

Second 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
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	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	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 2, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 10—The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and Accountability)

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I move, seconded by the Minister for Families, that Bill 10, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and Accountability), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Bill 10 will amend The Regional Health Authorities Act and a number of other acts as necessary to support the successful implementation of changes to our health-care system identified within Manitoba's Health System Transformation.

This transformation will modernize Manitoba's health-care system, aligning it with the leading practices of other jurisdictions. These efforts will improve the delivery of health services for Manitobans, resulting in a system that ensures patients are able to receive care when they need it, as close to home as possible.

Better health care sooner is our commitment to Manitobans and this bill is the blueprint.

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

Bill 11—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 11, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This is the long-awaited and much-anticipated annual bill that corrects spelling and typographical errors in the laws of Manitoba.

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

Bill 19—The Public Service Act

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Wharton), that Bill 19, The Public Service Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: Our government is committed to advancing transformation across the public service. This bill establishes the Public Service Act to provide a legislative framework for an ethical and effective public service for Manitoba by setting out fundamental values such as transparency, accountability, diversity and inclusion to ensure they are consistently applied across the public service.

With the introduction of this bill, the government is replacing The Civil Service Act that is 134 years old, and is enabling the Manitoba public service to effectively respond to modern pressures and changes.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts First Report

Mr. Jim Maloway (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on November 28, 2019 at 5:15 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Election of the Chairperson*
- *Election of the Vice-Chairperson*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Mr. LAMONT*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Ms MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)*
- *Mr. SMITH (Lagimodière)*
- *Mr. TEITSMA*
- *Mr. WASYLIW*
- *Mr. WISHART*

Your Committee elected Mr. MALOWAY as the Chairperson.

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

Agreements:

Your Committee reached the following agreements:

- *To establish a Steering Committee of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts comprising of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson, the Auditor General, a Committee Clerk and the Research Officer.*
- *To have in camera pre-meeting briefing sessions with the Auditor General.*

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Skinnners Restaurant

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, the restaurant business is not for the faint of heart. Running a successful restaurant is hard work with many sleepless nights and where personal capital is often at risk in a very risky market. In fact, it's reported that 17 to 23 per cent of restaurants fail in the first year and up to 80 per cent fail in the first five years.

Skinnners of Lockport celebrates 90 years of successful restaurant operations in Manitoba this year. They have survived the Depression, the Second World War and a few Red River floods. The tradition started in 1929, when James Skinner opened a stand on River Road located across from St. Andrews Lock and Dam. The Thompson family took over ownership in 1979.

Today, Skinnners continues to be world famous for its foot-long hot dogs and family-themed atmosphere. Having served generations of Manitoba families, Skinnners is believed to be the oldest surviving hot dog vendor in all of Canada.

When I asked one of the current owners what it takes to be successful in the restaurant business, he replied: Serving quality products from Manitoba suppliers, friendly and efficient staff and having a father who's on your case all the time.

But it's much more than that. It's developing a solid foundation, it's listening to patrons, responding to reviews, community engagement and strong customer service.

Skinnners is truly an iconic made-in-Manitoba success story with a proven track record and recognition on the world stage. Many Manitobans were saddened to hear one of the Skinnners locations had to close this year after The Forks Market decided that Skinnners no longer fit with their plans for the food hall.

Today, I ask my colleagues to please rise to acknowledge and congratulate Brent and Lyle Thompson, who have joined us here today, on 90 years as a successful iconic restaurant in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include the names of all the current owners of Skinnners operations into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Allan and Louise Thompson, Brenda and Brent Thompson, Lyle and Lynda Thompson

* (13:40)

Gerry Atwell

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I rise today to recognize an amazing Manitoba–Manitoban, Gerald Atwell, who passed on November 23rd, 2019, at the age of 60.

Gerry was an artist in every sense of the word. He was most known as a keyboard player and vocalist with bands such as Eagle & Hawk, who—he won a Juno Award back in 2002. Gerry was also a professional writer of theatre, television, radio and film. For almost 25 years, Gerry was the president of the board of—and artistic director for St. Norbert Arts Centre and is remembered as a generous, creative collaborator.

I've had the pleasure of knowing Gerry for almost 22 years, since he began playing with my uncle, Vince Fontaine, in Eagle & Hawk. I loved Gerry's generous, joyous and kind spirit. He always had a smile and a warm hug for me and everyone in the room when you had the opportunity to run into him.

My Uncle Vince wanted me to share with the House that Gerry was, and I quote, a vital bandmate and dear friend. Gerry brought a calming, professional spirit loaded with talent and swagger to our music circle. He will be deeply missed by everyone in our band.

Gerry's family shared with me this morning he mentored so many Manitobans and that his peers described him as a connector and as an essential go-to person in the arts community. His niece, Carla Williams, describes Gerry as an amazing listener who gave people one hundred per cent of himself so that you felt you were being heard and were valued. Her uncle always brought humor and stories to family gatherings.

Gerry will not be forgotten, Madam Speaker. The impact he has had on our communities, both here and wide, and the lives of those he touched will keep his memory alive for years to come.

Today, we are joined by members of Gerry's friends and family. I ask our colleagues to rise and welcome and congratulate our families.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Fontaine: I ask for leave to include the names of Hansard of our—in Hansard of our guests today.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the names of those guests in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Cathy Atwell, Hugh Atwell, Carol Atwell-Kinley, Ian Cameron, Nicola Kinley, Richard Kinley, Louise May, Darrin Thiessen, Angela Underhill, Carla Williams, Judy Williams, Paul Williams, Sean Williams, Doug Wilson.

Diwali Celebration

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): On October the 26th, my wife Shelley and I had the pleasure of celebrating and taking part in the Diwali celebration at the Access Event Centre in Morden. Over 300 residents gathered to celebrate Diwali together, where we enjoyed good food, great company and amazing dance performances.

Diwali, of course, is—festival of light, one of the most exciting festivals for Hindus and Sikhs, with an emphasis on love, courage, truth, knowledge, hope and spiritual enlightenment. The annual fundraiser brought in many residents from all over the Morden-Winkler constituency and surrounding communities in this wonderful and unique event.

There was a moment of brief anxiety when my wife Shelley suffered what could only be called a sari wardrobe malfunction, but someone with vastly more experience in these things came to the rescue, intervened and wrapped that sari very, very well so that even breathing became laboured at points.

This year, the event actually raised \$1,500, and the money went to Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation, and a smaller sum to Rossbrook House.

Morden-Winkler has seen tremendous growth in population in the last five years, with increased job opportunities and the success of Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program so that community celebrations like Diwali are increasingly reflecting the many newcomers who now call Morden and Winkler home.

It was a pleasure to attend. The youth cultural ambassador, Diviyani Abbu, spoke at the function, saying that this is a time to pause and reflect and to be grateful for we have—for what we have and to consider those less fortunate than ourselves.

I thank the Pembina Valley Diwali Society, Dr. Adashnee Pather and Dr. Ganesan Abbu for inviting me to participate. I also thank Zahid Zehri, who attended Diwali with his family. Zahid is with us today in the gallery and attended this celebration with his wife Shaista and children Sabeen, Eshaal, Shanza.

Nine Circles Community Health Centre

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Yesterday, December 1st, was World AIDS Day and, in Canada, the start of Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week. This year's theme for both is Communities Make the Difference.

Today I want to recognize the work of the staff at Nine Circles Community Health Centre, located on the boundary of the Wolseley and Union Station constituencies. Nine Circles delivers comprehensive primary care, social support, education and prevention services, with expertise in the care and treatment of HIV, hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted infections. Nine Circles is also part of a larger network of health-care providers working with over 1,400 people living with HIV across the province. Nine Circles staff, volunteers and clients are an integral part of our communities.

Over the past five years, new HIV infections—rates of new HIV infections have continued to climb. Manitoba continues to have one of the highest HIV new-diagnosis rates in the country.

I will add my voice to the professional health-care providers and community advocates calling for policy change in order to halt the rate of new infections and improve the health of all of our communities.

HIV testing should become a routine part of health care in order to decrease stigma and provide the opportunity for education and prevention. Free, universal coverage for HIV medication would avoid the delays or interruptions in treatment that lead to poorer health outcomes.

Free access to PrEP and PEP medications—pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis—would reduce the number of people exposed to HIV.

I want to thank Executive Director Mike Payne and the staff and volunteers at Nine Circles for the important work they do every day to reduce isolation and stigma as they strive to provide culturally and spiritually appropriate care and to ensure a better quality of life for those living with HIV and AIDS.

Normand Park Residents Association

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): I rise in the House today to recognize the great work of the Normand Park Residents Association, located in my constituency of Riel. Normand Park is a beautiful community of approximately 200 homes nestled north of Maple Grove Park, bounded on the east by St. Mary's Road and the Red River on the west.

One of Normand Park's defining assets is the riverbank park. This park is a result of many community meetings and an extensive recreational use survey by the City of Winnipeg. In keeping with the community's input, the park is perfectly balanced between open recreational spaces, as well as plenty of trees, a restored and naturalized river-bottom forest and intact, historical river-lot boundaries, and we owe much gratitude to the Normand Park Residents Association for this beautiful park.

The Normand Park Residents Association is a very vibrant and active community group. The association has an active Neighbourhood Watch Program. Annual events include summer garage sales, the community barbecue, a Christmas light contest, fundraising for children's playgrounds and many more.

Their quarterly newsletter, The Normand Park Lark, keeps residents aware of upcoming events and helps share the concerns of the neighbourhood. I've also had the pleasure of attending many of their annual general meetings. This is always a very well-attended event where community members get updates on the association's activities and concerns.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I'd like the House to know that Normand Park is more than just a collection of streets in south St. Vital. The community is a dynamic, caring and vibrant place to live and raise a family, and I'm proud to call it home.

The Normand Park Residents Association is a major reason why this community is such a wonderful place to live and play in Manitoba. The NPRA works with other residents associations in the area to foster a greater sense of community, to keep our residents engaged and be a positive force in Winnipeg.

I'm very proud to be able to represent the Normand Park community in the Legislature today and to honour the Normand Park Residents Association today.

I'd like to ask all of my colleagues to help me honour the efforts of this fine group.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Municipal Relations.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, I'd like to have—ask for leave to have the names of my guests entered into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Wilson Anderson, John Czarniecki, Charlene Glennson, Liese Dorber, Lisa Dutchak, Gerry Gregoire, Atif Ijaz, Joan Kirouac, Leo Kirouac, Spence Lytwyn, Brenda Trach, Mark Zoldy.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the public gallery, from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 17 grade 9 students under the direction of John Thompson, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

And also seated in the public gallery, from Linden Christian School, we have 26 grade 11 students under the direction of Mark Glor, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister.

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

* (13:50)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Reforms Consultant Costs

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, we know that this government has caused tremendous chaos in our health-care system here in Manitoba. We know that they closed emergency rooms in Winnipeg, and that there have been ever-increasing wait times and confusion in those emergency departments ever since.

Now, before even stopping to fix the damage that they've caused or even pausing to learn a few lessons, this government has launched the next phase of this chaotic campaign, which they dub phase 2. This entails the closure of emergency departments outside the Perimeter and across the rest of the province.

Now, of course, we're opposed to many of these cuts this government is making.

But, first of all, we'd like to know: Just how much money are they paying to expensive outside consultants to tell this government which emergency rooms to close?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, very pessimistic for first thing on a Monday, when the entire province was so fixed on the release of Manitoba's clinical and preventative services plan on Friday, a plan—and I will correct the member across the way—a plan that is designed to make good investments in rural and northern Manitoba, to fix the wrongs from the past under the NDP—high wait times, the inability to get services.

We are very proud to be able to be bringing a system that will be more co-ordinated, more focused on the patient and gets better results.

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

Mr. Kinew: A brutal dodge of the question, Madam Speaker, but we've got the answer right here.

It turns out that this government, once again, is only focused on lining the pockets of consultants, not focused on the care that Manitobans deserve. I will table this document that shows that this government is paying Deloitte \$1 million to tell them which emergency departments to close. That's \$1 million that could have been invested at the bedside, caring for patients. But this government sees fit instead to pay to an outside consultancy, Deloitte.

So why would this government pay \$1 million to have Deloitte tell them which emergency departments, that Manitobans rely on, that they want to see closed?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, to be clear—and to the member's question—we are a government that does rely on the advice of expertise.

Now, their government also paid \$1 million for a study. It was a PricewaterhouseCoopers study on procurement. The difference was they put it on the shelf and their own minister said he had no knowledge of the million-dollar report.

Madam Speaker, we're concerned with results and value for money, but let's be clear: what is this a plan about? It's a plan to produce 2,500 fewer patient transports for people who live in the North and people

who live in rural Manitoba, to bring health care closer to them.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, of course, they want to cut services. How else will they find the money to pay these expensive consultants, Madam Speaker?

A million dollars to Deloitte—and I table this agreement that this government has entered into with KPMG, which is an open-ended, sky-is-the-limit contract—any dollar value you want to insert will be paid to KPMG to oversee what, Madam Speaker? The implementation of phase 2.

Now, we've clearly established that this government wants to shovel money out the door to these expensive consultants to oversee the implementation of phase 2.

But my question, then, is simple, Madam Speaker: What does Shared Health do?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, the good news for that member is that we just introduced Bill 10, and he can read all about Shared Health in Bill 10, our blueprint for a modern health-care system that gets better results.

But where did not taking advice get the former NDP government? It got them the worst wait times in Canada, the most expensive system and a system that experts described as overly complex and not getting the results you would expect from such an investment.

We are making good investments to get 50,000 additional in-person home-care visits in rural and northern Manitoba.

This is a path ahead. That member just wants to go back to the past. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Liquor Mart Robbery Prevention Placing Police at Locations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So I don't believe the minister caught on there, but that was actually a rhetorical question.

The reason why I was asking is because Shared Health is supposed to be overseeing the implementation of this new phase of health care, and it therefore begs the obvious question: Why is an

outside consultancy like KPMG needed? Of course, I know the minister has no answer for these questions, so I'll turn my attention to the Minister of Justice.

We were all very moved last week when we had the Liquor Mart employees come down and speak to each of our groups separately.

They presented many important ideas which I would like to ask the government about the implementation of at this time, beginning with the following: We know that the secure entrances at Liquor Marts won't be installed overnight, but in the interim, can this government commit to deploying police officers at Liquor Marts in Manitoba to keep staff and employees and customers safe?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Certainly, we appreciate the time the employees from Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries took to tell and share their stories with them; obviously, some very tragic experiences that they have faced over the last several months.

We certainly are committed to working with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, certainly the staff there as well, to make changes, to make sure that safety is certainly paramount, both for the customers and for the staff at Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries.

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

Loss Prevention Officers

Mr. Kinew: We were all very moved these past few weeks with the videos and, of course, the incidents that have been reported on in the media, of which Liquor Mart employees and people in the general public were the victims of.

Now, when we had those employees visiting with us, they had many concrete ideas for ways that we could improve the safety situation in Liquor Marts. One of the programs that they pointed to as being a great success to our group—hopefully, they shared this with the government group as well—is the loss-prevention officers.

So this is a team of five officers who can actually go into a store and detain people and ensure that they get referred to the criminal justice system. However, our team was very shocked to find out that there is only one loss-prevention team in operation in the entire city of Winnipeg, covering more than 30 Liquor Marts.

With that in mind, can the government commit today to expanding the amount of loss-prevention officers working in Liquor Marts in Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: Well, certainly, Madam Speaker, public safety is paramount for this government. We know that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries have certainly taken a number of steps to that end. Clearly, we recognize more work can be done. We will be continuing our dialogue with folks at Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries.

I will advise the House that last week we convened Operation Safe Streets, which involves police forces from across the province, obviously, includes folks—security people from Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, and also the Crown prosecution branch.

Clearly, we've made a lot of arrests when it comes to liquor theft. There's been a lot of prosecutions made as well. We will certainly continue to build on the success we've made to date.

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

Support for Community Safety Municipal Operating Grants

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We are bringing these questions forward on behalf of the Liquor Mart employees themselves. They want more loss-prevention officers working in the Liquor Mart stores. We'll leave that with the government. Hopefully, they can follow up on the implementation of that.

I would also note that the summit that the employees called for apparently has been agreed to by the government.

I don't want to be too partisan and, you know, throw the minister's words back at him. Suffice it to say that we were pleasantly surprised that the minister has reversed course and is now willing to sit down with the representatives of labour and business and community groups to put together a strategy, but we know that one of the underlying root causes of the current situation is the underfunding for municipalities overseen by this Premier (Mr. Pallister).

Given that they're willing to reverse course on this issue now, I'd ask the Premier directly himself: Can he commit to lifting the operating grant freeze on municipalities so that we can see greater supports for community safety?

* (14:00)

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, it's interesting to see the Leader of the Opposition—his new-found fascination with the law, with justice and with public safety. We just went through an election campaign where the NDP never mentioned public safety in their platform at all.

Madam Speaker, we are taking action in terms of public safety. We have released recently—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Cullen: We have recently released a Policing and Public Safety Strategy, which—we're working with all Manitobans to achieve those goals. And we will continue to build on the successes that we've made already here in Manitoba.

Health-Care Services Privatization and Closures

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, the Health report released last week leaves more questions than it does answers.

On page 53, it proposes increased use of private health care. It similarly proposes the closure of facilities.

It's a familiar refrain from the Pallister government. Rather than providing funding for services and facilities that are facing challenges, the Pallister government will now use this as a pretext to cut services entirely. It means permanently closing emergency rooms across rural Manitoba.

Does the minister intend to tell us now what services he intends to cut, or is he waiting to tell us at a time of his choosing?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, let us be clear: the NDP presided over a health-care system for 17 years that failed to put services in health care closer to communities in the North and in rural Manitoba, and it did so knowing that those people would take longer to receive services.

This plan that we proudly introduced is talking about how to bring those services closer to the communities to reduce the number of trips to Winnipeg, to bring diagnostic services and other services closer to the community. And that is something that we should all be able to get on board with.

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

MLA Asagwara: Myself and many other Manitobans, all Manitobans, are currently trying to seek answers given the status of our health-care system being in chaos right now due to this government's cuts and closures.

Madam Speaker, the Pallister government reduced their Health infrastructure spending by \$322 million per year from their first budget. That's their record. Every report has been leafed through for an opportunity for Conservatives to close facilities and cut services.

Timely access to primary care has deteriorated to the worst level in years. That's according to the government's own information.

I ask the minister again: What emergency rooms and health facilities does he intend to downgrade and close?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to correct the record in many of these things.

This government is investing almost half a billion dollars more in health care than the NDP ever did.

Secondly, this is a plan to actually make health-care delivery and services more robust in northern and rural Manitoba. Finally, a blueprint ahead for a stronger system.

And third, the NDP closed—[interjection]—wait for it. The NDP closed 13 obstetric units over a course of 15 years. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: I'd like to thank the minister for talking about closures.

Under this government, Health reports were used as a pretext to close emergency rooms, to cut physiotherapy, to reduce staff ratios, to cut sleep apnea supports and the special drugs program. The Pallister government closed ICUs and urgent-care centres. Their budget was underspent by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Timely access to primary care has fallen, again, to the worst level it's been in years, Madam Speaker. This is the government's own record.

So the minister can stop the pretense and just simply answer this question: Will he tell us today which ERs he intends to close and what further services he intends to privatize?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, so many anecdotes; so few facts.

Madam Speaker, the facts are these: The NDP—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: If the Leader of the Opposition would like to have the floor, I'm willing to take more questions from him. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: The NDP, for years, put rural and northern hospitals on what they called temporary closure. They put plastic garbage bags over the H signs and told people that sometimes the facilities would be open and sometimes they would be closed, and this went on for 17 years. And those members believe that Manitobans would put an ounce of credibility in what they would say about protecting the interests of northern and rural patients? That's poppycock.

Madam Speaker, we are getting—we—and not just the candy—we are getting better health—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Vital Statistics Services Staffing and Processing Times

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, our caucus has heard from Manitobans concerned about a lack of timely access to records such as birth, marriage and death certificates. What's really concerning is these records are vital to Manitobans getting government documents such as for travel, for their access to health care and bank records. It's a basic service provided to Manitobans and it needs to happen in a timely fashion.

What steps is the minister taking to rectify this situation?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, our government is very much committed to improving the services that recognize delays. There's been delays happening in Vital Statistics. We've put more staff on this. We've also implemented online services that have improved the service by upwards of 30 per cent. That's not—we're not done yet. We need to make more improvements to make sure people get their critical records in a timely fashion.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Actually, Madam, the—Madam Speaker, the explanation for the breakdown at Vital Statistics is simple: more cuts from the Pallister government.

Since they took office, Madam Speaker, there has been a 20 per cent decline in the number of positions at the agency, and vacancy management has made the situation even worse. The agency's own annual report says that services are seeing longer processing times as a result.

Will the minister restore these cuts to ensure timely access to this vital service?

Mr. Fielding: Well, that is simply poppycock. I can't imagine—so I could tell you Budget 2019 provided \$305,000—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —for a new line—online application system to be—help expedite the application process, Madam Speaker, as well as \$345,000 to make more electronic birth certificates available at HSC as well as St. Boniface. That's improving the system.

We're not done yet. We need to make sure that Manitobans get their needed access to birth certificates and other items in a timely fashion.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, Vital Statistics are a core government function. It's really important that Manitobans get timely access to the records they need for travel, for citizenship and residency as part of the process to get access to health care. A 20 per cent cut in positions and vacancy management directly results in longer processing times.

Will the minister reverse his cuts to Vital Statistics today?

Mr. Fielding: And, again, our government is investing dollars and resources to make sure that Manitobans are getting their critical need of—their documentation in a timely way. I don't think it's at the level that it should be. We need to continue to work on this to make sure people get their access to information documents sooner; implementing things like an online service has increased it by upward—30 per cent. We want to continue to do this to make sure Manitobans get their needed—access documents when needed.

Legal Aid Services Funding Support

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Earlier this year, I asked the minister to enhance funding for Legal Aid. We understand Legal Aid services are critical if we are to have fair access to justice in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. The minister deferred answering that question, instead referencing a review of Legal Aid that was under way.

* (14:10)

We now know the review is complete and in the minister's hand, so I ask the minister: Will he release the report and will he finally expand supports to Legal Aid?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Here we go again, Madam Speaker: a newfound appreciation for timely access to justice on behalf of the NDP.

I—well, first of all, I want to commend the folks—the good work at Legal Aid Manitoba for the great services they do provide Manitobans. And I will say, in terms of Manitoba services, we are a leader in terms of the number of services available to people and in terms of the areas of law that we provide services to. Manitoba is a leader in legal aid across the country.

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

Ms. Fontaine: If the minister had such a deep appreciation for Legal Aid, he could simply pay them. Unfortunately, the minister has put off any action on this file to conduct a review and ensure that they are paid appropriately.

But even now, with the report in hand, 'mandam' Speaker, he's not prepared to take any action on this file. The Criminal Defence Lawyers Association say they could shortly be in a position to strike about this matter if not addressed.

It's a simple question: Will the minister release his review of Legal Aid and will he provide the resources necessary to enhance these supports?

Mr. Cullen: I'm glad to see somebody over in the opposition can read the Free Press and catch the headlines here. Clearly, they should've been reading the headlines for the last 17 years when they were in government. They would've been taking steps, in terms of enhancing public safety and Legal Aid here in Manitoba.

Certainly, we have initiated a criminal justice modernization strategy dealing with criminal justice all across Manitoba and, certainly, there's enhancements to come. We've also, in terms of Legal Aid itself, asked Allan Fineblit to provide a report, in terms of how we enhance and move Legal Aid into the 21st century here in Manitoba. We look forward to discussing that report with all Manitobans very shortly.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The minister's had that report for months now and what we do know is that Manitoba has the worst justice system in the country under his leadership, according to the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. And things are getting worse, Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —under his lack of concern. As an addictions crisis spirals out of control, it's the justice system that feels the pressure the most, Madam Speaker, yet funding for Legal Aid services is not reflecting the demands that are placed on these very services.

Why is the minister not prioritizing funding for Legal Aid?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we know the NDP ignored the criminal justice system for 17 years. That's—[interjection]—and during the previous election campaign.

Madam Speaker, we are taking initiatives here to address criminal justice here in Manitoba. We—making investments in criminal justice here in Manitoba and, certainly, we're making other investments outside of the criminal justice system, whether that be in education or treatment as well, in terms of mental health and addictions.

So many complex challenges that the NDP government left us with; that's why we have so many initiatives across government to making sure we're 'propriding' services for Manitobans.

HIV/AIDS Prevention Provincial Coverage for PrEP

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Yesterday marked World AIDS Day and the beginning of Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week, an opportunity to shine light and end the stigma of those living with HIV and AIDS.

Manitoba's seen a sharp increase in the number of new HIV diagnoses over the past several years and the trend of increased diagnoses continues upwards. There were 82 Manitobans newly diagnosed with HIV in 2018, including one case of mother-to-child transmission. These are concerning numbers, especially at a time when we actually can prevent the transmission of HIV.

Will the minister cover the costs of PrEP?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the question.

As they say, the HIV annual report was released and we are not concerned about the number of HIV instances in Manitoba. As the member knows, this is not a challenge that is exclusive or particular to Manitoba; it's one that is shared by all provinces, including Saskatchewan and Alberta, and I had the chance just recently to visit with them about their concerns on this issue.

I can tell you that this continues to be a concern both in our jurisdiction and well beyond it.

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

Ms. Naylor: For the first time, injection drug use has become the most likely mode of HIV transmission in our province, and these are cases of infection that are preventable.

PrEP can prevent the transmission of HIV up to 86 per cent, and those who are at a higher risk of acquiring HIV would benefit by having it readily available and accessible.

Will the minister commit to covering the costs of PrEP today to reduce the spread of HIV here in Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, there are many paths that we take, many avenues that we use to address issues like this. I have been in constant communication with the provincial chief public health officer, and I can tell you that there are a variety of tools, including PrEP, that are used now in order to address this.

We know that the increase in HIV is related in some way to the use of meth and other illicit drugs. We're concerned about the—that junction, that avenue of the—both the use of the drugs and the presentations of HIV.

We're concerned. We continue to monitor. We continue to act.

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

Ms. Naylor: I'm happy to hear that the minister's concerned.

I want to say it's been more than 30 years since I went to my first funeral for a friend who I lost to AIDS and societal indifference.

In 2019, we should not be seeing the number of HIV cases increasing. In 2019, we have the resources to prevent and treat. What is lacking is the government will to make life-saving medication more accessible.

Will the minister simply respond to the research and commit to funding PrEP today?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, as I have said before, this government continues to be concerned about the—any increase in instances of HIV in our jurisdiction. I have said that this is not just our challenge, it is shared in other jurisdictions. The numbers are high—they not—they are not as high as they were at some points under the NDP, in 2010. That's just simply stating a fact.

We continue to act. We continue to intervene in a broad variety of ways. And we'll continue to do so.

Sale of Manitoba Housing Units Wait Time for Housing Placements

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): There's a growing crisis in homelessness in Winnipeg and across Manitoba.

Across the river from this Legislature, there was a fire in a homeless camp under a bridge. When I spoke to the people who lived in that camp, they said there was a long wait for Manitoba Housing.

I table a FIPPA showing the wait-list for Manitoba Housing has gone up every single month this year. In January, it was 6,851; by the end of September, it was 8,449—an increase of 1,600 spaces, or 25 per cent.

Can the minister explain why the wait-list has gotten so much worse on her watch and what, if anything, this government is doing to make sure Manitobans aren't left sleeping under bridges because there are 8,500 people waiting for Manitoba Housing?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I take a—the issue very seriously when it comes to homelessness in our province, Madam Speaker. And

that's why we're partnering with stakeholders in the community who know best how to deliver services for these Manitobans as well.

We do have a national housing—there is a hat—National Housing Strategy, federally, that we're working with the federal government on. And I would encourage the member opposite to speak to his federal counterparts to ensure that there's more work done on this right here in Manitoba as well.

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

Mr. Lamont: The government and its ministers continually evade responsibility for their own failings by blaming it either on another government or the previous government. They are the previous government, Madam Speaker.

We can all agree the NDP had its failings, but it's not clear why the homeless and people living in poverty have to pay the price for someone else's mistakes.

Madam Speaker, I table another FIPPA that shows, since 2016 the Manitoba government has sold off 94 Manitoba Housing properties.

* (14:20)

Is the steady growth in the wait-list for Manitoba Housing linked to this government's decision to sell off 94 properties?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we take the issue, once again, of affordable housing very seriously in Manitoba. That's why we're working with our partners to ensure that we provide access to the affordable housing that they need. In fact, we've increased Rent Assist to more than 3,000 more Manitobans than when the NDP was ever in government. And it's important that we provide that affordable housing to Manitobans when they need it.

I can say for the members opposite that, this year alone, we'll be providing 1,000 more in the way of Rent Assist for Manitoba families that need, want and deserve that affordable housing.

Nurses' Mandatory Overtime Request to Eliminate

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, mandatory overtime is being used as a vile, anti-nurse, anti-family technique. It is a denial of respect for people who are putting their hearts and souls into their jobs. It treats people like pawns, not as

people who have human feelings, human needs and human rights.

Mandatory overtime arises because of terrible management practices being instituted by RHAs and a government which is too remote from the people.

The government has brought in sweeping changes.

I ask: When will the government actually improve its management of health care so that mandatory overtime is no longer needed?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, we're very proud of the investments that we have brought in the transformation of the health-care system. We see right now how those changes are beginning to be seen as really working: the consolidation of mental health services at Victoria hospital; the way the urgent-care centres are seeing more patients in less time; the place that indigenous health has got within this system and the improvements we've seen there.

We recognize that along the way, a stabilizing workforce is very, very important, and we're focused on doing everything we can to make sure that we can stabilize this system after some of the most historic changes in the last 30 years.

Clinical and Preventive Services Plan New Health-Care Initiatives

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Our government has committed \$2 billion to improving and updating our health-care system. After 17 years under the NDP government, Manitobans were left with a broken health-care system that featured long wait times and limited access for patients outside of Winnipeg. This adds an unnecessary burden—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: This adds an unnecessary burden on those who are travelling for these medical services, forcing people to take time off work and rearrange busy family schedules in order to access the health care they need.

Can the Minister of Health please update the House on the newly introduced made-in-Manitoba clinical and preventive services plan and explain how our government's new plan will improve health care for all Manitobans?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for Borderland for the question.

I'm pleased to tell all members of the House about \$250 million in initiatives identified by clinical leaders to improve access for all Manitobans, investments that will decrease wait times, travel time and increase access to primary care, diagnostics and emergency response.

Here's the clinical plan by the numbers: developed by more than 300 Manitobans; talking to thousands of providers; 21,000 days of care expected to move from Winnipeg centres to the community; 25 fewer patient transports; 800,000 Manitobans being able to see their records on a patient portal.

Our government is bringing better health care sooner and closer to home for all Manitobans.

Crown Properties Sale of Cityplace

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I table a document which shows the Pallister government is positioning Cityplace for a sale in the near future. Whether it were Liquor & Lotteries' headquarters or now Cityplace, the Pallister government is giving up on downtown Winnipeg.

Why is the government only focused on the bottom line and not on maintaining a vibrant space like Cityplace?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): Again, it's a privilege to be working with our three Crown corporations, Madam Speaker, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, Manitoba Hydro and, of course, MPI.

And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that I'm really impressed with the work that not only the CEOs are doing and our boards and board chairs, but the front-line workers at all of our Crown corporations. Hats off to all them.

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

Mr. Sandhu: Madam Speaker, the Pallister government has already committed to selling off Crown properties, but Cityplace is a valuable asset. It shouldn't be sold in a fire sale just to meet the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) need for short-term cash.

Has the government done any studies on what the job impact will be, should they sell Cityplace?

Mr. Wharton: Certainly, this gives me the opportunity to—and I hope that all members from the House will join me in congratulating the CEO for Manitoba Hydro, Madam Speaker, Ms. Jay Grewal,

for being named Woman of the Year by Chatelaine. Certainly, we should put our hands together for the CEO of Manitoba Hydro.

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

Mr. Sandhu: The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government have always opposed investment in downtown, including MPI, when—bought this property.

And now this couldn't be any clearer. They intend to vacate a large portion of this property and they are setting up for the sale of this facility.

Cityplace would now be just one of a dozen sites sold off if the Pallister government follows this path.

Why are these facilities being sold off?

Mr. Wharton: Certainly, we are extremely excited about the amount of private sector capital being invested right here, not only in the city of Winnipeg, Madam Speaker, but right across Manitoba. We're leading the country in private sector investment and we will continue to ensure that that happens under the stewardship of our government.

We know, under 17 years of the NDP, private sector businesses, Madam Speaker, were leaving the province. They couldn't get out quick enough. Well, I can tell you—and wait for it—where they failed private sector investment, we'll get it right. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Northern Health Services Access to Reliable Care

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Madam Speaker, last week's Health report was light on details for the North. Northerners can't be diverted away from Winnipeg if they don't have reliable service in the North. Unfortunately, under the Pallister government, that has not been the case. We have seen a decline of services and access to timely care.

Will the minister to—commit to enhancing northern services before relying on additional telehealth?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the question.

She is in luck. Manitoba's clinical and preventative services plan is a bold blueprint for the future that describes the use of digital health to make good investments in the North. It describes the use of an

enhanced emergency response for the North. It describes a way of bringing services to people who live in the North.

Where the NDP failed, we'll get it right.

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

Ms. Adams: Madam Speaker, the North needs more health-care capacity, yet, unfortunately, the Pallister government is heading in the opposite direction.

The surgical facility in Thompson has seen disruption for almost two years and has forced communities to go do surgeries outside of the community and have difficulty accessing transportation.

Does—the minister does not seem to understand challenges that face northern Manitoba: Why else would the surgical facility be in shambles for so long?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, Brenda Dawyduk is one of the individuals who was one of that 300 physician and provider teams who helped write this clinical and preventative services plan.

The Leader of the Opposition makes the mistake of thinking somehow this was driven from the top, when, in fact, it was driven by Manitobans. It was driven by people who live in the North and in rural and in Winnipeg. And so if she takes exception to the significant report that dropped on the table on Friday, she's taking exception with the very people who are running the system, people who have given us advice, advice we will act on to get better health care sooner for all Manitobans.

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Personal-Care Homes

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba elders and seniors have built this province and should receive a high level of support, having earned the right to be treated with due respect, dignity, understanding and compassion as a fundamental human right.

Seniors who reside in personal-care homes have more diverse and complex physical and brain health

issues today than those who were in similar homes even just five years ago, yet the staffing formula, or minimal personnel requirement, is over 20 years old.

The issue of the changes to, and more complex nature of, care is being exacerbated by the provincial government policy of discharging people out of hospitals more quickly, leaving many residents still in need of a high level of care.

Manitoba does not have enough health-care aides and nurses specifically trained to care for seniors with high and complex levels of physical and mental issues such as those with dementia, coupled with multiple chronic conditions.

The added complexity of care with such residents is putting additional stress on doctors and family members, as it may take six to eight weeks for a doctor to see a resident in a personal-care home.

Unfortunately, the lack of quality care received by many residents is not unique, causing one person to say that: It was easier to watch my dad die in the personal-care home than to watch him live in the personal-care home.

Staff are so overworked that they are forced to tell senior elders and residents in need: Go in your diaper; I can't help you; or: You will get food eventually.

Relatives are also being told that residents in care homes should not ever expect to walk again after hip or knee replacement surgery because care homes are not set up for rehabilitation.

The provincial government has allowed personal-care homes to serve food that is warmed from frozen instead of being freshly cooked, depriving seniors the taste of good food, which is one of the few real pleasures that they would be able to enjoy at this time of life.

Although residents enter personal-care homes to have the best quality of life in their last few days, weeks, months or years, relatives repeatedly hear the words: He came here to die; or: She came here to die.

Relatives are regularly angry, frustrated, disappointed and shocked at the care their loved ones now receive in Manitoba's personal-care homes.

Administrators in personal-care homes respond to complaints by stating they need more and better-trained staff.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase training and staffing requirements for personal-care homes in Manitoba to ensure residents receive high-quality, nutritious food as well as compassionate care.

Signed by Shirlea Frederick, Joanne Minkus, Michael Bagamery and many others.

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

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call for debate and passage this afternoon of Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence).

Following the passage of that bill, Bill 5, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act. Once that bill has passed, Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, and following passage of that bill, Bill 9, The Public Service Sustainability Amendment Act. And when that bill's passed, I'd be happy to bring forward new bills for consideration.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second readings of Bills 7, 5, 4 and 9 this afternoon.

Starting then with Bill 7—oh.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): For House business, I have an anticipatory leave request.

If Bill 7 passes second reading this afternoon before 5 p.m., would there be leave of the House to waive the two-hour—the two-day notice requirement of rule 92(7) so that the bill could be referred to the standing committee tonight?

Madam Speaker: If Bill 7 passes second reading this afternoon before 5 p.m., would there be leave of the House to waive the two-day notice requirement of rule 92(7) so that the bill could be referred to standing committee tonight?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence)

Madam Speaker: Starting now, then, with second reading of Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence).

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Acting Minister responsible for Status of Women): I move, on behalf of the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Cox), seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence interpersonnelle), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and put some comments on the record on Bill 7.

This bill makes a variety of amendments to the Employment Standards Code to expand eligibility for the existing domestic violence leave provisions, to include all employees who are victims of sexual violence and stalking, regardless of whether or not they were in a domestic relationship with the assailant. This would enable victims of sexual violence and stalking to take a leave for purposes such as seeking medical attention, counselling services and legal assistance. The code will now refer to domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking collectively as interpersonal violence.

As with existing domestic violence leave, they would be eligible for up to 10 day—10 individual days off, with five of those days being paid, as well as a single continuous period of up to 17 weeks. The proposed changes will also allow employees to take the leave if their child or an adult who is under their day-to-day care and control becomes a victim of domestic or sexual violence or stalking.

Since Manitoba's domestic violence leave provisions came into effect, numerous other provinces in Canada have passed similar leave provisions but have made them more inclusive by also covering victims of sexual violence and stalking. This bill will ensure that Manitoba employees have the same protections.

The bill also complements recent changes to The Residential Tenancies Act, which allow victims of domestic violence, sexual violence or stalking to terminate leases where they have reason to fear for their safety.

The proposed changes to the legislation are aligned with this government's commitment to address gender-based violence, including enacting the first Manitoba Cabinet committee struck to focus entirely on gender-based violence.

Manitoba has some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in Canada. These changes will provide vulnerable employees with opportunities to seek support.

The Labour Management Review Committee, which is an advisory body on labour legislation that includes representatives of major employers and labour organizations, was consulted on this legislation and has given its consensus support. I would like to thank the committee for its consideration on this matter.

Thank you very much, 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.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Does this bill have implications for low-income women who maybe do not have paid leave? Are there other options for low income women?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Acting Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, our government takes the issue of sexual violence very seriously whether the victim is an employee of government, and that's why we've worked through many procedures to enhance workplace safety here in the Manitoba civil service. We've also implemented standards for other institutions.

* (14:40)

With this leave, this will provide women who are in the employ of any employer in the province of

Manitoba the opportunity to seek leave, a paid leave, for—in the aftermath of sexual violence, domestic violence or stalking.

We believe that this is a necessary tool—one more tool in a broad array of tools that we've provided survivors access to support and help that they need in the aftermath of sexual violence.

Ms. Marcelino: For women who have low incomes and don't—do not have access to paid leave, what are their options?

Ms. Squires: Well, Madam Speaker, this law would provide women who are in—gainfully employed in the province of Manitoba with option for five days paid leave.

It is very similar to a bill that was brought in by the former NDP government that provided leave for survivors of domestic violence. We have certainly enhanced and worked on that. We know that that was a vital tool for many survivors of domestic violence in the province of Manitoba, but we felt that the NDP administration did not go far enough when they brought that law in a few years back.

And so we've added victims of stalking and victims of sexual violence to that bill so that we could provide them with the tools that they need in the aftermath of sexual violence or stalking or domestic violence.

Ms. Marcelino: Which stakeholders were consulted when drafting this bill, and did they feel that the number of days off was adequate?

Ms. Squires: We, of course, did consult with the Labour Management Review Committee.

We know that when the domestic leave provisions were brought in, in 2013 or 2014, there was some concerns that were expressed by the Labour Management Review Committee. And this time we did feel a unanimous support. There was consensus amongst committee members who we consulted with that this was a good provision to provide in the province of Manitoba.

We also consulted broadly with Manitoba Status of Women stakeholder groups and achieved unanimous consent from community that this was, indeed, a welcome and necessary legislative change.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): How will the government ensure that young people are educated about consent and healthy relationships?

And I'd like to hear what the plan is to modernize the current family life and health curriculum.

Ms. Squires: I'd be very happy to chat with the member for Wolseley on what our government is going to do to change the culture in Manitoba from one of a rape culture to one of a consent culture.

However, under Bill 7—Bill 7 is specific. It's got provisions and is providing a tool for survivors of sexual violence, stalking and interpersonal violence leave from their employment. And so if she would like to have an offline conversation about our government's commitment to helping eradicate gender-based violence, I'd be more than happy to share that with her, perhaps at a later date.

Ms. Marcelino: What are the government's next steps to ensure that once employees have the time off to cope with these issues of interpersonal violence that there will actually be supports available to them?

Ms. Squires: Another great question. I'd be more than happy to chat with the member about our government's commitment to eradicating gender-based violence, including the first step that we ever took to forming an all—whole-of-government approach.

We are the first in Manitoba, perhaps the first in the country, to establish a Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet. We know that gender-based violence is going to take an all-hands-on-deck approach. We need several people on—around the table to talk about solutions and working with community in conjunction.

Our government's made significant investments. Just recently, we gave enhanced supports to Klinik. The Klinik director, Nicole Chammartin, said that that was the first of its kind. In 17 years, the NDP failed to enhance their support level to Klinik. That is one agency that is helping get real results for survivors of sexual violence.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this bill, and looking forward to discussing it in committee tonight.

The question I have for the minister is, if a person experiences assault or trauma or abuse prior to being an employee in their current workplace, can they still request for leave, or does the abuse, assault or trauma have to happen while they are currently an employee in their workplace?

Ms. Squires: The one thing that we know about sexual violence, interpersonal violence, domestic

violence, that the consequences are long-lasting, and there is no one particular moment when a survivor of sexual violence can declare that they are completely healed and over—have recovered from their trauma.

So we know that the survivors carry their trauma with them years and years, perhaps even decades, into the—their future. So we have set it up so that simply what is required is some support, some documentation from Victim Services or other professional personnel that would confirm that they require this leave, and that would be the only requirement.

Ms. Marcelino: How were the number of days of leave determined?

Ms. Squires: So we took what was deemed to be successful in the viewpoints of those people that we had consulted on the domestic violence leave that was brought in under the previous administration, and we simply mirrored that and offered that on—with today's implementation of—or upon the implementation of Bill 7.

Ms. Naylor: Will the government increase supports for victims in northern communities?

Ms. Squires: Again, a wonderful conversation that I'd like to take with the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor). I don't see that it's relevant to Bill 7. It's a conversation about our government's whole-of-government approach to how we're supporting survivors throughout the province of Manitoba to eradicate gender-based violence and support survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking.

And one thing I can assure her is that our government has made significant investments. In fact, Nicole Chammartin, executive director at Klinik, said it was historic, the investments we made in the counselling services offered there.

Ms. Marcelino: We're just curious, for employees of companies like Uber Eats—and what was the other one? *[interjection]* And taxi drivers who—oh, sorry—Uber Eats and drivers, will they be—will they also be applicable for this type of bill, for their leave?

Ms. Squires: To be clear, anyone who is an employee and who is a victim of interpersonal violence, has a dependant who is a victim of interpersonal violence and has worked for the same employer for at least 90 days will be entitled to the leave.

Ms. Naylor: Just to follow up on my question about victims in northern communities, in the Throne

Speech, the government announced plans to invest in resource development in the North.

Will the government implement the recommendations of the MMIWG's reports that are intended to mediate the risk to indigenous women during resource extraction projects?

Ms. Squires: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the relevance of the member for Wolseley's question to Bill 7 is tenuous at best.

However, I am very pleased to talk about our government's commitment to helping MMIWG families, and I know our Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke) had travelled to Ottawa in June and was there for the unveiling ceremony of the report. I know that that report has been well read amongst myself and other Cabinet colleagues and looking at working towards implementation of some of the recommendations to help eradicate gender-based violence for all Manitobans.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): As a family member of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, I just listened to the minister, you know, say that she's read the recommendations and they're looking at implementing some of the recommendations. So she can—can she tell us what recommendations that they're going to be implementing, exactly when they're going to be implemented?

Ms. Squires: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the relevance to this member's question, as it pertains to Bill 7, is rather flimsy. However, I would be—I would provide for the member that the recommendations are something that our government is reviewing, and I know that the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations has reviewed the recommendations.

* (14:50)

We are taking a whole-of-government approach to eradicating gender-based violence in the province of Manitoba. We have struck the first Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet, something that the former administration failed to do, to actually get meaningful action on eradicating and addressing the challenges of gender-based violence in this province.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, Madam Speaker, I certainly take issue with the minister calling any question on MMIWG flimsy. I think that that's certainly inappropriate and disrespectful.

But I would be curious in respect of what supports, in the context of this bill, was offered to the

employee, the female employee, for the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), in respect of some of the complaints that she brought forward, where she was actually required to leave her job, she was forced out of her job.

So I am curious, what supports were offered to that particular employee?

Ms. Squires: I do take great exception with the broad mischaracterization of my words presented just here by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

And I would also like to point out that the labour leader who had—came to this building and had knocked on the very member's door, asking for support when she was going through rampant sexual harassment at her workplace, and she was completely turned down and she was ignored. Unlike that member's approach to helping survivors of sexual violence, unlike that member's approach to helping survivors of sexual harassment, our government has implemented a no-wrong-door policy where we are ensuring that survivors of sexual harassment in the workplace are taken seriously and that we're eradicating workplace incidents.

Madam Speaker: I would ask the table to stop the clock.

I feel I do need to intervene here, in terms of where the direction of this is going. We have two respectful workplace policies that are relevant within government and within the Assembly. The government has one for civil service employees; the Assembly has one for Legislative Assembly employees. They are two different policies.

When we have complaints that go in to those policies, those issues are not meant to be used as political fodder, and when issues or complaints are investigated, findings are dealt with, and those findings, according to any HR policy, is not meant for further use in this House. HR policies around respectful workplace do not give people the latitude to bring them up here in the House.

And I'm going to tell you, not one party here is free of any complaints. Complaints happen; they are dealt with, and they are dealt with by an outside, independent investigator who rules on them. Everybody here may not hear what the ruling is—in fact, you won't, because it's a very private issue.

So when a complaint comes forward, for instance, about an MLA, it is thoroughly investigated by an outside expert, not by anybody from within the

Assembly—by an outside expert. Those findings then come forward and they're not shared with the—all the details are not shared with everybody because it's a very private issue, as all human resource policies are, but the party caucus leader and the party leader will get a summary of the findings. But it ends there.

I'm very concerned that bringing up investigations of MLAs into this House is quite inappropriate, and I'm not going to allow that, because it can happen to a number of MLAs in here, and I don't think it's anybody's political fodder to deal with that. It's been dealt with, and it's been dealt with in a very professional way by outside experts, and I think we'd be crossing a line if we start to throw those types of issues out into debate in this House. And I urge caution by all members because, as I said, there's no one party that hasn't been touched by complaints and I think we need to be very careful going down this road.

We brought in that policy because it's important in today's day and age with a lot of things that are happening, and it was a policy that was thought out over a period of a year with—two years, actually, with investigation all across Canada and around the world. We put in a good policy.

The policy is a—one that was just implemented. Everybody is going through mandatory training right now and part of that training, if you would go back to the comments on the training, does not allow for allegations to be brought—re-brought forward on the floor of this House.

That is dealt with through the respectful policy that is in place and it is—I know people might be really interested in all the details, but I'll have to tell you that most of the information is very—it's—all of it is very well addressed, and not all the allegations are always found out to be true, either, and nobody knows that, and it's going to be nobody's business in here to know that because it's an HR issue.

And, if people want to take this further, then I would ask you to bring it forward to LAMC. It is not something that gets debated and used as a weapon in this House to further debate around this issue. There is a respect—I'm going to ask for order. I'm standing as your Speaker and I'm expecting that when I stand there is silence in this House, as has been for a hundred years. There's respect for the role of the Speaker. You may not agree with what I'm saying, but that is how it is and if people don't like the respectful workplace policy, take it up with your members on LAMC and bring it to LAMC.

I am not going to allow allegations, investigations, whether or not the investigation even finds out whether things are true or not, you don't know that; so, flinging out allegations in this House is very inappropriate. And I think if we want to further this—the usefulness and the care that's gone into looking at the policy and the reason a lot of these things are very confidential, is so that we can protect the victims; the people aren't scared to come forward.

If people find out that all this stuff can come forward on the floor of this House, why would people want to come forward, then, if they're going to be used as an item in a, you know, in a debate? We are here in our policies to protect the people that come forward and to encourage them to come forward and feel that they are safe in coming forward.

So I will not allow any of that to become political fodder in this House, and just remind everybody, too, the Assembly has its policy; the civil servants have their policy. They mirror each other, but the intent is the same in both, and I just want to bring us back to now what we are addressing, and that is Bill 7, and I would ask everybody to be relevant in their questions and in their debate about Bill 7, and I'm going to urge people because some of this has been getting a little bit out of hand in the last while; I'm going to ask everybody to be very careful about how they choose to use respectful workplace, because you don't know when you might be the one that has a respectful workplace complaint made against you.

So, be very careful. Everybody wants to be respected in this process and the people that come forward want to feel safe, and so I'm asking that that not be used as political fodder in this House.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable government—the honourable Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Before the clock starts so we can continue the questioning, I do just want to make it explicitly clear to the House that none of us on this side of the House have seen any investigations that were conducted. Comments that were just raised and questions that were just raised, Madam Speaker, derive themselves from media reports and from comments directly from the woman in question.

* (15:00)

So we have no access to any of those investigative reports, as you duly noted and as you are one hundred per cent correct. So the question then becomes, Madam Speaker, as has been done by members opposite many, many times in the last three and a half, almost four years: are we allowed, then, to bring media reports into our line of questioning, which are separate from HR investigative reports?

Because, actually, as I will suggest to you and I will submit that members opposite have many, many times brought into this House, while we've been debating bills, allegations against members on this side of the House and that seemed to have been fine.

So I think for the clarity of the debate and moving forward with this 42nd Legislative Assembly we need clarification on whether or not we're allowed to ask questions and bring into debate things that we have read and seen in media reports as members opposite have done in the last almost four years.

Madam Speaker: I'm going to indicate that certainly when there are media reports out there, we have never stopped members in this House from bringing forward questions or concerns related to media reports.

I would indicate, though, that when we are looking at the issue of perhaps allegations against an MLA and the members don't know whether that's gone forward for investigation, one might want to tread very carefully about feeling that they have the right to bring up a—an allegation about, you know, sexual assault or sexual comments inappropriately made because there may not be the knowledge of something that has gone forward for an actual complaint that has been forwarded to HR.

If the House leaders want to discuss this further and want to have some more clarification about it, I would be happy to sit down further with the House leaders. I—my comments still stand in terms of what I have been saying and that if you have reason to believe that an allegation has been made and forwarded to the appropriate authorities about an MLA or a staff person's behaviour, I would request that those types of questions not be asked in the House because that's really—that would not be appropriate at all, based on some of the comments that I have made.

So just a caution to everybody and also a caution in terms of the civility within this House and the respect that needs to be shown and that personal attacks in here are something, I think, that we need to work harder at.

Some people can shake their heads and roll their eyes, but it is something I think a lot of us believe in, in that we need to rein in personal attacks. We need to rein in that kind of behaviour because that's not debating policy. Personal attacks aren't getting anybody anywhere in terms of forwarding the democratic process in this province.

So I would ask members that if they feel—if the House leaders want to bring this forward for further discussion, I would be happy to sit down and discuss it further, but I am issuing some cautions about how far people are going to take some of these sensitive issues forward.

And I would ask the table, then, how many minutes are left in that question? *[interjection]* No, in that one question. *[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: I still have a former—an additional point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on another point of order—and I would indicate that the first one wasn't a point of order, but it's certainly something that we may want to look at further discussing.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Fontaine: I certainly think that it's important that we have these discussions in the House, and maybe not only just with the House leaders. And I do appreciate the recommendation and the suggestion to chat as House leaders, and I don't disabuse you as the Speaker to that.

I do just want, in respect of, then, process inside this House, we are allowed to read into the record and table certain documents, including media—a printout of media stories. And so, for instance, if I were to—and I won't read it out, Madam Speaker, because I know we're in the process of going back and forth right now, but if I were to read out a media interview in respect of a woman who made an allegation, quite concerning allegation against a member in this House who still sits in this House, am I able to read out that media document in the House and table that for the House?

Because if the question becomes that now any time there is something in respect of any MLA and we're not allowed to say anything because it's deemed a personal attack, then if I'm not allowed to read these into the record, does it become a matter of privilege

that I am being molested from doing the job as an MLA in this Chamber?

So we get into a lot of weeds, Madam Speaker, as I'm sure you could agree, that if I'm not allowed to read this in—as I've said, none of us on this side have read any HR investigation, but we do have the words of the woman in question herself. Am I no—now not allowed to read this in to the Chamber and table these documents to the table as well?

Madam Speaker: I still think that the member would need to be very cautious on what she's choosing to read and put into the record and also I really do think that having a more fulsome discussion with House leaders about how far this can go in the House is not something I feel comfortable making a decision on right now without further discussion with House leaders.

The part of it that also I wonder is how does that, you know, reading about something an MLA might have done, is that going to actually further the debate on the bill itself and what it intends or is it just a point to knock down the other side in tribal politics? Is—you know, does the newspaper article have any relevancy to this bill? And if it doesn't have any relevancy to this bill, then I don't think it would be appropriate to read something into the—this House because we know that whenever we're debating a bill it is all meant to be relevant.

So finding some media articles that might be related to an MLA who did something on any side may not have any relevance at all to this bill. It might have more to do with the level of discussion we're going down, which, again, has reached a level that is a bit outside of the relevancy of this debate.

So members can table documents. Members can read from documents, media documents. But, again, it has to be relevant to the bill. And if the—this bill is on, you know, victims of interpersonal violence, then I think the, you know, the comments and the debate need to reflect that interpersonal violence.

* (15:10)

So, in response to the member, then, I—she doesn't have a point of order. It is a point of discussion that I think we may want to have as a further discussion with House leaders to find out how far we want to make—to take some of that. And I would ask, if the House leaders would set up a meeting, I would be happy to take that on.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And, if we could move on then, now, to finish question period, which has two minutes and 23 seconds remaining.

Ms. Fontaine: I do—would like to ask the minister how the minister feels that Bill 7 will contribute to overall women feeling safe in the workplace, because, as you know, Madam Speaker, there is a lot of interpersonal interactions between employer and employee.

And so how does the minister feel that Bill 7 will protect women who are sexually harassed in the workplace?

Ms. Squires: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I do appreciate your wise words and your counsel and your guidance in leading this Chamber through challenging conversations. And it is rather unfortunate that members opposite would rather talk about anything except our government's commitment to eradicating gender-based violence in the province of Manitoba.

This bill, Bill 7, which will offer leave for survivors of sexual violence in the workplace, complements recent changes that we've made to The Residential Tenancies Act, which allows survivors of sexual violence to break out of their long-term lease agreements.

This is just yet another tool, one of many things that we've done to make our workplaces safe throughout the province of Manitoba; to make public spaces safe, work that we've done on the United Nations Safe Cities initiative to make our public spaces safer for women throughout the province; many initiatives that this government has taken, including enhancing supports for survivors of sexual violence through commitments to Klinik and other agencies.

Ms. Naylor: I had asked earlier about ensuring that young people are educated about consent and healthy relationships, and I heard from the minister that it wasn't related to the bill, but I think that it's related in the sense that when we change laws and policies it's important that people understand where they fall within that, and that consent education helps protect people from harm and also would be helpful to protect people to know how to use a policy like this in the future.

So I'm still wondering when we're going to modernize the current family life and health curriculum.

Ms. Squires: So I couldn't agree more with the members opposite that awareness and education on legislative changes and tools for survivors of sexual violence is critical, and that begs the question why the members opposite never informed people about the domestic violence provisions that they—that were provided under their government.

When we formed government and when we were consulting on this very bill, one of the main concerns and main complaints that we heard, even from members of labour—the labour organizations, that they were not made aware of the legislative changes and that the former administration never communicated that with the employees throughout the province of Manitoba.

We're going to take a different approach and make sure everybody knows about the things that our government is doing to provide tools for survivors.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, I'm pleased to put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 7. Certainly, I think that it is an important step, so I will obviously acknowledge that important work by the Department of Status of Women.

As everybody should know or may know, the Department of Status of Women has some pretty phenomenal staff, including Beth Ulrich, who is the executive director. So I simply want to put it out on the record that I appreciate the staff at the Status of Women.

We know that all of this work, this hard work into these bills and into the policies and programs and services, come from the staff and not necessarily from any of the ministers.

So I do want to acknowledge the staff and their hard work, not only on this, but the hard work that they do, day in and day out, month after month, year after year, fighting for women in the province.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I do want to clarify for the House a couple of things that the minister put on the record which were particularly erroneous.

I would state that there is a fundamental connection between the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirited and Bill 7.

So when the minister notes that the question by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), who, again, is an MMIWG family member and one of the first and only MMIWG family members ever elected across the country, when the member for Point Douglas asks the minister in respect of how this bill will best support and what services are going to be offered for MMIWG, there is a direct correlation between the epidemic and savage levels of violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirited and providing that—those safety measures for women.

We do know that some of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirited victims are also victims from interpersonal violence, including stalking, Deputy Speaker, and domestic violence.

So I do want to assure the minister, and perhaps the minister's not aware, and I would suggest that probably the minister's not aware for putting on the record words like flimsy. I think that if I were to post that to social media, and perhaps I will—I'll get the Hansard what the minister noted in this House in respect of MMIWG—I can guarantee you that MMIWG families, from coast to coast to coast—including MMIWG families now in the US who are in the last many years starting their own movement in respect of MMIWG—would be horribly offended by what the minister put on the record today.

And what that shows is the disconnect between the minister and the realities that indigenous women and girls and two-spirited face 24-7, 365 days a year for the last 500 years of colonization in this country.

So, I think I will do that, Deputy Minister. I think that any minister that gets up in the House and calls any question on MMIWG flimsy deserves to have his or her name in lights on my social media. So perhaps what I will be able to do is share that with the House some of the comments that MMIWG family members are sharing in respect of that noting that that was a flimsy—and, again, that's the minister's words, certainly not mine; I would never use those words—and we can maybe discuss that at another point. Or better yet, I can maybe send it to the minister. We'll see. We'll see how much time I have to do that.

I think it's important to recognize that while we are on the top of a—topic of MMIWG2S that the

minister thinks is a flimsy question, we do know, and the minister did attempt in some small measure to say that this government, the Pallister government, is—has supports and commitment towards MMIWG2S. We know that that's not true, Deputy Speaker.

We know that since taking office in 2016, they've done barely anything in respect of MMIWG2S, and in—you'd—and the House does not have to take my words for it. Certainly, I would suspect that nobody on that side would want to take my words, and that's fine, Deputy Speaker. That's fine.

What I would suggest is that if members opposite, in particular, ministers, wanted to sit down with MMIWG family members, MMIWG family members would be more than happy to share the little, if anything, that this government has done in respect of MMIWG2S in the last almost four years.

So I actually encourage the ministers or any members to sit down with MMIWG2S families to hear directly from them the lack of support or services or attention or support or appreciation that this government has offered MMIWG family members.

And here's the thing, Deputy Speaker, that I want to share with the House is that MMIWG2S families are so gracious and so kind with their time. Any opportunity that they have to be able to speak to the public and educate and share about their loved ones, they take that time over and over and over and over as the years go by, even though it retraumatizes them because it opens themselves up.

But I would suggest to you that if the minister said, hey, I'd like to meet with some MMIWG family—2S families and hear how they feel we're doing as the Pallister government, how they feel we're doing, those family members would be there offering their time and their grace and their generosity.

* (15:20)

So I encourage members opposite to reach out to MMIWG family members. If they want, they can start by going to the loge right over here and speaking with the member for Point Douglas. The member for Point Douglas would be more than willing to spend time sharing with this government what they haven't done in respect of MMIWG, but, as well, if members opposite wanted, Deputy Speaker, the member for Point Douglas and myself could set up a meeting with MMIWG families. We would be more than willing to do that to give the government, the Pallister government, an opportunity to share with them what they have not been doing.

So, that offer is open by my colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), and myself, that if members opposite, if the ministers would like, Deputy Speaker, we are more than willing to set up a meeting, more than willing to set up a meeting tonight, tomorrow night, before we rise, when we—any time the ministers want, we're here; we'll set up that meeting for ministers with families directly to—and, again, to confirm for the minister that any question on MMIWG is not flimsy. It is an important question. It's one of the fundamental reasons why the member for Point Douglas chose to run in the election.

And, again, I'm very proud, and everybody in the House knows that the member for Point Douglas and myself have been friends and known each other for a long time, since the member for Point Douglas's sister went missing.

But it's important to bring the realities of the most oppressed and vulnerable and marginalized and economically marginalized and at-risk women and girls and two-spirit into this House. That's our job. That's what we're supposed to be doing. So any attempt by the minister to dismiss those questions and bring though—MMIWG2S into this House, I would suggest to you is particularly egregious. So I'm glad that I've had an opportunity to put on the record and correct the minister in respect of what she thought were flimsy questions.

You know, there's certainly a connection to be made between the line of questioning that was, you know, we were starting to have that line of questioning in respect of, you know, supports that are offered to women in the workplace that experience interpersonal violence, because it's something that every woman and girl and two-spirited and LGBTTQ2S and every black woman and every indigenous woman and every person of colour woman that face exponentially in the workplace—all women face it, but I would suggest to you, Deputy Speaker, that black, indigenous, POC, LGBTTQ2S women face it at an exponential, unacceptable level.

So I think that it's perfectly acceptable for us in this House as legislators to talk about, in connection to Bill 7, the supports that are offered women who are sexually harassed in the workplace, because the reality is, is that sexual harassment in the workplace is interpersonal violence. It's not something separate in a separate category. It is interpersonal violence. If I'm getting sexual harassed in my workplace and I don't feel safe to come to my workplace—because, Deputy Speaker, as you know, there's an absolute

power imbalance—that is interpersonal violence. That is actually the perfect example of interpersonal violence in the workplace.

So I think that it was a fair question to ask in this House, what the government in respect of Bill 7, what supports they're offering women who have experienced sexual harassment/interpersonal violence in the workplace. That's fair questions. We believe survivors.

You know, we—I know that minister—members opposite talk about they believe in survivors and that minister brought up a labour sister. You know, I would appreciate that if the minister could keep comments that she has absolutely no clue about to herself. We support women on this side of the House. We believe women on this side of the House. And I think it's important that we have those conversations in 2019, especially when we're talking about the #MeToo movement and Times Up movement.

And, you know, more and more, as we've seen over the last couple of years, men—predominantly men in positions of power and in positions of power over their employees—are getting held to account, finally.

And I think that everybody in the House should be glad that this is occurring, should be glad that women are, in the last many years, have a space where they can bring forward their experiences, sometimes in social media, sometimes in the media, sometimes personally to other colleagues. And people are now speaking out about it and men are being held to account.

Men may not be held to account within the judicial system. I know that it was brought up in the House that if there are allegations about, you know, against particular people, you know, that the authorities can be involved. You know, sometimes, Deputy Speaker, that happens.

Often it does not happen. Often women and girls are—and two-spirited are—do not have the confidence or the supports to be able to go to police or whoever it is. That's the nature of interpersonal violence. That's the nature of sexual harassment in the workplace. That just is. Sometimes men are held accountable in the public and the public holds them accountable, and that's good too. Any opportunity that we have that we can hold men—predominantly men—accountable for interpersonal violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, I think, is a great day.

I don't think that men who sexually harass in the workplace, who, you know, participate in interpersonal violence should be rewarded in any way, shape or form. They shouldn't be allowed to keep their jobs. They shouldn't be able to hold very privileged positions in our society. So I think it is important that this House discusses interpersonal violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. All of those discussions are so pertinent and so important in this day and age.

And I would suggest to anybody opposite that doesn't think that those are important discussions to have in this House, where we're all legislators, where we create the bills that protect women in the workplace, I think is kind of missing the point of what we all do or what we should be doing, Deputy Speaker, because I do believe that I've established it on many occasions in the last many times. I don't know what certain members across the way do. I don't know. They sit here and they do the bidding of their boss and they're implicit in many of the things that go forward from this government that fundamentally impact on the lives of all Manitobans, but fundamentally impact on the lives of Manitoba women and girls and two-spirited.

So I'm not sure—I don't know if they got the memo on what an MLA does, but they're not supposed to sit and just, you know, do the bidding. That—those—that—you know, we get paid good money, we're elected by our constituents who have faith in us, we should be working 24-7, not be complicit in some of the things that we see going around by members opposite, Deputy Speaker.

I'll give you an example of what members opposite were complicit in. They didn't say anything. They didn't say boo. They didn't say tickety-boo when the North End women's—the point—the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, including the minister that just spoke just prior, did not say tickety-boo when the North Point Douglas Women's Centre was cut \$120,000. They just sat there and they just said, okay, boss, we'll let you cut \$120,000; that's okay with us because it doesn't impact on us; that's somewhere in the North End so we'll just leave it there. They didn't say anything, Deputy Speaker. None of the members opposite said anything.

So you can imagine, when we have bills like this and members opposite get up with this holier-than-thou attitude, it's pretty difficult for us on this side of the House to just sit here and say, yes, you guys are doing a great job, when you've done all of these other

things, Deputy Speaker, as you know. So that's a little bit hard for us to take.

* (15:30)

But, Deputy Speaker, for the purposes of Hansard—and, again, everybody knows in the House that I'm so excited for people to read these Hansards 10 years from now, to see as they're trying to unpack what the heck has happened in Manitoba and how come we have so much work to repair the damages that the Pallister government has done.

I want Hansard and all Manitobans who read Hansard to know, okay, right, that's right. Members opposite, this is what they did. They—*[interjection]* in 10 years, five years, three years, yes, because we don't know whether or not the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) going to want to retire early and force us into another early election.

So what else do we know that members opposite have participated in? We know, that there have been significant cuts to women's overall reproductive health. We know that. And I know that I've not been shy in the House to bring that up repeatedly, because I think it is entirely important that folks know that this Pallister government, and members opposite, Deputy Speaker, sat back while the mature woman's centre was closed. Members opposite sat back while we had to fight in this Chamber for two and a half years to be able to get the Pallister government to universally coverage the abortion pill.

You know that, Madam—or, Deputy Speaker, pardon me—that for many, many years now we've been bringing up the right to access abortion services, including the abortion pill. You know that it's been brought up many times in this House that this government, under the minister who just spoke previously, actively restricted access to the abortion pill for whatever reasons—we can maybe just leave that on the side for now, but we do know that that definitely happened, that there was a restriction in respect of the—accessing the abortion pill.

That was quite a fight, Deputy Speaker. That was, like, two and a half years of every week getting up in question period and asking questions on the abortion pill and trying to make members accountable or to see that women and girls and two-spirited folks in Manitoba have the right to access abortion. Whether or not people in this Chamber agree with abortion, that's neither here nor there; women—Manitoba women have the right to access abortion. And we had a minister who actively fought against that. We had a

Premier (Mr. Pallister) that actively fought against that.

The other thing that I think is important for the purposes of those folks that are going to be reading this in who knows how long, Deputy Speaker, is that this Pallister government—members opposite all stood up in the House and voted against Bill 200. Bill 200 would have seen buffer zones created around all women's hospitals so that women that are trying to access those institutions, for whatever reason, but particularly women and girls and two-spirited folks who were trying to access those institutions for the purposes of surgical abortions wouldn't be molested on their way in with just 'vitrolic' chanting or signs or whatever it is. Every member in this House stood up and voted against that bill.

The other thing, Deputy Speaker, that every member in this House voted up—or, voted against and stood up in the House and voted against, which I think is pretty important for people that are going to be reading this later on down the road, was the bill brought forward by myself, and I can't for the life of me remember the bill number right now, I apologize for that—I will bring it forward—which required that all provincial judges and JJPs, before they could preside on a sexual assault case, had to go through mandatory training.

So all new JJPs and all new provincial court judges had to go through mandatory training on rape culture, consent, sexual assault. All of these people—these pieces that would have created a place—a judicial—a court system in Manitoba that would be more safe for women, girls and two-spirited coming forward with cases of rape.

You will recall back—several years back when Judge Dewar got up in the chamber and spoke about, you know, calling a rapist a clumsy Don Juan. I don't know if you recall that, Deputy Speaker. But what he also did in that same case was he further victimized and shamed the women that came forward with their rape allegations and implicitly implied that they were to blame for their rape by saying that they were wearing too much makeup and they were wearing tube tops and all of these things, somehow that they were implicitly to blame for their own rape.

Well, Deputy Speaker, I wear makeup. I wear tube tops sometimes. I'm sure there's lots of women that wear those and where everybody that I know wears makeup, no woman or girl or two-spirited person is to blame for their rape. And that was the purpose of my private member's bill. It was to ensure

that no Manitoba woman or girl or two-spirited would ever be shamed in court because here's what I want to explain. For those women to actually get to the court case is a whole bunch of processes that nobody sees. First, they go to the police, which I just established at the beginning of this; often, women and girls and two-spirited do not go to the police.

So, first, they went to the police. Then they did the interview. Then they meet with prosecutions. Then they go through all of these other things. Then they go to court. It's not like the incident just happened and they skip and they go right to court. There's all these other processes. And these women, in their strength and in their courage, continued along that path so that they could have their day in court, that they could look their rapist in the eye and their rapist would be held accountable. But actually, what happened in a Manitoba court not too many years ago, was those women were blamed for their rapes. They were blamed and shamed for their rapes.

And so, Deputy Speaker, members opposite all stood up in this House and voted against that legislation. Now, I could even say, okay, you guys want to vote against that legislation, fine, if you actually just took that piece of legislation, which I already did all the work for you—for members opposite. I did all the work. They could've just put their name on it and made it a government bill and then voted in favour.

We on this side of the House would've stood up with the government and voted in favour of that bill. But actually, members opposite stood up in the House, voted against the bill and I've never seen anything. I've never seen a government bill to make justices, judicial—JJPs and provincial court judges go through that mandatory training.

But what's interestingly enough, is that, you know, some members in this House I saw on social media a little while ago, were, you know, horrified about a case in another jurisdiction that they couldn't believe that this young woman was, you know, so victimized by a judge.

And, Deputy Speaker, keep in mind, this is literally, maybe, only six months ago, and on social media, you know, they're forwarding the article, and, oh, we're—we stand with you; and, this is just horrible and da, da, da, until people had to remind members opposite that they all got up in this House and voted against that very legislation.

So you will excuse me when I get a little bit confused or suspicious when members opposite start touting how good they're doing on behalf of Manitoba women when they can't even stand up in this House and vote for good legislation to ensure that women that go to the court systems are protected or women that want to go get abortions can go get abortions, as many bloody abortions as they want, unmolested by people that don't agree with them.

Members in this Chamber have sat there and are implicit, have done nothing, to ensure that women are safe. And so, you know, I—again, Bill 7 is important. Certainly, I think that we will all—can agree that it's an important step in protecting women in interpersonal—violence, interpersonal relationships.

But, certainly, I think that we need to have some very honest conversations about women who are in the workplace who are being sexually harassed and who are being sexually harassed by their boss and are not—there's no accountability for their boss; absolutely no accountability. I think that everybody in this Chamber can agree that those are important things, Deputy Speaker.

* (15:40)

I want to just finish. I don't have much time. I was really hoping to have unlimited time to this, but I want to talk about finally, again, I want to bring it around in respect of MMIWG.

You know, I think I take particular offence when, you know, MMIWG2S, as we saw with the minister's answer, is certainly not taken seriously. When we see the minister's answer and, you know, we're responding to an MMIWG family member, I mean, it's one thing if the minister wants to, you know, respond to the member from Concordia. If the member from Concordia's asking a question on MMIWG and the minister wants to respond in such a dismissive way, okay, whatever.

But, for the minister to respond like that to an MMIWG family member and, Deputy Speaker, I will put it on the record: an MMIWG family member since the moment that her sister has been missing has been fighting for not only her sister but all MMIWG2S, not only here in Manitoba but across the country. I'm very honoured to be able to travel with the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) as we try to bring attention and fight for MMIWG.

But, for the minister to so callously answer an MMIWG family member in such a way, I think, is a testament—not I think—I know, Deputy Minister, is a

testament to how divorced members opposite are to the critical nature of MMIWG2S.

And we've had several indigenous women in the last couple of months who have been murdered. In fact, Deputy Speaker, we know one of our MMIWG family members who, as you know, we—the member for Point Douglas and I—we are in our eighth year where we put on a Christmas party for families. And we have about—last year I think we had, like, 270 family members attend this Christmas party, including, for the last many years, a young woman, a young mom who her grandmother—her auntie, her auntie was murdered. Her auntie was murdered in—many years ago, so she was just murdered. She was just murdered not even four, five months ago.

These are—it's not—these aren't just statistics somewhere out there. These are our relatives. And, as the member for Point Douglas and myself travel, unfortunately, to vigil to vigil, to funeral to funeral and you see the devastation of what racism does, of what poverty does, of what systemic racism does, of what discrimination does, what the whole history of colonization does, it's not a game, Deputy Speaker. It's not flimsy. It's not something to be taken lightly. And it's certainly not something for this government, members opposite to sit idly by and do nothing about.

And so I'm proud to stand with my sister from Point Douglas, and I say miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Ms. Audrey Gordon (Southdale): I am so proud to stand alongside the Minister for Municipal Relations, who has introduced this very important bill. We're called to support survivors of interpersonal violence, no matter who the perpetrator, and this bill recognizes that important fact. We take so much for granted as we go about our day-to-day lives, maybe driving our kids to soccer practice or to hockey games, keeping the house running and working so we can put food on the table. All of this goes and is placed on hold when one experiences interpersonal violence. It could be domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault. Each of these causes great pain to victims, and this interpersonal violence can shatter lives.

Whether the person who inflicts this violence is known to the victim or not should not matter. Interpersonal violence of all kinds causes lasting trauma, which must be worked through. Our women and girls need support and it makes no sense to make a distinction between victims who know their

perpetrators and those who do not. Violence is violence. Trauma does not focus on who the perpetrator is.

When going through the aftermath of deeply affecting, deeply traumatic experiences, we should not have to worry about keeping our jobs or showing up for work. This is not the time to worry about those things: such things as making sure all the emails are answered or preparing for a briefing or an 11 o'clock meeting.

The first business of a victim of interpersonal violence should be to focus on healing. For the rest of us, granting leave to all victims of interpersonal violence is integral to a compassionate, caring society. The victim's relationship to their perpetrator does not matter, and so it shouldn't matter in our important legislation.

That is why I'm proud that the Employment Standards Code will now refer to domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking collectively as interpersonal violence, and will not treat those victims differently who do not personally know their perpetrators.

That is why we're expanding leave provisions, so all victims of interpersonal violence can take 10 consecutive or intermittent days of leave per year, five of which can be paid and up to 17 weeks per year in one continuous period.

We want to ensure victims can use this time in a way that best meets their needs, yet it is not only victims themselves who need time off from work to begin this important process of healing. Parents and caregivers must also be ready to provide support and to receive support in turn. These are the pillars of our families, and they're also affected by traumatic violence, even if they are not the direct victims.

As a mother myself, the thought of any interpersonal violence being inflicted on one of my children simply horrifies me. When my children were dependent on me, I would have greatly valued some time to collect myself and to ensure my children are getting the best support available.

I'm proud to say that our government recognizes this, for this bill will allow employees who are a parent or caregiver to a child or dependent adult to take the same period of leave if their child or dependent adult experiences interpersonal violence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2018, Manitoba had the highest rate of police-reported sexual assault among

Canadian provinces. That statistic is unacceptable, and I'm proud to say our government is taking action.

We began by introducing The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, which expands the existing early lease termination provisions for survivors of domestic violence and stalking to also cover survivors of sexual violence more generally.

Our support for survivors of stalking and domestic and sexual violence is a core conviction of our government. We stand with survivors of domestic and sexual violence, but not only are we taking steps to support our women and girls after experiencing trauma, we have also created Manitoba's first Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet.

This is one initiative I'm extremely excited about. For an issue as serious as this one, we want to ensure a whole-of-government approach in addressing domestic violence and sexual violence. This is an initiative that demonstrates our conviction to support and deliver justice to all women and girls; to not stop at this moment but to continue our work for a better future.

* (15:50)

We knew with an issue this serious, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we just had to get it right. And so we listened; we listened to the experts who know this area better than anyone else, and we listened to the survivors who know what they need.

We listened to labour and employers because they are the ones who are affected. This truly is a bill crafted with the input of Manitobans so it will serve Manitobans. We needed to hear from the very people this legislation is meant to support and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is exactly what we did.

I'm also excited that this legislation unites all Manitobans. This is an issue every party, every employer and every worker can get behind because we all know it is right. This bill has the consensus support of the Labour Management Review Committee, an advisory body on labour legislation that includes representatives of major employer and labour organizations.

This bill truly transcends our divisions. It is a chance for us to remember that great legislation comes when we work together. We know that change is needed and we're proud to be taking action. All parties should be able to get behind this bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has made tremendous progress since we were first elected in 2016, and we will continue to move Manitoba forward. With this bill, Manitoba will join British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island as the only provinces which have introduced the expanded legislation. Manitobans deserve the same protections, and we are delivering them.

I also want to highlight that we're keeping our commitments to Manitobans. Too often, political parties—and I won't name them—promise the world during a campaign and deliver nothing—or, as one of our members in this House has noted for saying, less than zero—once they are in office, but that is not the case with our government. We honour our campaign commitments like this one. When we promise something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we follow through.

We're building a stronger, more resilient Manitoba. That means having measures in place to support victims of domestic violence, stalking and sexual violence. Victims need time in their own lives so they can wake up to a better tomorrow.

Likewise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are making a better tomorrow for all of Manitoba. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): This bill moves the province in the right direction by opening up eligibility for leave of victims of interpersonal violence, and I do support the amendment to the Employment Standards Code.

But during my questions, the minister indicated that asking about MMIGW or asking about consent education was not related to the bill itself. But you see, in my education as a counsellor who trained to work with women and girls who experienced intimate partner violence and other interpersonal violence as outlined in the bill, I learned that everything was connected.

I support this amendment to the Employment Standards Code, but I also know that support after an incident of violence, stalking or sexual harassment is only one part of the story. The debating of this bill, in fact, gives us an excellent—an important opportunity to bring out into the open all of the issues related to this bill. That's why I asked about sexual violence and education.

Education is our first defence against sexual violence and harassment. In Manitoba, the rate of police-reported sexual assaults is 113 reports of assault for every—nearly every 100,000 people, nearly

twice the national average. We know that reported sexual assaults represent only a fraction—less than 5 per cent of assaults that actually occur. We know that women need to be supported to come forward during this difficult time. It's imperative that we destigmatize talking survivors of sexual violence and making accessing services and legal help easier and less painful.

Women with disabilities, indigenous women, trans folk, women of colour and survival sex-trade workers are victimized at significantly higher rates. Less than one in three Canadians accurately understand what it means to give consent. This means that we as Canadians are not well educated on issues of sexual violence and harassment. We also know from a recent investigative report from CBC that rates of sexual violence in Prairie elementary and secondary schools are well above the Canadian average.

The government has said that it's working to update the drug awareness component of the education curriculum, although there is no plan to modernize the health, education or family life sex ed component. Teaching young people about consent and healthy relationships at an early age is necessary to reduce the frequency of interpersonal violence among Manitobans.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to chat with a group of grade 9 students. And these girls described to me—it was a Thursday when we were having the conversation, and they described to me something called—referred to as butt-slap Thursdays. I think it might have gone under a different term, but I'll stick with the use of the word butt in the House. The day—Thursdays were the day of the week when the boys felt permission to slap, hit or in any way touch girls' bottoms as they passed them.

And what was so alarming to me about this conversation is that the girls didn't think that there was anything they could do about it. This was simply the nature of being in grade 9 in a high school in Winnipeg at that point. And this was just a few years ago.

And I had quite an involved conversation with this group of girls and, in fact, you know, there was so much under—misunderstanding even among the girls themselves. One girl who had been—that day been touched by multiple boys as she walked around the classroom—her friends actually said to me right in front of her, well, she likes the attention. And so I asked her about that, and she quietly—she just got

quieter and quieter. And afterwards, she said to me, I really don't like that attention.

But that's what happens in our classrooms, and those boys are being educated to become men who think that it's okay to touch women without their permission, to comment on them, to make assumptions about them. Gender roles play such a major role in who experiences sexual violence and how it is experienced.

These rigid gender norms are reinforced in our schools, and they perpetuate. Girls are taught from a young age in our schools that their bodies are not just for them, that their appearance has to meet a certain criteria, so as not to distract the boys around them. Gender dress codes teach our young people that boys and girls are not equal, that as a school-aged girl, your worth and your access to the classroom is based on how you're dressed. A culture of shaming girls is encouraged by their peers and by the school itself.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In Manitoba, schools are not required to report serious incidents like sexual violence and harassment to the Province, so there are no reliable statistics that we can track to spot trends in our schools. There's no way to know what our young people are experiencing before they become part of the workforce, which is the population that this bill affects. And without good data, we cannot make decisions that will be of most benefit to our young people when it comes to sexual violence and harassment.

We all want to know that our children are safe when they walk out the door and go to school, and I believe that every member in this House wants to know that their daughter can go to school even on a Thursday and not have parts of her body touched without permission, and that our sons can go to school and know that there's no day that that is okay.

* (16:00)

I want to read a quote from somebody named Jackson Katz, who talked about this issue in a TED talk recently.

We talk about how many women were raped last year, not about how many men raped women. We talk about how many girls in a school district were harassed last year, not about how many boys harassed girls.

So you can see how the use of the passive voice has a political effect. It shifts the focus off of men and boys and onto girls and women. Even the term

violence against women is problematic. It's a passive construction. There's not active agent in the sentence. It's a bad thing that happens to women.

But, when you look at that term, violence against women, nobody is doing it to them; it just happens to them. Men aren't even a part of it.

When I heard that TED talk, it really struck me because our language about even things like interpersonal violence and domestic violence—when I started doing this work, we just called it violence against women. We called it wife abuse, or women abuse, because that's what it was, and we've made our language more and more sanitized over time so that today we erase the gender component of the conversation.

And there are many good men, many of them in this House; many of them in this—in my family and in my community, who would never dream of harming a woman, but we also know that, statistically, over 90 per cent of the violence that happens to women is, in fact, done by men.

So it is really important that we have these conversations about gender, that we have these conversations about sex education, helping our children grow up to be responsible employees in the workplace who don't harm others when they go to work every day.

Another issue that I want to talk about is how we, while making these kinds of changes to bills, we also need to continue to fund the services that require support from our government. Other services that women rely on in our province have been cut by this government. Tens of thousands of dollars have been cut to the North Point Douglas Women's Centre. The centre is on the front lines for dealing with issues of violence and harassment experienced by women who cannot access services elsewhere. These funding cuts have hurt the centre's ability to respond to local needs.

With unprecedented public safety concerns in this province, the demands on front-line service providers are higher than ever before. Meanwhile, by ending the Neighbourhoods Alive! program, this government has put an enormous amount of strain on these necessary services.

Under Bill 7, folks will be able to step away from work to seek services and, in many cases, will now find that those services simply are not there.

People with low incomes who find themselves marginalized will have the hardest time using their

leave to find help because free and affordable services can be challenging, if not impossible, to find.

For survivors who live in northern and rural parts of the province, there are very few resources available to them. Often the most support a victim is likely to get is over the phone which, although certainly better than no service at all, is not ideal or even accessible for everyone.

In northern communities the rates of sexual violence, harassment and domestic violence are disproportionately high. When I'm thinking about northern communities, I'm going to share another personal story.

In the summer I—most years I am—I host students travelling between—I won't name the community, but a northern community in Ontario down to participate in an educational program. They have to travel through Winnipeg to Ottawa, and I usually host them in my home on the way to and from this educational experience.

And a couple of years ago a 15-year-old girl just casually told me about her summer job, that she'd saved up a lot of money over the summer because she wanted to be able to buy some things on this trip, and she casually told—she referred to her boss at the grocery store she worked, as a pedophile.

And, naturally, I asked her more about this because, you know, here's this girl, I met her at the airport half hour before this conversation took place, and I was just asking her about her job.

And she described some of the behaviours of the man that she worked for and I ensured that her—none of them were directed at her, but I ensured that her parents were aware of what happened and I talked to other people in her community about the safety. But it was the casualness of this.

I asked her if she had considered getting another job which was probably a really naïve question. There were two places a teenager could work in that town and because she was so ambitious and wanted so badly to be able to make a good life for herself, she was working part-time jobs at both of them.

So I say that to talk—I'm frequently thinking about the rates of sexual violence and harassment, how disproportionately high that is and how lacking in resources that are available in those communities.

Our northern justice system is overburdened, which affects alleged perpetrators and victims alike. The Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters has

reported that so far in 2019, the crisis line was called 16,792 times and the shelter was used 49,031 times for women, men and children who experienced family violence.

Deena Brock, the provincial co-ordinator for MAWS has said that, provincially, what we're seeing is that the domestic abuse and family violence is not decreasing at all. We're still getting a tremendous number of calls requesting assistance or help in some manner.

And I'd also like to speak about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirits. I brought up that question earlier and we've—I've heard the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) speak eloquently on why this matters, but I'd like to add my voice. The national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls has uncovered a strong link between resource-extraction projects and violence against indigenous women. Women who work on these projects have also reported having their concerns dismissed.

After raising concerns about sexual harassment from coworkers to a supervisor, women have reported that the coworkers accused of harassing them are permitted to stay on the job. With Bill 7, victims of interpersonal violence are allowed to take leave from work, but what's going to happen when the perpetrator is at their place of work? What are they to do when their leave is up?

In the Throne Speech, government announced its intention to invest more money into resource development in the North. On the heels of Bill 7, it's critical that the government takes this recommendation from the inquiry seriously. The report from the inquiry offers a number of recommendations to governments in order to protect women and girls from the abuse and violence that's linked to these projects.

The first calls for all industries to consider the safety and security of indigenous women while ensuring their equitable benefit from development at all stages of project planning, assessment, implementation, management and monitoring.

The second recommendation calls on governments and bodies mandated to evaluate, approve and/or monitor development projects to develop and monitor a gender-based analysis throughout the entire life of a project.

The third calls for all impact benefit agreements to include provisions addressing the impact of—the project will have on indigenous women and girls.

The fourth calls on federal, provincial and territorial governments to fund more inquiries into the relationships between resource extraction and violence against indigenous women.

If the intention of Bill 7 is to protect folks who experience interpersonal violence and to allow them time to heal, the government must take time to reflect on how to prevent violence against Manitobans who are most vulnerable, as well as making sure that the resources are in place to help people to heal.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Although I support Bill 7 and the extensions granted to victims, regardless of whether or not they know the assailant, we—I believe that much more needs to be done to support survivors. If we want survivors to feel safe coming forward to seek help, we must ensure that accessing services is much easier than it is currently.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

* (16:10)

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I appreciate the support from the members across the way. And, you know, I just want to make mention before I get into my short remarks to the bill, that I really appreciated what the Speaker of the House said in just not turning this into an opportunity to attack each other.

This is such a wonderful opportunity to discuss the relevant—this hugely relevant topic that we should be and need to be discussing urgently here in Manitoba. And so to see it be turned into this back-and-forth bash game, it's just incredibly disheartening, and I'm hoping that we can stay away from that for the rest of the day and throughout committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I rise to speak to this bill brought forward. It is necessary that survivors of domestic violence are fully supported, and we believe that this bill is a step forward in helping survivors. Addressing gender-based violence is never something anyone in this House should shy away from.

There are so many vulnerable people in our society that can make great use of legislation such as this, and Manitoba has definitely lagged behind when it comes to protecting some of our most vulnerable.

Requiring survivors to retell their story can traumatize individuals all over again. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd encourage my colleagues here in

this House to actually watch the show called Unbelievable. It's on Netflix, and it's a great example of how it can be very scary and hurtful and harmful, in fact, for victims to have to retell their stories over and over again unless that's what they choose to do.

Bill 7 helps survivors regain a sense of power and control while focusing on healing from a more peaceful place. We stand fully behind supporting victims of domestic violence, and while we support the intent of the bill, we think it can and should be improved.

As it stands, the Employment Standards Code does not allow for victims of workplace violence to take a leave from work. For example, we all have heard about the story of a young woman assaulted at the Tyndall Market liquor store just recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

While we talk—while we are talking about violence in the Chamber today, I think it would be wise for us to expand the legislation to cover victims of violence at work. While we must recognize interpersonal violence as protection under employment standard codes, we are concerned about what happens when interpersonal violence is not recognized by an employer.

To make determinations on this, Manitobans could have a tribunal to ensure that they will be heard properly, although a process where victims do not have to re-share their story, unless they want to, is the ultimate goal. Victims could be properly heard by a tribunal consisting of individuals who have deep understanding or first-hand experience with domestic violence.

And a few other things to be considered—and I'm sure we will discuss later tonight—is, on what level of—or what is the level of evidence for interpersonal violence, or who is determining interpersonal violence? Does the right to leave from work cover those who have experienced violence in the workplace, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

And I look forward to debating this bill later on tonight in committee, and I want to thank the Speaker for allowing me the opportunity to speak today.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers?

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm glad to be speaking on Bill 7 today because, you know, as we know, domestic violence is something that is often—the victims of this are often women. And as a man, I'm

glad to be speaking on this because this isn't something that just affects women.

It affects men as well, the men in their lives that—their friends, their support network are there to support women who are victims of this. And is important that all of us, really, are supporting of preventing violence in any aspect of our society.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I myself have two children. I've got a daughter and a son. I don't want either of them to be faced with a violent situation, whether it's in or outside of a workplace. For my daughter, I want to make sure that no matter where she goes she feels comfortable in this life, whether it's in school; a work environment; whether it's hanging out with friends; or when she's older, whether it's in the workforce.

When she gets into situations where she mate be—where she might be made to feel uncomfortable; where she might be potentially the victim; where there are situations where people, you know, think less of her and feel like they are able to take advantage of her—you know, thinking about that happening to someone close to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, frankly, makes me uncomfortable.

And I think it is my duty and is all of our duty to, when we have the opportunity, to make sure that these types of situations are prevented.

You know, I look at the bill, and I have some questions regarding it. You know, I first look at the aspect of consultation when it comes to this bill. I talk about consultation genuinely, and I look at who are the people who were in the room when this bill was being created, and when the details of this plan were being thought out.

When it comes to the amount of leave that is proposed in this bill, I wonder what experts were consulted. Was it just experts consulted? Was it people who have been victims of interpersonal violence? Were they consulted, because it's so important to hear their opinions as well?

You know, so many times when you hear about victims of violence, you know, the first time they're victimized is in that act of violence. The second time of victimization might be having to relive that act of violence through either—whether it's a, you know, court proceedings of—or whether it gets to that stage, it might be in the public media of—in discussion, public discussion of these acts of violence, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We don't want to re-victimize the survivors and victims of interpersonal violence, and, frankly, I think it would be a disservice to pass a bill that really didn't include their thoughts, their opinions, their shared stories of having survived incidents of interpersonal violence, and I think that could be seen as a third victimization of having not actually properly consulted with victims of interpersonal violence because it is so important that we listen and we take their thoughts in mind when we form our opinion and our—as the people who are in this Chamber to legislate and protect people in the province, it's important that we consult and we listen to all of them.

And I say that because it's important to listen to, you know, women who are victims, but also because, as a minority person, we realize that, in many acts of violence, people of multiple minority groups are even more likely to be victims of interpersonal violence, sexual violence, domestic abuse, verbal abuse.

So it's not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just limited to women. It's women of colour; it's women of First Nation background, of indigenous descent; people who are Metis; it's people who are disabled; people who are of the LGBTQ communities, who are even more vulnerable to these acts of interpersonal violence.

And so I want to bring that up as a point: Were people from these groups consulted in the formation of this bill?. Was someone with a disability consulted for this bill? Was there someone from a black background consulted for this bill? Were victims who were also LGBT, were they consulted, because, frankly, something like this is so important to get a well-rounded, broad base of consultation before you can enact a bill that is truly going to help people in the province, right. Like, we're here from 57 ridings across Manitoba to represent every person—every person—in our province.

And so we want to make sure we're passing bills that are going to consider the aspects and the shared values of every person, and I think that considering the thoughts and feelings of not just women, but people of multiple minority groups is essential when we're coming up with bills like this.

Now, it is important to look at additionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's important for us to look at the aspects that has been brought up by members from Wolseley and St. Johns when it comes to our employers and the atmosphere in which many members of our society face in the workplace.

* (16:20)

And, when employers are often, you know, accepting of a culture where women feel less than, where women might feel inadequate, that's simply unacceptable. You know, this bill does go to act to, you know, perhaps give some leave of domestic violence and interpersonal violence, you know, give them some time off and some leave, which is appropriate.

But let's look at how we can prevent these actions from happening in our workplaces in Manitoba in the first place. How are we working with employers to create cultures where people feel safe? How are we creating cultures where women and men, people of any gender, feel comfortable going to work, making their contribution to their employer, you know, having social gatherings where they feel like they can be just as equally a part of the workplace culture and vibrant atmosphere as any other member, regardless of their gender, regardless of their race or ability.

And it's important, like, you know, this is one aspect of making things better for victims of violence but what are we doing to be proactive about it, right? This, you know, aspect of reacting to issues is just half of the story. What are we doing to be proactive? How are we asking our employers in our province—excuse me—how are we—what are we doing to act—to ask employers in our province to be more respectful of their employees' experiences when they work there, right?

Like, we're seeing this bill come up because we know violence acts—violent acts are happening. We know violent acts are happening across our provinces at home, at work, and in our society, and it's our duty to look at how we can not only react and make it better for victims but prevent these from happening in the first place. So we can start in the workplace, in our government.

So how—what are we doing to look at how to make the culture of our workplaces more equal and more fair? For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look at the trades, there are likely less than 5 per cent of people working in the trades in our province are women. And that is—that creates a culture where women in the workplace are the exception, not the norm. And, when that's the exception, you know, you get attitudes from employer, where I don't want to bother hiring a woman in the workplace because it'll lead to more sexual violence.

That is a completely backwards attitude, you know. You hear attitudes where, oh, I don't want to hire a woman in the workplace because it's going to cause problems for the spouses of my male employees; they might feel uncomfortable. You know, you get attitudes like, I don't want to hire a woman in the workplace because, you know, they might take a maternity leave, which I don't have to worry about my male employees. These attitudes are antiquated and, frankly, they're inappropriate in our workplaces.

Our workplaces should be places where anyone can work, feel safe and where we should proactively be looking at ways for men and women to become employed and feel like their workplace is just as safe as their home and their home is just as safe as anywhere in our province.

We see much of this violence occur in domestic situations as well. And we want to know that people who live in potentially dangerous situations can get the services and get the resources that they need to live and survive after these issues occur.

I do want to bring up the point of education in when it comes to domestic violence and how—what we could do to actually reduce some of the violence. And this comes to the point I'm making about being far more proactive about preventing domestic violence.

So, in Manitoba, the rates, you know, there's a rate of sexual assaults is 113 reports for every 100,000 people, and, you know, that is twice the national average in our province. Now, that means to me that we've got a lot of work to do. Right? We've got a lot of work to do to prevent acts of violence. It's not enough to just pass laws which will help victims and help survivors, right? It's up to us to actually take concrete steps, concrete actions to prevent some of these sexual assaults from occurring, right?

And of those—of these 113 that are reports—nearly twice the national average—we know that the reported sexual assaults represent only a fraction—less than 5 per cent of what is actually occurring in our society.

Now that's a scary thought, that only a fraction is actually getting reported. That fraction that's getting reported might lead us to think that there's not as big a problem as there is, and maybe is preventing government from taking concrete steps, but we have to realize that not all victims speak up. Not all victims are able to let their voice be heard.

So sometimes we have to take a strong stance and actually stand up for people who can't voice their concerns and actually be their voice, and I think that is an important role that we have in—of the people in this Chamber, to stand up for the people who can't actually have their voice heard.

Educating people is essential, and I think education goes a long way into preventing acts like this—domestic violence—interpersonal violence from happening. And that education starts early. It should extend to our post-secondary institutions.

People and students in our post-secondary institutions are often accepting of a culture of violence, especially towards women, because it has been the tradition and the norm. We often hear stories from—for fraternal fraternities and other groups who might have a culture of accepting violence—sexual violence. That is unacceptable. This culture needs to be changed through education, through strong role models who are offering positive attitudes towards creating a culture of safety.

But it shouldn't just be limited to our post-secondary institutions. We should start early with kids. And there's no reason that preventing sexual violence could be done through acts as part of our K-to-12 education system. When we look at comments made by our member from Wolseley of stories from kids who are in high school who knew it was a norm—an accepted norm as a female in high school to be sexually abused. How is a norm of abuse accepted in this province? And from the stat I read earlier, it's twice as likely in our province than in other parts of the country.

So what are we doing to really prevent and act on preventing these things from happening in our province? And I think that this bill, while it does help, could go a lot further to making sure that all Manitobans are—not only have the resources to get the services they need to feel safe, but to actually have prevention occur so they don't ever get victimized by interpersonal violence in the first place.

Now, the education side of it does go on both sides. It's important to educate our students—people, through education, through school—K to 12, through our post-secondary institutions and in the workplace, but it also takes another side. It's important to educate our judges and our people in our law system, in our justice system. It's important that they understand that when they are working on a case where a victim has been a victim of interpersonal violence or domestic abuse, sexual violence, that they don't re-traumatize

these victims in the court of law, that they are respectful of their own—of the victim's experiences, respectful of the victim's background—cultural background—that they're 'respectful' of history, whether it's a history of violence against women or history of violence against a certain ethnic background, that these aspects be considered when it comes to our justice system.

*(16:30)

You know, the justice system in Manitoba is unique, but navigating it is challenging for victims. And for them to seek justice—which should be equal among all members of our society—is especially challenging.

For example, there are, you know, there are challenges when it comes to seeking justice because of the nature of the number of male lawyers and female lawyers in our justice system. And there are a number of male lawyers versus female judges in our justice system.

And I think that it's mindful—should be mindful for all the lawyers, Crown attorneys and people—judges in our justice system to be mindful of the shared—the background and the history of people who might be victims of domestic abuse, interpersonal violence, sexual violence, so that they can actually be acting towards having a more just society.

Being in the justice system is important for them to actually be looking at, let's make the victim feel safe as they share their experience in this tragic incident. You know, currently, the province—in our province, judges and justices of the peace deal with over 90 per cent of criminal matters, in which most, if not all of sexual assaults are human—harassment cases.

Yet, while the federal judges receive sexual assault and awareness training, provincial judges and JPs—those who deal with most of these cases—are not mandated to take training, right. So across our justice system, we have witnesses—witnessed officials who are oblivious, simply oblivious to heartbreaking realities and experiences of women and girls who've been sexually assaulted.

Now, to me, that doesn't sound necessarily like a justice system that is aware and fully recognizes how these experiences affect the lives of women and girls. It sounds like we have a justice system that needs a lot of work.

And so I think that this bill, Bill 7, has aspects which will help many people in our province, but

can go a lot further into recognizing that we have a lot of work to do in preventing these injustices from happening; in taking concrete steps to educate people in our education system, in our workplaces, and in our justice system to ensure that they are aware of how victims of interpersonal violence and sexual violence, how their experiences really change their lives, and how we can, as a society, help to heal those wounds and make them better.

Now, nine out of 10 women do not report sexual assaults. They are often cited—cite fear of police investigation, the court process as a deterrent. That's a study, a report from the globe a few years ago. Last year, The Globe and Mail published findings of a 20-month-long investigation into sexual assault in Canada, and the investigation found that 1 in every 5 sexual assault allegations in Canada is dismissed as baseless and unfounded.

True unfounded cases are rare, the study said, but we know that victims don't come forward, that they are fearful to come forward, not just because of the justice system which makes it more difficult for them, but because of the repercussions that they may face from their employer, from their spouse, from their friends, from their family. And those repercussions do affect their lives and the quality of lives that they can have.

We can find ways beyond this bill—to enhance this bill that would actually help those people when they need the help. So it is for this reason, you know, that we believe although Bill 7 does move us in the right direction, there is so much more that is needed to be done to truly enhance the experience for victims to make sure that it is far less traumatizing, that they actually have resources to become more whole members of our society after they've become victims, after they have been victimized.

I want to just touch back briefly to what I was alluding to at the beginning about referring to consultation. And, when it comes down to consultation, you know, and consulting on this bill from different groups, from women, I'm really questioning how much consultation was done with people from minority groups.

When it looks at people who have experienced or friends of people who've been involved with missing and murdered women and girls initiatives that we've seen around our province, interpersonal violence, sexual violence is directly linked with missing and murdered women and girls. And it's—I think it's our duty to make sure that we're looking at the causes of

this violence as well as how do we help people who have survived the violence.

And there are so many things that lead to this violence. There are acts such as—or, rather, there are issues such as poverty that lead to people becoming more violent in their lives. There are things like addiction which lead people to be more violent in their lives. There are things like mental health issues which lead to increased violence acts in our communities.

And, if we really want to work on addressing sexual violence and domestic violence, we need to address the poverty issue in our province. We need to address the homelessness issue in our province. We need to address the issues around racism in our province.

You know, there are people who come from different backgrounds and different countries who have different cultures as they come here. And, when we look at the issues around violence, sometimes there are people who have different cultures around treating women and men when they're coming here. We want to make sure that all people are safe, regardless of gender. And so, when people come here, we want them to know that they're safe.

So this is another perfect opportunity for us to do education around newcomers who are here to our province so that they feel welcome, so that they feel like they have a place in our society and that they know that they're not going to have a violent act perpetrated against them, that they can have some sort of trusts and have a sort of, you know, faith in our system that, you know, that people in Manitoba will truly care about whether they are protected or whether they're not.

And so it is really, when we dive into some of these root-cause issues like making sure we have—making sure that we have supports for people so that they stay out of poverty, making sure that we have places for people who are addicted to get off of their substance abuse. Those actions will actually help to reduce some of the acts of violence that we're seeing.

You know, we've seen a lack of issues and bills put forward to actually address some of the root causes. Now, I think that, you know, this Bill 7, although it does, like I mentioned, have a lot of points that will help people in our province, what we're seeing is that some of these root causes are not addressed.

You know, we've called for, you know, we've called for a further increase to funding for addictions

services. And these addictions services would, you know, we seen this every day if you talk to members of the Winnipeg police, the RCMP around the province who deal with people who have acted out violently because they're addicted on substances. These acts are becoming a regular occurrence. You know, in the past, we've had alcohol abuse was—is very prevalent.

* (16:40)

We've seen it through various drugs and, most recently, we've had a meth crisis in our city. And we know that we've heard stories of people throughout the media over the last several months where people are in a, you know, simply like a meth trance where they're acting so violently that it is difficult for police to even control them. Now imagine that violence being taken out on a spouse or a partner, a loved one.

Now, those acts of violence can be prevented if we had a proper drug and addiction strategy in our province. That's been sorely lacking. If there was a way for this person to get treatment outside of an ambulance or outside of a police car, an actual spot where they could go to get some crisis prevention if they have a mental health crisis or an addiction crisis, to get them treatment so that they don't have an occurrence where they're being abusive to their partner or friend or even random citizens in our province, as we've seen an increase in random acts of violence.

Now, I think that—you know, I will conclude my—I see under two minutes here—but I will conclude some of my thoughts by saying a few things that—you know, this bill is very important. It does provide people with some steps to become more full members of our society by giving them some additional leave from their places of work so that they can actually have an opportunity to come back and contribute to that employer.

Now, it does take some steps. However, there is a long, long way to go. We have further work to do when it comes to education, both in K to 12, post-secondary education, in our employers and in our justice system.

We've got work to do when it comes to the root causes of much of this violence: poverty, addiction, mental health issues, homelessness. If we can tackle a lot of those root causes, it will allow us to prevent these actions from happening and therefore lessen the amount of times that we have to rely on Bill 7 to actually help people's lives.

And I do want to just say that I do want to make sure that we—our ultimate goal is to make sure that survivors feel safe. And, you know, we do look forward in—to making sure these people have a safe community, a safe home life, a safe work life and a safe place in Manitoba. And I want to make sure that we are supporting actions to actually help people achieve that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's a pleasure to speak to this bill today. I do think it's an important bill that's being presented.

We do need to recognize how serious this issue is. And words matter, and I think one of the things that happens is we often speak of domestic violence or violence against women, and the way we set up those—even just construct that sentence means that we're not acknowledging that violence is not a thing on its own. Violence does not just happen. It's an act committed by one human being against another.

And in the vast majority of cases, it is men—and sometimes young men or—and boys committing violence against women. It's not just a question of violence against women. It is men committing violence against women, and these assaults are fundamentally about power and control. And in Manitoba and across Canada, this is an ongoing and extremely serious problem.

I'll read just very briefly from a news story that, in 2019 in Manitoba, there—the—there was a crisis line that was called 16,792 times. The shelter was used 49,031 times, including for women, men and children who had experienced family violence.

And they said, provincially, what we're seeing is that the domestic abuse and family violence is not decreasing at all. We're still getting a tremendous number of calls requesting assistance or help in some manner.

In 2017, close to one third of all police-reported victims in Canada were victims of intimate partner violence, according to Statistics Canada. In addition, the rate of intimate partner violence rose 1 per cent from 2016 to 2017.

And now I have—this is an incredibly important issue. There are difficulties in prosecuting these cases. I know that I've dealt with constituents who've faced the challenges and that there are challenges both in the family courts and the criminal courts.

This is something that needs to be taken more seriously, in particular, and I've actually written a letter to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) expressing my concern that there are some issues that are being—not being recognized in family courts and that in very—in serious and in dangerous breakdowns of relationships where a husband is being controlling, threatening or violent, that there are some gaps in terms of making sure that mothers and children are safe.

So there are a couple of issues. We do want to make sure that this bill fully covers protection, that it's not too narrow. We want to—if anything we'd like to expand the protection for women and children who are—and anyone who's a victim—who's been a victim of assault in this way, but we will look forward to supporting this bill, to seeing—getting further scrutiny, hopefully improving it if it needs to be improved, but we are looking forward to supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers?

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Well, I did attend a bill briefing for Bill 7, and we were—Chris Sanderson and I—one of our staff members—and we were quite pleased with the bill, and we look forward to supporting the bill.

As I understand it, it's falling in line with other jurisdictions across Canada, including British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

We're also happy to know that with the five days of paid leave, that it was—we are on the higher end of the provinces that will actually be providing paid leave if we pass this bill. Some other provinces only provide two days of paid leave or three days, and I think BC only—provides zero days, although they're considering it right now, so it's good to know that we're providing the five days of paid leave.

As I said, we support this amendment to the Employment Standards Code. We do believe that this bill moves the province in the right direction by opening up leave for all victims of interpersonal violence. It's not just women—anybody who is experiencing interpersonal violence.

Where we stand on this bill and our major concerns, though, is not necessarily with the bill itself. Like I said, we are going to be supporting it, but what we're concerned about is the lack of services that folks

who are on the receiving end of sometimes extremely egregious acts of violence are.

We know that supports have been getting cut for Manitoba Housing. We just heard today, this morning, from the member from St. Boniface that this Province has sold off 94 units of Manitoba Housing.

We've heard from different groups all over the province, especially from the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the different groups that are associated with them, that they are extremely concerned about the housing—the lack of affordable housing situation currently in Manitoba, and that they believe that, really, we are on a precipice that we've never encountered before because a lot of different organizations that do provide housing currently are approaching the end of their 35-year mortgages with the province. And we're very concerned about will happen when those—the end of the 35-year mortgages will happen.

Will these organizations be able to continue to find some kind of funding for their housing for the needs of different folks who need that? Because without housing—it's the main support and it's the common denominator that people of all walks of life will have to go through when they need to recover from different acts of violence that are perpetuated on them.

*(16:50)

Housing is a common denominator and it's actually one of the things that I plan to spend most of my time on as an MLA to ensure that the constituents of Notre Dame and the rest of this province have access to affordable, decent and safe housing. And things like this bill—again, we're moving in the right direction, but the support systems for folks that are experiencing interpersonal violence are not there.

We know that education is our first defense against sexual violence and harassment, and we know that the rate of police-reported sexual assault in Manitoba is 113 per 100,000 people. This is nearly twice the national average, and even still, we know that reported sexual assaults represent only a fraction of assaults that occur.

We know that sexual assaults, especially rape—this is only second in the Criminal Code to seriousness that's only—only murder, only homicide is considered more serious than rape. It's important that we destigmatize talking survivors of sexual violence and make accessing these services and legal help easier and less painful.

I'd like to talk about the role of the criminal justice system in trying to address—to better address this issue. By expanding who qualifies for leave from work, Bill 7 allows more people to use their time off to potentially seek legal help, but we know that for victims of sexual violence and harassment, seeking legal help can be daunting and in fact, most victims never make a police report.

There was a very good case of investigative journalism by Robyn Doolittle from The Globe and Mail. And she had her unfounded series, and she discovered that 20 per cent of all cases of sexual violence that was reported never made it past the police officers who considered that those cases were unfounded, not because the police officers couldn't find suspects, not because they didn't feel that they could just go forward with this case.

So, just right there and then, there was already a lot of institutional barriers right there for victims who wanted to seek any kind of redress in the criminal justice system. This is why survivors do not report. It's part of these systemic issues that they re-traumatize the victimized person over and over again. Again, we believe on the—here at the NDP that this bill is a right step in the right direction, but there's still more to be done.

In addition to the cuts to local services that support victims being cut, housing initiatives being cut and in crisis, and I don't use that word a lot, crisis, but this is the word that housing—that folks in the non-profits that work with trying to find folks housing, they're using that word crisis because of this approach to the end of the 35-year mortgages that happening this year and next year.

But, in addition to those supports being cut, we also need to find a way to keep pressing and having more criminal justice bills in the right direction. So, in order to reverse some of these systemic barriers, we want to encourage making changes to reporting and to judicial processes.

Last winter, the NDP—I think it was the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine)—introduced a bill that would require newly appointed judges—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I just want to remind everyone, it's—I'm starting to hear—hard to hear the speaker. The noise is getting a little loud in this—in the Chamber. So if everybody

can, sort of, go to the loge or whisper a little bit so that we can hear the member.

Ms. Marcelino: We are hoping that this government will consider supporting us in our direction to require newly appointed judges to receive sexual assault and awareness training before taking office as a judge or justice of the peace, and we now hope that the government works towards dealing with this matter.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I know that time is very short this afternoon but I did appreciate the opportunity to just put a few words on the record to bring a perspective that we have heard here now a few times this afternoon, but which I do believe is important—is an important part of this conversation, and that is the voice of men and the men of our caucus and the men of all members of this House who, I think, understand the important role that we play when it comes to stopping this kind of violence.

And I believe that it's important that those voices are also part of the conversation and I think it's important for men to be part of the solution, hopefully, going forward.

I think—I want to commend our members on, as I said, on all sides. I did hope that more members would take the opportunity to speak to or put their words on the record, but it was important to hear so many diverse voices from our side of the House to speak to this particular bill and to talk about just how important it is.

We know, as the minister mentioned, this is something that the—was really started by the previous—by the NDP government, but I think it's important that we continue this conversation.

And what was most important, I found, in the questions and in the debate that happened this afternoon was that we weren't just solely talking about the constraints of this bill, but talking about the issues more broadly; talking about some of the challenges that folks have in the North; folks have who aren't employed; folks who don't have the same resources and the impact on them.

We know that this is only part of the solution, that we need a whole network of supports for women and for people who are victims of violence and domestic violence. And so I hope those words were listened to by the government. I hope that some of that message was taken into account.

Again, not just in regards to this particular bill but, I think, for others who may be not encompassed by this, that they would—this government would prioritize them, see the impact that they could have to change lives and to support those who are victims.

And I think we heard that clearly from our side of the House and I do think that all of us can come together with regards to this bill, move it forward and move forward to hear from Manitobans tonight at committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act. All those in favour of the—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

I declare the motion carried.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I rise on House business.

I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Human Resources will meet on Monday, December 2nd, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would like to announce that Standing Committee on Human Resources will meet on Monday, December 2nd, 2019, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence).

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 2, 2019

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