

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

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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, Hon.	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, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	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
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
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

Thursday, March 11, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

An Honourable Member: A matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, on a matter of privilege.

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): I move, seconded by the member for—*[interjection]* Okay.

I rise on a matter of privilege. This is a serious matter, Madam Speaker, and I request an opportunity to properly lay out the facts of the matter as I understand them.

This is the first opportunity I have had to rise on this matter, Madam Speaker, since learning of the facts. It's a first opportunity because the matter concerns a bill which was introduced and—but not distributed, November 2020.

I have learned the contents of the bill were shared publicly with the media just hours ago, prior to distribution in this House, and—the House adjourned in the morning sitting.

As this is the first time the House has met since then, I—taken place, I believe this is the earliest opportunity to bring this matter to your attention.

On the matter itself, it's a long-standing and clearly understood the—tradition of the House and tradition—practice has been affirmed and reaffirmed on many occasions, that the bills are not—to be introduced in this House and debated in this House must be first presented to this House prior to any other person or venue.

It offends the authority of this House to have the question of this legislator first proposed to individuals other than those who have a duty—duly elected by the people of the province to consider, debate and vote on such important matters.

Our most important authority, the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, O'Brien Bosc, on page 85 are very clear. It notes the distribute of bills to the media prior to members of Legislature—a breach of privilege. They wrote: For example, in 2001, the question of privilege was raised

regarding briefing of the Department of Justice held for members of the media on a bill that was yet introduced in the House, while denying members access to the same information. Speaker Migilken *[phonetic]* ruled that the provisions informed—concerning the legislator to the media without effective measures to secure the rights of the House—consists of prima facie case of a contempt—Debates, March 19th, 2001, 1839-1840. The matter was referred to a standing committee on procedure of the House affairs.

It is—the 14th report presented to the House on May 9th, 2001, and a committee found that privilege of the House had been breached: This case should serve as a warning to—our House that—will insist on full-page recognition of constitutional factions and historic privilege across the spectrum of government.

However, the committee did not recommend sanctions in light of an apology of the Minister of Justice, of corrective actions to be taken, and ensure actions did not reoccur. A prima—case of breach of privilege was found—similar case latter the same year and a matter was referred to a procedure of the House affairs committee.

To be clear, the information provided to the media in advance of this Chamber was not general in nature; it did not solely—concern solely the general principle or the principle of the bill. It was—concerned the details of the legislation of the bill.

Members of this Chamber who were duly elected by the people of this province have a mandated role to fulfill their Parliamentary functions and demand a presentation with the details of the legislation which must be debated and voted upon. Even the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) said it—should be an agreement with—principle, and I quote—the Chamber, former House leader, government caucus, May 9th, 2018: The contents of the legislation being shared with both public and media before members of this Legislative Assembly have a chance to review, receive, shows a history of disrespecting our traditions and practices of this Assembly and the rights of MLAs receiving information first before we ask—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Adams: –to offend commitment or debate. This has been long-standing parliamentary tradition and one that is observed in this Chamber and its members. Those were words spoken by the government House caucus, Madam Speaker.

The government's own ministers failed to heed their own words in their actions. As a result of these actions by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), this government—I move, seconded by the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) that Bill 47 not be considered a specified bill in this session for the legislator—Legislative Assembly; that the Minister of Families apologize for the breach of privilege to all members.

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to reply briefly to this matter of privilege.

Madam Speaker, you will know, as all members who have been in the Chamber for some time will know, that there are certain procedures that happen when it comes to advising the media in an embargoed or sometimes a lock-up situation, information and briefings in advance of certain things happening here in the House. The obvious example is the budget lockup that happens, where members of the media are provided information—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: –where members of the media are provided information, Madam Speaker, regarding the budget prior to it being distributed here in the Chamber, but it, of course, isn't made public. There's not a public release of the budget in advance of that.

And I suspect that this particular situation is similar to that where there was a private or an embargoed situation, where there was a briefing given to the media in some level of detail regarding a bill, but it was not a public disclosure of the bill.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The member needs leave. *[interjection]*

Oh, sorry—

Mr. Gerrard: I ask leave—no, I don't need leave on this.

Madam Speaker: No, you're right, you don't. Go ahead.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay.

Madam Speaker, I speak in full support of the MLA for Thompson that it is outrageous that the bill has been provided to others outside the Chamber before the bill was tabled in the House. I would add that it is a travesty that this bill, which I think was introduced November the 2nd last year, has still not been tabled in this House. And this would not have happened if the government had done their job properly and tabled this bill on November the 2nd. We understand they may not even have had a bill at that date to table.

But even if they hadn't, they had all of November and part of December to table it, and it is just a real miscarriage of the normal processes of the Legislature that this bill hasn't been tabled. But that as it be, this point of privilege deals specifically with the matter of the contents of the bill being shared with people outside the Legislature, rather than in the—provided MLAs first.

This is clearly a breach of procedure and a breach—and we should have a matter of privilege on this basis, and I concur with the member for Thompson (Ms. Adams) that this bill should no longer be considered a specified bill because of the mis-handling of it.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

Introduction of bills—oh.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable First Minister please proceed with his statement.

Pandemic's One Year Anniversary in Manitoba

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): It seems like much longer than a year ago, Madam Speaker, but it was just a year ago since the arrival of COVID-19 here in Manitoba.

It's been a year of incredible challenge and hardship, but it has also been a year of resilience and innovation and perseverance. Over the last year, we've learned what Manitobans are made of in many respects. The challenges of having to stay away from people you love to keep them safe only proved what we already knew: that we need each other, Madam Speaker.

* (13:40)

We saw neighbours stepping up to help their neighbours. We saw friends volunteering to check in on one other. We saw people volunteering to shovel the walks for seniors, so that they could be safe, and to deliver groceries and to help others in many ways.

We learned ways to be together while being apart. We learned how to take advantage of the technology—better than, perhaps, we had ever before—that allowed us to interact, to study, to help our children learn how to study, to hold meetings without being in the same room.

Local business people, local educators all, I think, displayed a remarkable ability to innovate and to problem-solve, to overcome challenges that even six months before COVID came here they could never have imagined.

Madam Speaker, I talked to a young teacher the other day, and he said that he'll never again go back to the old ways of teaching, that being able to use video for his students who can't always make it to class, to assist them in reviewing lessons, to assist them in studying and so on is a technique that he'll take forward. He knows many of his colleagues will, too.

So we've all learned, Madam Speaker, many things, but for many families, the last year will be remembered as one of loss. We've lost more than 900 Manitobans—the vast majority, of course, being older Manitobans—to COVID-19. Many families are grieving and many families need to know that we here in this House and all Manitobans grieve with them, and we offer our condolences to them.

As we honour those that are no longer with us, Madam Speaker, we are also grateful for the many lives we've saved, and I thank Manitobans for that. Provincial modelling has indicated to us that these restrictions that we imposed last fall have actually saved thousands of lives in this province, and the worst-case scenario that we were presented with—that we would, by the end of November, have over 1,000 COVID cases each day—never materialized. And thank goodness it was avoided, thanks to Manitobans bending the curve together.

To our doctors, to our nurses, to our health-care aides, to all the other health-care workers and professionals that we count on, this has been one of their most difficult years, too, Madam Speaker, being on the front line, seeing the effects of COVID. Manitobans are grateful for them and we're grateful for your heroic efforts and to you I say, you have displayed remarkable courage and perseverance in the face of incredible challenges.

The economic impacts of this pandemic have been borne by all of us, Madam Speaker, but in particular by those who have lost jobs and by local businesses that create jobs for Manitobans. Local businesses that have adapted their models and adjusted as part of this collective effort to bend the curve have shown their creativity and their ingenuity and shown us why Manitoba's known as a hard-working province with a wonderful base of small-business people that are so concerned with doing a great job for their customers.

Our government has done our best to offer these businesses the supports, and individuals the supports that they need to get through this difficult time, and one year into this pandemic we believe that there is hope on the horizon.

We're proud of the work we did to prepare in advance of this pandemic, which we did not know was coming, Madam Speaker, but Manitoba is notorious for having challenges, challenges Mother Nature provides us with on a regular basis, for example. And so we knew, as a government, it was wise to be prepared and we worked hard to prepare.

And so with that preparation in mind, we were able to offer some of the most important and supportive programs to benefit individuals, non-profits, charities and small businesses in the country of Canada. We're glad of that because that positions us to come out of this when the time comes, to emerge when it's safe to do so.

Widespread vaccination's our best strategy to return to a semblance of COVID-normal, and we know that—that normal we long for when grandparents can hug their children, when we can meet friends for dinner, when we can go to church again, when we can attend a Jets game and watch them thrash the opponent, Madam Speaker, or a concert. These are things we all want to do again, and we know that Manitobans long for these days ahead, and they will come.

And that's why we've launched a historic vaccination campaign, the largest and the most complex immunization campaign in the history of our province, and I am tremendously proud of the efforts of everyone that's involved—volunteers, Madam Speaker, leaders from our business community, from our military community, from the civil service of our province, working together to get these vaccines out to Manitobans. They are saving lives and I say thank you to them as well, on behalf of all Manitobans.

Together, I know that we'll look back on this year with both sorrow and with pride—sorrow for the losses we have sustained, but also, Madam Speaker, pride for the challenges that we overcame together and our collective courage and our resilience in the face of the greatest threat that most of us will ever see in our lifetimes.

So, Madam Speaker, I would ask for leave for—the House for a moment of silence in the Chamber to commemorate this event today, this anniversary, and also in respect for the many families who have lost loved ones over the past year.

Madam Speaker: I will call for that moment of silence after all members have spoken to this.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): This wasn't part of my wardrobe a year ago, Madam Speaker. And as we take the opportunity to reflect on the one-year anniversary since the global pandemic was declared, there are certainly many things that flood to mind.

It is a day of mixed emotions tinged with tremendous sadness. As of this morning, 911 Manitobans had lost their lives—cut tragically short because of the novel coronavirus and the disease COVID-19 that it causes.

These are friends, families and community members that are mourned, that are remembered, that are grieved to this day. So we send our condolences.

We also send our best wishes for a speedy recovery to those who are still fighting for their lives in

hospital today, for those who are still recovering from the impacts on their bodies, their hearts and their minds.

On a personal level, I wanted to take the opportunity during this statement today to pay a special tribute to the 10-year-old boy that we lost in Manitoba. I was told by a Globe and Mail reporter that, at the time of his passing, he was the youngest COVID victim in our country.

And wrapped up in that moment is the embodiment of so much of what makes this pandemic such a tragedy for so many people. From a parental perspective, my heart really goes out, but from the perspective of anyone with a beating heart, the fact that we lost a 10-year-old child to this terrible scourge has to move you.

At the same time as we have had our hearts broken, there have been some reasons for optimism. We want to thank all of our front-line heroes for their tremendous courage, whether it was the people who provide our food, the people who keep our supply chains moving, whether it's the front-line workers in education and child care or law enforcement, who continue to go to work each and every day to ensure that our essential services could continue to be provided. We say miigwech, thank you, merci.

To those working in our health-care system—the doctors, the nurses, the health-care aides, the health-care professionals—we owe you a tremendous, unrepayable debt of gratitude. You put your lives on the line to protect ours. You did so in the face of uncertainty, particularly early on in the pandemic when we didn't quite yet understand the parameters of this foe with which we are currently toiling against. And so, certainly our heart felt thanks, gratitude and dedication to all of those good folks.

We should also be proud of the tremendous, unprecedented, global scientific collaboration that delivered us these vaccines in record time, and that are now providing not just a sense of hope, but also a desire among so many of our fellow Manitobans to figure out when we can roll up our sleeves. And so certainly, we look ahead to that.

But as we look ahead to the future, as we look ahead toward a recovery on the other side of the COVID pandemic, let us never forget the lessons that we learned. Let us never forget of the collective tragedy that has befallen our seniors in the way that we failed them with long-term care across the country, but also unfortunately in this province.

Let us remember the heroism of our front-line workers by ensuring that they all earn a living wage; whether they work in the retail sector, food services, caring for our children or caring for our elderly relatives at the end of their lives. The care economy is crucial to our recovery.

And importantly, let us not forget that if we do come out of the other side of this thing, that if we do triumph over the coronavirus and COVID-19, it will not have been the result of individual action. It was only through the result of collective action that we were able to accomplish this thing.

Through our shared commitment as Manitobans to abide by public health restrictions, to wear a mask, to participate in the vaccine program when it was our turn, that is how we have been able to stem the tide.

* (13:50)

And so, on this day, it is with a heavy heart that I offer my condolences to those that we've lost and to the families that they've left behind. I offer my thanks and my honour to the commitment displayed by all those Manitobans who are still here with us, looking ahead towards a brighter tomorrow.

And I say that, one year into this thing, the message is largely the same, though perhaps with a little bit more hope. We're all in this together. The only way we're going to get through this is together, and so let's keep having one another's backs.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: It's difficult on this somber day to do justice to what happened in the last year.

First and foremost, we offer our condolences to the families of all those who died, and thanks and gratitude to all those who cared for them. Because Manitobans' response to this crisis has been extraordinary, and the fact that Manitobans have endured and persevered through this crisis is a testament to the generosity, caring and skill of the people in this province.

D'abord et avant tout, nous offrons nos condoléances aux familles tous—de tous ceux qui sont morts, ainsi que nos remerciements et notre gratitude à ceux qui ont pris soin d'eux. Parce que la réaction du Manitoba à cette crise a été extraordinaire, et le fait

que les Manitobains aient enduré et persévéré tout au long de cette crise témoigne de la générosité, la bienveillance et des compétences des gens de cette province.

Translation

First and foremost, we offer our condolences to the families of all those who died, and thanks and gratitude to all those who cared for them. Indeed, Manitoba's response to this crisis has been extraordinary, and the fact Manitobans endured and persevered through this entire crisis is a testament to the generosity, caring and skills of the people in this province.

English

And because we have an obligation in this House, both to truth and to history, we have to point out that Manitobans have persevered, not because of this government, but in spite of it. We've been borne through this pandemic thanks to the hard work and dedication of doctors, nurses, lab workers, health-care workers, teachers, principals, educational assistants and early childhood educators, First Nations leaders, public servants, construction crews, small businesses, Hydro workers who keep the lights on, grocery workers, delivery and truck drivers, artists and performers.

Et parce que nous avons une obligation à la fois envers la vérité et envers l'Histoire, les Manitobains ont préservé — non pas à cause de ce gouvernement, mais malgré lui. Nous avons survécu à cette pandémie grâce au travail acharné et au dévouement des médecins, des infirmières, de travailleurs de laboratoire, de travailleurs de santé, d'enseignants, de directeurs d'école, d'adjoints, et à l'éducation—d'éducateurs de la petite enfance, des chefs des Premières Nations, des fonctionnaires, des équipes de construction, petites entreprises, travailleurs d'Hydro qui gardent les lumières allumées, travailleurs de l'épicerie, chauffeurs de livraison, artistes et interprètes.

Translation

And because we have an obligation both to truth and to history, Manitobans have persevered—not because of this government, but in spite of it. We have survived this pandemic thanks to the tireless efforts of doctors, nurses, laboratory workers, health workers, teachers, principals, educational assistants, early childhood educators, First Nations leaders, public servants, construction crews, small businesses, Manitoba

Hydro workers who keep the lights on, grocery stores workers, delivery drivers, artists and performers.

English

And even before this pandemic, we warned to get ready, and throughout this pandemic, we've worked to warn this government of dangers and provide solutions. More than a year ago, we asked to protect First Nations and personal-care homes, to set up a central command centre and remote technology so the Legislature could keep working.

In May, after the tragic deaths in Ontario and Quebec, we asked the government to set up rapid-response teams to prepare for a second wave in Manitoba. We called for more funding to protect seniors homes and schools, and when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in July declared mission accomplished and announced the event attraction would be a pillar of economic recovery, we pointed out that cases were spiking in Alberta and that borders should stay closed.

In August, we helped secure a change to the federal 'sood' surplus program, which meant that Fisher River First Nation could buy and distribute for free \$10.8 million in fish to First Nations communities, and fishers across Manitoba and Western Canada could get back to work.

We called for asymptomatic testing in July, harder shutdowns in September, emergency teams to be sent to personal-care homes in October, vaccine planning and emergency homelessness supports in December and variant testing in January, and there is no pleasure in this.

There is no pleasure in warning of a disaster and seeing it unfold before your eyes, only to have the people in charge say that no one could see it coming in a province with the second worst mortality rate in Canada.

Today, while the flags outside the Legislature are at half-mast, rather than hold a press conference marking any of this, the Premier talked about accountability at Hydro.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, and hope is around the corner, but once we are clear from this, we cannot let the record of this government's failures be swept under the rug.

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

Please stand.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kidney Health Awareness

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services): Madam Speaker, March is recognized as Kidney Health Month and today, March 11th, is World Kidney Day. The message remains the same each and every year, and it is to raise public awareness of the importance of kidneys to our overall health and to reduce the frequency and impact of kidney disease.

Today is also the national day observance for those who have died of COVID-19 and the day to wear white in recognition of the nurses and front-line health-care staff who have been so important to us during the COVID-19 pandemic. During our family's very personal journey through the kidney donor and transplant system, we met several of those caring nurses and have many thanks for their knowledge and strength.

In Manitoba, we are a leader in kidney transplants. There is a dedicated team of physicians, nurses, members of Transplant Manitoba and the Kidney Health Clinic who provide the highest level of care and access to quality information for those living with kidney disease.

November of 2019 was the 50th anniversary of the first kidney transplant in Manitoba. The pandemic made many changes and most provinces saw kidney donations fall by 35 per cent. Here in Manitoba, we saw a small increase due to the generosity of Manitobans.

Please consider participating in our many campaigns virtually, and show your support by registering for Manitoba's online tissue and organ donor registry at Sign Up For Life. As of January 21st, we held the donation decisions of 52,000 Manitobans.

A gentle reminder: we have transitioned away from paper donor cards, so please take the opportunity to remind your family and friends to identify their intentions by going online to signupforlife.ca and registering to be a donor. It only takes a few minutes if you have your Manitoba Health card available. I encourage all Manitobans to discuss organ and tissue donations with their loved ones. By registering, you can save a life.

Thank you.

Kewal Singh Chocan

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I rise today to pay tribute to a pillar of our community, Kewal Singh

Chohan, a loving and devoted father, husband and spiritual leader to thousands. Kewal Singh tragically passed away two weeks ago, leaving an enormous hole in the hearts of so many across our province and beyond.

Faith was a driving force for Kewal and his devotion to the Sikh community in Winnipeg extended throughout his life.

As part of an early wave of Punjabi newcomers to Manitoba in the 1970s, Kewal was a pioneer who helped build the Sikh community of Winnipeg and establish Gurdwaras throughout the city. He would go on to serve as an executive member of the Manitoba Sikh Cultural and Seniors Centre and a multicultural consultant for various municipal, provincial and federal organizations.

Kewal's advocacy was not limited to his faith, however. His activism equally extended to advocating for Indigenous rights, education and knowledge and working to give every family equal and fair opportunities.

Deservedly, he was recognized on both the national and international stage, including with the Governor General's award and Queen Elizabeth golden jubilee medal, among many, many other rewards—awards.

Politically active his whole life, there was hardly an election campaign that Kewal wasn't a part of. His advocacy had lasting impact. Working alongside MP Bill Blaikie, he helped bring forward a resolution to parliament that officially recognized the four K's and the importance of Sikhism in Canada's history. In Manitoba, he worked with our NDP caucus to build public awareness and pass Sikh Heritage Month into provincial law.

Kewal was a mentor, a teacher and a friend to me, as he was to so many. He helped me better understand the Sikh community and faith and he always emphasized the shared humanity of all people. His words were always pointed and profound but he was also kind and welcoming, not only to me but to my family: my mother-in-law, my wife and my children, as we would often sit to enjoy the langar well into the afternoon.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I wish to extend our sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Kewal Singh, and to everyone he touched over his lifetime. Kewal's life has

left an immeasurable and positive impact in our community and he will long be remembered by those whose lives he changed for the better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Edward "Ted" Poyser

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, I rise today to honour and recognize an extraordinary man who achieved many things in his life.

* (14:00)

Edward Arnold "Ted" Poyser was a true steward of the land. He passed away on November 21st, 2020, and will be greatly missed.

Though Ted's heart never really left the prairie soil he grew up in, life led him to the city, where he became a scientist, conservationist and practical ecologist. Graduating from the University of Manitoba with a masters degree in agricultural science in 1950, he began a career in public service, which continued through and beyond his formal retirement.

Ted helped to map and publish some of the first Manitoba soil survey reports, which are still in use today. Later, with the Department of Agriculture, he helped establish the Whitemud Watershed Conservation District, which would become a model for our conservation districts. He also created productivity ratings for land, which became the basis for Manitoba crop insurance program.

Ted also helped organize major draining systems across southern Manitoba and worked to establish provincial parks, such as Oak Hammock Marsh, Spruce Woods park, Birds Hill and many other parks and wildlife management areas for all Manitobans to enjoy.

Never losing his passion for soil and water conservation, Ted continued into his final years to write, explain and advocate for sustainable prairie care.

Ted's public service and his impact on agricultural policies and institutions and practices was acknowledged with many distinguished honours throughout his career. Some highlights included his inauguration in the Agricultural Hall of Fame, winning the conservation builder award, achieving honoured titles such as distinguished agrologist and a fellow of the Agricultural Institute of Canada. He was a man of integrity and was very knowledgeable about challenges faced by rural communities, from floods to droughts to water quality or soil management.

Madam Speaker, his legacy is more than the many work accomplishments. It's also the people he influenced along the way, who live on under his influence.

Thank you.

Manitoba 150 Volunteer Award Winners

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Cheryl Antonio, Sandra Margaret Bartlett, Terry McKellep and Olivia McCorrison: these are the four inspiring women from The Pas that Manitoba 150 committee selected to be honoured, as part of Manitoba's 150th anniversary celebrations, for their tireless volunteer work that has helped shaped the province as we know it.

Cheryl has played a major role in reviving the Helping Hands 4-H Club for our youth and has tirelessly promoted The Pas, Opaskwayak Cree Nation and the RM of Kelsey over the years, running a face group—Facebook group which promotes many events in our area. The other groups she's volunteered for are numerous and include the Friendship Centre and The Pas correctional institute library.

Margaret has dedicated much of her time with the Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 19 Ladies Auxiliary for the past 27 years. The Legion itself has been described as the backbone of our community, as collectively they've volunteered countless hours supporting events in our community.

Terry is very well known in the community, in part thanks to her volunteer work. She's very passionate about her work with the Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival and has been the president for the Rotary club for many years. On top of that, she's been a member of the Legion since 2000 and a volunteer for our celebration of Opaskwayak Indian Days.

Olivia has done extensive work in education and community building, including founding educational supports such as the Songide'ewin program, helping open the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, among many other initiatives. She's also played an instrumental role in keeping Oscar's Place open—a homeless shelter in The Pas.

These women were four of the 150 Manitobans who were selected by a jury to receive this honour, which includes a commemorative medal, \$500 to be donated to the charity of their choice. They've made our community proud and they've also made our communities better through their selfless volunteerism.

Ekosi.

I Love To Read Month

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Celebrating I Love To Read Month is definitely one of the best parts of being an MLA because it's an opportunity to speak to students and teachers directly, together.

Now, this year was a little bit different considering it was all virtual, but I must say that the schools in my constituency—Tyndall Park, Garden Grove, Meadows West, Stanley Knowles, Prairie Rose and Shaughnessy Park—far exceeded expectations and made celebrating I Love to Read Month virtually not only possible, but fun and informative.

Between the 14 classrooms I had the opportunity to read with, I read through *Curious George*, *The Orange Shirt Story*, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today* and *Uniquely Wired*, several times. And of course, with the readings I also like to remind the schools that they are technically my bosses, and it's my job to bring to this government's attention their concerns and their ideas.

So, Madam Speaker, this year, students in Tyndall Park said that this government needs to create more accessible compost options for households, make sure teachers have money to buy students the resources they need, and lastly, there was a suggestion of a three-hour gym class; however, I think this one may warrant a little more debate.

Madam Speaker, as you can see, I believe these students are on to something, and in addition to these great ideas, I also want to use this time to say how doing virtual readings with schools really made me appreciate first-hand just how flexible and adaptable our teachers have been in their abilities with teaching and adapting to online and in-class studies. So just a big, big acknowledgement and thank you to all of our teachers, school administrators, parents and students.

And lastly, Madam Speaker, I want to give a shout out to gain some awareness about a spring 50/50 raffle that Stanley Knowles Children's Centre is having to raise funds to be put towards toys, books, activity supplies and furniture for the centre.

If anyone is interested in supporting, please visit www.fundingchange.ca/skcc/.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hydro Labour Dispute Arbitration Request

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to send my sincere congratulations to Stephanie Scott, the new director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. She is the first woman to be appointed to the role.

Manitoba Hydro's 2,300 IBEW employees are standing up. Now, these are the workers who have been threatened with layoffs by this government, who've had their wages frozen, who aren't being dealt with fairly at the negotiating table. They've asked the Premier to bargain in good faith, and they've given him the opportunity to do so by asking for arbitration to resolve the current labour impasse. Unfortunately, the member for Fort Whyte has refused to even consider the idea.

Why is the Premier so afraid of that independent process?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): First of all, I'll add my congratulations to the Opposition Leader's to Ms. Scott, and congratulations to her on the appointment that she has just received. I look forward to working with her to achieve shared goals.

I would also like to, if I could, Madam Speaker, just pass on our condolences but also our appreciation for the life of Ted Poyser and his family and many, many friends. A wonderful man and—who gave so much to our province throughout his life.

In respect of giving, Madam Speaker, we have also given a clear mandate to Manitoba Hydro to enter into negotiations with IBEW. This is important. This transparency is important, and it was absent for close to two decades when the NDP were in power. Sadly, we bear the consequences of that, and the other 10 billion reasons I can give you in the subsequent answer.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I'll tell you why the Premier is afraid of an independent arbitration process. He is afraid because he knows he will lose.

That's what has happened every time their fiscal mumbo jumbo has been put up in front of an independent adjudicator, whether that was the Court of Queen's Bench, whether that was the Manitoba

Labour Board, whether that was merely an arbitrator on a school-division-level labour dispute.

Every single time they've gone to an independent adjudicator, they have lost, Madam Speaker. And it seems like that is the real reason they will not go to arbitration with the good, hard-working Manitoba Hydro members of the IBEW union.

Again, we recognize that these workers are so important to our provincial economy and to our way of life.

Will the Premier simply agree and allow these 2,300 hard-working folks to have arbitration?

* (14:10)

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the mess—the \$10-billion debt burden—that Manitobans have been asked to carry because of the NDP is, in part, because the NDP felt that they knew better than Manitobans and didn't trust Manitobans to be involved in the process.

They covered up the process of advancing their ideas to the extent that they overruled Manitoba Hydro leadership. They ignored their own board at Manitoba Hydro. They actually didn't even give the PUB-appointed board the chance to look at the projects that they pushed forward politically before they began construction.

So, Madam Speaker, this kind of disrespect continues: nothing new with you-know-who. What he is advancing here is an idea that we should solve the problem of a labour negotiation by taking sides in advance and disrespect the process. That disrespect was evident during the NDP time in office and it's obvious that it's still there today.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I forgot to name an additional independent adjudicator who struck down this government's failing ideas.

In addition to the Court of Queen's Bench, the Manitoba Labour Board, the arbitrators for school divisions, the Public Utilities Board also struck down their 8 per cent rate increase, proving once and for all you just can't believe the PCs when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. And, of course, that's why, when it comes to Bill 35, that they seek to remove Public Utilities Board oversight of Manitoba Hydro almost entirely.

And so certainly these IBEW members, hard-working folks that they are, deserve to have an independent adjudicator look at their situation as well. They're so important to our way of life, to our provincial economy.

Why doesn't the Premier just admit that this belongs with an independent arbitrator?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, Mr. Schreyer—our beloved former premier—had it right when he said the NDP doesn't have a darn clue how to run Hydro. And the member has made it obvious that he's inherited that sane—same ineptitude himself.

Madam Speaker, the fact is the previous government decided that it wouldn't listen to its own people. It decided that it would keep Manitobans in the dark while it advanced \$10-billion boondoggle that would help Americans get cheap power and Manitobans would pay for it.

But, Madam Speaker, they also, in doing that, decided that once they got their way, they wouldn't even bother discussing it amongst themselves, I guess maybe because they just didn't trust each other. So there's no record of Treasury Board ever considering what \$10 billion of additional debt would do to the province while our provincial debt was being doubled by that government, no evidence that the Cabinet actually considered it either.

So what the member is suggesting is just a continuation of the endangerment that the previous NDP government did when it entered into this boondoggle at the expense of Manitobans. We're going to clean up that mess. We'll fix it.

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

Manitoba Hydro Subsidiaries Privatization Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I have tremendous respect for former Premier Ed Schreyer, and certainly I seek out his advice on Manitoba Hydro all the time. One of the important points he makes is that we need the Public Utilities Board to continue to have oversight over Manitoba Hydro.

But when it comes to keeping Manitobans in the dark, it is this Premier and this Cabinet who have been the worst offenders of all. Just last December, after having their 8 per cent hydro rate increase struck down by the Public Utilities Board, they snuck around in the dark of night—4 a.m. when it received royal

assent. They chose legislation instead of a public process to increase the rates for all the good, hard-working Manitobans out there.

We know why they don't want PUB oversight. They plan to sell off Manitoba Hydro Telecom's fibre-optic backbone to Bell MTS.

Will the Premier simply admit as much today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I appreciate any question from the member about sneaking around in the dark of night, Madam Speaker. I can tell you I know where his expertise lies and it sure doesn't lie in running Hydro.

If he's listening to Ed Schreyer, he'll know that Ed Schreyer has no respect for the way the NDP mis-managed Hydro. He'll know that for sure. And if he'd really listened to Mr. Schreyer, then he'll know that he shouldn't repeat the mistakes of the past.

And we're not going to, Madam Speaker. That's why we're strengthening the Public Utilities Board, so never again can a government agency come to the Public Utilities Board, as the NDP did, and say: Approve our project; we already built it. Because that's exactly what they did with the Keeyask dam, Madam Speaker: \$1 billion already invested. That's how little respect they had for the Public Utilities Board.

We're going to strengthen the Public Utilities Board, make sure that never happens again, Madam Speaker. It must never happen again because Manitoba Hydro doesn't belong to the NDP. It belongs to Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the reason that will never happen at the Public Utilities Board again is because they are never going to refer anything to the Public Utilities Board again.

Last year, they refused to go to the PUB for their rate increase. They snuck it in through those doors in the form of Bill 2, Madam Speaker. We know what would have happened if they went to the PUB. The PUB would have struck it down just as they did with their 8 per cent rate increase a few years back.

Madam Speaker, again, there was no press release about Bill 2. There was no press conference about Bill 2. No one was informed publicly until the members on this side of the House shared it with—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –the people of Manitoba. We cannot allow that to happen again, Madam Speaker, and that's why their Bill 35 will be so harmful: rate increases every single year signed off on at the Cabinet table without Manitobans ever being any the wiser.

Why is the Premier so obsessed with privatizing Hydro subsidiaries and raising rates on Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Aw, it's springtime, Madam Speaker. The member better get off the pond before the ice melts entirely. He's sinking fast here.

Look, any question on sneaking in from the member is one I welcome, Madam Speaker. Lookit, the Madam—the fact of the matter is the NDP raised hydro rates by 40 per cent—40 per cent—and now he's trying to—and tripled Manitoba Hydro's debt. So any question he has on Hydro debt I welcome it.

Look, they tripled Hydro's debt while they circumvented the right of Manitobans to even know why they were doing it. They went ahead and they didn't even get approval from the Public Utilities Board. They decided let's build it and then, well, they'll rubber stamp it for sure.

That's not respectful, Madam Speaker. We know how little respect they have for referenda. They actually went to the doors, knocked, promised everybody they wouldn't raise PST, and then they went and they changed the rules on the referendum so they could raise it.

Lookit, we are strengthening the referendum rule so that people who get to decide on these massive mega projects in the future aren't the NDP—never again; going to be the people in Manitoba instead.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I wonder whether any of the members opposite who clap along so un-enthusiastically and listlessly to all of these questions on Manitoba Hydro, whether they ever stop to think: why does everything the Premier say actually get discounted, dismissed and disproved by independent experts time and time again?

Because it is completely without bearing to reality, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: The facts are this: just a few hours ago, the Premier committed to implementing every recommendation of the Wall report, including chapter 6, which recommends the sale and privatization of Manitoba Hydro subsidiaries.

Wow. Apparently the Cabinet was not informed before they were told about the privatization of Manitoba Hydro subsidiaries.

My only question for the Premier at this point is: Which Hydro subsidiary is he going to privatize first?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, all I can say is I think it was chapter 5 where he said the taxi driver made him do it, so I don't think we need to take his credibility seriously here.

Madam Speaker, there's nothing in that report that says that, and he's making it up. The fact is he's using the boogeyman of fear to try to get what he wants. He's done it before. He did it before he got into politics. He's doing it now. He's doing it in the middle of COVID. He's trying to frighten people. He's trying to frighten people to get his way. He's trying to frighten front-line workers. The NDP tried to frighten cancer—people who were—had cancer—*[interjection]*

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: They'd get cut their medications. That's what they said.

They tried to frighten front-line teachers in the last election. Nurses—they tried to tell everybody to be afraid. That's how they get their way. It's called coercion, and it's done, Madam Speaker.

We're going to get the truth out. And the truth is going to support Manitoba Hydro belonging to the Manitoba Hydro people. And Manitoba Hydro people aren't the member from Fort Rouge, Madam Speaker.

The people who own Manitoba Hydro are Manitobans, and that's who we respect.

Swan Lake ER Vacancies Physician Recruitment

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, the community of Swan Lake will soon be losing the two doctors needed to run their local emergency department.

While community members are concerned that they might not see replacement physicians to keep their ER open, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has already decided to downgrade it.

The loss of this emergency room will have major long-term implications on health care in Swan Lake and in many surrounding communities who rely on this ER.

Will the minister reverse her decision and tell us today what the plans are to actively recruit new physicians and keep the emergency department open in Swan Lake?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Before I address the issue that the member opposite has brought up, I just want to say that, one year ago today the World Health Organization declared a global public health emergency, and our condolences go to all of those who lost their lives in this pandemic.

Today, many of us, Madam Speaker, are wearing white to acknowledge the sacrifices and extraordinary efforts of health-care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To all of our nurses, to our doctors, to our health-care aides, to our countless health-care professionals, we know that these have been some of the most difficult times in your life, and today we say thank you.

And I also just want to send sincere gratitude to leaders, members of our COVID-19 response team, to our Manitoba Vaccine Implementation Task Force and to all those Manitobans who have really sacrificed their lives in the last year. To all of you, we salute you. We—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, community members are still rightfully concerned about the decision by this government. People are worried that they're pushing ahead in the middle of a pandemic with phase 2 of their health-care plan that's going to see them cut health care and close rural emergency rooms across Manitoba.

If this ER closes, 2,000 residents from Swan Lake First Nation, villages of Swan Lake, Bruxelles, Mariapolis and St. Alphonse are all going to have to travel even further to access emergency care—in some cases, almost a one-hour drive.

Will the Minister of Health reverse course and work actively to recruit doctors to keep Swan Lake ER

open and care close to home for those community members?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member opposite and the former NDP government will know well that—of the challenges in recruitment of and retention of our health-care professionals, physicians and so on in our—some of our rural and more remote communities.

This is nothing new. This is something that rural and more remote communities face across our country.

Madam Speaker, that's why we are moving ahead with our clinical preventative services plan, which will provide better health care sooner, closer to home for Manitobans. That's what we're working on and that's what we'll deliver on.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker—and I hope that the minister takes the time to really listen to the question that I'm asking here about this decision-making—the government continues to ignore the health staffing vacancies in rural Manitoba. And it's causing a disruption in our health-care system.

We know how crucial access to emergency rooms is for people who are having strokes, heart attacks. And if those folks are forced to wait even longer for an ambulance to get to the nearest ER, which is even further away, that essential care is eroded.

Filling these vacancies and keeping emergency rooms open in rural communities is vital for their health.

Will the minister reverse course and tell us today what her plans are to fill those physician vacancies in Swan Lake and keep their emergency department open?

Mrs. Stefanson: I'll remember the member opposite about the 17 emergency rooms that the previous NDP government closed across rural Manitoba, Madam Speaker. That is not the approach that we are going to take.

We have put together the clinical preventative services plan. This is all about providing better health care, sooner, closer to home for people in remote communities. We're working with our clinical plan and those who are involved in it, Madam Speaker, to ensure that those in remote communities will have the access that they need, want and deserve, closer to home.

Animal Diseases Amendment Act Request to Repeal Bill 62

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): In the last year, during a global pandemic, we can thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for tens of thousands of Manitobans currently out of work. Over 900 Manitobans have lost their lives. We know that the road to recovery is going to be monumental.

And so what's the priority for the Premier right now? Well, to pick fights with a handful of animal rights activists, threatening \$100,000 of fines or even jail time for doing some things like giving water to an animal in times of distress. The Pallister government has the wrong priorities.

Will the Premier repeal this unconstitutional legislation today?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): I would take it the member's referring to Bill 62, and this is about the safety of our food supply. This—they adhere to national standards for biosecurity in our food supply. It ensures poultry and animals are looked after humanely and safely. It's about the protection of them—from the introduction of unwanted diseases or restricted food ingredients.

This is also about the safety for our farm families, who want to avoid potentially dangerous confrontations.

And I guess the member is opposed to all those things; and we're all about food safety and the safety of farm families.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. John's, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Fontaine: The Ford government has similar legislation, which is currently being challenged on constitutional grounds. And as it's written, Manitoba's Bill 62 could mean that—large fines or even jail time for providing water to an animal that's clearly in distress.

The minister's response, similar to just right now, and I quote: Who knows what's in that water? Are they contaminating that water, which would contaminate the food system?

Madam Speaker, come on. That's absolutely ridiculous. This legislation is the government's priority in a pandemic and in a recession. What's wrong with this Pallister government?

Will they repeal this ridiculous legislation today?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate that the member takes food safety as not a serious matter. It is very serious that food safety—is safe, the food production system is safe, the food handling system is safe. And ultimately, consumers want safe food, and that's what this bill is all about.

It's providing safety in the food system and also safety for farm families, and it's unfortunate that the member is putting all that at risk.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. John's, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: So let's consider another bill: Bill 63.

Currently, if you're out hiking or berry-picking, Manitobans know not to cross fences or to go into farmers' fields. If an area is marked with signs as private property, we all know not to go in. That's the law.

Now, the Premier intends to make it illegal. This is completely 'unenforceable', and it's the government's priority—again, in a pandemic and in a recession. What a waste, Madam Speaker.

Why is the Premier prioritizing misguided legislation in a time of a pandemic?

* (14:30)

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On the contrary, we are pleased to sponsor amendments that we think are reasonable, that actually work to de-escalate situations.

Current rules under the NDP required a confrontation between landowners and people on their land. We don't want that. So we are moving to a system that actually decreases the likelihood for a negative interaction.

We believe that these are balanced, reasonable and safe changes, and we're looking forward to debate. We had a bill briefing, but the member didn't come.

Supports for Children in Care Children's Advocate Recommendations

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Everyone here knows the name Phoenix Sinclair and the Hughes inquiry that followed her violent death.

Today's the—today, the children's advocate brought forward a new report that details the tragic deaths of 19 young children who needed safety and love.

Agencies will be challenged to implement—under block funding.

Will the minister reconsider this arrangement to ensure progress is made?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I want to thank member opposite for that question, as it gives me an opportunity to rise in this House and, perhaps on behalf of all members of this Legislature, express sincere condolences to the families and the loved ones of those 19 children who died unnecessarily and very tragically.

I also do want to express my gratitude to the acting advocate for her very thoughtful and concise report.

As I had stated earlier today, I believe that report provides a pathway towards greater supports and reunification of families so that we can support our vulnerable families and that we can ensure that no children fall through the cracks again in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: The advocate includes interviews with caregivers involved with the deaths of these children. The advocate suggests that, based on evidence, the risk of harm can be reduced through supports and a culturally appropriate unification policy.

When can Manitobans expect these investments in their communities as the advocate recommends?

Ms. Squires: Again, I thank the member for her question, and also her collaboration.

That member knows, as do us on this side of the House and all Manitobans, that we will get better outcomes for families and these vulnerable children when we work together, when we cross aisles and work together to support these families, when we work across agencies and authorities, when we work together as a province and with the federal government too, supporting these vulnerable families.

In regards to supports for vulnerable families, our government was pleased to give \$1 million recently for a community helpers initiative to prevent child apprehensions, as well as money towards Granny's House, which provides 24-7 respite care for at-risk families, as well as \$400,000 for the Mothering Project at Mount Carmel Clinic. We believe these investments are integral.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Lathlin: We met with the advocate to hear more about these cases and about their recommendations. We share their concern and commitment to reforming CFS and improving the lives of children at risk.

The children's advocate also recommends that culturally appropriate parenting programs be provided, not just in one community, but across the province in every community, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister provide assistance to deliver this this year?

Ekosi.

Ms. Squires: Again, I couldn't agree more with the children's—the acting children's advocate when she said that we need to provide culturally appropriate services, as well as some reunification support, and work together across party lines and work across agencies and authorities, also working with our federal government. We know that with the introduction of Bill C-92, the act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth, that we all have a role to play in transforming child welfare.

And our government is committed to implementing the recommendations as outlined by the acting advocate in her report today.

Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation Department of Fisheries Recommendations

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): On January 12th, the federal Fisheries Minister received a report on the future of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. It proposes very substantial changes to the FFMC, including transitioning it to a co-operative.

The Pallister government has been completely silent on this important matter that impacts so many Manitoba fishers.

I ask the minister: Do they support this transition, and what supports, if anything, are they proposing to actually support fishers?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): We certainly have been supporting Manitoba fishers.

We recently announced an eco-certification program for Cedar Lake and many other lakes across Manitoba. The way to market fish in the future is to have a certification process. That's what the consumers are asking for, is for eco-certification.

And we'll continue to work with our commercial fishermen all across Manitoba in order to build that market because it fits in with our protein strategy.

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

The honourable member for Keewatinook?

I would indicate that there is a technical problem, and I'm going to move on, and we will ensure that the member—oh. Problem fixed, then.

The honourable member for Keewatinook, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Bushie: I'll save my rural broadband connectivity issue for a different question.

But to go back to my other question on Manitoba freshwater, the Pallister government has been completely missing in action for Manitoba fishers. They make regulatory changes without consultation, they rip up the single desk without working through the consequences and now there's no evidence whatsoever that the Pallister government is engaged with the proposal put forward by the department of fisheries.

What is the minister's position and what supports, if any, are they going to put forward to help Manitoba fishers today?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned before, we're working with fishermen to build the markets all across the world for our fish products commercial—from the commercial fisheries. We also continue, as the member may not be aware of, that—the freight allowance that brings fish down to the freshwater fish marketing board.

And we will continue to work with fishermen all across Manitoba to build that market because it does fit in with our protein strategy. It's an eco-certified product that we can market worldwide and it'll help commercial fishermen build their markets and build their incomes all across Manitoba.

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

Mr. Bushie: Madam Speaker, it's always been disheartening when I hear the minister tout the buy-back program, and the buy-back program has done nothing but to—designed to eliminate fishers.

But during this pandemic, there's been a very difficult time for Manitoba fishers, and especially those in northern communities. They have faced many challenges.

Many unincorporated fishers, unfortunately, were excluded from provincial support programs. Now the federal government proposes ending the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation as a publicly owned entity.

Will the minister be involved with the supports in any process going forward, or will fishers once again truly be on their own?

Mr. Pedersen: I should note that we did have outreach with the fishers around Lake Winnipeg, the various communities. And actually, what they were talking about is that the federal programs, they were not eligible for. They're eligible for provincial programs but not for federal programs.

That aside, it has been a difficult year in—early in the pandemic because the freshwater fish shut down because they couldn't market the fish that they had on—in stock. It's been a difficult year for them but the markets are rebounding.

The protein market is building for their product. And we will continue to support fishers all across Manitoba because we know that there's a tremendous future for them in the markets and in the worldwide markets. And Manitoba will be the place to be to produce that product.

Supports for Children in Care Children's Advocate Recommendations

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Today, the children's advocate released its follow-up in to the inquiry into the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair.

Now, it took five years for an inquiry to be called into her death in the first place, and at the current pace it will take 23 years to fulfill all the recommendations of the inquiry, and the report says that progress is slowing.

* (14:40)

What happened to Phoenix Sinclair is still happening to children under this government because CFS, like ERs or 911, can't turn people away because all other supports, like housing, income and mental health care, are not available.

Why is it going to take 28 years after Phoenix Sinclair's death to fulfill the inquiry's recommendations?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): As I stated previously, our government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the acting

advocate's report, and we are also working with our partners in delivering child welfare.

Our government ended the practice of birth alerts last July to ensure that we've got mothers supported throughout the birthing process and that they are better equipped to take care of their babies and their children.

We're also working with our child-care workers to ensure greater supports are available to those vulnerable families. We know that much more work needs to be done, and we're committed to doing this work with all of our partners to ensure child safety in the province of Manitoba.

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

Accessible Prenatal Care Available to All Manitoba Women

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): The issue of children in care, especially Indigenous children in care, is the single greatest moral issue we face. From the residential schools to the '60s scoop to CFS to the—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont:—2000s scoop, governments have never stopped tearing apart Indigenous families while forcing those same families into poverty by denying them access to rights and resources others can take for granted.

A society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable.

This may be more of a plea than a question: Will this government do the right thing and make amends, go beyond the inquiry recommendations, keeping families together instead of tearing them apart, and starting with a guarantee for quality, accessible prenatal care for every mother in Manitoba?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government does recognize the need for pre-natal care for mothers in the province of Manitoba, that is why we launched the very first Indigenous doula program, where expectant mothers can be paired with a doula to provide those supports so that she would be better equipped when her baby comes into this world; that's why we also invested \$4 million in a Healthy Baby program, so that families and expectant mothers can get those supports that they need during that critical time.

We're committed to working with families. We know more needs to be done to support these

vulnerable families, and we're committed to getting the job done.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park. *[interjection]* Oh. The honourable member for River Heights.

Deaths from Neonatal Syphilis Prevention Resources Needed

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, there's a major outbreak of syphilis in Manitoba, with the highest rates for syphilis and neonatal syphilis of any province, and perhaps one of the highest in the world.

Contact tracing for sexually transmitted diseases is short-staffed and less than needed. The latest report of the number of STDs in Manitoba is years behind. Why is the government hiding information?

I ask: How many children have died from neonatal syphilis? How many children will suffer the life-long consequences of congenital syphilis under this government's watch? And when will the government provide the desperately needed additional funding and resources to get syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia under control in our province?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Yes, the last three questions have highlighted a serious problem and concern we're actually addressing on a number of fronts, but I would emphasize to my Liberal colleagues that they need to get on board with the NDP and the PC parties, and they need to get behind the call for their federal Liberal cousins to back health care in this country.

They're calling for more funding from us, but they're not calling for the federal Liberals to provide more funding in a partnership with us. And there's an incongruity with that, I think, Madam Speaker, because federal support for health care in our province has dropped to its lowest level ever in the history of Manitoba.

So, I appreciate them raising the issues, I appreciate them calling for us to address them, but I'd like them to join in with the NDP and PC parties here and be part of the unified approach that's happening all across the country in every other province, with the exception of here in Manitoba, unfortunately, where the Liberal Party is not joining in and calling for the federal government to resume its rightful role, its responsible role in supporting programs like the very ones they just asked we address today.

Fire Protection Grant Update on Initiative

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): This government recognizes the critical importance of fire protection and emergency response for the safety of all Manitobans. Last fall, I was very pleased to see the then-minister of Municipal Relations launch a Fire Protection Grant initiative.

Can the current Minister of Municipal Relations share with the House the outcome of this fire protection grant initiative?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'd like to thank my colleague from Riding Mountain for that wonderful question. I'd also like to thank all the firefighters in the province for their dedication that they show every day into protecting Manitobans and our families.

We'd initially launched a grant that was a \$5-million program in September.

Between September and November, we received hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of applications—very good applications—from all over the province.

Upon review of the funding, we were able to expand our support to more than \$9 million. These funds assisted some 209 projects for community fire halls and mutual aid districts and a wide range of equipment, including SCBAs.

Madam Speaker, these projects protect Manitobans across Manitoba, all parts of the province, something our PC government is committing to do for all Manitobans.

Provincial Park Services Privatization Inquiry

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Two days ago, I very deliberately asked the Minister of Conservation and Climate if she would commit to keeping Manitoba park services public, and she never provided Manitobans with an answer.

Park passes have already been privatized. People want to know that all other aspects of our parks will remain public, and they have not been provided this reassurance.

Madam Speaker, I ask again: Will the minister commit to keeping Manitoba parks services public?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Again, I thank the member for asking the question. I thought I was quite clear three days ago

when she asked the first time, and I will state again, that our parks are not for sale.

Madam Speaker, our parks have always been open to enhancements, except under the previous NDP government. Our government is committed to improving services, not privatization in any forms.

However, Madam Speaker, I would caution the member to wait until reports are released so that she can base her questions and debates on truth, not on—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: And I have a—I have rulings for the House.

Following oral questions on October 28th, 2020, the honourable First Minister raised a matter of privilege regarding comments made in the House by the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala). The comments in question referred to the then-Treasury Board secretary specifically alleging a conflict of interest, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) argued that these comments breached his privileges as an MLA. He also stated that these comments infringed upon his ability to perform his duties as First Minister and to receive professional guidance from a senior civil servant.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) both spoke to this matter before I took it under advisement to consult the procedural authorities.

As members know, there are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for a matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege: was the issue raised at the earliest available opportunity and was sufficient evidence provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the member or of the House were breached.

* (14:50)

On the issue of timeliness, the honourable First Minister indicated in his submission that this was his first opportunity to raise this matter, as the statements in question were made by the honourable member for St. James in question period that same day, October 28th, 2020. Based on this information, I would rule that the honourable First Minister did meet the requirement of timeliness.

Regarding the second condition, I would remind the House that when any Speaker is dealing with a matter of privilege, they are dealing solely with the procedural aspects of the matter. As noted by Speaker Fox in a ruling in this House on privilege in 1972, the Speaker deals only with the technical and procedural aspects of the matter and not in any way with the merits of the situation or the allegations. Therefore, when a Speaker makes a ruling indicating that there is or is not a prima facie case of privilege, the Speaker is neither condemning nor condoning any actions taken.

Regarding the question of civil servants being the subject of allegations made in the House, I must note that government staff are not protected by parliamentary privilege and cannot claim the protections of parliamentary privilege. Only MLAs are protected by parliamentary privilege. As identified by Joseph Maingot on page 100 of the second edition, *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, in order for non-elected persons to claim the protection of parliamentary privilege, they must be taking part in a parliamentary proceeding, such as appearing as a witness before committees or counsel who speak on behalf of petitioners for private legislation.

Providing professional advice to a minister would not count as participating in a parliamentary proceeding. Several Manitoba Speakers have previously affirmed this principle, including Speaker Reid in 2012.

Additionally, on page 224 of the same edition, Maingot advises that parliamentary privilege is concerned with the special rights of members, not in their capacity as ministers, party leaders or whips, but strictly in their capacity as members in their parliamentary work. Claims that privilege has been violated relating to a member's role as a minister of the Crown are therefore not the basis for a prima facie case of privilege. This perspective has been supported in numerous rulings in this House, including rulings from Speaker Rocan, Speaker Hickes, Speaker Reid, as well as in rulings I have delivered.

I would also add that when the First Minister made his remarks on this matter, he did not conclude by moving a motion. As a reminder to all members, our rule 36(2) states that, and I quote: A submission from a member raising a matter of privilege should conclude with a motion giving the House the power to impose a reparation or apply a remedy. End quote.

Considering of all of these factors, then, I must respectfully rule that the matter raised does not fulfill the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

Once again, I will note that, in ruling this way, I am not passing a value judgment on the concerns raised by the member or the comments made in debate by any other member; I am simply evaluating the matter on purely procedural grounds.

I will conclude with some advice that I hope will be instructive for all members in the House. On page 92 of the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Bosc and Gagnon wrote about the importance of freedom of speech in the parliamentary setting and the need to exercise it cautiously.

And he said: "Freedom of speech permits Members to speak freely in the Chamber during a sitting or in committees during meetings while enjoying complete immunity from prosecution or civil liability for any comment they might make. This freedom is essential for the effective working of the House. Under it, Members are able to make statements or allegations about outside bodies or persons which they might hesitate to make without the protection of privilege. Though this is often criticized, the freedom to make allegations which the Member genuinely believes at the time to be true, or at least worthy of investigation, is fundamental. The House of Commons could not work effectively unless its members were able to speak and criticize without having to account to any outside body." End quote.

Further to that point, in 1984, House of Commons Speaker Bosley affirmed that, and I quote: The privilege of a Member of Parliament, when speaking in the House or in a committee, is absolute, and that it would be very difficult to find that any statement made under the cloak of parliamentary privilege constituted a violation of that privilege. End quote.

Because the privilege of freedom of speech is such an extremely powerful immunity, on occasion, Speakers have had to caution members about its misuse. I believe that Speaker Milliken aptly summarized this sentiment in 2003 when he advised the House of Commons as follows, and I quote: "Speakers discourage members of Parliament from using names in speeches if they are speaking ill of some other person because, with parliamentary privilege applying to what they say, anything that is damaging to the reputation or to the individual, . . . is then liable to be published with the cover of parliamentary privilege

and the person is unable to bring any action in respect of those claims."

That quotation can be found on page 98 of Bosc and Gagnon, and this sentiment would also apply to civil servants, as they would not be able to defend themselves in this place. I trust that all members of this House will heed these words of caution and govern themselves accordingly.

I also have another ruling.

Prior to petitions on November 2nd, 2020, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) raised a matter of privilege regarding the government's failure to distribute printed copies of bills that had received first reading earlier in the same sitting day during routine proceedings. She noted that out of 23 government bills that had been introduced for first reading, only copies of four of those bills were available for MLAs and that the lack of the printed copies of bills prevented MLAs from being able to comment on legislation.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader concluded her remarks by moving, and I quote, "that this matter be immediately referred to a committee for consideration." End quote.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) also spoke to the matter of privilege. I then took the matter under advisement. I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for a matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege: was the issue raised at the earliest available opportunity, and was sufficient evidence provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the member or of the House were breached.

The honourable Official Opposition Leader asserted that she was raising the issue at the earliest opportunity given that 'verification' was required to see if the bills that had been introduced earlier in the sitting day had also been distributed. After hearing this explanation, I am satisfied that the matter was raised at the earliest available opportunity.

The second issue to consider is whether the evidence provided was sufficient to demonstrate that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred. Regarding the second issue, I would like to advise the House that a matter concerning the methods by which

the House proceeds in the conduct of business is a matter of order, not privilege.

Joseph Maingot, in the second edition of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, states on page 13, that, and I quote: Allegations of breach of privilege by a member in the House that amount to complaints about procedures and practices in the House are by their very nature matters of order. End quote. He also states, on page 223 of the same edition, and I quote: A breach of a standing order or failure to follow an established practice would invoke a point of order rather than a question of privilege. End quote.

I would also like to advise the House of a 2008 ruling by Speaker Hickes where the issue of a lack of bill distribution after first reading approval was raised as a matter of privilege. In that ruling, Speaker Hickes explained that it was not a prima facie case of privilege. He noted for the House, and I quote: Once the first reading motion for a bill has been agreed to, the sponsoring member or minister is then provided with a letter authorizing distribution of the bill within the Chamber. Until that distribution letter has been signed and returned to the table, the bill cannot be distributed. The sponsoring member or minister has the option of authorizing immediately distribution or of authorizing distribution at a later time or on a later date by providing specific instructions. There is no requirement in the rules that the distribution must take place immediately, and this is the decision of the sponsoring member or minister. End quote.

*(15:00)

I would also remind the House that until a bill is distributed, it does not appear on the Order Paper for the second reading debate, so the House would not be proceeding to debate these bills until distribution has taken place.

I can appreciate the concern of the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, but I must respectfully rule that it does not fulfill the criteria of a prima facie case of a breach of privilege.

And I have another ruling for the House.

Following introduction of bills on November 25th, 2020, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order claiming that the government was in breach of rule 2 by not distributing bills when they are introduced, suggesting that the intent of rule 2 was not being respected.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable member for River

Heights (Mr. Gerrard) also spoke to the point of order before I took the matter under advisement. I thank the honourable members for their advice on this matter.

In her submission on this point of order, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) referenced our rule 2(8) regarding specified government bills. She noted that this rule indicates that, in order for government bills to be considered specified, first reading must be moved no later than the 20th sitting day after presentation of the Throne Speech. She further interpreted the rule as meaning that, for any such bill to be considered specified, it would have to be both introduced and distributed prior to that deadline day.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader elaborated on this point by referencing comments made in the rules committee in 2015, when this rule was adopted.

On this point, I will respectfully disagree with the Official Opposition House Leader. I appreciate the argument she presented on this matter, but her interpretation of rule 2(8) is incorrect. There is no provision anywhere in that rule, or in any of our rules, which enforces the immediate distribution of bills when introduced.

I reference a 2008 ruling by Speaker Hickes, where the issue of a lack of bill distribution after first reading was raised as a matter of privilege. In that ruling, Speaker Hickes explained to the House the process regarding introduction and distribution of bills, and I quote: Once the first reading motion for a bill has been agreed to, the sponsoring member or minister is then provided with a letter authorizing distribution of the bill within the Chamber. Until that distribution letter has been signed and returned to the table, the bill cannot be distributed. The sponsoring member or minister has the option of authorizing immediate distribution or of authorizing distribution at a later time or on a later date by providing specific instructions. There is no requirement in the rules that the distribution must take place immediately, and this is the decision of the sponsoring member or minister.

While I can appreciate the concerns raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order.

There's one other matter I must raise for the attention of all members regarding this point of order. In her submission, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader quoted at some length comments regarding rule 2 made by the Clerk of the Assembly

during the meeting of the standing committee on the rules of the House on June 26th, 2015. While I understand why the member referred to the transcript of that meeting as background, I must caution her on referencing a table officer in her arguments.

This point has been made by previous Manitoba Speakers, most notably Speaker Hickes in 2008, when he stated, and I quote: I also wanted to give a reminder to all members that in raising points of order or matters of privilege in the House, it is not appropriate to be bringing the non-partisan staff of the House into disputes between the various parties in the House. The staff at the table are all non-political, non-partisan staff of the House and, as such, serve all members equally and provide excellent service. They also do not have the ability to defend themselves on the record and, as Speaker, I am sure I can speak for all members on all sides of the House when I say that it is not appropriate to be dragging non-political staff into disagreements, and I hope we do not see this happen again in the future. End quote.

I concur with Speaker Hickes on this point in general, though I would add an important qualification. During meetings of the standing committee on the rules of the House, it is the duty of the Clerk or Deputy Clerk to explain the nuances of rule-change proposals for all members. For this reason, I do understand why the honourable Official Opposition House Leader quoted the Clerk's comments from 2015 when framing her argument regarding her interpretation of that rule.

However, I would caution all members to be very careful when quoting our table officers. I would not want any member to make it seem, inadvertently or otherwise, that one of our Clerks was advocating for any argument raised by a member in the House.

I will echo Speaker Hickes here and remind members that all of our table officers are professionals, thoroughly non-partisan, serving all members equally at all times. It would be unfortunate and inappropriate there to ever be any impression given that they are taking sides on any dispute or debate in this House, something they would never do.

I thank all members for their attention to this ruling, and I have another ruling.

During orders of the day on December 2nd, 2020, the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) raised a matter of privilege regarding his ability to ask questions of the government in the House without intimidation. Specifically, he alleged that the then-

secretary of the Treasury Board had used a respectful workplace complaint against him as a means of preventing him from asking questions in the House.

The member concluded his remarks by moving, and I quote: "that this matter be immediately referred to a special committee of this House so the privileges of all members may be respected and the government be properly held to account."

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) both spoke to this matter before I took it under advisement to consult the procedural authorities.

Before I proceed, I will ask members to bear with me. This is one of the most serious and complex matters of privilege I have encountered as your Speaker, requiring extensive research and consultation. For that reason, this ruling is quite detailed, and I ask for the patience and attention of all members.

As members know, there are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for a matter raised to be ruled in order as a *prima facie* case of privilege: (1) was the issue raised at the earliest available opportunity; and (2) was sufficient evidence provided to support the member's claim that their privileges, or the privileges of the House, were breached.

On the issue of timeliness, the honourable member for St. James correctly indicated in his submission that a member must—pardon me—that a member, and I quote, "must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practical after becoming aware of the situation." End quote.

The member further explained that the circumstances related to the infringement of his privileges had been ongoing and that he raised the matter, and I quote, "in the most immediate and responsible way", end quote, he could. He concluded that the complicated nature of the matter required, and I quote, "significant research, significant deliberation and consultation and significant examination of the authorities in order to be properly presented in this House." End quote.

I will admit that I am concerned about many aspects of this matter, including the timing of the member's submission, as the situation referred to began weeks before he raised this in the House. However, I will note that a respectful workplace complaint such as the one referenced here should remain entirely confidential, as the policies require

both complainant and respondent to not disclose or discuss the complaint, except with the independent investigators.

For the information of all members, these investigators are hired by the Legislative Assembly in accordance with the policy approved by the Legislative Assembly Management Commission, which is posted on the Assembly website.

I reference the respectful workplace complaint here because it could explain why a member would not have immediately raised this matter in the House. Based on this unusual set of circumstances, I would rule that the honourable member for St. James did meet the test of timeliness.

* (15:10)

On the subject of the respectful workplace complaint, I will note for the House that while that process is clearly linked to this matter of privilege, in this ruling I am not addressing in any way the content or outcome of that process. That process has been addressed in another forum and my sole focus here is the procedural merit of this submission.

Accordingly, I would remind the House that when any Speaker is dealing with a matter of privilege, they are dealing only with the procedural aspects of the matter, in this case based solely on the information raised in the House on December 2nd, 2020.

As noted by Speaker Fox in a 1972 ruling in this House regarding privilege, the Speaker deals only with the technical and procedural aspects of such matters, and not in any way with the merits of the situation or the allegations. Therefore, when a Speaker makes a ruling indicate that there is or is not a *prima facie* case of privilege, the Speaker is neither condemning nor condoning any actions taken.

Further, I would like to explain to members that in this context the phrase *prima facie* means at first sight or on the face of it. Joseph Maingot, the pre-eminent Canadian scholar on such matters, explains this further on page 221 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* by stating that, and I quote: A *prima facie* case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence, on its face, as outlined by the member, is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter and to send it to a committee to investigate whether the privileges of the House have been breached or a contempt has occurred and report to the House.

While the Speaker may find that a prima facie case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt.

As this is a complex situation, to explain my ruling further I must first revisit some of the specific comments made by the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) in his submission and then consider remarks made in response by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen).

The honourable member for St. James began by asserting that there had been, and I quote, "a breach of my privileges as an MLA. In particular, through an attempt to intimidate me as an MLA, my freedom of speech has been undermined." End quote.

The member then alleged that he had been, and I quote, "the subject of an attempt to intimidate me in order to stop me from performing my duties in the House." End quote.

Specifically, the member indicated that the then-secretary of the Treasury Board lodged a complaint against him under the Legislative Assembly's Respectful Workplace Policy. The member stated that in the complaint the then-secretary, and I quote: "alleged I failed to display respectful behaviour toward him, that I harassed and bullied him, that I offended and embarrassed him and acted in a way that reflects negatively on this Legislature by asking questions of the government and the Premier in the Legislature." End quote.

The member concluded by stating that the then-secretary demanded in the complaint that the member stop asking questions of the government in this House on this issue and that the member keep this complaint confidential.

These are, indeed, serious allegations, and I'm sure the House can understand why I have given this matter very careful consideration.

In responding to the allegations from the honourable member for St. James, the honourable Government House Leader made the point that when members speak in the House about civil servants there should be, and I quote, "a greater onus upon us to be respectful because, while they are part of the process that we are all engaged in, they are not necessarily part of that political process that we are engaged in." End quote.

The honourable Government House Leader also noted that members, and I quote, "have a responsibility as politicians to carry out our affairs in a responsible way", end quote, and that while members, and I quote, "have the unique opportunity to have privilege in this House, that privilege shouldn't be abused." End quote.

For members' reference, I will remind the House that parliamentary privilege is a constitutional right that has been passed on to the Parliament of Canada and to the provincial legislatures from the United Kingdom's 1689 Bill of Rights. Parliamentary privilege was incorporated into the Canadian constitution and has been in existence since 1867 to provide protection for members to exercise their parliamentary duties free from interference.

More specifically, Bosc and Gagnon note on page 89 of the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, that, and I quote: The rights, privileges and immunities of all individual members of the House may be categorized as follows: freedom of speech; freedom from arrest in civil actions; exemption from jury duty; exemption from being subpoenaed to attend court as a witness; and freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation.

Elaborating on these—pardon me, I'll start again.

Elaborating on this point on pages 89 and 92, Bosc and Gagnon explain that, and I quote: By far, the most important right accorded to members of the House is the exercise of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings. It has been described as a fundamental right without which they would be hampered in the performance of their duties. It permits them to speak in the House without inhibition, to refer to any matter or express any opinion as they see fit, to say what they feel needs to be said in the furtherance of the national interest and the aspirations of their constituents.

He goes on to say: "Freedom of speech permits Members to speak freely in the Chamber during a sitting or in committees during meetings while enjoying complete immunity from prosecution or civil liability for any comment they might make. This freedom is essential for the effective working of the House. Under it, Members are able to make statements or allegations about outside bodies or persons, which they may hesitate to make without the protection of privilege." End quote.

Having established the primacy of members' freedom of speech, I will now explore the parameters of what would constitute the obstruction of a member's privilege to speak freely in the House.

Joseph Maingot advises on page 14 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that, and I quote: To constitute privilege generally there must be some improper obstruction to the member in performing his parliamentary work in either a direct or constructive way. End quote.

Further, on page 228 of the same edition, Maingot elaborates on this point, stating that, and I quote: Improper interference with the personal rights of members of the House of Commons—i.e., freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil matters and freedom from attending as a witness or as a member of a jury in court—may constitute a breach of privilege. End quote.

Members may or may not be aware that our rule 1(2) advises us that when our rules or practices do not fully address a matter raised in this House, we are to be guided by the parliamentary traditions of the House of Commons and other legislative assemblies in Canada. Accordingly, in order to conduct as thorough an examination as possible of this matter, I have researched similar matters raised and ruled on by other Canadian Speakers.

In 1992, two opposition members of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick were looking into the activities of the provincial workers' compensation board. The board then hired a private investigator to question the members on where and how they received their information. In response, one of the members raised a matter of privilege alleging that her privileges had been breached by this action.

In ruling on the matter, Speaker Dysart found this action to be an attempt to interfere with or intimidate the member, and therefore ruled that a *prima facie* case had been established, stating, and I quote: In my view, there could be a *prima facie* case of privilege if the activity complained of is of such a nature as to interfere with the members in the discharge of their parliamentary responsibilities. End quote.

In response to matters of privilege raised on similar matters in the National Assembly, three Quebec Speakers offered comments in their rulings pertinent to this matter of privilege.

In a 1991 ruling from Speaker Saintonge it was established that sending a member of the Assembly a formal notice telling them to stop talking about the

content of a contract, specifying that they may be found personally liable, notwithstanding parliamentary privilege, was ruled a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

In 2004, Speaker Bissonnet ruled that, and I quote: Our parliamentary jurisprudence established that pressuring a member of the Assembly to deter him or her from asking a question or discharging his or her parliamentary duties may breach the rights of the Assembly. Pressuring a member has been described as an influence or insistent action aimed at coercing the member in the performance of his or her duties.

Finally, Speaker Chagnon ruled in 2014 that, and I quote: It is of the essence of parliamentary institutions to be a place of debate and exchange, and it will never tolerate that a member be subjected to threats or intimidation. End quote.

* (15:20)

In consideration of the current matter before this House, I find these examples compelling and relevant. Before I conclude my rulings however, I am obliged to raise several other concerns I have regarding the circumstances of this case.

First, I must note one complication with the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) raising this matter in reference to a respectful workplace complaint. Such processes are intended to be, and should remain, completely confidential. These complaints are not to be shared with anyone outside of the affected parties and the investigators, both during and after the process. As members and citizens now know, both the complainant and the member involved spoke of the results of this investigation in the media.

While I find the actions of both parties in that regard troubling and disappointing, they are not the subject of this ruling, and, as the presiding officer of this House, they are not something I have the power to address from this Chair.

Instead, I will note for all members that due to the need for confidentiality in the respectful workplace process, there are complications with such an issue being raised in the House instead of attempting to seek a resolution in another forum.

For the information of all members, in light of this situation, I have already asked Assembly administration staff to review our respectful workplace policies and recommend improvements. Once that document is ready for consideration, I will ask our

Legislative Assembly Management Commission to consider the revised policies as soon as possible.

Second, let me be clear when I say that a member's privileges in this House take constitutional precedence over any other process or complaint raised outside of this place. This means that having a respectful workplace complaint raised against a member does not supersede that member's right to ask questions or speak on any topic in this House.

Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba are governed in this House by our rules and practices, and by the rulings of their Speaker, but while they are in this place they are in no way governed by the opinions or directives of civil servants or other individuals outside of this Legislature.

This is because the parliamentary principle of freedom of speech unequivocally gives members the freedom to raise subjects in the House without interference from outside the Assembly.

For further clarity, I will add that while this ruling, and my authority as your Speaker, govern comments made by members in this House, that authority does not extend outside of this House. As your Speaker, I do not have any authority to govern, or respond to, comments made outside of the House, nor are members protected by the privilege of freedom of speech outside of this House.

Third, earlier in this ruling I explained the importance of members' freedom of speech. Because this privilege is such an extremely powerful immunity, on occasion Speakers have cautioned members about its misuse.

Speaker Milliken aptly summarized this sentiment in 2003 when he advised the House of Commons as follows, and I quote: Speakers discourage members of Parliament from using names in speeches if they are speaking ill of some other person because, with parliamentary privilege applying to what they say, anything that is damaging to the reputation or to the individual is then liable to be published with the cover of parliamentary privilege and the person is unable to bring any action in respect of those claims. End quote.

This sentiment would also apply to civil servants, as they would not be able to defend themselves in this place, and I would ask all members to reflect on that. We all sign up for this business by voluntarily putting our names on a ballot, but others, whether they be civil servants, Assembly staff, or other individuals, do not

sign up for this, nor can they defend themselves in this place.

I would therefore ask all of you to consider your words very carefully whenever you stand up to speak in this House. Yes, you have the immense privilege of freedom of speech here. I advise you all to be certain that you are using that privilege wisely.

Returning to the matter raised, in this privilege submission in the House on December 2, 2020, the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) alleged that the then Treasury Board secretary intimidated him and attempted to obstruct him in his duties by seeking to prevent him from asking questions of the government in the House.

Based on the allegations raised by the member, the procedural authorities outlined in this ruling, and the rulings from other Canadian Speakers in similar situations, at first sight I am ruling that the actions alleged by the honourable member for St. James do constitute a prima facie breach of the member's privileges.

As a result, the motion moved by the honourable member for St. James may take precedence in debate and should go forward today in the House as the first item of business under orders of the day. It is a debatable motion, and the House must vote on and adopt the motion in order for the remedy suggested in the motion to proceed. If the motion is defeated, the matter will be concluded.

I trust that all members will heed my words of caution today regarding these circumstances and govern themselves accordingly in the future.

I thank you all for the courtesy of your attention.

Now that the ruling has been delivered for the benefit of all members, I would like to explain the rules and practices governing the process for debating a privilege motion, and outline the steps that the House needs to take.

In accordance with Manitoba rules and practice, and as noted on pages 143 to 153 of the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, when a prima facie case of privilege has been established, the following procedures apply: (1) the privilege motion is debatable and amendable, and takes precedence in debate over other orders of the day, meaning the Speaker shall call the motion for debate at the start of orders of the day on the same sitting day as it is ruled to be prima facie; (2) the motion is subject to all procedures and practices governing debate on a

substantive motion; (3) speaking times for a substantive motion are set out in our rules 44(1) and (2) as follows: 30 minutes for members, recognized party leaders have unlimited time; and (4) should the debate on the motion not be completed by the daily adjournment hour, the motion will take priority over all other orders of the day at the next sitting, and it will appear on the next day's Order Paper as the first item of business listed under orders of the day.

And I have no more rulings for today.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson (Ms. Adams)?

The honourable member for Elmwood.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or urine sample.

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at further risk in extreme weather, be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer waiting times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system where they are able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all the phlebotomy, blood sample sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

Grievances? Oh, pardon me. I do see that the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) does have a petition to read—apologize for that.

Vivian Sand Facility Project— Clean Environment Commission Review

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

* (15:30)

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares, making it the largest claim—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Before proceeding, I wonder if the member for River Heights could turn his camera on. We are not seeing him in the Chamber.

Mr. Gerrard: My mistake.

Madam Speaker: Almost had it.

Mr. Gerrard: There.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Shall I start at the beginning? Or I can continue from—

Madam Speaker: You might as well start at the beginning.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay.

Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares, making it the largest claim ever given to a single company in Manitoba's history. It is larger than the city of Winnipeg, which is 46,410 hectares. The amount of dry, solid sand mined and produced per year according to the EAP is 1.36 million tons, and much of this sand will be used in fracking.

A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, including both carbonate and sandstone aquifers, which covers much of south-eastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and an abundance of wildlife and ecosystems.

Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

The sustainable yield of the combined sandstone and carbonate aquifers has still not yet been established by provincial authorities.

The mine could cause leaching of acid and heavy metals and pollute the aquifer, as it will go down 200 feet into the Winnipeg formation of the sandstone aquifer. There is concern that the shale, which separates the carbonate and sandstone aquifers—sand and pyritic oolite itself contains sulphides—will, when exposed to injected air from the CanWhite Sands extraction process, turn to acid.

An additional concern with the proposed mine and plant is the potential to pollute the Brokenhead River and the aquatic food chain leading to Lake Winnipeg.

Residents in the area have also expressed fears of being overexposed to silica dust during production, as there has been a demonstrated lack of safety and environmental procedures by the CanWhite Sands Corporation during the exploratory drilling phase. Signage and fencing has been poor; identifying and required mine claim tags were missing; and there were no warnings for silica dust exposure and no coverings to prevent exposure of the silica stockpiles to the elements.

Residents' concerns include the fact that boreholes, which should have been promptly and properly

sealed, were left open for a year. The drilling of hundreds of improperly sealed boreholes yearly create significant risks of surface contamination, mixing of aquifer waters and drainage of surface fecal matter into the aquifer.

There is also a risk of transboundary issues that need to be addressed as the aquifers extend into Minnesota.

This project should not proceed, as no licensing conditions and mitigation measures will alleviate the risk to all Manitobans and the environment since CanWhite Sands Corporation plans to use an unprecedented mining technique with no established safe outcome. The corporation has gone on record indicating that it does not know how to mine for the silica in the water supply and need to develop a new extraction methodology that's never been done before.

Contamination of the aquifers and the environment is irreversible and there are many surface sources of high purity silica that can be extracted without endangering two essential regional aquifers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to undertake a combined review of the Vivian Sand Facility processing plant and the mining/extraction portion of the operation as a class 3 development with a review by Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to include public hearings and participant funding.

To urge the provincial government to halt all activity at the mine and plant until the Clean Environment Commission's review is completed and the project proposal has been thoroughly evaluated.

Signed by Charlene Closer, Grant Fertiliy [*phonetic*], Jaskaren Grewal, and many, many others.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

If not, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

(Continued)

Madam Speaker: I will now indicate that the House will now consider the motion referenced in the ruling, and I would ask the member for St. James to move his motion.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I ask that the motion be moved.

Madam Speaker: The member needs to say I move, seconded by, and then read what his motion was.

Mr. Sala: I'm going to need some language here, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Apparently it was emailed to him. He may want to check his email.

Mr. Sala: Yes, I'm doing that. Okay.

I move, seconded by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), that this matter be immediately referred to a special committee of this House so the privileges of all members may be respected and government be properly held to account.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sala: I'm very pleased to hear this ruling today. I think it's an important ruling that confirms, I think, what many of us felt throughout this process, which was that the rights of myself as an MLA and—were threatened, and that frankly, I was prevented from being able to do my job.

This is what was shared today by yourself, Madam Speaker, that, quote, on December 2nd, 2020, the honourable member for St. James alleged that the then-Treasury Board secretary intimidated him and attempted to obstruct him in his duties by seeking to prevent him from asking questions of the member, or asking questions to the government in the House. Based on the allegations raised by the member, the procedural authorities outlined in this ruling and the rulings from other Canadian Speakers, at first sight I am ruling that the actions alleged by the honourable member for St. James do constitute a prima facie breach of the member's privileges.

I think it's important here to emphasize two points, so I'll be brief. My claim that a senior member of this government attempted to intimidate me from asking questions in this House and obstruct me from performing my duties was, in fact, found to be in breach of my privileges, and that's because I was, and I continue to do, my job—to ask difficult questions of this government and to hold them to account for their interference in Manitoba Hydro.

And that was the fundamental fact that was brought to light today, an attempt by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to stop me from doing my work as an MLA, from asking important questions about the

future of Manitoba Hydro and this government's interference in Hydro's operations.

So the ruling is good news, not just for us as the opposition but for all members of the House, as it confirms our ability to do our jobs free from intimidation or obstruction. So I thank you for the ruling, Madam Speaker, and am glad to see that justice was served here.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the member for St. James classifies this as good news.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Let's maybe review a little bit about what the member for St. James would call good news. He's a member who made an unfounded and untrue allegation against a public servant, Manitoba—madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker. A public servant doing their job in the province of Manitoba, came into this Assembly, named the public servant, and made an unfounded and untrue allegation.

The ruling has come down and I'm absolutely free to speak about this, but if the Leader of the Opposition wants to stop me—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen:—from being able to speak, he can do that through a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (15:40)

So, this untrue allegation was brought forward by the member for St. James. The public servant then used a harassment policy that is formed by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, not the government—although it mirrors, I think, in many ways what the government policy is—but it's a policy that was approved by LAMC. It came out of LAMC—I'm not speaking about what happened in the meeting, Mr. Deputy Speaker—but it came out of LAMC as an approved policy, and members will know that things are done there by consensus in LAMC.

Members of the opposition sit on LAMC, independent members sit on LAMC and of course members of the government sit on LAMC, so we approved that harassment policy. The public servant availed himself of that harassment policy, which, the Speaker rightly cited, is a confidential policy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The member for St. James (Mr. Sala) then came into this House and used his parliamentary privilege, which I recognize the Speaker has indicated is a

constitutional right, but used that parliamentary privilege to again name the public servant and to talk about that confidential harassment policy that all members of this Legislature, including the official opposition, agreed to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And now, today, it's determined that the individual, of course, because it's now known that the independent investigator hired by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba—not by the government of Manitoba, but by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba—came back and found that there was, in fact, harassment against the public servant, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And yet today, in the Assembly, it is found—and I'm not questioning the ruling, I'm stating this as a fact—that the individual, the public servant who was found to have been harassed, who was found to have been victimized, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is now actually being accused of being the individual who is the victimizer.

And this, the member for St. James feels, is a good day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder if it's a good day for the thousands of public servants that we have in the province of Manitoba who will now look at the proceedings today and realize that they are entirely and wholly unprotected.

Now, in some ways, I suppose, that was confirmed by the Leader of the Official Opposition, who summarily dismissed the Legislative Assembly harassment policy, which he himself decided to—or, who supported through members of his caucus who sit on LAMC—but he summarily dismissed the harassment policy and essentially said there shouldn't—there is no policy anymore, it's wide open. It's the wild west, I suppose, on public servants when it comes to harassment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

That is a good day? I don't think it's a good day for anybody in the public servant—public service, let alone the individual who was the subject of the harassment, as found by the independent—the independent—investigator hired by the Legislative Assembly.

And I hope that, you know, members opposite—not exclusively, but certainly including the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), who often passionately—and I would say eloquently—stands up in this House and other places and speaks about the need to protect those who are harassed in its many forms. And the Leader of the Opposition has said we need to protect those who are harassed in all of its forms, he's put that

on the record when his party was—did an internal review and found many things that were unflattering, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would hope that the members opposite, including the member for St. James would say to—or, sorry, the member for St. Johns would say to her colleague, the member for St. James, this is far from a good day. If it's a good day that somebody who was found by an independent investigator to have been harassed by a member of this Assembly is then turned around and made to be not the victim but the victimizer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know how that qualifies as a good day for anybody here. And I certainly know it isn't a good day for the member who—or, for the individual who was victimized—found to be victimized, or for any member of this Assembly.

Now, I appreciate the Speaker saying in her ruling that we're going to review—as a Legislative Assembly Management Commission, we're going to review the harassment policy. And that needs to be done and maybe it needs to be done in other fashions as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I don't know how anybody on that side who has stood up in this House or any forum, publicly or privately, and said that they will stand up with those who are being harassed, that they will stand with those who are being victimized, in any form or fashion, would find this to be a good day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not a good day in this Assembly. It is not a good day for public servants in the province of Manitoba, and I would hope that the members opposite would reflect on that and recant the comments that were made by the member for St. James.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Honourable Official Opposition House Leader—official 'opposition' leader. Sorry about that.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I will consider that you have recognized me to speak, sir. I appreciate that.

I just want to explain to my colleague from Steinbach why our position is entirely consistent and why, apparently, it's only us in the House who stand on the side of those who've been subject of harassment in the workplace. Again, this is an issue that we have grappled with. This is an issue that we have thought about, carefully studied and acted upon.

The complaint in this case does a disservice to those who have truly experienced harassment in the workplace. It was named by the newspaper of record in our province as disrespecting the workplace

process. I will quote here. This is verbatim: Comparing those victimizations to a political dust-up between an MLA and a powerful government adviser undermines the severity of workplace harassment cases, especially those involving women in power-imbalanced situations. It trivializes the pain and anguish they endured. End quote.

This is not our view. It's not a partisan perspective. This is the consensus view of the editorial board of the Winnipeg Free Press. So, again, we are standing up to protect the sanctity of a process that has been appropriated by the government for political purposes.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) can gnash his teeth, can dispute the learned wisdom that has been put on the record here today from the Chair, but we must acknowledge that if we're talking about independent experts, Madam Speaker, you are an independent expert, and you have given us a ruling here today.

On the subject of parliamentary precedent, I just want to say the following to editorialize for a moment. When I'm not recognized to speak, you may hear me grumble, you may hear me praise, you may hear me cheer, you may hear me jeer, but my true feelings on the matter, and this is after having listened to all the rulings on the point of order and matters of privilege today, is that while I have—may have mixed feelings about all of the decisions as a whole, I do greatly respect the authority of the Chair, and, of course, I want to thank you as well as the clerks and the staff for all the hard work, the research and the careful thought that went into preparing these decisions, and I do mean that sincerely. Humble in victory, humble in defeat. And so the statement that I just made applies both to decisions that may have, quote, gone our way and decisions that, quote, may have gone against us. I do respect the authority of the Chair.

And so there is an important precedent that has been set here today on the matter that we're currently debating as well as other precedents which have been set on other matters, and I'm sure that we'll all have the opportunity to comment on those. However, in this instance, this is an important precedent not for a party; this is an important precedent for each of us as members of the Legislative Assembly. I'm sure that my colleague from Steinbach understands the importance of freedom of speech and the importance of preserving that privilege within the Chamber. He may be upset that his party has been handed a loss and did

not get the vindication that they sought, and perhaps he's equally upset that the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) is likely going to be attributed some sort of vindication. But when we cut through the partisan dimensions of the matter here, what lays beneath is the important recognition of rights of members of the Legislative Assembly that need to be protected to ensure the proper functioning of our democracy.

* (15:50)

And when we recognize it from that perspective, I can only ask, why is the government so afraid of the question? Why have we had the workplace process put into disrepute, questioned publicly, including with the consensus view of the Winnipeg Free Press editorial board? Why has, you know, this issue been carried out in public over so many months? What is at the heart of the question that was asked?

We know that the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) and the member for saint—or for Steinbach and other constituencies like to attribute and like to exaggerate the commentary that they attribute to the member for St. James. But when you read the words on the record, all that he ever did was ask a question. And so why is the government so afraid of that question?

On any day we see them dodging, evading, refusing to answer questions in question period. And yet, why is it that this issue, as it pertains to Manitoba Hydro Telecom, Manitoba Hydro International and the parent company, Manitoba Hydro, so touched a nerve within them that they resorted to such unprecedented lengths that not only did they have the very rare instance of a matter of privilege ruled against them on this matter, but realistically speaking, they besmirched themselves and acted in an undignified manner by carrying it out through all these various venues? And to me it is a tacit, implicit and unspoken admission on the part of the government that they don't want to answer that question.

Imagine being a government that is threatened by a simple question. Imagine being a government with \$13 billion in core government; 17, 18 billion dollars in, you know, the extended view of the budget at your disposal. Imagine having all the apparatus of government, all the civil servants, at your disposal, and yet merely putting an upward inflection at the end of a sentence would threaten you. Imagine having all the privileges of the offices of the Cabinet, of the Executive Council, being able to sign orders-in-council, and yet merely by having an MLA put a question mark at the end of their question all of a

sudden you start to shake in your boots. It's a sad commentary on the state of this government, Madam Speaker.

And while I realize that your decision did not reflect on what I am saying—you ruled on the procedural matters—I feel that because what you have ruled on will be referred to as a precedent for many years to come that it is important for us to put this context on the record so that future parliamentarians, future Speakers, future clerks and staff who work on these matters, may better appreciate the context with which these decisions arose from.

And so with that in mind, I want to thank you and the clerks who assisted and everyone else, with the greatest respect, because this will be a precedent that is referred to in the future.

We as a society are trying to build a consent culture. We know that women have had to face unwelcome harassment, abuse, assault, and worse in the workplace and in many other venues throughout our society. The same has happened to trans folk and non-binary people as well.

And so we take the responsibility to build a consent culture seriously, and we must all abide by the calling of the universal human rights enjoyed by all people to play our part in collective action towards stamping out that mistreatment and creating a framework of rights and trust and support so that people can just come to work and do their jobs to the best of their ability and that they have their humanity and dignity respected, if not uplifted, in the process.

At the same time, there are unique parameters put on the work of MLAs. And, certainly, the decision today speaks to the importance of freedom of speech within the Chamber for a member to be able to carry out their important role, whether they are government, opposition or independent.

At the same time, it is important that we also recognize that the reason that an MLA enjoys these privileges is not because of any inherent characteristic enjoyed within ourselves, but merely because we have been invested with power by the people of Manitoba.

There's nothing special about me; as much as I respect my friend from Concordia, there's nothing special about him; and as much as I respect my colleague from Steinbach, there's nothing special about him, insofar as we are individuals coming into the Chamber.

The only way in which we become invested with some sort of special privilege or right or capability is because we have been invested, through our democracy, with the privilege of representing the great people of Manitoba in this Chamber. And that is a solemn responsibility, and it is an awesome one as well.

And so I want to thank you for preserving the sanctity so that the good people of Manitoba know that, when they send a member to this Legislative Assembly, they will know that they have the freedom to ask a question. They will know that they have the freedom to be able to hold power to account. That the good people of Manitoba will be confident that, even if we may share our various qualms and concerns about the nature of our democracy in the public sphere in the year 2021, that there still is the ability to at least bring a concern forward.

The question may not be answered, the concern may go unaddressed, the program or initiative may remain unfunded, but at least we should have the ability to bring it forward in this Chamber. If we did not have that right, that privilege, that ability, then our democracy would be under threat for real.

And so I'm sure there will be more commentary, more reflection. I'm sure there will also be more editorializing on this decision within this Chamber, both in the near future and for years to come. However, I just wanted to put some words on the record to reiterate our complete support for addressing harassment and for addressing these issues that have emerged in workplaces.

But I wanted to provide the context, that everything that the government member recently shared is contested and, by many independent observers, has been disputed. And as a result, our members on this side have supported our colleague—not because we share a partisan affiliation, but because we share a commitment to the values of trying to find the right way to implement a respect in the workplace policy while also preserving the ability to rightly call out the abuse of such a process when it impinges on the basic function of our democracy.

And so, these two things, these two positions, are consistent with one another and speak to the value set that we bring here into the Chamber each and every day.

So, with those few words on the record, I'm happy to let the matter go to a vote, and of course, I would encourage the government to vote for the motion

today so that we may actually debate this in a committee of the House and perhaps come to a consensus that would serve all people in Manitoba—but perhaps most especially women, trans folk and non-binary folk, who have borne the brunt of harassment and intimidation in the workplace for far too long.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to put a few record—or, comments on the record with regard to this motion.

This is an important ruling which the Speaker has clearly spent a lot of time looking at, discussing, referencing previous rulings, and so on. It is an important ruling because it sustains what we have in terms of parliamentary privilege, and parliamentary privilege is one of the fundamental rights that we have as MLAs.

And, it is—thank you to the Speaker for looking at this very carefully, and making a decision that it is important to sustain the privilege of the ability of MLAs to bring up issues, to raise concerns and to have those concerns listened to and heard in the Chamber.

The—there were, of course, two allegations, which are curious. The one by the secretary of the Treasury Board, which was made against the MLA for St. James. This matter, as I understand it, was then looked at by our legislative procedures and a decision was made in favour, in that instance, of the secretary of the Treasury Board.

* (16:00)

We also have a decision by the Speaker that the approach which was used by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in supporting the secretary of the Treasury Board and which appears to suggest that the process which was used by the secretary of the Treasury Board to request an evaluation of harassment was somehow wrong or misplaced.

I think that—let me start with, first of all, the handling of the harassment complaint, because I think this is something that clearly needs to be looked at. I will remind the Speaker that Liberals have repeatedly called for an independent officer of the Legislature to handle such harassment complaints, rather than the present process, which is, in essence, an in-house process.

I think that the ability of an independent officer to provide an independent perspective is going to be very important in the future and that this has demonstrated one of the reasons why this has happened.

And I will explore this further, because when this matter first came to light—and I am very much aware of the Speaker's remarks to both the MLA for St. James and the secretary of the Treasury Board, that our current policy is that they will not bring these matters to public light, and the Speaker has, in fact, indicated that they were both wrong in the way that they handled this.

But let us look at the process. One, the way that things were—happened—there was publicly a concern of impartiality in the process, even though it was handled by a procedure which we had approved in the Legislature. There was not sufficient general public knowledge of the procedure and the recognition that it was impartial, and so there was a lot of people who felt that there was some impartiality in the process, and it became almost like a political decision one way or another, rather than an impartial decision.

I think one of the lessons that we have to learn from this is that we can't not have any information coming out. Clearly, we have to have enough information that all MLAs can learn and improve—and that it's not just MLAs, it's others who may bring forth complaints, as in the case of the secretary of the Treasury Board—or the former secretary—and that we need to be able to have some understanding of what has happened, some public discussion, if we're going to improve the ways that we approach identifying and preventing harassment and intimidation.

This is, as we've seen in the ruling, a complicated matter, and it's not simple, but we're clearly going to need to back and have a look at what the harassment policies are for our Manitoba Legislature moving forward.

I think the—there is—interesting aspect of this. It is important that members of the Legislature not be harassed or intimidated for things that are said in the Legislature itself, and yet there clearly needs to be an ability of people who are spoken about with their public servants or others to be able to respond and counter, right, if they disagree with what is said in the Legislature, particularly when it relates to personal matters, as this does.

I think we all, as collective members of the Legislature, want to be able to decrease harassment and intimidation and bullying. We are learning that it is not always a simple matter to do that, but, clearly, there is a need to decrease harassment or intimidation on whatever it is based, and clearly we know all too well that there have been people who are Black or

Indigenous who have been discriminated against in one way or another.

And it is not just such individuals, it is individuals in the LGBTQ community, individuals sometimes—as I have brought up in the Legislature—who are small, individuals who have large bodies, that this matter of making sure that we don't attack people on the basis of who they are. We do need to exchange ideas. We don't want people to be discriminated against. We want to make sure that, as we move forward, that MLAs have the ability to speak out in the Chamber. But there is a line here which is actually extraordinarily important, and that is a line of making sure that we don't have harassment or intimidation either on one side or the other, and we need to reflect, I believe, on how we're going to do that.

It is frequently the case that, in spite of two rulings, all right—one on the original harassment complaint by the Secretary of the Treasury Board and a ruling by the Speaker—which, in some ways, seemed to be counter to one another. But, at the same time, we have to, as the Speaker has mentioned, stand up for the ability of MLAs to speak out in the Legislature, and yet, at the same time, we have to work out ways to do this so that we are not harassing, bullying people, but rather we are able to address the critical policy issues of today, we are able to discuss the needs and desires and wants of those who have been marginalized too often in our society.

We have seen, as an example, in the last two months, tremendous numbers of people in Winnipeg who have been homeless, who have been living in bus shelters, and there is a tendency to look at people who are living in bus shelters as somehow, you know, inadequate. But, in fact, the people who have been living in bus shelters who are homeless, are all too often have had challenge in their life, have had unexpected circumstances, sometimes the death of a spouse, sometimes a breakup of a family relationship, sometimes a loss of a job, and that we need to be able to recognize people who are experiencing homelessness as human beings like us who need help to carry them through a difficult time.

* (16:10)

And once they are through that difficult time and have housing and have support, that individuals in this circumstance can do really well.

I encountered, not very long ago, an individual who had, at one point, been homeless. Now he's got a good relationship with his two boys, he is working

hard as a painter and he was recently injured by some individuals who went after him with mal intent.

But, here he is, with an injured arm, absolutely determined that he is going to go on working and earning money, because he doesn't want to go on social assistance. And this was an individual who not too long ago, several years ago, was homeless and having great difficulty.

There are many, many examples of people who have struggled and who have gone on to significant productivity, significant achievements, significant ability in their turn, to recognize and help others.

So, let us move forward in spirit together to figure out how we better reduce, eliminate harassment, bullying and intimidation. And it will not be easy, and as the Speaker herself has said, it is complex. But let us go on this journey, all of us as MLAs together, and work toward a better future where we are more empathetic, more courteous, more sympathetic toward others.

And let us do this in the spirit of trying to build a better Manitoba, trying to build a better democracy, trying to build a province which will stand out not only in Canada but internationally for the good things that we are doing and will do in the years ahead.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to speak. Merci. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

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

Recorded Vote

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

* (16:30)

As a reminder for all members about recorded votes—and I won't be doing this every time, but until we're not rusty anymore about recorded votes—for virtual sittings of the House, we are required to conduct votes in a different manner than during normal sittings of the House.

For members in the House, the vote will be conducted in a manner similar to our previous practice. For this part of the vote, those in favour will stand to be counted first followed by those against.

I will note for members that we have modified this system in one respect: once the page states the name of the member standing to be counted, the Clerk will acknowledge that the member has voted by repeating the member's name rather than saying aye.

Once the count in the House is complete, we will conduct an alphabetical roll call for members participating virtually.

For this part of the process, the page will call each remote member's name alphabetically and then each remote member must audibly state their vote responding clearly with either I vote yes or I vote no. The Clerk will then respond with the member's name followed by yes or no.

Finally, after the bell stopped ringing for any vote, the moderator and the table will need to take a moment to verify that all members listed as remote are actually present on screen and in their seats and therefore eligible to vote.

This delay should be brief but it's necessary to confirm who can vote because for remote members being seated before the camera is the equivalent of the members being in their assigned seats in the Chamber when the bells stop ringing.

So the question before the House is the motion for the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala).

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 19, Nays 33.

* (16:40)

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly defeated.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On orders of the day.

Madam Speaker: Or, orders of the day?

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for second reading of bills 5, 6, 20, 23, 34, 14 and 68.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will now consider the following bills this afternoon: 5, 6, 20, 23, 34, 14, 68.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee)

Madam Speaker: So, I will now call second reading of Bill 5, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee).

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 5, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 5, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Mr. Friesen: I am pleased to rise in the House and to put some words on the record in respect of the liquor, gaming and cannabis control amendment act, Bill 5.

Madam Speaker, I am rising to put some comments on the record recognizing that the legalization of non-medical cannabis in 2018 has brought both economic opportunities and social costs.

Bill 5 sets the legislative foundation for the cannabis social responsibility fee. This fee ensures that cannabis retailers who participate in those economic activities and opportunities will also contribute directly to paying for costs associated with the sale and consumption of non-medical cannabis.

Madam Speaker, I can recall in 2016, when our government was recently, newly elected, taking part in the federal-provincial-territorial meetings. In this time, I believe in Vancouver—it might have been Ottawa, I'm getting a few of them mixed up—but I do recall more clearly the discussions around the proposed, at that time, legalization of cannabis.

We were clear, as as jurisdiction, that the federal government was rushing into things, and that rushing in could have implications, could have negative consequences. Indeed we've seen that play out across Canada, a real very bumpy start for this, you know, bold societal experiment that is the legalization of cannabis.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We had cannabis legal before there was even sobriety test capability by law enforcement. We've had all kinds of—a patch quilt of approaches across the country. It's been a rush for every jurisdiction to get there. But I'm proud of the efforts of this government in respect of its continued advocacy and in respect of the representations that we made at that time and since that time to the federal government.

The way in which we had approached the issue, a hybrid approach, when it came to sale—allowing retailers to be able to, you know, enter into this space with a knowledge of what they'd be able to do, how they would be able to bid for a licence, and how they would, in time, remit back to government in respect of, as I say, the costs associated with the sale and consumption, because obviously such a legalization comes with costs.

So, we set out, since day one, to develop a framework for the legalization of non-medical cannabis

guided by four principles: social responsibility, education and treatment, protecting children and youth, and preventing illegal sales by organized crime.

However, these priorities set out to protect Manitobans come with costs, and our government believes that those should be offset by the retail cannabis stores who directly profit from this new and growing industry. We feel that this is a fair trade-off.

A social responsibility fee is a critical tool to ensure that we are able to meet these objectives and directly address the social costs associated with legal cannabis. This includes funding preventative measures, like public education and safety and health services, as well as responsive systems for addictions.

The social responsibility fee is also used to offset the costs associated with the regulation of non-medical cannabis.

While the social responsibility fee is already being collected as part of retailer agreements, our government feels that establishing this fee in legislation will ensure transparency for retail cannabis stores. This approach assures that these retailers will pay consistently across all companies and are not subject to arbitrary adjustments.

The bill clearly shows that the social responsibility fee will be initially calculated based on 6 per cent of retailers' gross revenue from the sale of non-medical cannabis. This is the same percentage that is collected today through agreements.

I note that the amendment allows for the calculation of the social responsibility fee to be adjusted as needed in the future, particularly as this new retail sector and the products it sells continue to develop and evolve.

Bill 5 is grounded in our government's commitment to protect the health and safety of Manitobans and will establish a clear mechanism to ensure that we have the funds to be able to support the initiatives that do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the House's support of Bill 5 as it proceeds through second reading, committee work, and to the passing of the bill.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be asked—addressed to the minister by any of the members of the

following sequence: first question from the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by each of the independent members; the remaining questions may be asked by the—any opposition members. And no questions or answers shall exceed 15–45 seconds.

The honourable member for—is there—anybody want any questions?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the minister is this: the social responsibility fee is supposed to offset the social costs, not the economic costs, of the consumption of cannabis.

Has the minister done research to know what the social costs are and to understand these in a way that will allow the minister or the government to use the funds well in addressing such social costs?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member for River Heights knows that—oh, that's right, this is not committee.

The member for River Heights knows that this legalization of cannabis is still something that is working itself out. I think there is no dispute in principle that there are social costs. These I've named—categories of those in the remarks I've made this afternoon.

We know that those costs—due to increased consumption of cannabis—do come with issues pertaining to mental health, addictions, the need for treatment, health needs that are met through our health system. These are some of the areas in which we know that these—it will be important to reinvest funds back to strengthen our communities and strengthen the health of Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. I think what's clear to me is that there needs to be some ongoing research so that you define these costs more clearly. For example, I mean, there has been some suggestion that there might be increased police costs.

Is there any evidence, I ask the minister, that the police costs have increased as a result of cannabis? And I mean real evidence, not just sort of anecdotal hearsay.

* (16:50)

Mr. Friesen: The member is correct in that the, you know, the police costs would be one category of—one area in which greater costs may be incurred, greater resources might be necessary to be employed. There are so many that we can think of.

These were the arguments, of course, that we made, principally to the federal government in our responses, back in 2016 and 2017. But, clearly, we will continue to gauge the effect of the legalization of cannabis in our communities, among the health of Manitobans, and we are well-equipped in Manitoba to be able to undertake that work to gauge the impacts and measure those costs and make the investments necessary.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. I—there has been, of course, discussion about the concerns over addictions, but, on the other hand, I hear from many that there are actually significant health benefits, and those health benefits might result in reductions in health-care costs in other areas, particularly for people who have certain types of pain, I understand, and that.

Will the government look at, you know, not just the costs but the benefits in the research or the efforts that the government is undertaking?

Mr. Friesen: It's an interesting point that the member raises. Certainly, there's so much that is still becoming known, so many products still continue to find their way through legal markets and being marketed to individuals. And many people, as the member says, are reporting back the efficacy of cannabis products in providing some remediation to them, wellness, in the area of mental health and otherwise.

I think the member would probably concede the point that probably, writ large, the challenges and those costs will greatly exceed benefits but we will continue to measure exactly this and see and understand better in time—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes. I mean, part of the question is that, clearly this is a product that was once illegal, which we had to spend money on policing and arresting people, and that is no longer the case.

So, I'm just wondering whether, in terms of social responsibility, you know, whether they were—or, whether the destination of the fee, not just whether it would be used for mental health or for addictions, but also the question of whether it would be used for—to assist municipalities with policing costs. Are those things that have been considered?

Mr. Friesen: Manitoba has some of the most generous provisions to municipalities and for policing costs at the municipal level. However, this bill

concerns itself with the real and definite costs that are implicit with the legalization of non-medical cannabis, and so—we—that's exactly the measurement that is undertaken at 6 per cent to start.

But the members will notice that the bill makes clear that because this is a fee, that fee can be set, can be adjusted, to make it right and comparable and right-sized to the kind of costs that are incurred.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable member for saint 'bonif'—has another question?

Mr. Lamont: Yes. I mean, I think that it would be a positive—would—is the—would the minister be willing to provide any studies or evidence that have been—whether there's a distinction or if there's been a—seen an increase in—or decrease—in policing costs, for example, or increase or decrease in mental health costs?

Clearly, these are things that are—should be directly available to the government. Whether they're—or there have been—they've embarked on any studies of this type?

Mr. Friesen: The member is straying from the bill. The bill doesn't contemplate what he's indicating. The bill simply sets out that the social responsibility fee is mandatory for all cannabis retailers and the commencement date for the application of the social responsibility fee—one rate for all of those retailers; and it sets out as well the calculation and how that will be calculated. It can be changed by the LG, the Lieutenant Governor, in order, but those are the tenets of this bill for this afternoon.

Mr. Gerrard: It seems to me that the government is trying to distinguish between what is a tax and what is a social responsibility fee. What the government describes in the inside of this bill and what he mentioned just a moment ago is a tax.

But if, in fact, the government is trying to use this as a vehicle for social responsibility, then it's up to the government to tell us what he's going to use that money for, in terms of helping to make Manitoba more socially responsible.

Mr. Friesen: I want to assure the member this is a fee; it is not a tax. The bill title makes clear that this is a social responsibility fee. As such, understanding that the impact of legalization of cannabis is that we will incur costs, this fee is generated by those who retail, in order to plow those monies received back into these

services that we will need in the areas of health and mental health and others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further questions?

Mr. Gerrard: The member talked about the problems with—increased problems with addiction and that there would be a social cost as a result. In fact, there is some evidence that the cannabis may be helpful in the treatment of certain opioid addictions. I'm not sure how good the evidence is at this point, but clearly what is needed is research on an ongoing basis so that we know exactly what the social costs are.

Will the government be engaging in any such research?

Mr. Friesen: If the member is suggesting that legal cannabis means that people will not need treatment, drug treatment, or any kind of interventions from a health perspective because of this, he's sadly mistaken. He should understand that.

You know, as a—the former minister of Health I can tell you I read many studies, many briefings about the continued impacts of cannabis addiction, especially among youth, mental health issues that arise because of the use of cannabis while the brain is still forming. The member is a medical doctor; I think he should clearly understand the implication about the connection between cannabis youth—use and cannabis harm.

Mr. Gerrard: I mean, I certainly recognize that there are problems and that may need to be addressed in terms of addictions, but I'm pointing out that there may be positive effects on other addictions, like opioid addictions.

And—but back to the premise that we've talked about—clearly, we're in a world where we need to have some research so that we understand what we're doing. It's my understand—the government wants to use evidence-based approaches to what is social responsibility.

Will the government do that research to find out what is needed in terms of what are the social costs?

Mr. Friesen: Yes, the government will be undertaking to continue to study what the costs are that we incur and the services that we must provide in Manitobans as a consequence of the legalization of cannabis.

I do want to say to the minister—to the member's previous point, that, remember that Manitoba's—Manitoba has among the lowest government fees, charges, on top of the sale of cannabis, and the reason we've done this is in order to maximize the legal retail area which puts pressure on illegal cannabis supply.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, and I appreciate that. And one of the important goals is in fact decreasing the illegal cannabis supply and use.

Does the minister have any evidence in respect to what is happening with illegal cannabis use and supply in Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: I would be happy to engage further with the member for the discussion of what's happening out there in terms of enforcement and what police forces are saying about what they're seeing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is before the House, there'll be a question period up to three minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is recessed—adjourned, and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

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