, in question period—but so far there hasn't been sufficient action.

The government needs to cover the first few months of Suboxone treatment, as happens, for example, in Alberta.

When the government supports long-term recovery, there needs to be a move beyond support for just 21 or 28 days, the historic approach. This approach has been discredited, and organizations like Morberg House and Two Ten Recovery are able to achieve much higher rates of sustained recovery with longer periods of support.

We need to have adequate tracking of success and/or lack of it so we can improve the approach we use in Manitoba. We need to address accompanying mental health issues simultaneously with the addictions.

I want to say thanks to all those who are here today. We really appreciate your efforts and your support and the fact that you're here, and thank you for what you do to help people all over our province.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Rail Safety Awareness Week

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good afternoon. Today I will not be highlighting a Dawson Trail hero. Instead, I would like to talk about rail safety.

In May of 2018, my private member's bill, Rail Safety Awareness Week, was passed. Rail Safety Awareness Week falls on the third week in September. This year it ran from September 19th to the 25th.

It is still with a heavy heart that I remind everyone the importance of this bill and the significance of always remaining alert and cautious around railways and trains.

Unfortunately, rail safety week was born from tragedy. In the memory of Kharma Brown, I will continue to speak and raise awareness about rail safety in Manitoba. Kharma, at the age of 11, was struck by a train when crossing a foot path on her bike in 2017 in Ste. Anne, Manitoba.

Every year, there are hundreds of lives taken and thousands injured at railway crossing and trespassing 'incidents.' There are devastating consequences when not paying attention to rail safety signs and devices as well as trespassing on railway tracks.

Today I would like to remind Manitobans to continue to help raise awareness and educate one another on the danger of railways—railroads, trains and train tracks. Always remain vigilant, avoid distractions, stay off the tracks and railway property, know and obey railway signals and signs, and always leave a vehicle if ever stuck on a railway track.

I encourage all Manitobans to keep this in mind not just for the one week in September but throughout the year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Bill Blaikie and Kenneth Henry

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, today I arise to pay tribute to two Transcona residents that passed away this last weekend, Bill Blaikie and Kenneth Henry.

Bill Blaikie was our MP beginning in 1979 right up until 2008.

I first met Bill during the 1979 campaign when he visited our grade 11 history class at Transcona Collegiate to talk to us about being a candidate in the federal election, why he was running and how he was going to represent our little part of Treaty 1 territory. Interestingly, I've known Bill's wife Brenda longer, for I delivered the newspaper to her family, the Bihuns, in the mid-'70s on Ravelston Avenue West.

Our paths often crossed throughout the '80s and '90s as we got to know each other, mostly through election campaigns and when I became friends with his constituency assistant, Sharon McLaughlin.

Bill was also an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada and a long-time member of Transcona Memorial United Church. In his capacity as an ordained minister, he would often officiate at weddings, with the member from Concordia and his wife being one of the many couples married.

While there are many traits to admire about Bill, the one that sticks out the most for—to me and—was his connection to people of northeast Winnipeg. Bill was one of us, hard-working, without pretension, approachable and sociable, with a strong desire to make people feel valued and welcome. For me and many constituents, this is what defined Bill.

Bill left us on a Saturday, and shortly after, early Sunday morning, long-time Transcona resident Kenneth Henry also passed away. Kenneth was married to my sister Teresa for 34 years; they are parents of my niece Sarah and my nephew Thomas.

Kenneth was a details person who was generous with his time and always ensured that every job he was associated with was completed with a high level of competency.

Both Bill and Kenneth left us too soon, both as a result of the effects of cancer. However, I can safely say that many of us are better for have known these individuals and that their legacies will live on in the many lives they influenced.

Rest easy, my friends, and know that we will continue to pursue with integrity and passion, the important work you both embodied throughout your lifetimes.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I've known Abigail Stewart for a long time. When she was just four years old she was diagnosed with multisystem LCH, a rare form of cancer. She had many skin biopsies, bone biopsies, extra surgeries, MRIs, many blood tests. She had two tumours: one in her skull and one by her eye. She underwent a year of chemotherapy and high doses of steroids.

Abigail has always been a strong advocate for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. She even appeared before the Manitoba legislative committee considering bill 209 at just 10 years old, and some of you here might remember her bright smile, her brave heart and her bold plans for her future.

Yes, September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month here in Manitoba. That's something that Abigail is very grateful for, and that's something that we should thank the hard-working MLA for Lac du Bonnet for. After all, it was he who brought forward the legislation.

And last but certainly not least, I think we can say thank you to all the persistent parents and childhood cancer patients and all their friends who made it very clear in the Legislative gallery, on Facebook, on the lawn at Memorial Park, and pretty much everywhere else, to the members of the opposition and the public that this bill really needed to be passed and that September really needed to be recognized as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

In 2018, Abigail became the Children's Hospital's Champion child, expanding her influence and impact and raising more awareness for childhood cancer research and for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Abigail is now a beautiful and confident teenager. She doesn't live in Manitoba anymore, unfortunately, but I do keep in touch. She continues to raise funds for childhood cancer and to promote Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and each and every one of us should do the same. Let's get out there and get 'er done.

Government Record in Northern Manitoba

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): As the MLA for the Flin Flon constituency, I am seeing terrible outcomes, poorly communicated by this government about issues that have been created by this government for northern Manitobans.

In July, Mathias Colomb Cree Nation was evacuated due to a wildfire. I am so glad that everyone got out safe. I only learned about this from Facebook just after I'd met several ministers who had promised to keep me informed with what was going on.

This lack of communication is not just with MLAs. All of Lynn Lake hospital in-patients were transferred to Flin Flon. This transfer would have been stressful enough, but families were not told in advance that the patients would be moved away. There's been no information about how long the transfer would last or what would be in place to help families visit their loved ones eight hours away.

These are incredibly difficult situations. It's reprehensible to add to the stress of the poor communication.

The government fails to listen as these issues could have been avoided. The Northern Health Region and I have both raised concerns about nurse vacancies in Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake. Even the Northern Health Region authority has stated the shortages are leaving the system very fragile. Despite these clear warnings, the Province refused to act, and Leaf Rapids ER was closed, people having to travel now over 100 kilometres away to Lynn Lake where in-patient services are suspended.

* (14:10)

Snow Lake has now had their hospital reduced to an emergency room only and there is little more than an ER left in Flin Flon.

People in my constituency are experiencing a lack of available ambulance services. People with serious medical conditions are being forced to transport themselves to another community to get medical care. This is unacceptable.

The government needs to listen to northern Manitoba about issues that they are facing and act swiftly to address those issues.

Thank you.

Truth and Reconciliation

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Today, I attended an assembly at Collège Louis Riel in my constituency of St. Boniface, where Janelle Delorme, who's Métis, told the story of a residential school, the industrial school, that was in St. Boniface, just a couple of blocks away.

Janelle had been doing family history and was trying trace the whereabouts of her great-grandfather, who was from the community of St. Laurent, a Métis community of such significance that it has been recognized at the Smithsonian. But he had disappeared from the records, only to turn up in the record of the St. Boniface Industrial School, where over 70 children died of tuberculosis and other diseases before it was closed in 1905. Though her great-grandfather survived, he later died of tuberculosis.

I have met and discussed the school with Phil Fontaine and Monseigneur Albert LeGatt. In fact, many of Phil Fontaine's ancestors, sadly, attended the school, and some did not survive.

The assembly was a very moving event and all the students went outside to commemorate the loss of the children who died at the St. Boniface Industrial School.

I first heard of residential schools in 1990, when I saw Tomson Highway speak at a student conference. He talked about the abuse that had been uncovered in other provinces, at the Mount Cashel home in Newfoundland, and said that similar stories were about to emerge from residential schools.

One of those stories was Phil Fontaine's, and he showed tremendous courage in coming forward and sharing his tales of abuse and in his efforts to work towards justice for so many decades on the part of so many who'd been hurt.

On a personal note, I had a unique perspective because, growing up, I had an aunt who lived with my family, who went to law school in the mid-1970s with

a number of First Nations pathbreakers, including Ovide Mercredi. She also graduated with Marion Ironquill Meadmore, who was the first First Nations woman to—called to the bar in Canada, and together they started the first all-woman law firm in Manitoba.

I remember my aunt coming home after working on CFS cases in 1970 and the '80s, and her shock and outrage that a person, a child, could lose all their freedom and be taken all their—from their family just on the word of government workers.

Justice delayed is justice denied, and it is past due time to match action to words and make things right when it comes to reconciliation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have some guests in my gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

I would like to draw attention of members to the Speaker's Gallery, where the six individuals who are serving on the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the 2022-2023 year are seated.

In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 10 months. They will be performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced their assignment September 12th, 2022, and will complete them in June.

They are, working with the government caucus, Ms. Bea Basaran, of the University of Winnipeg; Ms. Tayla Gudnason, of Brandon University; Ms. Alina Hart, of the University of Winnipeg; and working with the caucus of the official opposition we have Ms. Cheta Akaluka, of the University of Winnipeg; Ms. Hannah Drudge, of the Canadian Mennonite University; and Mr. Dane Monkman, of the University of Manitoba.

Professor Kelly Saunders of Brandon University is the academic director for the program, and the administration of the program on a day-to-day basis is carried out by our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk. The caucus representatives on the Internship Administration Committee are the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) and the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program and hope that they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly, and I'm sure all members agree with that sentiment.

Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Rates Request Not to Raise

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I'd also like to welcome the interns to the Legislative Assembly. I hope that you learn a lot this year and that it's a meaningful contribution to your careers.

The PC's plan for Hydro is simple: they want to raise rates on Manitoba families by 5 per cent. In fact, they plan to pass a bill to do exactly that later this afternoon.

We also learned today that Hydro stands to profit some \$500 million this year. But the PCs and the Premier don't appear intent on changing their plans; they're sticking to Brian Pallister's plan to hike hydro rates at the Cabinet table. That means hydro rates will get more expensive, not more affordable. That's wrong.

Will the Premier abandon Bill 36 and stop raising hydro rates?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to mislead Manitobans when it comes to Bill 36 that is before the Legislature. What Bill 36 does—the facts—is that the bill protects ratepayers and it protects Manitoba Hydro, particularly from an NDP government that likes to run rampant with projects and cost overruns that causes significant challenges for our Crown corporation.

That is—those are the facts around Bill 36, Madam Speaker. It protects ratepayers, and it protects Manitoba Hydro from the NDP.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the simple fact is that the hydro rates of the average Manitoba family are going up. And now today, later this afternoon, this government is going to pass Bill 36, which will raise those hydro bills by another 5 per cent.

Now, they're doing this at the same time that Hydro workers have been—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —forced to strike because of the disrespect shown to them by the successive Pallister and Stefanson governments. They're doing this at the same time that the CEO of Hydro is getting a Christmas bonus.

Now, on this side of the House, we say that that's just wrong. And, of course, these members line up—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to demand further 5 per cent increases on the good hard-working people of—Manitobans. All this will happen while Hydro profits are at record levels.

Will the Premier simply stop with Brian Pallister's plans to raise the hydro rates of Manitoba families?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition had actually read Bill 36—and I hope he does before he votes later on this afternoon. There's still time to do the right thing, to vote in favour of this bill because this bill protects ratepayers and it protects Manitoba Hydro.

It also, Madam Speaker, gives more power to the Public Utilities Board within this bill. The Public Utilities Board decides the rates of Manitoba Hydro, not the government. The Leader of the Opposition continues to fear monger. I suggest that he pick up the bill and actually read it, and then maybe he'll know and understand that it's actually good for the citizens of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, there the Premier goes, saying that a 5 per cent rate increase is good for Manitobans. We disagree on this side of the House. We don't think there should be further rate increases on families in Manitoba.

Now, there's \$500 million more for Hydro this year, in terms of net income. What's the response of this Cabinet? To give Manitobans a break? No, they plan to raise hydro rates by 5 per cent. That's wrong. It will only make life more expensive for the average family.

Bill 36 is a bad bill. It was bad when Brian Pallister brought it forward as bill 35. It's bad when this government brings it forward as Bill 36.

Will the Premier stop these plans to raise hydro rates this year?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite actually read the bill because it does protect ratepayers, particularly in the inflationary times that we're in right now, Madam Speaker.

So, if the Leader of the Opposition is going to vote against this, what he is actually voting for is a significantly higher increase to ratepayers in the province of Manitoba—for Manitoba Hydro ratepayers, Madam Speaker.

* (14:20)

Those are the facts. I know the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) doesn't like the facts. She continues to get up in this House and fear monger and put infactual information on the record, Madam Speaker.

We will continue to work to ensure that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —life is more affordable for all Manitobans. That's why we will all be—on this side of the House—supporting Bill 36 this afternoon.

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

Health-Care System Service Reduction Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, there's a crisis in health care in our province.

Some of the sickest patients in Manitoba are waiting for 170 hours in hallways in our emergency rooms. Front-line workers are speaking up. They say health care has, and I quote, crossed over into collapse. End quote.

At the same time, the Premier speaks to wealthy PC donors and tells them that her government has never cut health care. Ask any patient waiting for care or any nurse on the front lines whether there have been government cuts under the PCs, and they will tell you different.

Manitobans want to know why the Premier is still pushing ahead with Brian Pallister's agenda for cuts to health care.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, once again the Leader of the Opposition likes to fear monger Manitobans.

The facts of the matter are that we're spending almost \$1 billion—investing almost \$1 billion more in health care than when they were ever in government, Madam Speaker. And so that's more, not less. And so, again, he continues to fear monger and put infactual information on the record.

The fact of the matter is we accept the fact that there are challenges within our health-care system. There is nothing—this is nothing that is unique to Manitoba. These are challenges right across the country, when it comes to shortages of health-care workers. We are working and I'm working with my counterparts across the country and the federal government to ensure that we take this on as a challenge and we find solutions to these challenges, Madam Speaker.

We will continue to work with those in the health-care field to ensure that we get the services that people need when they need it.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, every Manitoban knows about the clinics that the PCs have cut in St. Boniface, on Corydon and the QuickCare clinics in South St. Vital and other parts of the city. Every Manitoban knows about the CancerCare community clinics that this government cut. Every Manitoban knows about the emergency rooms that this government cut. Every Manitoban knows about the physiotherapy outpatient services that this government cut.

Will the Premier simply acknowledge that her government has cut health care?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, what I will acknowledge, Madam Speaker, is the facts. And we will put the facts on the record for Manitobans so that they know what is actually happening in the province of Manitoba.

In fact, we are expanding hours in walk-in clinics to better meet the needs of patients. We are increasing wages for nurses to better support recruitment and retention and to recognize the incredible work that they do. And also, Madam Speaker, we've begun construction to triple the size of the St. Boniface

Hospital emergency room: an investment of \$141 million in St. Boniface.

That's what we're doing for health care in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—*[interjection]* Order, please.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we heard it from the Premier yesterday in the first question period of this fall sitting: the PCs' only plan for health care is more cuts and, in her words, quote, contracting out. End quote.

More private health care is not what Manitobans need or what Manitobans want. They want more nurses and doctors on the front lines. They want more home-care aides working in our communities. They want a government that is going to invest in our public health-care system, because public, universal health care is a fundamental Canadian value. They're not getting that from the PC government.

Will the Premier apologize to the front-line workers on the health-care system for her plan to contract out their jobs?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition likes to refer to a plan. Well I ask, where is his plan for the future of health care in our province? He has no plan.

Now, I know he has been busy off at book signings this summer. Busy off doing things, and doing everything but listening to Manitobans, Madam Speaker, but I—what I can tell you is that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —we have been listening to Manitobans. My colleagues and I have been all over this great province of ours, listening to Manitobans. We have been taking action and we have been getting things done, unlike members opposite.

We will continue to do everything we can for the people of Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro Rates Request to Withdraw Bill 36

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Manitobans are struggling with the high costs of living right now. Essentials like gas and groceries have gone up a lot

and, if the PC government has their way, so will Manitobans' hydro bills.

Bill 36 guarantees that Manitobans will pay much more for hydro, and it takes away independent oversight over hydro rate setting and hands rate-setting power to this PC Cabinet.

Will the government do the right thing and withdraw Bill 36 today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Madam Speaker, when that member gets up to ask that question, no wonder the Winnipeg Free Press said about him that the Hydro claims by NDP are not plugged into truth.

Madam Speaker, I can't understand it for the member, but I can try to explain it to the member. This is the explanatory note of Bill 36: The general rate increase for a fiscal year cannot exceed 5 per cent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. I table.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, Manitobans are already struggling to get by, and Bill 36 will only makes things worse.

It guarantees big hydro rate increases and removes the Public Utilities Board from the rate-setting process. The PUB currently sets rates through an independent—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala:—process, which is informed by experts, and their very purpose is to ensure we don't overpay for our utilities in Manitoba. And this is precisely why the PCs want to do away with their role. They are currently the only thing standing between this government and the big rate hikes they're seeking to impose upon Manitobans.

Will the minister back away from his plan to legislate big hydro rate increases, and will he withdraw Bill 36 today?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, political spin is one thing. Deliberately misleading Manitobans for the purpose of invoking fear to drive opposition to measures designed—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen:—to create affordability for Manitobans crosses a line. The NDP has crossed a line.

No wonder the Free Press said about them, they either haven't read the legislation, they can't tell the difference between up or down or they're pulling your leg. And, Madam Speaker, I think Manitobans have figured out already, the NDP is pulling their leg.

Madam Speaker: I would point out to the member that using the words deliberately misleading is not allowed in the House. So, a reminder to all members that those—that language is—together—is not allowed.

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

Mr. Sala: We want to see lower hydro bills for families struggling to get by, not more increases. But it's clear that, rather than respect the independent rate-setting process, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her Cabinet want to set rates themselves without input from experts. That's why Bill 36 is so wrong. *[interjection]*

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: But it's not too late, Madam Speaker. The minister could still withdraw Bill 36.

Will he do so today?

Mr. Friesen: The Minister of Education must be terribly disappointed today because he's done so much in the school system to promote the idea of reading for comprehension.

Madam Speaker, the member says he wants lower hydro rates, not further increases, so he doesn't want the 5 per cent increases that the NDP brought in 2005, in 2007, in 2013, in 2009. This is a bill that is designed to keep the increases low.

If the member wants lower hydro rates, will he today agree to support Bill 36?

Health-Care Consolidation Impact on Nurse Vacancy Rate

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, Brian Pallister and the PCs ran health care into the ground and it has only gotten worse. Before the pandemic—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara:—they cut 18 ICU beds, 56 inpatient surgical beds and 127 hospital beds, and they fired hundreds of nurses. There are 2,400 vacant nursing positions in the province right now. The

minister has said she's finally now going to meet with nurses.

So, I ask: Will she start that meeting with an apology for the cuts she and her government have made to health care?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I know that, when the member opposite rises in this House and talks about a meeting that I'll be having with front-line nurses, that I'm doing the right thing. So, thank you for bringing that to the Chamber floor.

I look forward to meeting with those front-line nurses who've been emailing me, calling my office with—sharing ideas and innovative solutions, but more so, sharing the dark days of the NDP and asking that our government make changes to correct their wrongdoings, Madam Speaker.

I look forward to today's discussion and the discussions to come, and I would encourage members opposite to listen to front-line health-care workers. That is where the solutions are, not in their caucus.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, I'm glad the minister is acknowledging that she did receive the emails and phone calls and letters those health-care workers wrote. It's unfortunate that she chose to ignore them and that their caucus ignored those emails for years.

You know, it's the same health professionals at HSC and St. Boniface who are reaching out to that caucus that are bearing the brunt of Brian Pallister's cuts. This government was warned by them that their consolidation plan would overwhelm HSC and St. Boniface, and that's exactly what's happening today. These hospitals have the longest waits on record, with health professionals being pushed past the breaking point. There's a 30 per cent vacancy rate at HSC emergency room.

When the minister meets with them, will she start with an apology and a commitment to fill those vacant positions immediately?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to share with Manitobans that, this summer, our government announced \$482,000 to increase respiratory therapy program seats at the University of Manitoba, an increase of 20 per cent.

Madam Speaker, \$50 million for the Health Sciences Centre operation of excellence to increase surgical and diagnostic capacity by 25 per cent.

And this summer, I was pleased to be joined by six-year-old Jack, diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, to announce TRIKAFTA would be added to the provincial formulary so that six-year-olds and up can access this life transformative drug.

Madam Speaker, our government has been busy this summer meeting the needs of Manitobans.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, Brian Pallister and the PCs disrespected our health-care workers for years, and this minister knows that. They froze wages for five years. They accused health professionals of trying to cause chaos—that's a direct quote from a former minister of Health—when they were simply advocating for their patients. And they left thousands of health-care positions unfilled.

I ask again: When the minister meets with the nurses today, will she apologize and commit to reversing the cuts her government has made in health care in Manitoba?

Ms. Gordon: I urge the members opposite to listen to front-line workers because they will be apologizing to those workers.

Just today, Madam Speaker, I heard from a sonographer who works at St. Boniface Hospital, once again sharing the dark days of the NDP when none of them listened. And that's going to continue.

Madam Speaker, adding 400 new nurse training seats; 30 new nurse training seats at Red River College Polytechnic.

Madam Speaker, we are going to continue to listen to front-line workers and meet their needs in this very difficult time.

Seniors Advocate Request to Establish

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, seniors are bearing the brunt of this government's cuts to health care. Seniors are being treated in hallways due to a lack of beds in hospitals, beds that this government cut year after year.

This is no way for seniors to be treated, and it's clear that now is the time to establish a seniors

advocate and to improve and transform the systems that care for our seniors.

Will the minister commit today to the establishment of a seniors advocate?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): As we have indicated in the past, our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has certainly had the foresight to establish a Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care, which focuses—focuses—on the needs of seniors in Manitoba.

And, Madam Speaker, the initiatives that this department has taken and will be taking in the future, which we look forward to sharing with our opposition members—matter of fact, we really look forward to sharing it with our opposition members. We continue to invest in seniors. The seniors strategy, which is well under way right now and—is beginning to—certainly will establish results, and we look forward to bringing them forward.

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

MLA Marcelino: I was really having a hard time understanding the comments from the minister. Something about a department, something about a strategy.

But we're asking about a seniors advocate for today. We're wondering if the department has come up with that advocacy as well.

So, this pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the seniors in our province, and the Stefanson government's actions have only made things worse. Much more should be done to protect the seniors in our province. The tragic loss of life at private personal-care homes during the pandemic has made this clear, and establishing a seniors advocate would help ensure that action is taken to protect seniors.

Will the minister support the call for a seniors advocate today?

Mr. Johnston: Our department, since being formed, has met with over 70 stakeholders and had discussions with those stakeholders in understanding what they feel the needs of seniors are. And certainly, this government is prepared to work towards those goals.

Secondly, this department has established a minister's advisory committee, made up—a number of professionals who advise this—the ministry in regards to initiatives that it should be taking. As well, we have also initiated the seniors strategy, where we've gone

into communities and asked for their input on long-term seniors strategy.

We have a plan. Unfortunately, they never have.

* (14:40)

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

MLA Marcelino: Yes, and today, with this question, we're asking if that plan does include the establishment of a seniors advocate because there are tens of thousands of seniors who have been living in pain for too long.

These Manitobans are waiting for their surgeries, and many of them have been waiting way too long for their turn. And for many months, we've been hearing that there's—there are so many reports of how broken our home-care system system is. So, seniors deserve a voice in government that would advocate on their behalf to ensure that these injustices are corrected.

The minister has the power, with his department, to establish a seniors advocate, and will he do so today?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, 17 years of NDP government and they never put in a seniors advocate. Seventeen years of NDP government and they didn't feel a seniors advocate was required.

The majority of provinces in Canada don't have seniors advocates, and yet the NDP all of a sudden thinks that this is going to be the solution. The solution, quite frankly, is looking at what the seniors' needs are, going to the people, going to the stakeholders and acting upon that.

That's what the solution is, Madam Speaker.

Cosmetic Pesticide Legislation Request to Withdraw Bill 22

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the majority of Canadians live in a province that puts their health first and provides protection against the cosmetic application of pesticides. Manitoba proudly did the same in 2014. The Environment Act currently protects children and pets and all those who use our boulevards, lawns and city parks.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives tend to roll back—intend to roll back protections that were there for the health of Manitobans, and this is the wrong approach.

Will the minister withdraw Bill 22 today?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Certainly our government stands by the side of science, Madam Speaker.

We know the ideology of the NDP, we know that 300—over 300 federal scientists, Madam Speaker, have said that this process is safe for Manitobans, it's safe for Canadians and we are going to follow the science. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, Health Canada offers the most blanket approval of these products. And, as a chemical used on crops where children don't play and workers are instructed to wear appropriate PPE, this is simply not the same as use in a city park or next door to a home daycare.

Madam Speaker, the PCs are taking the same approach as Brian Pallister did. He called restrictions on the cosmetic application of pesticides a radical agenda. This is nonsense, but it is the approach of this government, the same approach as Brian Pallister, and that is not what Manitobans want. They actually want you to put our health first.

Will the minister change course and withdraw Bill 22 today?

Mr. Wharton: It was nice to hear that the member is—pays attention to Health Canada. And so do we, Madam Speaker.

As a matter of fact, we know the rigorous testing that Health Canada does when it comes to cosmetic pesticides, Madam Speaker. And certainly, 350 scientists—federal scientists—are the folks we are going to listen to as we move forward with Bill 22 this afternoon.

And I know, Madam Speaker, we're going to be speaking more about that bill this afternoon, looking forward to that discussion. I know, currently, there are no speakers lined up, but I certainly hope that the NDP get on board, support Bill 22 and move forward on science.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, no jurisdiction in the world has rolled back pesticide protections put in place. Any place across the world who have restricted the cosmetic application of pesticides continues to put the health of children first.

Madam Speaker, Brian Pallister may be gone, but his agenda—because this started six years ago—this agenda carries on with this group of PCs. They want to be the only jurisdiction in the world to roll back health protections for Manitobans.

The World Health Organization—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor: —says this is the wrong approach. Canadian Cancer Care says it's the wrong approach and many Manitoban organizations say it's the wrong approach.

Will the minister—

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

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: Well, Madam Speaker, it's interesting the member talks about building policy. Well, let's talk about building policy on ideology.

No jurisdictions, Madam Speaker, other than the NDP in Manitoba, build policy on ideology. We rely on science. We know that Manitoba has still some of the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —strictest pesticide regulations in the prairies, Madam Speaker. By expanding our list of sensitive areas, government continues to protect Manitobans, protect our children and protect Manitobans across this great province.

We have a plan, Madam Speaker. What's their plan?

Indigenous Children in CFS Care Compensation and Apology Request

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Earlier this year, the Manitoba courts found that from—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, earlier this year, the Manitoba courts found that from 2006 to 2019 the Manitoba government violated the rights of thousands of First Nations children who'd been taken from their families, placed in the custody of CFS and had all of their children's benefits from the federal government seized by the provincial government.

According to AMC, \$338 million intended for their care was seized even as Indigenous organizations, CFS agencies, and Manitoba Liberals repeatedly, consistently and publicly objected to this immoral practice.

In 2020, when every single PC MLA voted to keep the \$338 million that had been taken from Indigenous children and attempted to bar them from ever holding the people responsible in court, the minister of Families was the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson).

We think they should be paid back with damages—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, I didn't quite hear a question from the member opposite, but after I tabled all the annual reports from the Families Department today, I certainly hope that the member will seek to educate himself before he comes into this House.

The member opposite knows full well that our government received the report from the judge in May and that we took time to read through the report. We established a litigation instruction table as well as a technicians table comprised of Indigenous leaders throughout the province so that we can talk about not just the amends that need to be made but, on a go-forward basis, how we can amend policy and legislation and the entire CFS framework so that we can create a better CFS system that supports all children in the province of Manitoba.

I wish that members opposite would get on board and find out exactly what we're doing before making false accusations.

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

Mr. Lamont: We need to recognize that no province in Manitoba—sorry, no province in Canada has treated First Nations and people living in poverty worse than Manitoba.

We have twice the national incarceration rate, the highest child apprehension rate in the world and the deepest and world's worst child and family poverty. And when you hear a tragic story about an Indigenous child in Manitoba and many Indigenous adults, the chances are that that person was involved in the provincial CFS system. An astonishing—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —one in five First Nations people in Manitoba found themselves as wards of CFS at some point in their lives.

Now, we know the NDP will never apologize for their role in this because they want to pretend it's someone else's fault, even as they seized a newborn baby a day for years on end.

Will the Premier do the right thing and apologize for what the Manitoba government has done to these children and make it right with compensation now?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, our government has met with Indigenous leaders and our government has met with officials throughout the CFS system, and we have publicly stated that there are amends that need to be made and to correct the historic wrongs. And those are many things that we are doing, as well as fixing the CFS system.

* (14:50)

And I really wish that the member opposite would stop with his false accusations and listen for a quick moment as I explain some of the work that we're doing right now. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: We have a practice—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: He wants to know how we can fix the CFS system and better serve children in the province of Manitoba, yet he refuses to listen, just as he refused to pick up the phone and talk to his Prime Minister when there was a historic case before the federal government to rule on discrimination against Indigenous children.

I wish he'd had a voice then like he does now.

Assessment and Treatment for Hearing Loss Provincial Coverage for Hearing Aids

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, hearing is one of the most important senses that humans have, especially for seniors. People who lack the ability to hear will have difficulty communicating with and making connections with others and this isolates them. It is also associated with a higher risk of dementia later in life. Hearing aids are essential to the well-being of the Manitobans who need them. Yet too many people, seniors on fixed incomes in particular, cannot afford a hearing aid.

When will the government recognize the importance of hearing and include assessment and

treatment of hearing loss under Manitoba Health, and provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all those Manitobans who need them?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I really appreciate that question from the minister—or, the member, sorry. We got—that party's got a long way to go. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnston: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, our seniors strategy that I'd indicated is taking place right now. And certainly, comments in regard to those type of needs are well received by my department, by our government, and they're certainly considerations in the future.

Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund Application Deadline Extension

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): Arts, culture and sport are the backbone of some of the most vital connections that we can form as communities. Just ask anyone who comes to Manitoba: they are floored by the amazing cultural and community events that truly showcase how amazing our province is.

I understand the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage recently extended the deadline of his department's new grant program until October 11th. Can he speak on this new arts, culture and sport in community grant program, and how it furthers our government's historic investments in these sectors?

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I thank my colleague for that excellent question on the Arts, Sport and Culture in Community Fund, an historic investment of \$100 million, Madam Speaker, over three years, in this important space in our province. I encourage Manitobans all across the province to apply—visit our website and apply to this important fund to help their communities not only survive but to thrive into the future.

This is so much more—an historic \$100 million investment—so much more than the NDP have ever done in their time in office. When they were in office, they didn't have a plan. Today, they don't have a plan, and they'll never have a plan, Madam Speaker.

Lake St. Martin Outlet Timeline for Completion

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), along with every member of this caucus and Cabinet, stood by Brian Pallister as

he promised the people of Manitoba that he would get the Lake St. Martin-Lake Manitoba channel project done by 2020. Since then, not a shovel of dirt has been moved.

Instead, this government fought with the federal government in court, ignored—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe:—local landowners and failed to properly consult with our Indigenous people. Then, with record precipitation and high water this spring and summer, the best the Premier could do was to say she had fallen short and go on an apology tour.

When will this project get under way and when will shovels finally get in the ground? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I think everybody needs to hear the answer, so I'm going to respectfully ask for order. Order.

When questions are asked, I'm hoping people do want to hear the answers, so—that's the point of all of this, so in order to hear the answer, you need to stop heckling and stop talking and listen.

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I just want to thank the member for the question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the whole summer, we were able to consult—I had my colleague, the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations (Mr. Lagimodiere), with me on consultations to many of the First Nation communities across Manitoba. And we are going to be working with the federal government to get this, actually, licensing done for the project. It's very important during—especially during this flood. We are working with the federal government to make sure that the licence gets approved so that we can start the channel as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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 sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

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.

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.

A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated 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.

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

Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide what 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.

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

Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an otolaryngologist or 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.

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

The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive listening devices, including the purchase, repair and placement.

Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

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 for whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

Manitobans over age 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 \$50 an ear.

* (15:00)

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.

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

Signed by Ron Wally, Pat Simpson [*phonetic*], Keith Fontaine and many other Manitobans.

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

Are there any further petitions? If not, grievances?

We will then move into orders of the day, government business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY*(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****House Business**

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please canvass the House for leave to debate this afternoon, without notice, a resolution regarding the appointment of the new Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave this afternoon, without notice, to debate a resolution regarding the appointment of the new Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that,

WHEREAS the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs was struck to manage the hiring process for the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth; and

WHEREAS the subcommittee, following an open competition and consideration of applicants, recommended to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Sherry Gott to be appointed as the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth; and

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to section 2 of The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, Sherry Gott be appointed as the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), seconded by the honourable member for St. Johns,

WHEREAS the subcommittee of the Standing—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Goertzen: Just very quickly, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the members of the subcommittee for their work. This was a somewhat new process in reporting this back to the House in this way, probably a couple of glitches we have to work out in terms of timing, but I think it's better in terms of ensuring that the House itself is ratifying the independent officers.

And I want to wish Sherry Gott all the best as she undertakes this new role as the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to comment?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I would echo my colleague's sentiments and say miigwech to the committee that did really important work, and a congratulations to Sherry Gott on behalf of our caucus and, I'm sure, everybody in the Chamber. And we wish her well on this new path and journey as the new advocate.

Miigwech.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I want to thank all those who participated in the committee, including my colleague, the MLA for Tyndall Park. I want to congratulate our new advocate for—Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth and wish her well, and we look forward, on our side, as Liberals, to working closely with her to improve the future for children and youth in our province.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for debate this afternoon, in the following order: Bill 36, 13, 14, 22 and 24.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider the following bills this afternoon in this order: Bill 36, Bill 13, Bill 14, Bill 22 and Bill 24.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**Bill 36—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act**

Madam Speaker: So I will therefore call debate on second reading of Bill 36, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), who has 25 minutes remaining.

Is there leave to allow the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Boniface?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No.

Is the House then ready for the question? No?

Are there any other members wishing to speak in debate on this motion?

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm pretty pleased to get an opportunity to speak to Bill 36. And the reason I'm happy to speak to Bill 36 is because I get an opportunity to voice some of the concerns I've heard from residents in St. Vital.

I've had the opportunity to connect with and chat with many residents in my neighbourhood over the course of the last few months. As we were on recess over the summer, we went—spent some time going out, reaching out and connecting, chatting with many community members in St. Vital, in south Winnipeg and across the city and across the province.

And a couple of things became loud and clear across in the messages I heard from Manitobans. Those messages are that life is becoming more difficult because of this current government in terms of the health-care challenges that our health-care system is facing and in terms of the challenges that Manitobans face when it comes to affordability. And today, with Bill 36, we are directly talking about the affordability challenges that Manitobans face.

The hydro bills—Manitobans ratepayers pay their hydro bill every month. And when they see that bill increase and increase and increase under this government, they're ask themselves, hey, is this government actually working for me to help my life become more affordable? Or are they continuing to make me pay additional burden when we have such a beneficial, profitable resource in Manitoba Hydro? Is the government using their financial resources as wisely as possible to make my life more affordable?

Manitobans ask themselves that question every day when they look at the rising cost of living, when they see the inflation rate creep up each and every month this year, when they see their grocery bill get higher and higher as they get less and less every time they make a trip to the local grocery store. And when they see that number on the pump go up every time they fill up for gas and they—the affordability challenges get more difficult each and every month, and they say, what can be done? What can we here in

Manitoba do to help people with this great challenge? And we have the opportunity to do that by helping Manitobans with low hydro rates.

Has this government chosen to do so? No. They've chosen the other path. They've chosen a path with Bill 36 which would put into legislation what the hydro rates would be, at 5 per cent, taking their responsibility away from the independent Public Utilities Board to determine what the rates should be for Manitoba Hydro, for Manitobans; taking that away from the independent board, away from Manitobans to have review over the rates that they should be paying, and putting it in the hands of this legislation, of those who operate around the Cabinet table.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

That's what Bill 36 proposes to do, to put the power and control of hydro rates away from the independent Public Utilities Board and puts it into the hands of the Cabinet. And they are telling us what they—what the hydro rates should be. It says right here, plain and simple in the bill, that it's going to be 5 per cent, the rate of inflation, and they're taking that choice away from the Public Utilities Board. And I think that all the financial indicators are telling us that that rate is almost certainly going to be 5 per cent.

Now, the Public Utilities Board hasn't approved rates that high, especially not in a year where there are record profits—Manitoba Hydro—and especially in a year where the minister just says that the financial picture is looking a little rosier than it was projected. So, it's a little rosier for the Province of Manitoba, but the people of Manitoba have to suffer every more.

That's the kind of government that the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is choosing to run. That's the kind of financial choices that the government is choosing to make. Not the ones that are best interests of the people of Manitoba, but rather the ones that seem to be the preferred choice of the Premier and her Cabinet.

* (15:10)

Now, we look at that—at those choices, and we look at the crisis, really, that we're facing when it comes to affordability. And even just the minimal changes when it comes to hydro mates—hydro rates can have a massive impact in terms of the lives of Manitobans.

You know, whether it's setting hydro rates at the Cabinet table, well—whether it's the prospect of privatizing Hydro piece by piece by piece, it's clear that this PC government is taking us down the wrong track

when it comes to hydro. And worst of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're not telling Manitobans about this, about this plan. They're not being transparent with Manitobans about what their objectives are for Manitoba Hydro.

It's clear that, over the last few years, they've taken steps to sell off and privatize subsidiaries of Manitoba Hydro. It's been clear that they've gone down that direction. And so when we see that they're clearly dictating a 5 per cent rate increase in Manitoba Hydro, we also see that they've chosen to privatize portions of Hydro, we ask ourselves, is there something a little bit more going on here? Can we put the pieces of this puzzle together and see that there is a concerted effort to advance the privatization of Hydro, to advance that plan further down the road? And I think that this is the path that the government seems to be taking us down.

And that's why I'm proud to stand with my colleague, the MLA for St. James, and the introduction of bill 210, which would limit the ability of this government to privatize Hydro any further without going to referendum. And that type of legislation is done in a manner to protect Manitoba ratepayers.

Because, at the end of the day, we want for Manitoba Hydro to provide us clean, reliable and affordable energy, and I think this is exactly what our goals are on this side. And it is no more exemplified than in bill 210, where we see evidence of us trying to protect ratepayers from privatization, because we know that every profitable subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro goes to benefit their bottom line, goes to keep rates low for all Manitobans.

And this is ultimately what this is about. This is about, how do we help everyday Manitobans who are facing the struggle of rising costs, facing the struggle of inflation and of groceries and gas prices going up. And this is why Bill 36 is, frankly, so important. Why we chose to delay this bill, why we chose it as one of our five bills to delay—to give Manitobans that time to come out and rally around it.

And we know that there are a coalition of many Manitobans who are against Bill 36—who are against Bill 36 for a very, very good reason, one of those reasons being that they know the Public Utilities Board plays a key and vital role in rate setting in Manitoba. And that key and vital role needs to remain in place. It is threatened—it is threatened to be stripped away with Bill 36.

And that does not only do damage to Manitoba Hydro in the long run in terms of public confidence and transparency about how rates get set, because nobody, I think, after seeing what we've—what this Cabinet has done over the course of the last—well, not only two years, but frankly, six and seven years, nobody trusts that in Manitoba anymore; that's quite clear. And we need to have that public trust when it comes to Manitoba Hydro.

And that's why we need a clear and independent Public Utilities Board that has the power and authority to set rates for the best interest of Manitoba Hydro and of ratepayers in Manitoba. And Bill 33—Bill 36 threatens that authority and autonomy by the Public Utilities Board, and that is a scary prospect, that this government would go to such lengths to strip away the power from the Public Utilities Board. And it's having a real impact, and people are calling this government out for it.

People are signed up, I know, for the public committee hearing that will be upcoming in the next few weeks, to speak out against this because of the vital role that the PUB plays in helping to protect ratepayers. I mean, they—it's obvious they are an independent third party that regulate Hydro. And it's quite frank—it's quite clear that when we're looking at—not only at Manitoba Hydro but all Crown corporations, we need to have a certain level of independence from the Cabinet. This is why they're run as Crown corporations, so they have a certain level of independence.

But yet with Bill 36, that strips it away and it makes sure that the people who are really controlling hydro rates in this province are the ones—are the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the folks that she's hand-picked around her Cabinet table. At the end of the day, the reason that matters is because it hurts Manitobans' bottom line.

It comes down to the choice about the families that I spoke with as I went door to door this summer. The families who struggle to pay their bills and ask, well you don't control inflation as an MLA, you don't control the grocery bill, so why—what can you do to help me with my affordability challenges?

And I say that I'm going to fight for you against Bill 36 because that government wants to increase your hydro rate by 5 per cent and I don't think it should be increased. And that's why I want to come and talk to you. That's what I said to the people in my neighbourhood when they asked what I was going to do for their affordability challenges.

And that's why I'm proud to be speaking here against Bill 36. Because in this year, when Manitobans have faced one of the greatest affordability challenges that we ever have, certainly in the last few generations; in this year, when Manitoba Hydro has had some of the most profitable years it's had, certainly in many years, why would this government think that they should be raising hydro rates by 5 per cent without consultation from the PUB, without third party consultation, without consulting Manitobans, and inflicting this 5 per cent rate hike that will benefit nobody but themselves?

And so that's why I'm happy to be speaking against Bill 36 and I hope all members in this Chamber, when we get an opportunity to vote for this later today, take the opportunity to think about the constituents that they represent, think about how they will help them with their affordability challenges and do the right thing by voting against Bill 36.

So thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just wanted to make sure the clapping was finished, so—the honourable member for Wolseley.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Manitobans rely on low and affordable utility rates and life has gotten substantially more expensive for the average Manitoban since the PC government took office. The rising cost of living is making life unaffordable for many Manitobans and making it harder for families to make ends meet. Recent studies have shown that more than 53 per cent of Canadians say that they can't keep up with the cost of living and seven in 10 Canadians report being stressed about money as inflation rates continue to grow.

Unfortunately for Manitobans, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) doesn't seem to care about what Manitobans can afford. The interference by both the Pallister and Stefanson governments in Manitoba Hydro has cost ratepayers and led to higher bills for family. Manitoba Hydro rate was increased by 3.6 per cent last December, right in the middle of a pandemic. And for the first time in modern Manitoba history, this PC government increased hydro rates at the Cabinet table in 2020, and attempted to raise them again at the Cabinet table in 2021, costing families hundreds of dollars.

Now the government has introduced Bill 36, a bill that makes the lives of Manitobans much harder. This bill allows Cabinet to effectively set hydro rates at the Cabinet table, and will increase hydro rates by

5 per cent every year, making life more expensive for Manitoba. This bill weakens PUB and moves us away from independent rate-setting, and gives government the power to effectively direct hydro rates.

This bill's proposed amendments also signal the government's privatization agenda for Manitoba Hydro. We know this PC government cannot be trusted when it comes to Manitoba Hydro and other Crown corporations. Bill 36 will only cost Manitobans more money with 5 per cent increases year after year.

* (15:20)

The—this government is making life less affordable for Manitobans by increasing rates for hydro and MPI and undermining the authority of the PUB. While the cost of living keeps going up, life has gotten substantially more expensive for the average Manitoban since the PC government took office. And for those who are struggling to get by, this government only raised the minimum wage by 5 cents. And even with a change promised next month, Manitoba will still have the second lowest minimum wage in the country.

We believe in making life affordable for Manitobans through keeping utility rates low and initiating programs that help Manitobans. The Pallister and Stefanson governments have always operated under a shroud of secrecy and interference when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, whether it's setting electricity rates behind closed doors or selling off pieces of the Crown without telling the public.

Last year, the PC's bill 35 would have undermined the Public Utilities Board by allowing any rate adjustments to be made with the stroke of a pen at the Cabinet table, with no oversight or accountability.

This year, they're trying again. Bill 36 proposes hydro rate increases of 5 per cent and for years the province and Manitoba Hydro have not provided needed financial forecasts to reflect the true financial state of the corporation. But we know that Manitoba Hydro is profitable even though the PCs say otherwise.

Manitobans are paying over hundreds of dollars more a year for hydro. PC—the PC government raised hydro rates by 2.9 per cent right before the holidays in 2020 and in the midst of a pandemic after sneaking it through in an omnibus bill.

The number of those in arrears with Hydro is growing fast. At our last check, 80,000 customers are

now in arrears. The last 2,000 customers in arrears were added in just the last few months, and they owe \$5 million. This is a problem that's getting worse by the moment.

The PC government is also looking at surge pricing, and then Hydro put out their own survey asking customers what they thought of it. The minister and this government need to be clear whether they intend to implement surge pricing.

On top of all of this, they caused a strike that not only put thousands of people out of work, but cost ratepayers \$18 million because of their illegal wage freeze. And now, Manitobans are left to shoulder the cost on their hydro bill every month.

We recently learned that while they were forcing strikes with their workers, the board of Hydro contemplated a bonus for the CEO. The minister should be clear what bonuses were provided while workers were being forced out on strike.

This government's actions cost us all more. They scrapped a \$55 cap for vehicle safety inspection, costing Manitobans four times more before registering their vehicle.

And their interference isn't just at Manitoba Hydro. They interfered with MPI's negotiations with brokers, which will cost ratepayers an extra \$23 million over the next five years.

They transferred \$125 million in excess reserve funds to cover the government shortfalls of the DVA, which meant ratepayers lost out on a nearly additional 10 per cent rebate or rate reduction.

Under the PC government, MPI is also increasing the cost of third-party liability coverage and is increasing the basic deductible from \$500 to \$750. The reality is that these increases are becoming unaffordable for the average Manitoban.

Since the 1980s, the rates charge for public auto insurance in Manitoba have been reviewed by the PUB every year. This independent oversight protects Manitobans from unpredictable and high rates. But it hasn't always been this way. The PUB was given this responsibility to ensure public trust and confidence.

The Public Utilities Board would provide, quote, "independent third-party approval and the regulation of Hydro, Telephone and Autopac rates," end quote, giving consideration to both financial and, quote, compelling social policy factors. That's pulled from Hansard in November 4th, 1988.

Crown corporations have since been kept at arm's length from government to ensure they are de-politicized. This government wanted to politicize utility rates through bill 35 and now, again, with Bill 36, thereby undermining public trust in our Crown corporations.

We're not going to stand idly by and allow this to happen, obviously. The Manitoba Public Utilities Board provides rigorous evidence-based oversight of Manitoba's Crown corporation for the protection of consumers.

Thanks to the PUB rates for Crown corporation services in Manitoba are fair. They don't change unpredictably and are focused to support efficient, effective and long-term services. The PUB's independence helps us all. The cost of the PUB's regulatory process is a very small portion of the corporation's revenue requirement.

Over the past three years, it has averaged less than 0.25 per cent of Hydro's anticipated annual domestic revenues. For a customer who uses approximately 1,000 kilowatts of electricity each month, the cost of the PUB's process adds only a few cents to their monthly bills.

Despite its low cost, the PUB's rigorous oversight ensures that the rates charged are set with consumers' best interests in mind. On average, based on the previous example of a customer using 1,000 kilowatts per month, that customer has spent less than \$2.50 per year in order to save more than \$50 per year, thanks to the PUB's oversight.

Customers of other Crown corporations experience similar benefits, also at costs that are only a fraction of the corporations' annual revenues. Manitoba Public Insurance customers, for example, have paid on average less than \$1.75 per vehicle per year for the PUB to ensure the rates they are charged are appropriate.

The PUB ensures that Manitoba consumers pay rates that are fair, just and reasonable. The PUB ensures that rates are set with Manitoba consumers' best interests in mind through a rigorous and evidence-based process. The PC government is attempting to assume sole control over setting rates for services Manitobans need, bumping the independent PUB to the sidelines. This Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her Cabinet are attempting to take away the powers of the PUB.

In 2018, the PUB saved Manitobans \$60 million in just one year when it rejected Hydro's call for a

7.9 per cent rate increase. This government is obviously more concerned about saving itself money than keeping costs low for Manitobans.

Byron Williams, director of Public Interest Law Centre, said the Public Utilities Board has been a critical place where consumers can bring the best evidence and independent oversight from people from across North America, where low-income individuals and others can have their say. In a province where Manitoba Hydro has a legislated monopoly, it has been the one consistent voice sticking up for consumers.

The PCs have claimed over and over that PUB hearings cost \$10 million. Recent filings by Hydro to the PUB show that the average cost is just a quarter of that.

The Stefanson, and prior to that, Pallister governments have done everything they can to lead Manitobans to believe that Hydro's not doing well financially and to interfere in our Crown corporation. In October of 2020, they sold Manitoba Hydro's profitable 40 per cent stake in Teshmont. In secrecy, this government directed Manitoba Hydro not to compete in a bid for the Province's fibre-optic network, and instead awarded it to the private company Xplornet to operate. At first, the minister said that this access to Hydro assets would come, quote, at no additional cost to Manitoba Hydro ratepayers. He later removed those words from his directive to Hydro.

Then, in February 2021, this government announced the closure of their international consultancy of Manitoba Hydro International, which will mean fewer expert jobs here in Manitoba. The PC government hired Brad Wall. We all know that that's the same Brad Wall who, while in Saskatchewan, introduced legislation to privatize over 40 per cent of its Crown corporations and privatize many functions of SaskTel. As expected, the Brad Wall report recommended selling off so-called non-core parts of Hydro and using public-private partnerships to contract out infrastructure projects, effectively privatizing parts of Hydro, bit by bit.

* (15:30)

The Wall report was the pretext for bill 35, which we stopped. The Wall report failed to include details of the multi-billion dollar hydroelectricity contracts between Manitoba Hydro and Saskatchewan. This government doesn't want Manitobans to know about Hydro's real financial position. The Stefanson and

Pallister governments then secretly hid the directives to Manitoba Hydro to implement all 51 recommendations of the political Wall report, which will mean higher costs for families and more risk to our most important Crown utility.

We on this side of the House are so committed to a clean energy future and a publicly owned Manitoba Hydro. We will continue to put the needs of Manitobans first and fight for Manitoba Hydro to remain public and keep rates affordable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the privilege of putting a few words on the record regarding this Bill 36. Before I get into the actual meat of my debate, I would like to thank the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), who has been steadfast in his oversight in this particular file. He has shown a lot of leadership and has shown a lot of courage in this House and outside of this House and purporting all of the points that are listed in all of our debate this afternoon.

This is a very important debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's important because, right now, in the world, in Manitoba, in Canada, these are unprecedented times. Just the other day, I was driving—coming down to the House here and I noticed gas prices, 20 cents in a day. I can tell you, with those kind of increases, that makes it very difficult for Manitobans to make ends meet, to be able to pay the bills, feed their families, to contribute to the overall well-being of not only their communities, but also our province.

And that's a theme that seems to be lacking from the other side of the House. Looking after the overall well-being of Manitoba citizens, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We come here as members with a task at hand. Our task, perhaps the most important one, is to look after the welfare of our citizens, of the people that call this place home.

Subsequent NDP governments and other governments have spent and invested hundreds of millions of dollars in Manitoba Hydro infrastructure, have made it the absolute Crown jewel of Manitoba. And what do we have happening right now? We're having this Crown jewel begin to lose its lustre. That concerns many Manitobans, Deputy Speaker. It concerns them because, at this time—unprecedented times where inflation is running at over 7 per cent—this government needs to be looking after the welfare of the citizens by ensuring that a—Crown corporations like

Manitoba Hydro aren't raising rates at a time when people are struggling to make their ends meet.

They want a partner in their government to help them make it through to the end of the two-week pay cycle, to the end of the month. Instead, what we get is we get Bill 36. Bill 36, that'll allow this Cabinet to raise rates at the Cabinet table. This was said today at—during question period, Deputy Speaker, outlined by the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) herself: it will go up 5 per cent. At a time when, right now, affordability is at the top of mind, not only every Manitoban, but every Canadian.

And there are plenty examples worldwide, Deputy Speaker, where, when a citizenry loses confidence in its government, economic ramifications begin to harm a particular government's ability to raise funds. I'll give you an example of the United Kingdom right now. The pound sterling has fallen to the lowest level—why? Because the citizens have lost confidence in their government to administer that particular currency.

You're seeing the impacts. A lower currency is now, of course, affecting that entire country's affordability. People—regular working people—just like regular working Manitobans, want to see their government as a partner. They're not seeing that.

Instead what they're seeing is a government that wants to set rates at the table instead of having it adjudicated by an independent body. The PUB, Deputy Speaker, is created for a purpose. The purpose being—is to take away political interference into the rates of our Crown jewel here, Manitoba Hydro. It's an important piece, one that we cannot forget.

As I mentioned earlier, at the beginning of my words here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we have our member and—member from St. James, that has been reminding us regularly of the importance of the PUB, not just for Manitoba Hydro, but also for Manitoba Public Insurance.

That body is there for a purpose. The purpose being to ensure that if rates do go up, it's based upon not only affordability, but also on what the current financial status is of that particular utility.

But we also get obfuscation from the other side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to the financial health of our Crown jewel, of Manitoba Hydro, so that now, all of the sudden, we're going to be asked to trust them to set the rates? That's a tough ask, especially now when many of our families in Manitoba are having difficulty getting to the end of the month.

These are concerns, they're very real concerns, that Manitobans have. Instead, what we're left with is: Just trust us; we'll ensure that we're going to look after this.

That's not good enough, Deputy Speaker. We have an independent body in the Public Utilities Board that will ensure—that is there to ensure that oversight—proper oversight—is undertaken. It provides that independent third-party approval that's very necessary, that evokes confidence.

And right now we have a crisis of confidence in this government. We see it on a daily basis. We see it in the mismanagement of the pandemic, mismanagement of our health-care system, our education system, now, that is really on the brink, having to budget during times of cuts since 2016, where not only—the classroom cap has now been removed, but also, now, we're having huge pressure on EAL students, et cetera.

But going back to Bill 36, Deputy Speaker, it's important to know that Crown corporations have been kept at length from government to ensure that they are depoliticized. This government wanted to politicize utility rates through bill 35. And now again, we see it in Bill 36.

I talked about it earlier, Deputy Speaker: this undermines public trust at a time when we need to be shoring that up. Like I said earlier, 'citinzes' of Manitoba, Manitobans, need to feel that they have a partner in their government. I don't think they feel that right now.

This bill does nothing to show Manitobans that the government's on their side, working with them to make life more affordable during these very challenging times.

So, it's left to the opposition. It's left to this side of the House to do the real work, to bring it home for Manitobans, to ensure that their voice is heard here in this very House, to say that we will not support a bill that makes life less affordable at a time when inflation, like I said earlier, Deputy Speaker, is over 7 per cent.

* (15:40)

People are feeling out of control of their budgets, worried about whether or not they can get that tuition paid. And you know, tuition fees are coming up due in early October for the University of Manitoba. I can tell you, as a parent of a student, those tuition fees

have become another piece, another worry to add to the plate of this affordability crisis.

That's why it's important to have bodies like the Public Utilities Board in place to ensure that oversight is taken during these very important times. This is no idle conversation. We are here to do a job, and right now it seems that it's the opposition that's doing the job. *[interjection]* Absolutely. Paying attention. *[interjection]* I'm glad—you know what, I'm glad the member from Steinbach was paying attention there. I got his—I got him going.

But here's the piece. When you strip the power from the Public Utilities Board, like I said earlier, Deputy Speaker, it begins to undermine confidence. And right now, the citizens of Manitoba need to feel confident in their government. I don't know if that's being felt right now.

There are pieces, there's a history here, where we have—like I said earlier—our Crown jewel in Manitoba Hydro being cut apart. We have a fibre optic network that could've been used to bring high-speed broadband to very remote regions in northern Manitoba and in other parts of Manitoba. That has just been wasted, not being utilized.

Especially during the pandemic, would've been really good to have some of those pieces in place so that citizens up north could have had access to broadband when we were in remote learning—an opportunity wasted because of the foot dragging of this government when it came to that particular piece.

We've also seen that Manitoba Hydro International had many expert jobs that have now left the province because of its decommission.

This is all during their watch, Deputy Speaker. And I can tell you, with Bill 36 people are now beginning to pay attention, pay attention to what really is happening. And what's happening is, it's becoming more expensive every day for families in Manitoba. We used to have a Manitoba advantage: low MPI rates, predictable hydro rates, place where you can have and attract people to this province.

And now, we're having trouble attracting people and even staying in Manitoba. We're having school divisions that can't recruit people here into Manitoba because we've lost the advantage of affordability. And now it's going to become even more of an issue, Deputy Speaker. And these are the pieces, these are the pieces that people are paying attention to.

So, as we begin to look very closely at this bill, you can—we can say with confidence, this side of the House will not support this bill, Deputy Speaker. Because of all of the reasons that many of—that I myself and many of my colleagues have put on the record. These are unprecedented times that require unprecedented oversight, and we're not going to get that with Bill 36.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me the time to put these few words on the record.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I want to speak about the affordability part because I represent a community that struggles with poverty. There's a lot of folks in my constituency who struggle to pay their hydro, and this government has continued year after year to raise hydro rents, which has created a homelessness issue here in our province.

People cannot afford to pay hydro, and a lot of apartments or housing require tenants to pay hydro, while they're being priced out of homes. So they're being forced to live in shelters, they're being forced to set up tents, they're being forced to couch surf, and Bill 36 is going to create an even more uneven playing field for these folks.

Many of them are on EIA, and with the structure that this government has created they get so much on their budget that they have to pay hydro, and it's never enough. This government gives about \$35 for an independent person to pay their hydro. Well, their hydro rates are a lot higher than \$35, which means they are taking out of their budget that puts food on their table. Someone with children, it's taking, you know, food off the table for their children, and this is the wrong direction.

This government has the opportunity to take Bill 36 off the table. I'm so pleased that we have the member from St. James who continues to hold this government to account in terms of hydro and not setting these rates at the Cabinet table.

We've continuously seen, year after year, that this government doesn't care about the folks who are struggling with poverty. Just come look in the North End. Come on Main Street, come for a ride down Higgins, come for a ride down Logan. You will see so many people that are homeless that can't afford to live in a home. They can't afford an apartment. Myself as a child, I remember moving, you know, numerous times because my parent couldn't pay for the hydro or our water got cut off.

That's exactly what's happening now. Folks are struggling to get EIA under this government, to even get shelter benefits. So, you know, if they're renting an apartment—and I've been looking at apartments, I have a constituent who is trying to get out of the shelter and get into a home—they can't even afford to get into an apartment.

The lowest rent for an apartment now is \$850, plus hydro. And what do they get from EIA? Five eighty-seven, and that's with Rent Assist. So, you want to tell me that this government is concerned about those who are struggling, those who are living in poverty? While they continue to raise hydro rents?

How about that single parent who is working a job that is barely making it, that doesn't have the money to put their child in sports, that doesn't have the money to take their child to a movie? How about that parent? Is this government worried about that working parent? Is this government worried about those children? No.

We've heard this government's stance on children, we've heard that this government doesn't want to feed children in schools. We've heard that this government isn't worried about children when it comes to pesticides, and now, again, this government—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Smith: —doesn't care about children when it comes to poverty.

They want to continually increase hydro rates for families who are struggling. Some families who are working two jobs. You know, a single mom that has to—and I had to do this as a single parent. I had two young boys. I had to get up early, get on a bus, sometimes I didn't even have bus fare. I had to walk my kids to daycare, walk to work, and make sure that I could get to daycare on time to pick my kids up.

That is the reality today. That is the reality under this government, and does this government really care about those who are struggling? No, because they continue to raise hydro rates. Are they doing anything about the homeless in this province? We continue to see, you know, more and more people become homeless. We continue to see rate—rents go up, and this government continues to approve rate increases, 100 per cent of them, while Manitobans can't afford to even get into the rent market.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And then let me talk about our social housing. While, Madam Speaker, I was just knocking doors a

couple of weeks ago in Lord Selkirk Housing, and many of those folks are paying for hydro. They don't have their hydro included in social housing rent.

* (15:50)

So, while I was knocking doors, talking to folks—and I tell you probably every third door was shuttered. Every third door in social housing was boarded up. Why? Because this government doesn't take care of the existing social housing that they have. People cannot get into these places because they will not maintain them. They also can't afford to pay the hydro rates that are in them because this government doesn't include them in EI rates, in their EI benefits.

They also told me that they're moving out of social housing because what this government has done is they're not taking care of the bedbugs that are infesting these social housing units. Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, going to bed, having—opening the light and looking at your children—and this is what someone has told me—seeing bedbugs all over their children and not being able to do anything because they can't afford to get someone in to come and spray their house or get heat treatment?

And does this government do anything about that? No. They continue to raise hydro rates and make people have to live in those conditions while they do nothing to make them better.

So, when we're talking about health of people, well, we want people to have social and affordable housing, absolutely, but this government is pushing people out of even those places by not maintaining them. There's also cockroaches—cockroaches. Like, that's a health condition, that's a health problem and this government, are they worried about that? No. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Smith: They continue to raise hydro rates, not worry about those that are living in poverty, not worry about those that are homeless, and certainly not those who are struggling every day like the single mom or the parent who is working two jobs just to make ends meet and sacrificing time with their children to pay hydro rates, while this government continues to year after year increase that.

So I say shame on this government. They should be ashamed that they're bringing this bill forward, and they should not vote in favour of it and stand with this side of the House that wants to support Manitobans,

that's listening to Manitobans and wants to make life more affordable in this province. Miigwech.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Wow, I almost don't even know where to start when you use the word PCs and affordability, because it—they definitely don't go hand in hand, let alone—one thing that does go hand in hand though is interference, PCs and interference. That's something that for sure goes hand in hand, and you're seeing that for sure with Bill 36 and the government's need to feel like they have to have a say, have a strong oversight, have influence. And not a positive influence, but a negative influence.

Madam Speaker, for myself, being a northern constituency and having a lot of First Nations, Indigenous communities in my constituency, affordability is something that's top of mind—not just today, not just tomorrow, not just last month but for years, generations even—affordability and the inability to afford just to survive, just to live, to get the basic needs.

And now we sit here talking about the hydro rates, and it can't help but come on me exactly where our benefits and our resource and our profits and revenue from Manitoba Hydro are generated from; in fact, for the most part, a large part, significant part from northern Manitoba. So, when we talk about relating that affordability back, that has to be reflective in where that resource comes from and paying that back.

So, I just do want to put that on the record that affordability for northern Manitoba is top of mind for northern people in Manitoba always—not just today, not just tomorrow, but always.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 36, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

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

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

Order, please.

The one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing that the division bells be turned off and the House proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 36, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 32, Nays 21.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The time being after 4 p.m., I am now interrupting proceedings to conclude second readings of the designated bills.

For designated bills that have already been fully debated, I will immediately put the question without further debate.

For designated bills that have not yet been fully debated, the minister can speak for a maximum of 10 minutes if they have not already done so, followed up by a—followed by an up-to-15-minute question period if one has not been held yet. Critics of recognized parties and independent members may then each speak for a maximum of 10 minutes per bill if they have not already done so. If any of the members I just noted have not spoken to any of these bills, they will be given that opportunity as part of this process.

For the information of the House, the following designated bill has already been debated and will proceed directly to the question: Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions).

The following bills have not yet completed debate and require actions to be taken:

Bill 13, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act requires a contribution from the Liberals.

Bill 14, the drivers and vehicles amendment act, highway traffic amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation amendment act requires second reading to be moved, with the minister to have up to 10 minutes to speak. This will be followed by an up-to-15-minute question period and remarks in debate from the official opposition critic and the Liberals.

* (17:00)

Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act, requires second reading to be moved, with the minister to have up to 10 minutes to speak. This will be followed by an up-to-15-minute question period and remarks and debate from the official opposition critic and the Liberals.

The bills will now be called in the order they appear on the Order Paper. The House will not adjourn until all of the applicable questions have been put.

Also, in accordance with our rules, matters of privileges and points of order will be set aside until all votes are completed.

Bill 13—The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call Bill 13, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and share

a few words about Bill 13, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment.

No, I kind of just want to start off by really expressing my appreciation for bill briefing. I really appreciated how the department took the time to meet with us so we had the opportunity to ask the questions that we had, and they were able to share with us a lot of thoughtful incitement on the legislation.

I think behind Bill 13, what's really important is that we are ensuring that all Manitobans are being provided a fair and a just opportunity. Mr. Deputy Speaker—Madam Speaker, I think that the goal of the bill is to ensure that there is efficiency and effective timely access. But there's a very fine line in this. We need to make sure that every case is being reviewed fairly and, as I mentioned, justly. And we need to make sure that cases aren't being rushed and that they're all being treated fairly.

These changes actually affect many Manitobans, many who use EIA, who have Rent Assist, prenatal benefits, community living disability, residential care and child-care licensing and subsidies on adoption agency licensing. And that's why it is extremely important that every case is reviewed diligently and with fair lenses.

Madam Speaker, I understand that there's about 700 cases going to Social Services Appeal Board annually, but, again, this doesn't mean that they can be rushed. That's just over two cases a day and they all deserve a fair opportunity.

In researching the bill and reading some of the past Hansard to better understand the legislation, I know my colleague from River Heights asked about the change to a single member to hear appeals, and the minister's response indicated if the appeal is complex, there will be a three-member panel, which is excellent, but again, it's unclear.

So what does complex mean? What is the definition? Who determines if a case or an appeal is complex? And very similar to the term vexatious in the legislation, how is that term decided? Who actually determines if the case is vexatious and perhaps doesn't get the same sort of quality for their appeal, Madam Speaker?

This legislation gives a lot of power to the board. You know, the board can dismiss an appeal up until the time of the hearing. This can be very last minute, and a lot of people put in tons of effort into their appeal, Madam Speaker, and it wouldn't be fair or just in any respect to dismiss it. Imagine the day before

your appeal, it's being dismissed. It's extremely important to remember that no one understands a person's individual situation more than that person themselves, in this case, the appellant.

So, again, what hasn't been made clear yet is what mechanisms are in place to safeguard against personal biases and discrimination, Madam Speaker. We need to make sure that those who are coming forward with their cases are being fairly treated and they're being given the respect and the time that everyone else who's coming forward with their cases are being given.

Part of the legislation that I think can be quite positive—however, just again, the details are a 'bit'—bit unclear—is how appeals can be heard in other ways, other than in person. I'm curious; does this mean that the applicant gets to choose their method of appeal? Does it mean that communication or the method in which communication is going to take place is assigned to the applicant? And we need to consider the timeliness of this as well if we want to make sure that everyone is given the same amount of time to conduct their appeal and that they're comfortable with that.

So, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I'll sit down.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

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

* (17:10)

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 13, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 31, Nays 19.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 14—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call second reading of Bill 14, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 14, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), seconded by the honourable Minister of Education—[interjection]—order—that Bill 14, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message is tabled.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill contains 14 proposed amendments. It's a fairly lengthy list, but I'll try to give some brief descriptions.

Members may then, during the question and answer period have some questions about them, as it's an outside corporation—a Crown corporation proposing the amendments. There might be some specific details that members want to ask that committee. Representatives of the corporation may be able to attend and advise on some of the more particular details the members have.

So, first it would offer online driver's licence checks. Today, non-law enforcement organizations have limited ability to check whether a driver, or whether a licence is active or not, and may face legal consequences if they allow an unlicensed driver to operate a vehicle.

The proposed changes will allow MPI to develop an online portal that will provide businesses with real-time identification of drivers with invalid licences, and prevent drivers with cancelled or suspended licences from operating a motor vehicle until they have resolved their inactive status.

This service would display the licence status, class of licence held in any conditions that apply to the driver, but no other personal information will be provided.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Another amendment would discontinue student stickers. This proposal would eliminate the requirement for out-of-province post-secondary students obtain a two-dollar student sticker as proof that they are using a legislated exemption from Manitoba registration/insurance. Having the students purchase these stickers adds red tape and administrative burden, and is inefficient.

A third amendment—regards to temporary driver's licences. This proposal clarifies that MPI has authority to issue temporary licences while a photo card is produced and mailed.

A fourth amendment clarifies acceptable use of dealer plates and repairer plates. And this amendment will provide—will move the requirements for dealer plates and repair plates from the act into regulation.

Another amendment clarifies acceptable road use of antique vehicles. The amendment will enable the

rules for acceptable road use by antique vehicles to be prescribed by regulation. Currently, antique vehicles can only be used on road in parades, for servicing or in rallies with the approval of the register. The new regulations will reduce red tape.

A sixth amendment prohibits the use of regulated vehicles with foreign driver's licences. This proposal would prohibit new residents from driving heavy vehicles or buses with an international driver's licence not issued in Canada or the United States before they obtain their Manitoba licence. This is in co-ordination with other changes being done under the MELT requirements to ensure safety, and some of them come as a result of the tragedy in Humboldt, or regarding the Humboldt Broncos.

Another amendment would clarify corporate residency requirements. This amendment will give MPI greater assurances that vehicles registered to corporations are actually being operated primarily in Manitoba, and that there are not businesses who are just registering their vehicles in Manitoba and using them primarily elsewhere to take advantage of the low rates in Manitoba.

An eighth amendment is the deregulation—deregulating the acceptable verifiable resource list. This amendment to the DVA will allow MPI to determine what documents are acceptable identification when applying for a driver's licence or identification card without the need to prescribe them by regulation. This would provide more flexibility and would allow MPI to be more responsive to evolving applications and operational needs. MPI would retain the AVRL internally, and publish it on its website to its customers and brochures.

* (17:20)

There are also amendments to The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act regarding the vehicle-for-hire 'insurance' which enables MPI to ensure blanket certificates to transportation network companies to cover vehicles while being used in a ride-share capacity. It brings MPI in line with every other jurisdiction, particularly those like Saskatchewan and British Columbia. There's been significant consultation with the industry, the variety of various industries, regarding this, and there'll continue to be consultation.

Deregulating rebates and surcharges for fleets: the amendments remove the fleet business rules. That will authorize MPI to publish the business rules and the fleet rebate surcharges in its online rate guide. Any

changes to the business rules rebate and surcharges will continue to be approved by the Public Utilities Board.

Eleventh amendment is the deregulation of driver premiums. Currently, insurance discounts and additional driver premiums are tied to a driver's position on their driver safety rating, or known as the DSR scale, and that scale was established in regulation. Any changes to the DSR discounts or premiums are first approved by the PUB—by the Public Utilities Board—as part of the annual rate-setting process but then also require a subsequent separate regulation change to be implemented, which is time-consuming and places a significant burden in terms of process.

There is a 12th amendment; it updates the third party-liability requirement. On April 1st of 2021, the regulation amendments came into force, raising MPI's minimum liability coverage insurance to all MPI-issued vehicles under basic Autopac from \$200,000, first set in 1983, to \$500,000. If this amendment is not completed, it is not reflected in The Highway Traffic Act.

And so, if The Highway Traffic Act is not amended to reflect the \$500,000 TPL coverage, then vehicles operating in Manitoba not insured by MPI and out-of-province vehicles could be required to carry less insurance than MPI-insured vehicles, increasing the possibility that Manitoba motorists and property owners may be unable to recoup the full extent of damages from a responsible driver in the case of an accident resulting in a third party claim.

Thirteenth amendment: enforcement authority for inspection certificates. This amendment would transfer the enforcement authority for inspection certificates to be issued by qualified mechanics under The Highway Traffic Act to The Drivers and Vehicles Act and would thereby give MPI's vehicle safety officers the ability to issue tickets to unlicensed mechanics and inspection stations that knowingly issue and submit inspection certificates to MPI that are false or misleading.

Permitting the electronic documents: this would allow for—it removes the requirement for a driver's licence to be issued in a physical—a paper form, to enable the future of—use of electronic documents and enable regulations to specify procedure for surrendering a licence permit or registration card in electronic format. This is something that consumers have been asking for, and it would align with other Canadian jurisdictions. Currently, I understand, only Manitoba, British Columbia and New Brunswick are

the remaining provinces that do not allow for electronic proof of insurance registration. All 50 united states do allow for it—or, all 50 states in the United States do allow for it.

This is part—these amendments are part of the overall Project Nova, which is the IT system that is being updated for MPI and allowing for more online services. And so the passage of this bill is important. It'll be some time yet before Project Nova is completely implemented, but this advances the ability to provide services online when Project Nova is complete.

I look forward to members' questions here and in committee as well.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): MPI already provides coverage to ride-sharing companies.

Why is the changes to blanket certification necessary?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): My understanding is this brings us more in line with every other province in Canada in terms of how the insurance operates for ride-sharing.

The member opposite will know because we kept him and other members well informed about the consultation between the industry and MPI, and I think that that consultation will be ongoing, and there's a strong desire from MPI to continue to work with all that are in the ride-share and the taxicab industry.

Mr. Sandhu: Can the minister provide some information how the blanket insurance works?

Mr. Goertzen: My understanding is that currently the insurance of a time band insurance, and so would ensure certain hours that an individual might be involved in ride-sharing; the blanket insurance simply

insures the activity that that vehicle would be used for regardless of the hour that it's being used for.

Member opposite may want to ask additional questions at committee when MPI officials are available.

Mr. Sandhu: While providing blanket insurance, how much money it will cost to the regular ratepayers?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I mean, I think, like many things when it comes to insurance, there's many variables that are at play when an individual or a company is insuring. So, the member would have to give a more specific situation that I could then provide to MPI if he's looking for a rate quote for, whether it's a taxicab or whether it's a ride-share service.

If he has a specific example with all the parameters, I can provide that to the insurer, and they can provide that quote.

Mr. Sandhu: I really want to know, is it the MPI asked for the blanket insurance coverage to provide it, or is it someone lobbied on behalf of someone else to provide the service?

Mr. Goertzen: My understanding from MPI is that they simply wanted to come in line with how the service is insured in every other province, and I believe, although I can confirm this, every other place in North America.

Mr. Sandhu: This bill enables a database to be established to check the validity of a driver's licence or any condition or restriction on that licence. It allows disclosure of that information to anyone.

Can the minister explain these changes?

Mr. Goertzen: It's a good question and one that I had myself because in the world of privacy, there's always concerns when it comes to privacy. So this would allow businesses to ensure, you know, that a driver had a valid driver's licence but wouldn't disclose any personal information related to the driver beyond whether or not they had a valid class of driver's licence.

Understand that businesses have been asking for this, and it's in place in other provinces.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes, just a question for the minister on—can you just explain—it says it'll allow the driver's licence or ID card to be issued in physical or electronic format.

Can he just explain what that is because there's also a mention of being able to withdraw an electronic—how is an electronic licence going to work?

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for the question. It's one that the public is obviously interested in because there's been lots of discussion over the years about we have two cards and it sometimes felt clumsy in Manitoba.

But in every united state—or every state in the United States, and in all provinces except for a couple, you can have it, for example, on your phone, I believe. It might just even be in your wallet, your digital driver's licence. It's not mandatory; you don't have to have a digital driver's licence. You can continue to keep the paper one. But there has to be a way to surrender that as well.

And so there's a mechanism, I suppose, that one loses the ability to have a digital driver's licence if they lose the ability to have a driver's licence.

* (17:30)

Mr. Sandhu: Just following up to that question about electronic licences.

So, in case we have to show the licence to a peace officer, can the police officer or the peace officer look at the licence only in the device, or can they look at more than—other than—like, the whole device when they are issuing a ticket or they are enforcing bylaw?

Mr. Goertzen: I think that there might be two questions there. I want to make sure I get them right.

There is no requirement to have an electronic driver's licence—I mean, this—and this is some time away. This is not imminent. This will be probably years away, because it requires technology changes at MPI. But my understanding would be that it's not required. You can continue to have your physical licence.

But a police officer wouldn't be able to take the phone for any other reason, other than that what's intended, unless they had just cause to do so. So they wouldn't be able to look at anything else.

Mr. Sandhu: Just want to know about the whole bill.

Is it going to be implemented in parts or is kind of the whole bill will be implemented at the same time?

Mr. Goertzen: I believe it'll be implemented in parts and some will take a very long time.

So, for example, Manitobans who are waiting to access an electronic driver's licence, it won't be for

years, not weeks. It'll take a long time for the MPI to be able to put in the technology, I understand, through Project Nova, so it'll be implemented in stages.

Mr. Sandhu: Last question.

The bill more than doubles required liability coverage. How did the minister arrive at those numbers?

Mr. Goertzen: So, I want to make sure I understand the question correctly.

There is the one portion that doubles, or more than doubles, the third-party liability insurance if you are an insured vehicle from outside of the province of Manitoba but accessing Manitoba on a regular basis. So, right now, I believe that the third-party liability minimum is \$500,000. But if you're a truck transporter, for example, coming through Manitoba on a regular basis, and you might only have to have \$200,000 in the place where you've registered your vehicle, this would require that that individual hold \$500,000 of liability to drive in Manitoba, so there's not an inequity of insurance among vehicles who are driving and putting individuals who might get into an accident, need to rely on that insurance and find out that the person driving had less insurance than most people who drive on Manitoba roads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the—*[interjection]*—my mistake. Thank you, clerks.

The floor is open for debates.

Debate

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): As always, it is an honour to rise in the House to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 14, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand that this bill amends several statutes to make changes to the Manitoba driver licensing, vehicle registration and vehicle insurance framework.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of those changes is a blanket insurance for ride-sharing companies. We are talking about a billion-dollar company based out of USA getting the benefit off the backs of the regular MPI ratepayers in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how blanket insurance works is very simple—it's simple and it's not simple; it's both. Currently, you are given a—four points for bands to drive your ride-sharing company or a taxi in there. So how it happens if there's an accident happens in your time bands that they have a group. Taxi industry have their own group and ride-sharing companies have their own group. So, if there were to be accidents happen, that whoever had the accident—in case it happens in the taxi industries, then its—the taxi industry's insurance goes up. If this happens in ride-sharing companies, the ride-sharing companies' insurance goes up.

For the last couple years, their insurance is going up by 20 per cent, which is—Manitoba Public Utilities Board has asked that insurance should be going up 20 per cent for the—three years in a row. Because there's more accidents that are happening, they are paying more out of pocket.

So now, with this blanket insurance, what happens is ride-sharing companies—one of the cars standing right here in front of the Legislature building, after they get a call to pick up someone, let's say 400 Broadway, while they are going there, even though they are own business, they are supposed to have a commercial insurance. But it's not a commercial insurance; they are going on a private insurance.

So, in case there's—if there's—an accident happens, that accident is on the private side, is not on the commercial side. So the commercial insurance stays the same and the private insurance goes up. So what happens now with this blanket coverage? Regular ratepayers' insurance will go up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a usual habit of the Stefanson government of benefiting out-of-province corporations. Actually, it's not only out of province; it's actually out of country. This—the corporation is based out of the States that they are benefiting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here are the couple examples, actually: Manitoba park location system based out of Texas. Where the money goes? Goes to Texas. MPI auctioning salvaged vehicles through Chicago-based Impact Auto auctioneer, sending millions of dollars to the States.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll also like to highlight a few concerns that people moving into Manitoba have getting their licence. This is where we should be focusing instead of providing a billion-dollar company some benefits.

So these people are moving from other countries or other provinces. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to get a licence they must provide two pieces of ID to—showing that they are the residents of Manitoba. When new immigrants come to Manitoba, they can able to provide one piece of ID, which is very simple to get. They can open an account in a bank and get a void cheque.

The second piece of ID is where the concern is. How will they get the second piece of ID? They can get it through, let's say, if they go to Manitoba Health, get their licence—their health card, and then they can apply for the licence. But that is also a—you can't get your health card for three, four months. So there's no way of getting your licence sooner.

This is also a barrier of people getting the jobs. Most employers require someone to have a licence to—if they want to get a job.

So, actually, when we are talking about Manitoba Health, actually they have a—one good program—or program or the—accept—the residency proof that they accept, that residency proof is either you get a lease agreement—if you are staying with your family members, just get a lease agreement with them and go to Manitoba Health and they will issue you a health card. And also, they will simply accept a letter, oath commissioner's signature on it, saying this person is staying with me and will stay at least for another six months. Manitoba Health also accepts that as a proof of residency.

But MPI doesn't accept any of those ones. If—they do accept a lease agreement only if the person who is leasing their premises to the person, that they are not living at the same place. So this is also a barrier.

* (17:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's—another question is people arriving from the other countries. When they arrived in Manitoba, their licences need to be verified to see if their licence is legit. And there are very simple ways to check it. This is just a—one of the examples. I want to make sure I quote that—give a website properly so I don't go there—the wrong—so, there is a website, like, especially somebody coming from India, to verify their licence is very easy.

They can simply go to Ministry of Road Transport and Highways site. By entering their driving licence, they can check to see if the licence is legit. It will tell you when this licence was issued, when is this licence expiring and if there's any

accident on their licence. But MPI doesn't accept that as proof that that licence is legit.

So there are a couple people who got a job at Winnipeg Transit but they have to quit, or you can say they got fired or they—you can say they can't get their job because they can't verify their status of the licence.

So this is where we should be focusing our energy instead of providing a billion-dollar corporation the benefit on the back of Manitoba ratepayers.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further speakers?

Seeing none, is the House—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 14, the drivers and vehicles amendment, highway traffic amendment and public insurance corporation amendment act.

Division

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

Yeas

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Goertzen, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Khan, Lagassé, Lagimodiere,

Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 30, Nays 19.

* (17:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion is carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

(Continued)

Bill 22—The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We now proceed to debate on second reading of Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions) of appeal amendment and provincial court amendment act.

The floor is open for debate. *[interjection]* The floor is not open for debate.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, please.

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

Question before the House is second reading of Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk: Yeas 30, Nays 20.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READINGS

(Continued)

Bill 24—The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will now call Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act, and recognize the honourable Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to move and speak to the second reading motion.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 24, the real property valuation board and related 'amencement'—amendments act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill and I table the message—it has been tabled.

Mr. Helwer: This bill will amalgamate the land value functions of the Land Value Appraisal Commission, the Surface Rights Board and the assessment appeal function of the Municipal Board.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Currently, several boards in Manitoba provide similar roles and functions related to land valuation and land value disputes. The real property valuation board act will create a single window for stakeholders seeking resolution of land value disputes.

This action will improve board services to Manitobans and create a simplified, fair, transparent and streamlined process for the public to interact with government on matters related to land value.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): So, I do have some questions with regards to this. Obviously, many changes that were made under Bill 37 are, you know, being affected here by this bill.

So, my first question is, this bill takes assessment appeals away from the Municipal Board—how much extra activity has the board been experiencing since Bill 37 has been put into place?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): So, currently before the Municipal Board, the assessments are 1,847 and there's a few other activities going on in planning debentures and others.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): The act will take away powers from municipalities and the Municipal Board and give it to a real property valuation board.

Does this not remove local community influence on decision-making?

Mr. Helwer: Sorry, Madam Speaker, could the member repeat the question?

Ms. Lamoureux: Again, the act will take away powers from municipalities and the Municipal Board and give it to the real property valuation board.

Does this not remove local community influence on decision-making?

Mr. Helwer: This act does not remove any powers from municipalities. It changes the Municipal Board and makes it one access point.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate the minister giving me the number.

What I'd like to know is what, you know, how does that indicate it? Is that an increase in comparison to last year? Maybe he could just give me a little bit more detail about how much increased activity the Municipal Board has experienced.

Mr. Helwer: The assessment appeals have been pretty constant, Madam Speaker, so the increases have been nominal.

Ms. Lamoureux: By removing the Surface Rights Board, how will surface rights be enforced?

Mr. Helwer: So, Madam Speaker, particular act talks about land valuation only. It is the land valuation that will be subject to moving into this one entity.

* (19:00)

Mr. Wiebe: So, the minister does admit that there has been an increase.

One of the arguments that was made by the AMM, by municipalities throughout Manitoba, certainly by the official opposition, was that there were no new resources being put forward for the Municipal Board.

Can the minister indicate, with, you know, increased workload, how much more resources are going to be allocated, based on the changes made in this bill?

Mr. Helwer: So we don't expect that there will be an increase in staffing, Madam Speaker. There will actually be changes to the staffing of the particular boards that are referenced in this act.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Lamoureux: Many landowners have wells to provide water for their farms, buildings, livestock and for irrigation. These wells are part of the surface rights of landowners.

What is the approach for compensation if a landowner's well is contaminated by the activities of the operator with the mineral rights?

Mr. Helwer: So, this act doesn't speak to that particular question. We are talking about land value appraisal.

Mr. Wiebe: So I take the minister's point that there will be potentially less for other—these other boards in terms of their responsibilities, their duties. Potentially, he's saying that there'll be a reduction in the resources that are allocated to those boards, but clearly a municipal board will have an increased workload.

What kind of new resources is the minister going to provide for that board?

Mr. Helwer: Madam Speaker, so we are currently working—we will work with the ABC as—Agencies, Boards and Commissions directorate—regarding the appointments to this particular board.

Ms. Lamoureux: With the potential of hundreds and possibly thousands of wells drilled to mine sand in southeastern Manitoba, will there need to be additional changes to the Surface Rights Act to protect landowners from polluted wells and subsidence of their land.

Mr. Helwer: So this act does not speak to the question that the member is asking about. This is about the land value.

Mr. Wiebe: What concerns about the work with the Municipal Board led the minister to remove property tax assessment appeals from the types of hearings that it conducts?

Mr. Helwer: What we were finding was that people were shopping their land value appraisal, if they thought they could get a better hearing at a particular board, they would move it there. If they were not happy with the result of a hearing, they would try again at another one to see if they got a better appraisal in their eyes.

Ms. Lamoureux: This is my last question.

Will there be a requirement or an expectation that the real property evaluation board will have a representative of landowners with oil wells and a representative of landowners who may have sand mines on their property to be appointed to the board?

Mr. Helwer: Again, this particular piece of legislation does not speak to those types of appointments. We are talking about the land value appraisal system.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the minister give us an example of the—someone who is shopping around their land value appraisals to different boards?

Mr. Helwer: So, an example of that would be subject to the board, Madam Speaker.

I cannot disclose individual applications. It would be a question for the boards.

Mr. Wiebe: What would the process now be for appeal of valuation under the various acts?

Mr. Helwer: So, the act speaks to amalgamating these boards, and the process is very similar to what currently is in place.

Mr. Wiebe: Maybe the minister could just spell that out for the House, give some detail about what exactly that appeal process would look like.

Mr. Helwer: That process, as I said, is very similar to what we see now. And I'm sure that as we move through this change in the legislation and amalgamation of the boards, people will learn how the process works and we'll see that it is much more functional than what we currently have.

Mr. Wiebe: Are there other functions of the Municipal Board that the minister is considering removing?

Mr. Helwer: This particular act only speaks to the land value appraisal portion.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, certainly the minister would have heard—I know that the Minister of Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke) certainly heard from municipalities and their concerns. This minister may have heard some of those concerns coming to his office.

So, is this an on-going process? Will he continue to refine and change the role of the Municipal Board and the various aspects that it deals with?

Mr. Helwer: Again, this act only speaks to the appraisal system.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If not, I will call on the honourable member for Concordia for his comments.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I'd like to put a few words on the record with regards to Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act.

As has been said, this bill establishes the Real Property Valuation Board to take over the roles of

other boards and commissions in relation to the following matters: applications for determination of compensation under the Expropriation Act for expropriated property which are currently heard by the Land Value Appraisal Commission; applications for determination of compensation under the Land Acquisition Act for property acquired by the government, which also is currently heard by the Land Value Appraisal Commission; and property tax assessment appeals under the Municipal Act which are currently heard by the Municipal Board, along with applications under the Surface Rights Act which are 'hurrently'—currently heard by the Surface Rights Board.

Now this bill, Madam Speaker, is a further continuation of this government's tinkering with planning and the responsibilities of the Municipal Board. As I said in my questions, I'm sure this minister, if he was anywhere in Manitoba over the last, probably, two years talking to municipalities, talking to leadership throughout our province, he would have heard loud and clear their concerns with Bill 37 and with the overreach that this government and the minister for municipal relations undertook to make changes to how municipalities govern themselves, how they plan and how they conduct their business with developers.

And I can't remember if the minister took the time to come to committee to actually listen to the folks that came out to speak out against Bill 37, to put on the record, eloquently, how concerned they were with the impact that Bill 37 would have on their ability to deliver democratic results—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Wiebe: —to their citizens.

And if he didn't hear it there, as I said, if he was anywhere in this province over the last number of years, he should have heard it. And if he didn't hear it from them, maybe he would've heard it from his Minister of Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke), who sits just a few seats down from him.

Certainly, he would've heard it from us, because the members on this side of the House have been standing with municipalities and explaining to the government that Bill 37 simply adds—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the member to focus his comments on Bill 24. That is the bill that is before us and I would ask him to stay relevant to the comments related to Bill 24, please.

* (19:10)

Mr. Wiebe: Agreed, Madam Speaker. Bill 24 is a major concern for municipalities because the changes that were made in Bill 37 have now been continuously altered and changed and refined by this government.

Because they've heard nothing but criticism, not just from municipalities but from developers and from citizens across this province who have indicated that Bill 24, and the changes that are proposed in here will simply add more bureaucracy and red tape, that—municipalities are telling us is not sustainable for them to undertake. Furthermore, it will simply add another layer between the democratically elected governments and their ability to deliver for their citizens the planning that they want.

You know, we have been out around this province talking to municipal leaders throughout the summer and into this fall. It's now a municipal election season. And what I'm hearing from municipal leaders is that they're going to door to door, as we do as provincial representatives. They're talking to their citizens and they're bringing forward their vision for their municipalities.

But in many cases, their hands have been tied. Because the changes that were made in Bill 37 and now continue to be made in Bill 24, those municipal leaders are not able to communicate properly with their citizens about what those vision—what their vision is and what those changes might be.

In addition to that, municipalities who have been frozen by this government for seven years now are telling us that they cannot take on more bureaucratic responsibility at the municipal level.

And yet, this government hasn't listened. It's changed, it's fiddled with and changed around the edges—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Wiebe: —Bill 37 again and again, and again.

Now, why did they even start down this path? You know, we know that this government has a reputation, we should say, you know, that when they make a decision, they go for it. Doesn't matter if municipal leaders say it's a bad idea, they're going to, you know—full steam ahead. It doesn't matter if the people of Manitoba across this province say, you know, we want to protect democracy in our province and democrats say they'll go ahead with it.

But why did they stop in their tracks with Bill 37? It was because we, as the official opposition, were able to hold up that bill. We were able to stop it, along

with a suite of terrible legislation, and we were—forced them to go back to the drawing board and go back to municipalities, hat in hand, and say we were wrong. We were wrong.

Now, given that opportunity, you would think, why would they go forward with it? Why would they bring it forward again?

Well, they had Premier Brian Pallister. They had the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) sitting around the Cabinet table. And they said no, let's push forward with this legislation. Again, tweak it, change some things around the edges and push forward.

And so, here we are, now, with Bill 24, which continues down this path of pushing on municipalities a set of bureaucratic roadblocks that no one is asking for—no one is asking for.

And in fact, as we're starting to see these changes implemented in the real world, we're starting to see the buildup and the increase in the number, as the minister admitted to in the responsibilities and the impact on the Municipal Board.

That was the concern of Manitoba municipalities. I mean, we were saying it here in the House, but it wasn't us that the government should have been listening to, it was our municipal friends, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and beyond.

So why are they moving forward now with this legislation? Well, it's—it seems like nothing's changed over there. It seems like they continue on this path where it's their way or the highway. This government has decided that they want to further take power away from municipalities and they want to solidify and codify that in the power of Cabinet and of this government to set by regulation.

That's a concern that we've heard over and over again. We will continue to monitor this. We will continue to be stalwarts who are watching these changes as they play out in the real world. Because we know our municipal partners, as I said, who are out campaigning right now, who are telling their citizens what's important to them, it's only with a partnership with them that we can move this province forward. We can start to repair some of the damage that's been done by this government over the past seven years.

An Honourable Member: It's going to be a task.

Mr. Wiebe: And it's going to be a task, as the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) certainly points out.

I look forward to seeing this go to committee. We are—we do have some real concerns about how the members of the board are appointed. We are concerned about the related amendments that are being made to The Expropriation Act, The Land Acquisition Act, The Municipal Assessment Act, The Surface Rights Act and how the transfer of responsibilities to this new board, how those will be undertaken.

We are also—as has been mentioned, the Land Value Appraisal Commission and the Surface Rights Board, as they are dissolved, what the impact is going to be on the remaining boards and the workload. As I said, municipalities are worried; developers are worried. I spent the summer speaking to developers, as well to those who are concerned about how this process is going to work in the real world. This is a big concern for them. As we heard at the committee for Bill 37, when—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Wiebe: —universally, we heard people coming out to speak against that bill. It wasn't one side against another; it was everyone against this government. Increasingly, that's how it seems out in Manitoba these days.

Everybody is looking for things to be done better. I look forward to listening to Manitobans, to seeking new ways that we can enhance democracy and local say in our province and how we can also work with those to ensure that development happens in a responsible way, in a thoughtful way, in a way that respects the role that municipalities play in our province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I rise to speak to Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act.

This bill will dissolve and terminate the Land Value Appraisal Commission and set up the real property valuation board, take over the responsibilities of the Land Value Appraisal Commission, which includes the determination of compensation under The Expropriation Act for expropriated properties.

It will also take over the responsibility for the determination of compensation for property acquired by government under The Land Acquisition Act, an action currently also the responsibility of the Land Value Appraisal Commission. The real property valuation board will also take over the property tax

assessment appeals under The Municipal Assessment Act, which are currently heard by the Municipal Board. This latter takes away the current procedure which municipalities are used to and puts this responsibility under the real property valuation board.

This bill will also dissolve the Surface Rights Board and create the real property valuation board, which the government says will take over certain other responsibilities of the Surface Rights Board so that applications under The Surface Rights Act will now be held under the real property valuation board.

This dissolution of the Surface Rights Board does create certain issues which need to be resolved because The Surface Rights Act has responsibilities beyond those of assessing compensations. These include: (1) to provide for a comprehensive procedure for acquiring and utilizing surface rights; (2) to provide for the maintenance, preservation and restoration of the surface and land and groundwater acquired in connection with surface rights; and (3) to provide for the resolution of disputes between operators, occupants and owners arising out of the entry upon use or restoration of the surface of the land.

These aspects need more than just a board which provides compensation. Disputes can be about more than money. There's a concern that without the Surface Rights Board, that in the future there may be circumstances where issues are not as well addressed as they should be.

With respect to surface rights, the government of Manitoba has issued a brochure which provides details of the process for an individual holding the mineral rights to property being able to access the land to work and remove the minerals. In question period, my colleague from River Heights raised the issue of the rights as they pertain to a well. Surely, a landowner with a well has the right to continue to have access to clean, unpolluted water, and the owner of the mineral rights must have the responsibility to ensure that the well continues to provide clean, unpolluted water. What happens if the well becomes polluted as a result of the mining activity? Is the operator of the mine responsible if the groundwater is contaminated and the well water is no longer usable? Then what is the responsibility of either party?

* (19:20)

If a mine operator—in the case, for example, of a silica sand mine—does not build the well properly or does not close the well properly, then what sort of compensation is there to the landowner for the loss of

drinkable water and access to new uncontaminated well?

There are a variety of questions, which for the answer is not so clear, and which may require much more than just monetary compensation, which is the function of the real property valuation board.

In addition, whereas in the past, the surface rights issues have primarily been related to oil or gas wells, we are now entering a time when there are proposals to have very large numbers of wells or boreholes put into the ground to mine silica sand. In this context, there urgently needs to be a review of the situation and changes made to the surface rights legislation to ensure it adapts adequately to protect landowners from deleterious effects of silica land mines.

There appear to be at least two potential bad effects of sand mines using wells to extract sand that need to be considered: (1) As mentioned previously, well and groundwater contamination are very serious issues. There are questions which need to be answered here; (2) In addition to this very serious potential issue with a sand mine and subsidence of the land after the operation of the sand mine, this could occur years or decades after the operation of the mine. Will compensation for damage which results from subsidence be given? Since subsidence could occur many years, what provision will be made to ensure that the landowner or future landowner is compensated if this occurs? How will this be addressed?

While the rural property evaluation board has experience in the valuation of property, they—will they also have experience in valuation of compensation for their impacts on mining, on well pollution or on subsidence? The government has not adequately answered these questions; (3) The number of oil wells drilled on a landowner's property is relatively few compared to the number of wells proposed to be drilled on mine sand. What changes will be made to enable proper compensation and proper protection of landowners?

This matter is of particular importance when clauses like the following are used. I quote, Madam Speaker: The operator of the oil well or mine will indemnify and say harmless the occupant from and against all actions, suits, claims and demands by any person with respect of any loss, injury, damage or obligation arising out of its or its contractor's agents, servants and representatives, operations on the right of the way as described in this order unless such loss, injury or damage was caused by the willful damage or gross negligence of the owners or occupants.

This could lead to the sand mine operator getting away with contamination of wells and subsidence with language like this. We will await comments at the committee stage to get further input into the merits or lack of merits of this bill.

Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

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

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Fontaine, Kinew, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Naylor, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Smith (Point Douglas), Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 31, Nays 20.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And at this time, I wonder if we could give the pages another round of applause. This is their first day having to do votes, and it is, I think, a little nerve-racking at times, but they've done a great job. So I told them you would all appreciate that very much.

So the hour now being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 29, 2022

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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