

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

Vol. LXXVIII No. 48B - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 23, 2024

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): On a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I rise today on a truly important matter of privilege that has impacted my ability to participate as a member and adequately represent my constituents in Brandon West. This is a serious matter that I am rise-raising, and I encourage members opposite to listen very closely as I'm raising on a matter that they have been cautioned on previously this session.

I am bringing forward a situation that has directly impacted my ability to participate, as well as goes against long-standing rules of not just this House but all similar Assemblies. Bosc and Gagnon explain rights of members of an Assembly in House of Commons Procedures and Practice, third edition, and I have referenced that material substantially in preparing these remarks as well as other legislative precedents.

As these experts write, and I quote, a complaint on a matter of privilege must satisfy two conditions before it can be accorded precedence over the orders of the day. First, the Speaker must be convinced that a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been made and second, the matter must be raised at the earliest opportunity. I believe that both of these criteria have been met and I will explain why, Honourable Speaker.

As Speaker Bosley noted, if an honourable member is impeded or obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts or other improper behaviour, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege.

My ability to participate was directly impacted by the actions of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and this NDP government. My own hometown paper has reached out to me to comment on the proposed changes, but I cannot properly represent my constituents or

answer these questions when the minister has yet to table this legislation. That is why these rules exist, Honourable Speaker.

We live in a society of rules and laws. Unfortunately, we are consistently seeing certain members opposite think that the rules of this Chamber do not apply to them. I fundamentally can't grasp that way of thinking. Coming from my background in law enforcement, that is akin to arguing that laws don't apply to you and no one would be that foolish.

As Speaker Milliken remarked in October of 2010, and I quote: It is indisputable that it is well-established practice and accepted convention that this House has the right of first access to the text of bills that it will consider, unquote.

Unfortunately, this minister breached this long-standing convention and spoke to media and has confirmed details about a bill that has not been introduced in this House.

In June of 2027, Speaker Regan considered a similar matter federally where the contents of changes to the Canadian transportation act were provided to media outlets prior to their publication in the House. He referenced Speaker Parent in his ruling, and I quote, although the members of the House should always be the first ones to examine legislation after it has been introduced and read the first time, this rule must be balanced against the need for the government to consult both experts and the public when developing its legislative proposals.

I must be clear, Honourable Speaker, that is not what occurred in this situation. This was not the development of a bill; rather, the members opposite were frustrated and decided that their plans superseded the rules of this House. That is unacceptable. There is one set of rules for all legislators, and those are universal. No matter how inconvenient it may be for the Minister of Justice, he is bound to table legislation before it goes—before he goes and speaks to the public, or confirms details in the public.

This is clearly a prima facie breach of privilege, Honourable Speaker. That minister violated long-standing traditions and rules. They did so knowingly. He knew that the legislation had not been distributed in this House.

This is also part of a precedent with this government. By my count, Honourable Speaker, this is at least the third instance where this privilege has been violated in just the last month and a half. I understand that the minister may not like the role that we in opposition play, but we represent Manitobans as faithfully as he does, and it is concerning to see a disregard for the Manitobans that I represent.

This is clearly the first time that I could rise in this House on a—on this matter, and I had to confirm details from a media article Sunday evening. This article clearly showed that government sources confirmed details of this bill that I had no access to.

A core tenant of responsible government is that responsibility flows from top down, and accountability flows upwards. These two meet at the minister who is fundamentally responsible for and accountable for all decisions and actions made within his department.

We have seen this time and time again, provincially and federally. If someone from his department confirmed details to the media, then this is a serious leak if such disclosure was unauthorized, and the minister is accountable.

So the criteria of timeliness is met, as I could not have risen on this point earlier. There was a substantial amount of referencing and research to do to ensure I was fully aware of all of the details of this transgression.

To communicate exactly how serious this is, I have further reference from other Speakers to share with the House, hopefully to carry just how important this is, Honourable Speaker.

On April 19, 2016, Speaker Regan delivered his ruling on a matter along similar lines. Amendments to the Criminal Code were reported to media before they were introduced in this House. In that instance, the government whip rose and apologized on behalf of the government because it was not authorized.

Unfortunately, Honourable Speaker, that is not what happened here. For the third time we saw a knowledgeable and intentional violation of these rules, and I will express exactly what I mean, because it is vital to your ruling on this.

Need I remind members of this House that it has been merely weeks since the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) turned to the Premier (Mr. Kinew) at a media availability and asked 'fermission'—permission to give details on a bill. Quote,

am I allowed to answer this question, she asked. The Premier granted that endorsement. Quote, just go for it, he said.

The minister joked about their shared disregard for the rules. She said, and I quote, what's another matter of privilege, right? We've tabled that entire recording for your consideration as well as the past, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, I should be learning about bills we are debating in this House when a copy of the text is distributed to this Chamber. I should not be learning the details in the newspaper. This is a matter of respect for this House and respect for all of its members.

As the examples I presented earlier show, Honourable Speaker, a minister is encouraged and entitled to consult with Manitobans in the crafting of legislation. But there is a difference between consulting on the contents and having special-interest groups present to media on intimate knowledge of a bill that has not been tabled.

In his April 19, 2016 ruling, Speaker Regan quoted extensively from Speaker Milliken, used precedent to form the basis of a ruling—of his ruling of a prima facie case that was evident. In March of 2021, Speaker Milliken ruled that, quote, the convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only that members themselves may be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent role which this House plays and must play in the legislation—legislative affairs of this nation.

* (13:40)

Speaker Regan concluded, quote, in this instance, the Chair must conclude that the House's right of first access to legislative information was not respected. The Chair appreciates the chief government whip's assertion that no one in the government was authorized to publicly release the specific details of the bill before its introduction.

Still, it did happen and these kinds of incidents cause grave concern among honourable members. I believe it is a good reason why extra care should be taken to ensure that matters that ought properly be brought to the House first do not in any way get out in the public domain prematurely.

In December of 1986, Speaker Fraser addressed a matter of privilege where a member alleged that an American pharmaceutical company had advance knowledge of a bill that had not been introduced.

Quote: I think it is appropriate for the Chair to remind all honourable members that these kinds of incidents do cause grave concern among honourable members and I believe it is a good reason why extra special care should be taken, especially by ministers to ensure that matters that ought properly to be introduced in the House do not in any way get out in the public domain and cause concern to honourable members, and often to ministers as well. End quote.

These are two separate Speakers who have confirmed that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) clearly knew that to present on these bills to media was a breach of our privilege as members and a violation of contempt of this House.

To conclude, I encourage you, Honourable Speaker, to echo the words of Speaker Regan: Thus, the available precedents lead me to conclude that incidents constitute a prima facie question of privilege. Unquote.

I have presented an obvious case, including the facts of members on this side of the aisle are fully aware of the rules because you yourself have reminded them that it is very clear in this Chamber.

The Justice Minister, of all members opposite, should be able to obey the rules of this House and introductions—sorry, instructions from you, the Speaker.

But, just like with their failed bail reform, chronic repeat offenders think that they are above consequences. These actions of the government have directly impacted how I can represent my constituents and that needs to be addressed. The citizens of Brandon West deserve this minister's respect. This is a repeated and intentional disregard of long-standing rules of this House. It is done with malice and forethought. It is done to diminish the ability of members of this House to engage in enlightened and informed debate and to control media articles, as I cannot give comments when they are discussing secret information.

Honourable Speaker, over a month has gone by since some ministers discussed bills in the media that have still to date not been tabled. That is willful, that is intentional and that is a violation of privileges of all members and it must be addressed. This is a pattern that has gone on for far too long.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that the Minister of Justice be compelled to apologize to this House for his transgression—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member can only have a seconder who is actually in his chair.

Mr. Balcaen: I'm sorry, Honourable Speaker.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the minister for Lac du Bonnet, that the Minister of Justice be compelled to apologize to this House for his transgressions and that this matter be referred to an all-party committee for review.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would remind the member that he needs to use the proper title when he's referring to someone, either his constituency title, ministerial title or title as official leader. But not—using the wrong title is not acceptable.

So, if the member would like to repeat that and do it properly this time, I'd appreciate that.

Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet, that the Minister of Justice be compelled to apologize to this House for his transgression and that this matter be referred to an all-party committee for review.

The Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would like to remind the House that all remarks at this time must be limited strictly to relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): In respect of the matter of privilege raised by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), just a couple of things for your consideration, Honourable Speaker.

(1) Certainly this isn't a case in which prima facie has been made. The member is in his seat, rising and attempting to waste valuable time this afternoon. So his privileges haven't been violated or molested.

Also, Honourable Speaker, this isn't the earliest opportunity that the member for Brandon West had. If, indeed, such a violation had occurred, the member for Brandon West could have gotten up yesterday. And so, today, this is a—too late, so I would also disabuse the member in his assessment that this is the earliest opportunity. It, in fact, is not.

Let me just say this, Honourable Speaker, in respect of your deliberations. Let me be explicitly clear: had the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) actually read the article properly, he would see that no minister commented and no government officials ever spoke to media. There's been no prima facie case here.

So, I would suggest that the member for Brandon West—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: —take some time, read the article again and he will see that, in fact, what he just put on the record is wrong and he owes an apology to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), who is doing his job in the best way on behalf of all Manitobans.

Secondly—or, finally, Honourable Speaker, let me just say this in respect of your deliberations: had members opposite, every single one of them, not wasted days on days and days rising in the House, putting forward fictitious, erroneous, ridiculous matters of privilege, blocking our amazing legislative agenda, the member for Brandon West could have read the bill.

But, unfortunately, every single—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: —member stood up, wasted everybody's time, and so—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: —Honourable Speaker, my suggestion is that if the members opposite want to see our amazing legislation on behalf of Manitobans, next time don't pull what you did.

Miigwech.

The Speaker: A matter of privilege is an important issue and I will take this under advisement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? *[interjection]*

Order.

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Excellence in Education Awards

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): This past Friday, April 19, I had the honour of recognizing a group of exceptional Manitoba educators by presenting them

with this year's Manitoba's Excellence in Education Awards.

Every year, teachers from across the province are nominated by their colleagues, school leaders and students. Nominees demonstrate outstanding educational practices and have a deep and lasting impact on student achievement and attendance in our Manitoba schools.

* (13:50)

I would like to share with you a little bit about each recipient of the award and why they were chosen by this year's selection committee.

Saul Correia from Collège Churchill High School, winner of a teacher's Excellence Award, was recognized for his commitment to ensuring an inclusive, safe and engaging environment in his woodworking program. One notable project he had his students complete was the construction of dog houses, which were donated to northern communities for dogs in need of shelter.

Mirosława Demko from Ralph Brown School, was winner of the Teaching Excellence Award and recognized for her ability to spark her students' curiosity through community garden initiatives and also coding instruction at grade 3–1, 2 and 3, actually because she's a multiyear, multilingual teacher that also teaches in the Ukrainian program. Her garden initiatives and coding instruction have had a lasting impact on her students.

Tara Tuchscherer from St. James Collegiate, one of the teaching excellent award, was recognized for encouraging her students to take initiative in the areas of human rights, sustainability, literacy and Indigenous allyship. Tara has also dedicated her time to help her colleagues by offering monthly lessons that broaden understanding of truth and reconciliation which is then utilized in their respective classrooms.

Rachel Robinson from Victor Mager School, was winner of the Outstanding New Teacher Award, and recognized for her enthusiasm and energy she brings to her school. Outdoor learning workshops, meals-to-go, spirit weeks, student newsletters, skating programs are just a few of the activities she has initiated or been a part of since beginning her career two years ago.

Karen Duffield from Shamrock School, was winner of the Outstanding School Leader Award, recognized for her dedication to changing her school's culture by meaningfully engaging students, families after the school was impacted by incidents of discrimination.

Rebecca Okemow from Strathclair Community School, was winner of the Premier's Award for Excellence in Education. Recognized for her commitment to promoting and encouraging pride in Indigenous identity, Rebecca has explored land-based learning, Indigenous language with her students, while also emphasizing the outdoors through organizing activities such as fishing, snowshoeing, kayaking and cross-country skiing.

Honourable Speaker, I want to thank all this year's award winners for their dedication to their students, families and communities. They are an inspiration for all Manitoba educators and will continue to be the exemplary role models Manitoba youth will look up to while attending school.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this important recognition forward. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to celebrate the exceptional achievements and contributions of our educators here in Manitoba. We gather to honour those who have demonstrated unparalleled dedication, innovation and excellence in the field of education.

Since 2006, the government has formally recognized outstanding contributions of Manitoba educators through the Excellence in Education Awards. These awards recognize not only outstanding teaching but also the transformative impact that educators have on the lives of their students and the broader community.

As the minister noted, this year's award recipients come from a range of diverse backgrounds, each showcasing their own unique skills and passion, both in and outside the classroom, many—with many serving long and dedicated careers over many decades.

We have asked many things of our educators over the past few years. Their resiliency and flexibility came to the test, treading the unknowns of a rapid shift to virtual learning during the pandemic. Teachers responded as they always have to the challenges of the day, with courage, dedication and passion for improving the lives of Manitoba students.

And so on behalf of our Progressive Conservative team, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the nominees and winners of this year's Manitoba Excellence in Education Awards. Your achievements are a testament to the transformative power of education and the incredible difference that dedicated educators can make in the lives of their students.

And on the topic of excellence in education, I would also like to recognize a teacher from my constituency of Spruce Woods, Mrs. Jessica Canning, who, just last week, was recognized with the 2023 Agriculture in the Classroom Educator Champion Award.

Jessica is a teacher at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School in Brandon, and she brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her students and is extremely deserving of this award as well. Congratulations, Jessica.

Let us continue as legislators to support and recognize and celebrate the remarkable educators who make a positive impact every day in the lives of our students.

Thank you for your commitment to excellence in education, and congratulations once again to all the honorees.

Thank you.

The Speaker: No further ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

World Book Day

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Today is World Book Day. Today we celebrate books that give you a chance to disappear into another world, that capture your imagination and foster creativity. I'm sure we've all been changed by a moving story we've read, heard or seen.

Children benefit from reading unique and diverse stories at their school or their local library. As an educator, I know that books are safe spaces for many kids and offer comfort through difficult times.

We have librarians, authors and educators to thank for the stories that change our lives. For this year's World Book Day, I've 'invited'—invited Michael Hohner, the president of the Manitoba Library Association, to join us in the gallery today. Michael and his colleagues represent the leaders in our communities who stand up for children's right to read in this province.

For many, books are the key to accepting ourselves, they reveal a new way to see the world and make us more empathetic to the experiences of others.

Recently, we've seen attempted book bans rise as a strategy to make people feel unwelcome in our communities. Campaigns have primarily targeted books written by 2SLGBTQQIA+ authors, Black authors, Indigenous authors and other authors of colour.

I am proud to say I stand with a government that celebrates the strength found in diversity. We must choose love and acceptance over agendas of hate and division.

Please join me in thanking Michael and libraries in Manitoba for their amazing work in uplifting diverse stories and creating safe spaces for all our kids.

Thank you, Michael.

Member for Dawson Trail—Birth of Grandson Jasper

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good afternoon. As of last Friday, April 19, I have had the honour to be the MLA for Dawson Trail for the past eight years.

It's remarkable, really, how eight years can fly by. In the past eight years, life has changed drastically for everyone. You find yourself getting wrapped up in the political realm as an MLA, and you lose sight of the small things, the important things, the simplicities of life.

Eight remarkable years as an MLA, helping many people and organizations be part of creating legislation that will make a difference for our province and the next generations.

And you know what? After eight years of political life, it took the birth of a child on April 20 to really put things into perspective. While our duties as MLAs and the constituents we serve are of the utmost importance, so are our lives, our children, our grandchildren. So today, I would like to celebrate the birth of my grandson, the little boy who made me a grandpa, Jasper.

Not only did this incredible little boy help put into perspective why, sometimes, stepping back for a moment and appreciating those who surround you is necessary, it also put into perspective the importance of this role.

Forest Witcraft once wrote: 100 years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, the kind of car I drove, but the world may be a different place because I was important in the life of a child.

Welcome to the world, Jasper. I love you so much already. And Zayne and Jason, I'm incredibly proud of you both and wish you all the best in this next chapter of your life.

Zayne, Jason and Jasper join us in the gallery today.

* (14:00)

Bilal Community and Family Centre

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Honourable Speaker, today I rise in honour of Bilal Community and Family Centre, a non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring, educating and empowering newcomer and immigrant communities, with a focus on youth and families.

Since 2017, BCFC has served over 600 newcomers with seminars, weekend classes and an array of drop-in programs. BCFC is particularly proud of its long-standing summer youth program, which hosts over 200 newcomer children and youth per year. Through academic tutoring, recreational and sports activities and personal development, participants gain valuable life skills and staff gain employment experience and training.

BCFC has also developed a restorative youth justice program. This program is designed to divert newcomer youth from the criminal justice system through conflict resolution, promoting healing, reparation and re-integration into the community. They have already successfully diverted over 20 clients and have helped many at-risk youth with coaching, mental health support, mentorship, anger management sessions and community engagement.

Alongside their restorative justice program, BCFC hosts a Newcomer Community Mobilization Initiative. By bringing together government agencies and community organizations, staff support immigrant youth and families with complex needs and help create, innovate solutions to community safety. The program has made a massive impact, with 40 families having participated this year alone.

Joining us today we have Bilal Community and Family Centre founder, Muhiadin Omar, board chair, Kathleen Buddle and other board members, staff and volunteers from BCFC, whose names I would like entered into Hansard.

Please join me in thanking Bilal Community and Family Centre for their dedication and service to our Manitoban community.

Anteneh Abraha, Kadar Ahmed, Sultan Ali, Kathleen Buddle, Warren Clarke, Jack Dan Maxson, Muhiadin Sheikh Omar, Magalie Sibomana

Expanding Community Cancer Care

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Today I rise to recognize the 25 outstanding individuals representing the 15 surrounding communities of the Expanding Community Cancer Care committee in Russell.

The committee was established in 2014 to launch an improved area for chemotherapy in the Russell hospital. Committee was told a build was not possible and renovations would be upwards of \$610,000, and they'd be responsible for all funds. With time, the new cost climbed to \$1.1 million and the plan didn't meet the needs of the committee so the plan was rejected and an application to build was submitted to Prairie Mountain Health.

In 2021, E-C-C was granted permission, and in 2022 a tender to build was put out and a contract awarded at a \$2.5-million cost. The E-C-C was short \$700,000 to begin, and our PC government provided these funds so there would be no more delays.

On April 13, a celebration gala was held, and I was joined by a number of my colleagues to celebrate the accomplishments of the E-C-C committee.

With the support of the seven surrounding RMs, hockey teams, various events, farmers donating cropland, individuals, organizations, businesses, private memorial donations, the E-C-C raised a whopping \$2.9 million.

The new 3,300-foot building linked to the current health centre will provide four treatment areas, a nursing station, dictation room, staff room, washrooms, proper examination rooms in a welcoming environment with dignity, safety and privacy. The final phase is a proper parking lot that'll make their dreams a reality.

I would like to congratulate Gloria, Judy and the entire committee for their hard work and perseverance and not ever taking no as an answer.

Your commitment made this dream become a reality. Congratulations.

And I would also ask—like to ask for leave to include the 25 committee members into Hansard.

Thank you.

Donna Auger, Karen Bauer, Betty Beischer, Joyce Bork, Laurie Burgess, Barb Cameron, Cheryl Collins, Pam Demchynski, Judy Forsyth, Andrea Glasman, Jo-Anne Hickman, Margaret Hodgson, Terry Jackson, Colleen Jones, Eunice Koss, Darlene Lichkowski, Connie Popp, Keith Popp, Cheryl Robinson, Cheryl Rubeniuk, Zelma Salyn, Lesley Sawchuk, Brenda Simard, Gloria Tibbatts, Marsha Trinder, Terri Welwood

Distribution of Garden Seeds to Elmwood Residents

MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My office has been distributing garden seeds to Elmwood residents since 1985. When our residents see us on the streets in the spring, they know exactly what we're there for: it's garden seed time.

In the early years, residents got forget-me-not flower seeds. We then graduated to multiple types of flower seeds, then to 10 different types of vegetable seeds, all purchased from McKenzie Seeds of Brandon.

The idea of distributing seeds came to me from a former NDP MLA, Ben Hanuschak, who was MLA for Burrows from 1966 to 1981 and was Speaker of this House from 1969 to 1970. Ben came up with the idea for his 1966 election campaign. He purchased bags of the raw seed of forget-me-nots, he filled plastic bags, labelled them and distributed them to the—packets to residents of Burrows constituency.

My concern has always been that our generation has turned our backs on gardening. Our parents and grandparents had gardens. We need to rediscover our roots and get back to growing some of our own food.

Every spring is a welcome opportunity to meet and greet our residents in their yards, often giving our gardeners a choice of variety of garden seeds: sunflowers, carrots, zucchinis, cucumbers, beans, peas, pumpkins.

For the first 22 years, the constituency allowances branch paid for the seeds, and they allowed their mailing as a frank. Now they don't. In its place, we have a—fridge magnets and pens made with petroleum products.

We now have an opportunity to revisit this issue and reinstate seeds—seeds as a qualifiable expense. You can still distribute your fridge magnets, but enable the rest of us to promote gardening if we want. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order. Order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: Oral questions. Nobody has any questions today?

Minister of Labour and PNP Program Premier's Knowledge of Minister's Comments

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I was just listening to the blooming of new relationships happening in this wonderful Chamber, and I just was taken back from the member for Elmwood's (MLA Maloway) statement.

So, on a serious topic, Honourable Speaker, multiple people with absolutely everything to lose have come forward with the same story. They say the Minister of Labour and Immigration, the MLA for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino), threatened them with consequences.

We've heard the NDP minister slap the table and raise her voice.

We're asking: Was the Premier, the NDP Leader, in the room at the time?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): So I asked these—I answered these questions yesterday. We did a draw last week, we're doing a draw tomorrow, we're doing another draw next week. And this minister has my full support.

I wonder if the member opposite can say the same about his party. The PC Party of Manitoba just put out a recent membership survey, and the first slide on this membership survey that this leader has—his political organization sent out in his interim capacity says, and I quote: Many of you who have expressed that you did not feel the 2023 provincial election campaign aligned with your values or the values you believed aligned with the PC Party of Manitoba. End quote.

Again, I think most Manitobans could see that very clearly, but I think it's pretty surprising to see that the interim leader of the PC Party has given direction for them to communicate to their members and say that they themselves did not align—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, once again, there's nothing new with you know who, the member from Fort Rouge. Dodging and deflecting as usual. This is his new MO.

The Premier, the Minister of Labour and Immigration and many NDP members are calling these hopeful newcomers liars, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, if what the hopeful new Manitobans conveyed to them was not, then can the member for Fort Rouge inform the House what exactly was said?

* (14:10)

Mr. Kinew: So in terms of this new material, just wait, there's more, Honourable Speaker.

So under the direction of this interim leader, he sent out an email to the entire PC Party membership in which he admitted that not only did the 2023 provincial election campaign not align with the values of the PC Party, but then they went on to say, and I quote here, we may have strayed during the election. End quote.

So again, we've been very clear with the people of Manitoba that we rejected the division that the PCs campaigned on last year. Manitobans agreed. So I think that this is very significant that under the direction of this interim PC Party leader, the PC Party itself is now stating on the record, to their own members, we may have strayed during the election.

And, of course, the values of the PC Party members themselves were not reflected by this leader or anyone on the opposite side. So what is it—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Call for Independent Investigation

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, once again, the only one that is trying to divide Manitobans is the Premier, the member for Fort Rouge.

Honourable Speaker, he's dodging the questions because he knows his minister and he himself have made a major mistake, and it broke the trust of many hopeful new Manitobans. Manitoba is meant to be the place—the home of hope, and the members opposite, including the MLA for Notre Dame, have made it a place of fear.

And if the NDP leader is so confident there's no wrongdoing, why not investigate?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I can confirm that the PC Party of Manitoba is undertaking an investigation. An investigation, and I quote, into the values that they strayed from during the last election.

I'll table these documents that the interim PC Party leader directed be mailed to every single PC Party member in the province. Let's dive into some of the questions that they asked their members. What's important in the next leader? Two of the options for them to consider are competence and integrity.

On this side of the House, we would assume anyone putting their name forward for leader would be competent and have integrity. But under this member opposite, under the interim leader opposite, apparently

it's up for debate. Should the next PC Party leader show integrity? Should they be competent?

According to this interim PC Party leader, that's for others to decide.

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

Premier of Manitoba Activities Prior to Being Elected

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, we had a whole set of questions coming up. We had a whole set of questions coming up, and the member for Fort Rouge wants to talk about integrity.

Honourable Speaker, in my early to mid-20s, I was working at schools, working with youth, contributing in a positive way to not only my community but also working with students in the LGBTQ community.

I would like to ask this Premier, this leader of the NDP, what was he doing at that time in his life?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): So again, let's dive further into the PC Party membership survey that this interim PC leader has directed—somebody who, I would point out, has not ruled out running for the permanent leader position in the future. So maybe he'll be reviewing these results very, very closely.

So again, the opening statement was that the 2023 campaign that every single member opposite supported did not align with the values of the members of the PC Party, that they strayed during the election. And, of course, I just talked a bit about some of the qualities for leader; this interim leader's asking, what are the values of the party, in a subsequent question.

Is integrity? Is competency? Is ethical behaviour something that should be required in the PC Party of Manitoba? Again, most Manitobans would take these things for granted. But why is it that the member opposite wonders whether or not his party should sow ethical behaviour?

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, I am ready to debate the topic of integrity on a day-to-day basis with this Leader of the NDP. He has nothing to stand on.

I table the story that details the activities of the member of Fort Rouge before he was elected and what he has said about them. This story specifies that the

member's public account varies from the court records. Why are there incongruities between the Premier's ghostwritten memoir and the official court records, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: Well, again, it's really something that this interim PC leader has directed that his party tell their members that the last provincial election campaign that saw all of them elected did not align with the values of the members of that party and that of course they, quote, may have strayed during the election. Unquote.

And it's quite shocking that they don't take it for granted that there would be competence or integrity shown from a PC Party leader, or that the party itself should show the values of ethics or integrity. But I think there's something really, really telling here that they put on a survey question. The question is whether the PC Party should be empathetic.

I think after the resounding defeat that they suffered last year, targeting vulnerable Manitobans day in, day out, it really should be clear to the members opposite and the interim PC leader that yes, Manitobans want them to show empathy.

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

Minister of Labour Resignation Request

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, we have seen over the last couple of weeks the lack of empathy, the lack of character from not only this Premier, but also his minister, the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino).

So I ask again today, Honourable Speaker, since we're talking about integrity and stepping up: Will the Premier ask his MLA for Notre Dame to resign as Minister of Labour and Immigration, and apologize today to all those hopeful new Manitobans, which they all have threatened on a daily basis? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, here's the thing, Honourable Speaker. They went out and campaigned on division last year. They went out and sought to be elected on attacking vulnerable Manitobans: the families of murder victims.

Now some of them found their way into the Chamber, but now, they're asking the PC Party membership, you know, are you willing to forgive us

that we strayed during the election, that we didn't reflect your values? Do you think we should practise competence and integrity?

It's clear that they've placed a big mistake at the feet of their members and they're now doing the flip-flop that they always talk about. They campaigned on division; now they want to change the channel.

Well, when you come here and you try to change the values on which you were elected as they're now doing, I think you're the one who should resign.

Cost of Living Increase Request for Affordability Measures

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans do not believe this NDP government, and they are finally starting to see through the NDP's smoke and mirrors, as we've been saying all along.

This Premier (Mr. Kinew) threatened local grocery stores that they must reduce their prices, or else. But now, grocery prices are higher than ever and rising faster than they are in Saskatchewan and Ontario.

I table a graph showing the consumer price index and their article that shows grocery prices are higher now than they were on January 1. This minister has no affordability measures that are working. He has no plan.

Why won't the minister admit today that he has no plan? Grocery prices are higher and they are increasing education and property taxes on hard-working Manitobans by \$148 million.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Honourable Speaker, we're happy to stand on our record of affordability.

One of the first things we did since coming to office was to take real action to deliver affordability directly to Manitobans by cutting the fuel tax by 14 cents a litre on January 1. That's savings every time Manitobans fuel up. That's real savings in their pockets every day, and we're proud of that fact. And as a result of that, what happened? Lowest inflation rate for three months in the country.

* (14:20)

The Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, just like I said, Manitobans do not believe the NDP. The minister doesn't even have the audacity to stand up and answer

one of the questions or comment on the increasing grocery prices.

Manitobans do not believe them. And I will table a survey of over 800 Manitobans from Probe Research that clearly states four out of five Manitobans do not think the budget shows a—more affordability measures for them, that even more Manitobans believe they will be paying more, and to top it all off, one third of every NDP member doesn't believe this Premier.

It's only been seven months, and the cracks are already starting to show.

Will the minister admit today and answer one question, please, that he has no plan—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, members opposite should pay attention. We've—already delivering on our plan. We lowered the fuel tax by 14 cents. We cut the homeowners tax credit. It's \$1,500 that homeowners can get. That is a real savings for Manitobans. These initiatives that we are doing in Manitoba to save all Manitobans money, this is what we are talking about with our government plan.

Instead of talk, instead of division, instead of picking fights with Manitobans and with the federal government, we're just doing the work. We're getting things done for Manitobans, and that means saving you money every day.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, proof once again, facts do not matter for this NDP. That minister will not simply answer why groceries prices are the highest they've been in this province under the NDP. He will not comment on the \$148-million tax increase under this NDP. And as I table more articles, because facts do matter, showing a 17 per cent increase in property taxes in Manitoba, \$148-million tax grab.

I've already tabled more facts, and here's another one. Gas prices in this province are increasing every single day and are at the highest point they've been today than they were on January 1.

Why won't this minister just simply stand up and say he has no plan and he is not working for affordability measures for Manitobans?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, the member's assertion's wrong. We have the lowest gas prices in the country. We have the lowest inflation rate in the country for three months in a row. We extended the

gas tax holiday. We've brought in a new \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit. We did a broad-base middle-class tax cut. We doubled the 'fratertile'—fertility treatment tax credit, increased the renters tax credit, free prescription birth control, real \$10-a-day daycare, 5 per cent lower on car insurance, \$300 security system rebate, \$4,000 EV plug-in hybrid rate and the list goes on.

Meeting with PNP Applicants Labour Minister's Conduct

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): While members opposite want to talk about empathy, I want to talk about honesty.

For two days, we've been calling on this NDP government to address the undemocratic behaviour of the Minister of Labour and Immigration. And instead of rising to admit her guilt, this minister continues to hide behind her Premier (Mr. Kinew) and her colleagues. This is not the same individual who slammed tables and demanded that the international community stop protesting and make her look bad.

So I ask the minister a simple question: Is her behaviour some subdued in this Chamber because the cameras are on and she can't hide from the truth?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Members opposite are engaging in slander. They have tabled nameless sources and hearsay. There are no references to dates or any other kind of information so that I may be able to even begin to defend myself.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition wildly accused that the Premier might have been at the same meeting with protestors that I allegedly threatened.

Honourable Speaker, there were dozens of people at that meeting with the Premier that would be able to corroborate that no such thing happened. And the same goes for all of my meetings with the public on this matter.

Honourable Speaker, members opposite are hurling untrue and unfair—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Members opposite should be ashamed. Multiple MPNP applicants have come forward, shared their stories of how they were intimidated by this minister, shared how they felt uncomfortable and

shared their concerns of protesting for fear of repercussions.

And what do the NDP do? They call these students liars. They shout hateful things across the Chamber.

So I ask the minister and her colleagues: Will they step outside of this Chamber, away from their parliamentary privilege, and repeat these attacks on the international community?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, members opposite are engaging in slander. Even worse, members opposite are using people who are desperately looking for ways to stay in the country. And members opposite have done nothing and can do nothing to help in this situation that about 6,700 temporary foreign workers find themselves in. All members opposite have done is use them for their crass political gain.

Our NDP government is actively listening. We're actively working to find solutions for these folks, and our Premier has made a commitment to be a champion for these temporary foreign workers to stay in the country. That's why our Province is working towards an agreement with the federal government to keep these workers in Manitoba, and we are hopeful for a positive announcement for them soon.

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

Ms. Byram: They won't, Honourable Speaker. They hide behind privilege, the same way the minister hides from her colleagues, the same way she hides from accountability. She must be the next one taking a trip to New York.

She pretends that because draws have happened, then nothing could be wrong. She threatened to cancel draws if protests didn't stop.

Will the minister do the right thing and apologize and co-operate with an investigation?

MLA Marcelino: Members opposite are engaging in slander for their own crass political gain. While the PCs cut one third of the human resources of our department, our NDP team invested \$1 million more this year in Budget 2024 to make improvements for MPNP system.

While the PC legacy on immigration is our highest out-migration rates ever in this province and shameful prevention of internationally educated nurses to work in Manitoba, on our side of the House, we're growing our economy in our communities through immigration and supporting newcomers' success.

PCs need to stop peddling their division, their desperation and American-style politics, and they need to get on board with us and do what Manitobans paid us—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

**Minister of Labour and PNP Program
Call for Independent Investigation**

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, the international community came to Manitoba to invest and contribute to our communities. Under the PCs, Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program was fair, predictable and transparent.

Under the NDP it turned into a lottery, unfair, unpredictable and anything but transparent. Now several have come forward with credible fears that they will face consequences if they protest the NDP's senseless policies. The minister made these threats and she's hiding it.

Will this Premier (Mr. Kinew) call for an immediate investigation?

* (14:30)

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Hey, like Coach Rick Bowness says, you come for one of us, you come for all of us. And on this side of the House—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Simard: On this side of the House, we are a team. We are a team focused on making Manitoba the great province that we all know that it is.

And in that survey, put on none of the above, because you don't answer any of them.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, the NDP government just doesn't get it.

Thousands in the international community are seriously anxious because there have been no draws for international students since February 8. Work permits are expiring, and they face the real threat of being forced to leave the country. Worse, they've been bullied and threatened with consequences if they choose to protest this NDP's inaction and delays. These people want to stay in Manitoba, they want to invest in Manitoba and they want to exercise their constitutional rights.

So I ask the Premier again, will you call for an immediate investigation?

Mr. Simard: In the spirit of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, you are offside with that line of questioning.

We have checked the replay. This minister, the Lady Byng winner, has more integrity in their small finger than the rest of that caucus has. She is working tirelessly for Manitobans. She is working tirelessly for the people who want to become Manitobans, and we are lucky on this side of the House to have her.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, it's clear: speak up against this NDP government, and you are gone. Listen to the minister, and you get preferential treatment. Talk about picking winners and losers and pitting newcomers against each other. Shame on the NDP.

We've spoken to several people, and now we know the Premier was also a witness to the member's shouts and intimidation. These claims need to be investigated fully, and we know that the immigration system needs to be fair and transparent.

The minister has been accused of putting her thumb on the scale of abusing her power.

So why does this Premier refuse to allow an investigation?

Mr. Simard: On this side of the House, we are an equal-opportunity party, so we're going to quote another sport, football: unsportsmanlike conduct on that side of the House.

We have a team that is ready to deliver for Manitobans. Ready to deliver on affordability, ready to deliver on health care, ready to deliver on education, ready—deliver for communities, ready—deliver for immigration, ready to deliver for labour. We are ready.

We are ready debate the issues in this House; come with questions about what matters to Manitobans.

**Nurse Overtime Hours
Request for Plan to Reduce**

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): While in campaign mode, the NDP made some big promises they have yet to keep, including reducing nurse overtime.

I don't know if they've noticed the billboards and the ads that the Nurses Union has been putting out, but nurses are not feeling heard by this NDP government.

The Minister of Health campaigned on ending nurse overtime and, in fact, they went so far as to introduce

legislation twice while in opposition to completely end mandatory overtime.

So I have a simple question: How many nurse overtime hours have been worked since the NDP took office?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, our 2024 budget has \$309 million earmarked for the retention, recruitment and training of health-care professionals across our province.

In contrast, the PCs spent \$1.2 million on hateful advertising—hateful advertising—to attack the victims—victims—in our communities. To attack trans kids. To 'affect' vulnerable people in our province.

On this side of the House, we are focused on investing in this province to improve the conditions for health-care workers. On that side of the House, they were investing in division and hate and taking steps that drove health-care workers out of the province.

We will take no lessons from that member or any member—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: I checked the NDP's budget this morning. There's not a single dollar earmarked for reducing nurse overtime.

I'll table a FIPPA that reveals in the months of October through December alone, almost 78,000 overtime hours were clocked for front-line nurses in Shared Health facilities. This doesn't include major hospitals in Winnipeg, aside from HSC, or rural hospitals.

That equates to almost nine years' worth of overtime for these front-line nurses. Nine years taken from these nurses on the NDP's watch.

Why has this NDP government failed to listen to such a major concern from nurses?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we have been listening to nurses since our first day in office. And I'll tell you a little bit about what we've heard.

We heard that for over seven and a half years, they put up with a previous PC government that refused to meet with them, refused to listen to them, that forced them into the tunnels under HSC to go and look for other jobs when they deleted their positions for hundreds of nurses across the health-care system. These are the very nurses who no longer were able to work

at the bedside of over 500 beds the previous government cut from our health-care system.

On this side of the House, we're investing in retention. We're investing in relationships. We're investing in capacity. We're investing on people on the front lines, something they didn't do for two terms—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mrs. Cook: To quote the now-Premier (Mr. Kinew) from Hansard, overtime causes personal difficulties around child care, managing of families. It's been a concern that's been highlighted by nurses and by others in health care. End quote.

Yet, in his first three months in government, you've done nothing. There's no money earmarked in your budget, there is no money earmarked in the budget to reduce nurse overtime. They cried foul in opposition for years, and now the monthly average is 26,000 hours of nursing overtime—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Cook: While the Premier is trying to shout me down, I'll ask: Is the NDP government actually listening to nurses, or was that just another NDP broken campaign promise?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we've invested more in improving staffing in the health-care system in six months than that previous failed government did in over six years, in over two terms of their government.

We have invested in capacity to the point where here in Manitoba, as announced yesterday—I wish they'd pay attention—we have a record number of kidney transplants being performed here in Manitoba. We're investing so much that today we had the pleasure of announcing, for the first time ever in our province's history, a provincial spine program for those who've been waiting, that they never delivered on.

We've had several stops on our listening tour, and we're actioning what's being brought forward every day. We're going to keep listening to the front lines and investing in health care based on what they tell us they need to see happen, something that never happened—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Manitoba's Energy Grid Net Zero Target

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): As a quick side note, I would like to table the following document to confirm the statistics that were questioned by the Environment Minister during my question yesterday.

Furthermore, we know that our unseasonably warm temperatures, among many other factors such as drought conditions, affect Hydro revenues. Given all of the warning signs made by the previous CEO of Manitoba Hydro, does this Premier (Mr. Kinew) believe that our current energy grid is sufficient to sustain net zero by 2050?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you to the member for Tyndall Park for the question. Unfortunately, I'm not in the House today to view the document that was—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

You can't refer to a member being present or absent in the House, even if it's yourself.

MLA Schmidt: My sincere apologies, Honourable Speaker, I—my mistake.

* (14:40)

Yes, and so thank you for the question to the member for Tyndall Park about Manitoba Hydro.

As the Minister responsible for Efficiency Manitoba, I'm very excited about the new board that we have announced at Efficiency Manitoba, the renewed and expanded mandate that we've provided to them, something that Efficiency Manitoba has been asking for for years that fell on deaf ears of the previous failed PC government.

And what I've learned from the great folks at Efficiency Manitoba is that the best form of energy and the cheapest form of energy is efficiency. And we are working with Efficiency Manitoba—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Renewable Energy Partnerships

MLA Lamoureux: The documents were provided to her virtually if she would like to apologize.

Our ability to meet net zero relies on Hydro's generating capacity. To be clear, privatizing Hydro or selling it off is not in Manitoba's best interests. We need to diversify our renewable energy partnerships

and better include First Nations who are integral to the success of Manitoba Hydro.

Can the minister help us understand why he has closed the door on all renewable energy partnerships outside of the public sector?

MLA Schmidt: Let me be crystal clear for Manitobans: under an NDP government, Manitoba Hydro will always remain public, unlike under the previous government. *[interjection]* Thank you.

While the previous government was, you know, motivated and on the road to—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: —to privatize Manitoba Hydro—they were selling off the subsidiaries—under an NDP government, that will never, ever happen. We are so proud of the leadership of our Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (MLA Sala).

We know that Manitoba Hydro is going to be there to meet the needs of industry and to grow our economy, and we cannot wait to show—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Renewable Energy Projects First Nation Partnership

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Given our growing energy needs, this is a prime opportunity to advance economic reconciliation.

Fisher River Cree Nation owns the largest solar farm in the province of Manitoba and sells subsidiary power to Hydro. Northern communities could certainly benefit from renewable energy projects.

Can this government explain whether they support renewable energy projects like in Fisher River Cree Nation and whether they would support similar projects by other communities wishing to sell power to Hydro?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I'd like to congratulate and lift up Fisher River Cree Nation. They are an amazing community doing amazing things and really showing real leadership when it comes to not only solar power, but also geothermal heat generation, something that our government is committed to.

We are working closely with Efficiency Manitoba. We cannot wait to introduce our affordable home energy

program that's going to save Manitobans money and also get them off of fossil fuel heating for their homes.

I am also so excited that Budget 2024 introduces electric vehicle rebates for Manitobans. Manitobans are going to save \$4,000 on a new electric or plug-in hybrid vehicle, \$2,500 on used vehicles, and we are here, committed to the environment—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Spinal Surgery Wait Time Reduction New Spine Program Announcement

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): Honourable Speaker, under the previous PC government, we saw nothing but cuts and chaos in health care.

Honourable Speaker, they broke health care in Manitoba. They pipelined money into private clinics in San Francisco and North Dakota and refused to build surgical capacity here at home.

We're taking a different approach. Today, our Health Minister announced a new spine program aimed at ensuring timely care at patients and delivering that care right here in Manitoba.

Can the minister tell the House more about this program and why it matters to Manitobans?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my colleague from Riel for that great question.

Honourable Speaker, our NDP government is investing \$12 million into a new provincial spine program, something that is historic and long overdue for Manitobans. This program will help hundreds of Manitobans waiting for surgery and thousands who are waiting for assessments.

We are increasing operational—operating spinal slates by over 50 per cent next month alone. We've recruited three additional spine surgeons. We are shortening patient consultation wait times with a new outpatient clinic, and we're centralizing wait-lists to enhance care co-ordination. We are proud to be investing in building capacity here in Manitoba and prioritizing Manitobans getting care right here at home.

Louisiana-Pacific Plant Licence Extension Concerns

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Honourable Speaker, my constituents are deeply concerned that their livelihoods will be hurt. On top of that, there is a

housing shortage in this province, which along with other causes is contributing to the affordability crisis.

Honourable Speaker, why is this NDP government failing to take the steps needed to protect Manitoba's lumber industry?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Honourable Speaker, we keep it very serious on this side of the House when it comes to economic development. We want to ensure that we grow industries right across Manitoba, whether it's our forestry sector, whether it's our fishing sector, whether it's our agricultural sector, manufacturing sector. We are proud of all of them and want to see them all succeed.

And that's why we've had a comprehensive plan about making sure that we deliver affordability to Manitobans and ensure, at the same time, we continue to grow our economy.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Swan River, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wowchuk: Honourable Speaker, one of the major building materials used in new home construction is SMART Board and oriented strand board. Nearly 100 per cent of walls, roofs, and floors of a home are constructed from OSB. A major player in this industry, Louisiana-Pacific, who for 28 years now, has been employing hundreds of Manitobans in the Parkland area. There are families where three generations have been employed in the LP plant.

This NDP government has jeopardized this by only extending their licence for three months instead of the 10 years that they were empowered to do.

Minister, why are you jeopardizing the well-being of hundreds of Manitobans?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We did an interim extension just like the PCs did and here's the thing: We're standing up for jobs in the Swan Valley region. *[interjection]* You hear that? You hear that? They heckle because they have nothing to say.

One of the many, many problems with the PC party is that they never ask questions about Brandon. We know that that's what they were like in government too. If you read the Brandon Sun headlines about their budgets, it said that Tories leave locals wanting

more—that was 2018—and that Brandon was left out of the Budget 2022 loop.

Well, the good thing is that the recent editorial of Brandon says that the investments in 18th Street are great, that the Maryland Park School project moving ahead is good news.

And where they were said to be leaving Brandon out of the loop, I'll table the document—says Brandon gets—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —some love from the NDP.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

The Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

* (14:50)

On March 18, 2024, immediately following the prayer and land acknowledgement, the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson) raised a matter of privilege, alleging that the honourable First Minister had repeatedly called him a failed political staffer, and this impeded his ability to serve his constituents.

The member concluded his remarks by moving: That this matter be referred to a committee of this House.

The honourable Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) spoke to the matter before I took it under advisement.

For a matter of privilege to be ruled in order a prima facie case of privilege, the member must demonstrate that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity while also providing sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached.

The honourable member for Spruce Woods was silent on the condition of timeliness, and I would therefore rule that this requirement was not met.

On the second issue of whether a prima facie case of privilege had been established, it has been ruled many times in the House that a disagreement between two members over comments spoken on the record does not qualify as a matter of privilege.

On page 148 of the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Bosc and Gagnon advise that if a question of privilege involves a disagreement between two members—or more—members as to facts, the Speaker typically rules that such a dispute does not prevent members from fulfilling their parliamentary functions, nor does such a disagreement breach the collective privileges of the House.

Further, Beauchesne's citation 31(1) advises that a dispute arising between two members as to the allegations of facts does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

Accordingly, I rule that a prima facie case of a breach of privilege has not been established in the case.

The last comment I will make is that, although we are all protected by parliamentary privileges while in the Chamber that grants us freedom of speech, personal attacks and disrespect will never help win an argument or debate and have no place in this Legislature.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, with all due respect, I'd like to challenge the ruling.

The Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in favour of the ruling, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Johnson: Yes, I'd like a recorded vote, please.

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

* (15:50)

Order, please.

The question before the House is—*[interjection]*

Did they not bow?

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Division

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

Ayes

Altomare, Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Chen, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

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

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 29, Nays 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated. The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

* * *

The Speaker: And I have another ruling for the House.

Prior to routine proceedings, on March 18, 2024, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) raised a matter of privilege, alleging that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) made comments to the media and in the House that damaged his reputation as an educator, which thereby impeded his ability to serve his constituents.

The member concluded his remarks by moving that this House call on the members—member for Fort Rouge to retract his inflammatory remarks and apologize, as well as direct this matter to an all-party committee for a review.

The honourable Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) spoke on the matter before I took it under advisement.

As the House knows, for a matter of privilege to be ruled as prima facie case, the member must demonstrate that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity while also providing sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached.

On the condition of timeliness, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition indicated that this was his first opportunity to raise the matter. However, the member referenced multiple occasions when the alleged infractions occurred, yet he didn't state any specific dates, and he also didn't raise this matter after any of those occasions. I found the member's explanation of his—of this condition incomplete, and accordingly, I am ruling that he did not meet the test of timeliness on this matter.

For the record, I will also rule on the question of whether sufficient evidence was provided to demonstrate a breach of privilege. On this occasion—on this condition, I must indicate that disputes between members regarding information put on the record are neither matters of privilege nor order, but rather, matters of debate.

* (16:00)

Joseph Maingot, on page 223 of the second edition of the Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, states that a dispute between two members about questions of facts said in debate does not constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate.

Further, on page 148 of the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Bosc and Gagnon state that if the question of privilege involves a disagreement between two or more members as to facts, the Speaker typically rules that such a dispute does not prevent members from fulfilling their parliamentary functions, nor does such a disagreement breach the collective privileges of the House.

Accordingly, I rule that the member has not demonstrated a prima facie case of privilege.

Thank you for your attention to this ruling.

Mr. Johnson: Respectfully, I would challenge the ruling.

The Speaker: The ruling of the Speaker has been challenged.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in favour of sustaining the ruling, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those who are opposed to sustaining the ruling, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Johnson: A recorded vote, please.

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

* (16:50)

Order, please. Order.

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Division

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

Ayes

Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Chen, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loisel, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Piwniuk, Schuler, Stone, Wowchuk.

* (17:00)

Clerk: Yeas 28, Nays 19.

The Speaker: I declare the Speaker's ruling stands sustained.

* * *

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

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