

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Agriculture—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 minister please proceed with his statement.

Show Your 4-H Colours Day

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): As the Minister of Agriculture, I rise today to celebrate 4-H show your colours day.

Our government is pleased to join Manitoba 4-H Council to recognize November 2nd as Show Your 4-H Colours Day during 4-H Month in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, 4-H Manitoba is one of the most highly respective—effective and positive youth

development programs in Canada, and in 2022 it celebrates 109 years of rich partnerships and wide-ranging innovative programs to help young Manitobans learn to do by doing.

The 4-Hs represent their core values: head, for managing and thinking; heart, for relating and caring; hands, for giving and working; health, for being and living.

Our government provides an annual grant of \$300,000 to Manitoba 4-H Council towards the delivery of their 4-H program in Manitoba. Since 2016, our government has provided funding to Manitoba 4-H for operating funding grants in the amount of \$1.65 million; \$5,000 for a special project funding, which I'm sure everybody recalls my presentation in the House on Clover, and \$1-million endowment, which supports four annual scholarships.

The annual operating funding supports delivery of events, development of teaching resources and scholarships to 10 4-H area councils and 75 4-H clubs in Manitoba. Manitoba recognizes long service volunteer awards for 4-H leaders, recently issuing 40 certificates and letters to congratulations representing a total of 484 years of volunteer service.

Show Your 4-H Colours Day is celebrated here in Manitoba and across Canada. Every November, this campaign, established in 2007, celebrates everything that is 4-H while giving back to 4-H.

By wearing green, celebrating and giving back, you are showing your 4-H colours; 4-H nurtures responsible, caring and contributing youth leaders who are committed to positively influencing their communities. 4-H is one of the world's largest youth organizations. It has close to 7 million members and can be found in more than 70 countries around the globe.

The 4-H motto is Learn To Do by Doing. The 4-H mission is to empower youth to be responsible, caring and contributing leaders that effect—that effect positive change in the world around them. The 4-H vision is thriving communities in partnership with youth leaders.

I would also like to table a list of names for those participating in the signing of the proclamation to be added into Hansard, Madam Speaker.

But today, we are joined in the gallery by the Manitoba 4-H Council, Greg Penner from the Springfield 4-H club; Michelle D'Souza, Kailey D'Souza, Brooklyn Piasta, Gene Piasta—all from the La Salle 4-H Club.

Please join me in thanking the Manitoba 4-H Council and 4-H volunteers for making a difference in communities in Manitoba and across the country in—by inspiring youth with 4-H's own motto, Learn To Do by Doing.

Karen Olafson, Sandra Duchak, Colton Olafson, Sarah Vanderveen, Nel Vanderveen, Rose Vanderveen, Ivy Vanderveen, Lyla Kostal

Madam Speaker: If the member would like those names in Hansard, he is going to have to ask leave to have those names put into Hansard.

Mr. Johnson: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include the names of the people involved in the signing of the proclamation into Hansard, following my speech, please.

Madam Speaker: I would just indicate that the clarification is that it doesn't have to be tabled, but we need leave of the House to include the names in Hansard.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I welcome my friends from 4-H in the gallery today.

Show your 4-H colours highlights the significant contributions of 4-H to youth development across Canada.

As an international volunteer organization that specializes in nurturing young people to be positive contributors in the society, 4-H continues to build youth leaders and thriving communities. Here in Manitoba, 4-H operates several clubs in different towns across the province.

There are over 130 4-H clubs in Manitoba. We want to ensure more children of diverse backgrounds experience 4-H, and we look forward to seeing more accessibility for all children in Winnipeg and across Manitoba.

Young people should be able to benefit from 4-H values: a clear-thinking head, a greatly loyal heart, larger serving hands and better living health.

These values are a recipe for good health and well-being. They help young people be resilient and address challenges like drugs and alcohol, addictions,

mental health, self-esteem concerns and so much more.

* (13:40)

4-H inspires youths to learn to do by doing and facilitates positive experiences for them. The volunteer organization offers beneficial programming in community engagement and communications, science and technology, environment and health—environment and healthy living as well as sustainable agriculture and food security.

Besides providing career development opportunities like internships and mentorships, 4-H also curates expository experiences for its members such as exchange programs and conference experiences. 4-H creates an avenue for youth to be productively engaged in personal development and community service. We believe all young people, regardless of gender, race or ethnic background, should have this opportunity.

To celebrate Show Your 4-H Colours Day, I urge everyone to learn about 4-H and enroll their children in 4-H clubs.

And, Madam Speaker, if you're wondering why I'm not wearing a green turban today, I couldn't find a matching tie in my wardrobe, but I'm wearing green in my heart for today.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, 4-H in Manitoba goes back many years, to 1913 in Roland, Manitoba, which is recognized as the birthplace of 4-H in Canada and has a museum to recognize this and the contributions of 4-H over those many years.

The approach in 4-H is to learn to do by doing. This is a reflection of the fact that doing is more impactful and creates a better ability to remember and to understand what's happening.

My daughter, Pauline, joined 4-H when she was growing up and she learned a lot by doing. We were living in rural Manitoba and for a period we had a number of sheep. She learned to look after the sheep, and to get up and check them during the night when they were ready to lamb.

She also learned by doing when it came to banding bald eagles as a part of the project we've been involved with for many years on Besnard Lake. She climbed trees to help lower the young eaglets back down for banding.

On one occasion, when we arrived at the nest, it was in disrepair and the still flightless young had fallen to the ground. She learned that young eaglets will be looked after by their parents on the ground and that their parents will bring them fish for them to eat when they're on the ground until they are ready to fly. But Pauline made sure the eaglets had plenty of food by bringing them extra fish from time to time. They did well and in a few weeks were flying and starting to learn to catch fish on their own.

4-H has made a tremendous contribution to young people growing up in Manitoba. It's been very important for children and youth to learn many skills. It's a model which I think could be used more widely, particularly in cities, to have activities for young people and projects that they could be involved with.

I look forward to many more successful years of 4-H activity in our province and I thank those who are 4-H representatives in the gallery today for joining us for—on this occasion.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Education—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 minister please proceed with his statement.

Take Our Kids to Work Day

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I am pleased to rise in the House today to celebrate Take Our Kids to Work Day. I would like to welcome all the children of legislative staff who are here with us today in the gallery and those of you that joined us for the tours and the great lunch we had earlier this afternoon.

Take Our Kids to Work Day, Madam Speaker, is an annual program hosted in early November which provides employers, parents, family members and organizations to extend an opportunity to students to spend a day in a workplace environment.

Students who participate in Take Our Kids to Work Day are all able to experience and learn about

the world of work, whether it be in government, civil service, corporate settings, non-profit, construction, farming, volunteering and so many other employment fields.

Take Our Kids to Work Day is an endeavour which offers students in Manitoba and across Canada the opportunity to explore the vast array of career fields available to them.

Students are able to take away the knowledge of the expectations of a workplace scenario and apply that to their decision-making regarding their studies. This can continue to provide the framework and focus as to where their education will lead them in their lives after their educational careers.

Madam Speaker, I believe that all members of the House can agree with me that we are here to ensure the best of our youth right here in Manitoba.

Take Our Kids to Work Day facilitates a start of enrichment to inspire the children of Manitoba to explore their potential, to encourage them to stay in Manitoba and to explore their accomplishments and to have them pass along their success to future generations. This is the most worthwhile endeavour we can partake in.

Thank you to the students who have chosen to be here with us today to experience a day in our lives. I hope your participation today so far has been rewarding and one to remember.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. Thousands of grade 9 students from across Canada will be following a parent, guardian, mentor into their workplace to learn about what they do and get one of their first experiences of professional life.

In Canada, The Learning Partnership launched Take Our Kids to Work Day in 1994. Since then, it has been the most recognized career exploration event in Canada, and it is an exciting tradition for kids, families and employers.

Take Our Kids to Work Day is about more than just following around your mentor. It is an annual national celebration of employers hosting young adults at their workplaces. Designed to be more than a career day, it is a real-life experience for kids and an opportunity to grow their understanding of the importance of work.

The day exposes kids to what their parent does during their workday, but also shows children the value of their education and provides an opportunity to share how they envision their future in a hands-on, interactive environment. During Take Our Kids to Work Day, students will have the opportunity to see how the environment of a workplace functions, instructs, learns and grows.

Grade 9 students are at an age when they're maybe just beginning to explore what they want to do after graduation. Having the opportunity to spend a day in a workplace can help them on their path of determining their direction.

The theme for this year's take our work—Take Our Kids to Work Day is You Belong Here. It is an important message for all children in Manitoba: Whether you end up in the same profession as your parents and mentors or something completely different, you do indeed belong.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I seek leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: I want to thank the minister for celebrating take your kids to work day. Since my children are not in grade 9, I am proud to say I have two students shadowing me today: Simon, 14, and Yasmine, 14, are from Collège Louis-Riel.

Simon excels in math and would consider a career in architecture or engineering, while Yasmine is interested in becoming a lawyer.

They followed us today for our meeting with Diabetes Canada, where we talked about the urgent need for 'bretter' prevention and treatment of diabetes, especially for Indigenous folks in Manitoba who face major barriers to access in our health-care system.

Yasmine, who had heard that politicians only talk about problems and don't talk about solutions, was presently—pleasantly surprised that we were talking about solutions: universal access to continuous glucose monitors, education, Indigenous wellness centres, as well as successful models like the First Nations NUKA model at Opaskwayak Cree Nation that has been adopted with great success.

Yasmine and Simon both spoke about the importance of putting our differences aside and working together and accepting of how people are different from another. They talked about how people need to be more understanding and accepting and less judgmental,

less quick to make assumptions about people based on everything from skin colour, where you were born, how you dress or your life.

And they talked about destigmatizing people with disabilities. They said at school, they have people who have disabilities need to be fully accepted, as well as treated with respect, and not just patronized. They don't want anybody to be treated as less than.

They said when it comes to Manitoba, people in Manitoba do try to understand, and we do want change for the better.

With all that's going on in the world, they said there's a lot of healing that has to happen, and that in Russia and Ukraine, we don't want a third world war.

* (13:50)

We need to remember we're all human beings and work towards peace.

So, thank you, Simon and Yasmine, who I think may have taught me considerably more than I taught them.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Remembrance Day

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, we remember. Every year on Remembrance Day, we honour the courage and devotion of brave Canadian men and women that answered the call and fought to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens of Canada and our allies.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia earlier this year has brought the harsh realities of war back into focus. Nearly 10,000 Ukrainians have come to Manitoba to find a home away from the war where they can be safe and secure.

At the same time, many of them left their husbands, their fathers and their sons behind in the Ukraine to fight in a war that should—never should have started. These new Manitobans wonder what will happen and wait with the same anxiety our forebears must have felt when their loved ones went to fight in the Second World War.

Most of us have not experienced the horrors of war firsthand. All of us hope to never have to. But we should all be willing to do so if necessary. Freedom is not free. It is bought with a price. Therefore, there will always be those who attack our freedoms, but freedom needs to be actively defended in order to be preserved.

If we want remembrance to continue, we need to collectively resolve to take time to share these stories with our children and our grandchildren. Transcona hosts a well-attended Remembrance Day service where we do more. Thousands of students participate in the No Stone Left Alone program by placing poppies on every veteran's headstone, led by Peter Martin.

Legion members including Peter also visit countless schools, and he'd be here today if he wasn't busy with that. The Transcona Museum also takes part, and today I am joined by Alanna Horejda and Jennifer Maxwell, who work as curators at the Transcona Museum. Every year they open a Remembrance Day exhibit in Kildonan Place. This year's exhibit is called from hometown to the front lines: read their words, learn their stories and remember their sacrifice, and I encourage you all to go and visit there from November 7 to 11.

We all need to work together for a more just and harmonious world, free from conflict, free from war. So take up the torch and hold it high and wear a poppy.

So today, please join me in thanking the Transcona Museum for setting a good example to all of us by demonstrating a strong commitment to remembrance.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino).

Oh—the honourable member for The Maples.

Dr. Krishnamurti Dakshinamurti

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): On the morning of Thursday, October 15th, Manitoba lost a world-class academic and champion for human rights. Dr. Krishnamurti Dakshinamurti, emeritus professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of Manitoba, passed peacefully while surrounded by family.

Krishnamurti Dakshinamurti was born in 1928 in Vellore, India, and saw first-hand the struggle and advocacy for human rights as a student activist during Quit India resistance, then as an acolyte of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence during India's liberation.

He joined the University of Manitoba's department of biochemistry in 1965, and involved with the Nobel committee for medicine, nominating eminent scientists for consideration through the 1980s. He received Canadian and international research awards, lectured at hundreds of universities and was a mentor for countless students, including generations of Manitoba doctors.

His work in Manitoba passed beyond of that of simply as academic, and reached well into the area of philanthropy, advocacy, organizing as a member of the centennial committee of Winnipeg in 1967; was honoured by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, worked on fundraising campaigns in response to disasters local and abroad and founded the Dakshinamurti Academy of Hindu Studies at Winnipeg's Hindu Temple.

He retired as emeritus professor in 1998, but continued to research into his 90s. In 2002, he was recognized in the Cambridge University Press as one of the outstanding scientists of the 21st century. In 2020, he was appointed a member of the Order of Manitoba.

Mr. Dakshinamurti's life brought him into many different—

Madam Speaker: The—I'm sorry, but the member's time has expired.

Is there leave to allow the member to complete his statement? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Sandhu: Dr. Dakshinamurti's life brought him to many different adventures and accomplishments, but his championing of human rights and endless search for knowledge are virtues that all of us strive for.

We have the honour of hosting some family and friends today. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Dakshinamurti's wife and son-in-law, Dr. Ganga Dakshinamurti and Dr. Eylfason [*phonetic*—Doug Eylfason [*phonetic*]. I already apologized earlier that maybe I cannot pronounce the name.

Also today are—with us are: Mr. Sudhir Kumar, president of the Manitoba—Mahatma Gandhi Centre of Canada; Mr. Kirit Thakrar, president of the Hindu Society of Manitoba; Mrs. Manju Kumar; Mrs. Surekha Joshi; Ms. Rashmi Mehta; Mr. Ankit Bahl; Mr. Rohan Sethi; and Mr. Rudra Patel.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Community Safety Initiatives

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): We know that crime is certainly a topic on Manitoban's minds lately, and our government will take whatever steps are necessary to improve safety in our communities.

We also know that Manitobans expect this government to listen to their concerns and to act on their behalf. Crime is an issue affecting many Manitobans,

and our government will continue to take strong action to combat it, and its root causes, across our province, while supporting vulnerable Manitobans.

Just this week, our government announced that we are increasing our annual funding rates to shelters, transitional housing and homelessness outreach mentors to \$15.1 million from \$6.1 million. This will be a \$9-million increase in investment, one that has not seen an increase since 2009.

Our government will continue to make investments in safety, and we are taking a variety of different approaches to do so. Our government has been working to crack down on reducing many different acts of crime in our communities such as reducing auto parts theft, cyber crime and cracking down on illegal firearms.

Finally, I would like to give a shout-out to someone who has been working tirelessly to ensure that my home community of Brandon is a safer place to live and to work. Wayne Balcaen has served as the Brandon chief of police for just over five years now and I would like to share, on behalf of our government, an utmost congratulations on this milestone. I say to the chief: we look forward to working with you in the future to further safety—and ensure safety, pardon me, for all in our community and I thank you for all you do for the city of Brandon.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that initiatives our government has taken will benefit all Manitobans, and will create safer communities that we can live and thrive in. Our government has been listening, and will continue to do so, to ensure that Manitoba is a safe and more prosperous place for all.

Thank you very much.

Adult Education System

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, adult education is critical for the success of many of my constituents and for so many people around Manitoba. Unfortunately, things are not headed in the right direction.

My eyes were opened to the worrisome state of adult education in Manitoba when a school vice-principal in my constituency bluntly told me they wouldn't be able to fulfill my request to send parents a note on an urgent community meeting because they don't send letters home to parents because they can't read.

Since that unforgettable moment, I've been closely following the ongoing research efforts into the state

of Manitoba's adult education system of Jim Silver, a professor emeritus and an anti-poverty advocate in Manitoba.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released Jim Silver's second report on October 20th titled Building the Best Adult Education System in Canada. His research provides a road map we should be seriously considering to improve our current adult education system including: finding adult education department a permanent home affiliated to the Education Department, the creation of adult learning centre hubs that include child care and online education services, and for the Province to promote access to adult education instead of discouraging it.

* (14:00)

Currently, folks who are on employment income assistance are at risk of getting kicked off of it if they indicate they would like to pursue adult education.

Throughout, Professor Silver's recommendations—these are grounded on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action on education.

Currently, we are nowhere near what should be a shared goal of providing universal access to functional literacy in adults. The PC government's cuts and underfunding have held back necessary progress on adult education. This PC government's repeal of the adult literacy act has actively made outcomes worse, and the PC government needs to commit to doing more to improve adult literacy outcomes. And all MLAs should commit to improving adult education in Manitoba for the future of our province.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

Russell Arthur Ward

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Today, I want you to join me in recognizing Russell Arthur Ward, who passed away on October 25th of this year at the age of 93 years.

Russell was born in Portage la Prairie in 1929 and grew up on the shores of Delta Marsh. He was a masterful storyteller, conservation officer, 'waterferral' guide and a well-known decoy carver.

Russell Ward was recently awarded formal recognition from the Province as the eldest living conservation officer who served during the 1940s.

At the age of 20, Russell became a game warden, patrolling the Delta Marsh by way of dog team and horse and sleigh to enforce trapping and game laws.

Russell Ward married Wilnell *[phonetic]* Hiebert, and together they had five sons. Early in his married life, Ruffle *[phonetic]* and Wilma *[phonetic]* lived at St. Marks, near St. Ambrose, and then moved to Winnipeg, and then moved again to a wild rice farm in Minnesota.

They returned to St. Marks in 1974, where Russell and Wilma *[phonetic]* shared duties of cattle farming as well as guiding, cooking and maintaining the St. Ambrose shooting shack for throngs of hunters during the height of the waterfowl hunting season.

It was during this time of life that Russell joined up with his brother, Tory, as a wood carver, producing thousands of duck decoys and shore bird decoys native to the famed Delta Marsh.

Throughout his life, he has always stayed connected to his hunting and fishing roots. He represented one of four generations of Ward family to serve in some capacity within that natural resource profession. He served as guide for Delta Waterfowl's founding father, James Ford Bell, and many other hunters over the years.

Join me to acknowledge and remember Russell Ward, who is dearly missed by all who knew him.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would now like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's gallery, where we have with us today Mr. Doug Martindale, the former MLA for Burrows, as well as Rene Burgos, Doug's son-in-law from Mexico.

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

Also in the public gallery, we have with us today Cheryl Hutchinson, Emily Hutchinson and Haylee Flores, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen).

And also in the public gallery, we have numerous grade 9 students who are visiting the building as part of Take Our Kids to Work Day. And these include Ezra Micklefield, son of the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), along with his two friends and classmates, Philip and Isabelle.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Milk Price Increase Request Not to Raise

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): This is your daily reminder that the PCs and the Liberals voted against our hydro rate freeze. That's how they voted, and it's costing you money.

The—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —cost of living keeps going up. The price of gas is way too high. The PCs won't do anything—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to help.

We also know the price of groceries keeps going up, and the PCs will not do anything to help. In fact, the price of milk is set to increase yet again. For the third time in a year, the Premier is set to approve another hike in the cost of milk here in Manitoba.

Will the Premier simply stop raising the price of milk on Manitobans?

Madam Speaker: Before we go any further, I'm going to remind members we do have a lot of students that are here today with either people from—maybe some of your own children, or children of people that work in the building.

And I think if we want to find a day where we can show that things work well in this Chamber, today might be a really good day to do that and to show them that, if they're here to watch democracy, democracy can work with respect shown by all sides.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I just want to take a moment to welcome all of those students who are here with us today. It's a great day to bring your kids to school. I remember those days fondly, and just want to wish them all well here today.

Madam Speaker, with respect to the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked: on one hand, the Leader of the Opposition has stated, at least in the past, that he wanted an independent Public Utilities Board. And now, on the other hand, he is saying that he wants to interfere in the Public Utilities Board process.

The Public Utilities Board is, of course, the entity that approves rates with respect to Manitoba Hydro.

So, I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition could indicate which day is it today; is he in favour of the independent PUB or not?

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we're very clear. We're in favour of saving you money on your hydro bill. They voted against it. So did they.

We're also very clear that we're in favour of a strong, independent PUB. That's why we're going to vote against Bill 36. If they support an independent Public Utilities Board, they should vote against Bill 36 as well, Madam Speaker.

But returning to question at hand, which the Premier refuses to answer: the third increase to the price of milk that she will approve this year. It's a fact that every increase to the price of milk has to be signed off at the Cabinet table in Manitoba, and there's another milk price increase on its way.

Will the Premier simply stop raising the price of milk on Manitobans?

Mrs. Stefanson: The opposition, once again, does not have his facts correct, Madam Speaker. The fact of the matter is we have among the lowest milk rates in all of Canada.

But I will go back to the Leader of the Opposition, not just—just from his last question, he has flip-flopped from the last question to this question. Last question, he's calling on an interference in the Public Utilities Board when it comes to setting rates, and then the next question, he's saying he doesn't believe in interfering.

Madam Speaker, he can't have it both ways. He introduced—or, they introduced—members opposite introduced—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —changes to Bill 36 on the floor of this Chamber, Madam Speaker.

They're speaking out of both side of—sides of their mouths. Which is it, Madam Speaker?

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we say that we should save you money on your hydro bill and we should save you money on the price of milk. It's very clear. It's very clear, and anyone in Manitoba can understand that.

Nobody understands what the PCs are doing, especially during this time of high inflation. After the third price increase on milk, milk prices will have risen 11 per cent this year, each and every one of them signed off at the Cabinet table by this Premier and those members of the PC Cabinet.

Given the rising cost of the price of groceries, the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —rising cost of gas and the rising cost of hydro that they're voting to increase each and every day here, why will the Premier simply not give us a break and not increase the price of milk on Manitobans yet again?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues, day after day, in this House and puts false information on the record of this Chamber.

* (14:10)

The Leader of the Opposition—if he doesn't know, he should know that it's Manitoba's Farm Products Marketing Council who decide the price of milk, Madam Speaker. It is not decided at the Cabinet table. That is just false information and shame on the member opposite.

But when it comes to making life more affordable in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, I will tell you, Manitobans don't want to go back to the dark days of the previous NDP government where, year after year after year, they raised taxes on the backs of Manitobans.

We will not go down that path, Madam Speaker.

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

Health-Care System Investment in Nursing

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, increases to the price of milk are approved by the Premier at the Cabinet table. The Premier should know because she signed off on it not once, not twice, but three times within the past year. We're saying, give Manitobans a break and don't sign off on another price increase at the Cabinet table.

You know what else is signed off on at the Cabinet table, Madam Speaker? Cuts to health care. They started under Brian Pallister and they continue under this Premier.

We've lost beds at the Grace Hospital. We've lost community clinics at Concordia and Seven Oaks. And again, at the Grace Hospital, we've lost 13 nurses, and that's just since this most recent summer. It's wrong.

Will the PCs finally just stop cutting health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, again, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues down a path of putting false information on the record in this Chamber. He's absolutely wrong—not only on the price of milk and who is responsible for those prices, but he's also wrong when it comes to health care and the investments that our government has made.

The facts of the matter are, we are investing more than \$1 billion more in health care than the NDP ever did. We will take no lessons from members opposite, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we all remember because we were all in this Chamber when Brian Pallister sat in that chair and admitted that he signs off on every cut to health care. And now that we see those health-care cuts continue under this Premier, we know that it's this Premier who's approving those continued cuts.

Look at the Grace Hospital. Wait times are worse than they've ever been. That's because—we know from the annual report that that Premier released—that we've lost beds at the Grace Hospital because of their cuts. We also know that we've lost 13 intensive-care-unit nurses from the Grace Hospital, and that's just over the past few months. Everyone in every community in Manitoba has seen health care cut since the PCs took office.

Our question is simple: When will the PCs finally stop cutting health care and start investing in nurses?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, once again, the Leader of the Opposition continues down the paths of putting false information on the record in this Chamber. The fact of the matter is, just at the Grace Hospital dinner the other evening—I'm not sure if the member was there, maybe he missed it, but I was there and a number of our colleagues were there to support the Grace Hospital that evening. And we did say that evening, and did announce that evening, that we will have supports for the Grace Hospital ICU.

So, once again, the Leader of the Opposition has no idea what's he's talking about. He has no plan, no vision for the future, and he continues to put false information on the record in this Chamber. Shame on him.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the only thing that the PCs can point to are figments of their imagination which only exist in press releases. When you go to the actual front lines of the health-care system, what happens?

At the Grace Hospital, the subject at hand, we've lost 13 nurses from the intensive-care unit. And that's just since this summer. We also know that we've lost beds from that hospital. And on a given day, patients in the ER waiting room are awaiting there longer than they ever have in the history of our province. It's a similar story at many other sites.

Ask any nurse and they will tell you that health care is worse in Manitoba today than it has ever been. Under the PC's watch, we continue to see nurses leaving the front lines of our health-care system at a time when we can least afford it.

The question remains: Will the Premier finally stop denying that there is a health-care crisis, deny that their government's cuts are responsible and finally start to invest in nurses in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: We are investing nurses in the province of Manitoba. That's why we have announced and continue to move towards 400 new nursing seats in our post-secondary institutions in the province of Manitoba.

So, once again, the Leader of the Opposition is putting false information on the record in this Chamber, and that's unfortunate, Madam Speaker. But we continue to make significant investments in health care in the province. We recognize that there's a human resource issue—not just here in Manitoba, but indeed across the country. And if the Leader of the Opposition would just understand that.

This is nothing that's unique to Manitoba. We've come through a worldwide pandemic, Madam Speaker. We recognize and we know that back during the dark days of the previous NDP government—how long people used to wait in the hallways then. And that was when there wasn't a worldwide pandemic.

We recognize there's challenges; we know there's more work to be done. We are committed to getting that work done on behalf of Manitobans.

Indigenous Nurses English Proficiency Testing

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Manitoba needs to make sure that our system for registering nurses is fair and equitable. Unfortunately, we've heard from Indigenous nurses who speak English and have trained in Manitoba, yet are being forced to take English proficiency testing in order to complete their registration.

These same requirements are not in place in other provinces like Saskatchewan, and we have lost nurses from our province as a result. The situation is simply not right, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister intervene to ensure that Indigenous nurses are not disadvantaged by rules that are not applied elsewhere?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for Union Station for the question.

Madam Speaker, we are continuing to work with our College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, as well as other colleges across the province, to ensure that registration in our province is streamlined not just for Indigenous nurses but for all nurses who want to practise here in our province.

But I do want to ask the member opposite if they have asked the NDP why, in 2013, when Ms. Sigua came forward to be registered here, she was sent packing and told to go to another province because she, as an internationally educated nurse, could not get registered in this province.

What is the answer?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. I'm going to have to call the members to order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, we are joined today by Manitoba Indigenous Nurses Inc., as well as Dr. Barry Lavallee from KIM in representing Grand Chief Settee. I thank them for being here today.

They've all been advocating on this issue, and I've also communicated their concerns in a letter to the minister. Their concerns are as follows: they're seeing

Indigenous nurses who speak English subjected to English proficiency testing that delays their registration.

Saskatchewan doesn't have those same requirements, and so we're losing these nurses to other provinces. That's not fair, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister take action to ensure the rules are fair for Indigenous nurses here in Manitoba?

Ms. Gordon: It is just sad, Madam Speaker, that after 17 years in office, the members opposite did nothing to change the regulations or the requirements for English proficiency benchmarks to allow Indigenous nurses and internationally educated nurses to get registered in this province.

Madam Speaker, I spoke with someone who's advocating on behalf of Indigenous nurses. They told me that three nurses had gone to Alberta, two nurses had gone to Saskatchewan—all during the dark days of the NDP.

* (14:20)

They did nothing; they sat on their hands. Our government is taking action. Get on board.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, instead of the minister focusing on taking shots over here, I think that she should be better focused on addressing the nurses who are here today—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara:—and who are asking and have been asking for her help.

Manitoba's own Fair Registration Practices Office has called upon all regulated professions to review their practice to ensure their language proficiency policies and requirements looks at these issues. The office speaks against the application of blanket language requirements without considering whether a person lives and works in English-speaking environments.

We have Indigenous people who have trained in English and live and work in English being subjected to testing that can and has delayed their registration. That's wrong. We need every nurse we can get, and we need the registration to be fair.

Will the minister address this immediately?

Ms. Gordon: There is one thing today that the member for Union Station and I agree on, is that it's

wrong. For 17 years, Madam Speaker, the members opposite sat on their hands, and they did nothing.

Ms. Sigua is an internationally educated nurse who received her education in the Philippines. In 2013—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —she applied to the CRNM for registration—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —and after her application was evaluated, she was told that she could not be registered here in the province.

That was during the dark days of the NDP, Madam Speaker. They sent Indigenous nurses packing to other provinces. They sent internationally educated nurses.

We have issued an order to the college—

Madam Speaker: The—

Ms. Gordon: —that allows those individuals—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

And I'm going to call members to order. And I'm going to start naming those members because that is obviously the only way I might be able control this heckling that is going on in this House.

I know tensions can get high, but that does not mean people should be disrespectful in following the rules of this House.

Lions Place Seniors Residence Request for Agreement to Prevent Sale

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The seniors action committee for Lions Place held a press conference in front of the office of the Minister of Families today. They're raising the alarm that 610 Portage is on the verge of a sale that imperils the affordability of their housing.

They're asking the minister to take all action necessary, including passing urgent legislation, in order to keep their housing affordable.

Is the minister listening, and will she take action to keep Lions Place from being sold?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I appreciate the letter from the business organization supporting seniors, and I also appreciate that they acknowledge in their letter that the Manitoba government, of course, does not own the building, yet we do

have a responsibility for affordable housing in the province of Manitoba, which is exactly what we do.

We also have a responsibility for ensuring that rent supplements and Rent Assist is in place, and that is why Budget 2022 has \$650 million in that budget for EIA, including Rent Assist.

And I certainly hope that the member will show and demonstrate her support for low-income seniors who need a supplement on their rent by voting in favour of \$650 million towards Rent Assist and EIA and supplements for people who need a safe and affordable place to call home.

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

Mrs. Smith: The concerns of the seniors action committee at Lions Place are reasonable. They're asking for a 90-day reprieve from the sale of Lions Place to allow the Province, City and federal government to come to terms on an agreement.

We need to protect social housing in this province, especially for seniors, and this is the largest non-profit seniors housing block in our province.

Will the minister listen to the residents and provide a reprieve so that everyone can come together on an agreement and keep Lions Place from being sold?

Ms. Squires: And, of course, our government is doing everything we can to ensure that all Manitobans have a safe and affordable place to call home. That is why we signed on to the National Housing Strategy and why we've built 745 net new units of affordable and social housing since we formed office. That is why we're committing more money than ever in Budget '22 to ensure that we've got enhanced initiatives for people who need affordable options for their housing and we've increased—we've quadrupled the Rent Assist and the rent supplements.

I've had very productive conversations with the seniors action committee at the Lions Place, and will continue to do so.

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

Mrs. Smith: Gerald, Brown, chairperson of the seniors action committee, writes, and I quote: This is a very stressful time for the residents of Lions Place. Words are not enough. Urgent action is needed immediately. We need to know that the provincial government has our back. End of quote.

And we agree on this side. The time for action is now. Seniors social housing should be preserved, and this is the largest one in our province. The minister can intervene today to keep her—this building from being sold. It's just a matter of political will.

Will the minister do the right thing, provide a reprieve, and keep Lions Place from being sold?

Ms. Squires: To quote the member, who said that it is a very stressful time for seniors, I wholeheartedly agree, and that is why I wish that the NDP would stop putting false information on the record. I wish the NDP would stop fear mongering with vulnerable seniors.

We are working very closely. We are committed to affordable and safe housing for our seniors in the province. It would be incredibly helpful if the NDP stopped fear mongering with all seniors in the province, including the residents at Lions Place.

WPS Headquarters Construction Request for Public Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): There are still way too many unanswered questions surrounding the Winnipeg Police Service's headquarters scandal.

A judge ruled that the former Winnipeg CAO received a \$327,000 bribe in connection with the tendering process and invoices for work on the headquarters that weren't done or they weren't completed.

Manitobans deserve accountability on the Winnipeg Police Service's headquarters. The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) continues to refuse to call a public inquiry to get to the bottom of this scandal. She can do the right thing today, stand up, and announce a public inquiry.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite knows that there are many questions that are being asked and many answers that are being provided through the many civil cases that are working their way through the civil courts. We won't interfere with that process.

To call a public inquiry on top of that civil process might actually stop all of those things from happening, and questions wouldn't be answered.

I don't know why the member opposite would want to try to cover those things up.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, speaking of covering things up, Madam Speaker, Winnipeggers want to know why the Winnipeg Police Service's headquarters went \$79 million over budget.

People should be held accountable for wasting taxpayers' dollars. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Outgoing Winnipeg mayor Brian Bowman has urged the Premier to see this through. Bowman said, and I quote: Our residents' confidence and trust in government is at stake. End quote.

A public inquiry would get to the bottom of this scandal.

Will the Premier do the right thing today: stand up in the House and call a public inquiry?

Mr. Goertzen: The member opposite would know a great deal about wasted public money when it comes to things like the bipole line, which cost billions of dollars more than it was ever intended to, Madam Speaker.

However, unlike the bipole line—where, of course, the NDP didn't have that kind of scrutiny and that sort of public accountability—in this situation, there is actually accountability going through the courts. There's a civil process. Many questions are being asked, many questions are being answered in that civil court process. To have a public inquiry might allow the litigants to stop everything, including the civil litigation. I don't know why the member opposite doesn't want to have those questions answered.

* (14:30)

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

Ms. Fontaine: Brian Bowman has said, and I quote, we have certainly felt for many years the Province doesn't have Winnipeg taxpayers' backs on this file. End quote.

Winnipeggers deserve to know why a taxpayer-funded project went tens of millions of dollars over budget. They want to know why invoices for work were not completed or they went to different projects, Madam Speaker.

Manitobans and Winnipeggers deserve accountability. The Premier could help to get to the bottom of this scandal by calling a public inquiry.

Will she do so today?

Mr. Goertzen: The very member who asked that question was a senior adviser to the former government—the former government who had billions of dollars wasted on a bipole line, who hid information, who hid reports, who put everything they could underneath the carpet and tried to make sure that nobody saw it.

Now, here, that same member wants to somehow stop a court process, put that in it—threat. Doesn't want that information put forward.

There is a court process. Several, in fact. There are questions being asked, there are questions being answered.

Just like before, when the member opposite tried to cover up information, she's trying to do it again, Madam Speaker.

Indigenous Reconciliation Strategy Timeline for Duty-to-Consult Framework

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): It's been six months since the Auditor General released a scathing report on the PCs' failure to implement the reconciliation strategy.

A strategy would include a framework for respectful and productive consultations with Indigenous communities. The PCs are required to implement one under law—and again, I say under law—yet they've failed to do so.

This is a mistake. The Auditor General has said that, and I quote, without a strategy, efforts towards reconciliation are hampered, ultimately lacking focus and vision. End quote.

Can the minister tell us why his government has failed to implement a duty-to-consult framework?

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I welcome the question from the member opposite with respect to reconciliation.

I've said many times in the House before that I've spoken with many First Nations leaders, with the—with our grand chiefs across the province, many individuals from First Nations communities in Manitoba. And what I heard was very disturbing to me.

Under the NDP government, Indigenous people in Manitoba never felt they had a voice in this House. They never felt there was a seat at the table for them. We decided we needed to take a different approach.

We are reaching out. We are engaging. We are proud of what we are accomplishing in our reconciliation process.

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

Mr. Bushie: Well, I proudly stand here, being an Indigenous voice in this House today.

Madam Speaker, through FIPPA, we've learned that the department of Indigenous Reconciliation, Northern Relations drafted a new framework for consultation with Indigenous communities in March, and I quote, subject to Cabinet approval. I'll table the document now.

It looks like the PCs and this minister have been sitting on this framework for the past seven months without explanation. This raises the question of whether this consultation framework wasn't, in fact, rejected by Cabinet.

Can the minister explain why the Cabinet rejected this consultation framework, and when one will finally be implemented?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Yes, that is being developed in co-operation and collaboration with Indigenous leaders across the province.

And with the new—election of our new grand chief of the AMC in Manitoba, I actually have a meeting tomorrow to discuss these very issues and move this matter forward.

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

Mr. Bushie: I hope the minister tells them why they've been sitting on that document for over seven months now.

Over the past six years, the PCs have been in office and the 15 months this minister has been in his position, this minister has failed to implement a reconciliation strategy despite his legal—and, again, I say a legal—obligation to do so. The AG found that they have no strategy and no plan for one when will—when it will be implemented.

One aspect of reconciliation strategy is a consultation framework. We've recently discovered that the minister has been sitting on a consultation framework for the past seven months. The minister should explain whether Cabinet rejected this framework, or whether it was silently implemented.

Will he do so today?

Mr. Lagimodiere: We're certainly not sitting on this issue on this side of the House. As a matter of fact, just last week we had very engaging meetings with First Nations leaders within the province to talk about these very concerns, about the duty to consult. We're still ongoing with those discussions.

We, unlike the former NDP government, do not force our ideas upon First Nations. We will work collaboratively with First Nations to get things done the right way.

Non-Disclosure Agreements Act Request to Pass Bill 225

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We brought forward Bill 225 to reform the abuse of non-disclosure agreements in Manitoba. We know that NDAs have been abused to cover up misconduct in this province. It happened at the University of Manitoba and at Hockey Canada.

NDAs are used to silence whistle-blowers and make it possible for someone who's done something wrong to silence and threaten someone who's only tried to do what is right, which runs against the fundamental principles of justice.

Every day that this bill is delayed, more people will be silenced for doing the right thing: speaking up.

Will this government support Bill 225 through committee and pass it before the end of this session?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for raising the question.

As he knows, this is a serious issue, and it needs to be handled seriously. That's why we called the committee, why we have a number of presenters that are coming tonight, why we referred it to the Law Reform Commission and asked them to bring forward recommendations.

I've committed that after tonight, after the witnesses have put their comments on the record, I'll provide that testimony to the Law Reform Commission so they can consider it as they come forward with their recommendations early next year.

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

Mr. Lamont: Virtually the same bill was passed un-animously in Prince Edward Island. Similar bills have been passed in the US, including California and Washington state.

Tonight's committee has presenters from across Canada and the US, including journalist Jan Wong, who faced a gag order from The Globe and Mail, and Julie Roginsky, a Democrat who worked with Gretchen Carlson of Fox News when both were sexually harassed by Roger Ailes.

The government of Ontario is now banning NDAs at universities, but we all know the problem is much larger than that because here in Manitoba, Hockey Canada, Peter Nygård and the U of M all used them—not to protect business secrets or ideas, but to silence people who'd been wronged.

Again, will this government support Bill 225 through committee and pass it before the end of the session?

Mr. Goertzen: I've already indicated to the member, and I indicated to this House, that we take this extremely seriously.

It's rare that a Attorney General, a Minister of Justice, would refer something to the Law Reform Commission and ask them to study it specifically. They've indicated they are engaged in that work, they expect to be done that work by spring or early next year.

They know that the hearings are happening tonight. I will provide them with the testimony—the important testimony tonight. And we look forward to the recommendations.

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

Increase in Diabetes Rates in Manitoba Request for Government Plan to Address

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the number of people with diabetes in Manitoba has increased from just over 40,000 when diabetes was declared an epidemic in 1996 up to almost 140,000 in the latest figures available for the year 2020, as I table.

The upward rise, now a three-fold increase, is a reflection of 25 years of inadequate action by successive NDP and PC governments. The present government clearly has not made debate—diabetes a priority, as after more than six years in government, they have not yet even delivered a plan to address this epidemic.

Why has the PC government delivered the same inadequate results as its predecessors over the last 25 years?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite, and as a mother of a type 1 diabetic, it—I personally am invested in seeing that we have action on this file and improvements towards treatment, prevention and all-over wellness for those who are living with diabetes and those who will develop it. And hopefully, we can prevent more in the future.

That is why our department will be happy later this month to reveal our diabetes action plan for Manitoba.

Thank you.

* (14:40)

OASIS Mobile Outreach Project Addiction Treatment Funding

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): What a great response from our minister for Mental Health and well-being. I think I should ask her another question, don't you? I think so.

Now, our government's been working closely with front-line organizations that help Manitobans dealing with addiction and with housing challenges.

So, I'd ask the Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness: could she please share with this House details about what these investments are that we're making and to support all these efforts.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I want to thank my friend and colleague from Radisson for that great question.

Our government understands that we need to listen to those who are on the front line. And we know that no one is more entrenched than those who are part of St. Boniface Street Links.

That is why we were proud to announce, yesterday, \$215,000 investment to help support St. Boniface Street Links outreach and support intervention for people who use substances, or OASIS project, an overall \$625,000 investment that also includes expanding the naloxone and 'narclan' pilot project.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Public Insurance Rebates BITSA Amendment to PUB

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): The PCs are making harder for Manitobans to receive MPI rebates.

Through BITSA, PCs are making changes, which means MPI can keep hundreds of millions of dollars more without having to seek approval from the PUB.

This is wrong. The previous system worked well.

Why is the minister interfering in MPI yet again?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): I would seek clarification from the member.

Did the NDP have a caucus meeting this morning? Because the first question was the Leader of the Opposition speaking against the PUB.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member—*[interjection]*

Order.

The honourable member for The Maples, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Sandhu: Madam Speaker, previously, PUB could order MPI to rebate money to Manitobans. However, changes in BITSA now mean that MPI has solo authority to decide when or if any future rebates are issued.

It is clear the PCs are, yet again, interfering in the activities of the PUB. Manitobans could lose out of millions of dollars in rebates.

The minister should explain to Manitobans why he's interfering in the activities of PUB and MPI; will he do so today?

Mr. Goertzen: I was actually corrected by my Premier (Mrs. Stefanson); the Leader of the Opposition actually spoke in favour and against the PUB.

So, maybe I could get clarification: are they in favour of the PUB or against the PUB? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for The Maples, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Sandhu: The MPI rebates help Manitobans struggling to get by. However, thanks to the changes the PCs have made through BITSA, Manitobans may not see rebates at all. The PCs are interfering in MPI and PUB could mean that Manitobans lose out upon millions of dollars.

Will the—behalf of Manitobans, can the minister explain why he's interfering with MPI and PUB yet again?

Mr. Goertzen: You know, the NDP spent some great deal of time at different times saying that, you know, rebates from MPI, they're political. They accuse MPI of political rebates, they accuse this government of political rebates, they accuse everybody of political rebates; and now, we're actually having criteria that'll say when rebates should actually happen.

And now that member says, no, there shouldn't be criteria. They should just be political, Madam Speaker.

Somewhere there's a pickerel on a dock somewhere in Manitoba who's very jealous of the NDP government and their flip-flopping ability, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Hydro Rates

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Since the Progressive Conservative Party took office, the provincial government has interfered in the activities of Manitoba Hydro and has attempted to undermine the Public Utilities Board's role in the hydro rate-setting process.

(2) The provincial government has raised Manitoba Hydro bills by hundreds of dollars since 2016.

(3) The provincial government is now ushering in changes to Manitoba Hydro rate setting and the PUB through Bill 36, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act.

(4) The PUB is the one thing standing in the way of the provincial government and unchecked hydro rate increases.

(5) The PUB's independent rate-setting process has worked for many years by balancing the ability of consumers to pay and the financial health of Manitoba Hydro.

(6) Bill 36 strips the PUB of its rate-setting powers and hands it over to Cabinet, reducing transparency and oversight.

(7) Bill 36 guarantees that Manitobans will pay more for hydro.

(8) In the first fiscal year after its implementation, Bill 36 will increase rates by 5 per cent during a period of high inflation that has made the average Manitoban's cost of living significantly higher.

(9) A hydro rate increase would amplify the financial pressure Manitoban families are facing and would undoubtedly increase the number of people who have difficulty paying their hydro bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to respect the PUB's independent rate-setting process, and to not increase the financial pressures on Manitobans—or, rather, the financial pressures Manitobans are currently facing and withdraw Bill 36.

This petition is signed by Lesley Skibinsky, Denise Dabinsky, Till [*phonetic*] Bannerman and many other Manitobans.

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

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of the petition is as follows:

The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys library has been served notice by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school by March 31, 2023.

The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the JRL for 48 years.

A photo of the auditorium captioned the regional library is published in a 2008 document titled heritage buildings in the RM of De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of heritage site.

The JRL and Red River Valley School Division have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

Students that are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefield [*phonetic*], are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1 of 2023.

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that the JRL provides to the student population of École Héritage school, as well as the communities of St. Pierre Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the Red River Valley School Division and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community. And,

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

* (14:50)

This petition is signed by Heather Hofer, Rebecca Hofer, Thomas Hofer and many more Manitobans.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin

contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Louise Bridge

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 110 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it's deteriorated extensively, becoming functionally obsolete, subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the

new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed the residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its throne–2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east, as originally proposed.

(10) The City expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn Avenue from Watt Street to the 111-year-old bridge is complete.

(11) The new Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so that it complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the new Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping it open for active transportation in the future.

And this petition's signed by many, many Manitobans.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by Ramandeep Sidhu, Navneet Kaur, Lachuir Kaur and many other Manitobans.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, JRL, has been served notice by the Red River Valley School Division, RRVSD, to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school, ÉHS, by March 31st, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned, the regional library, is published in a 2008 document titled, heritage buildings in RM De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

(4) JRL and RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and had the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students that are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal, Kleefeld—and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

And we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (15:00)

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of the Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium

that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

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

Thank you.

Home-Care Services

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Home-care workers in Manitoba provide skilled and compassionate care that helps better the quality of life for thousands of Manitobans.

(2) Robust home-care services are proven to reduce the strain on health-care services and demand for hospital beds.

(3) Home care reduces the demand for long-term-care beds as it allows people to continue living in their own space.

(4) Studies show that a third of the 200,000 Canadians living in long-term-care homes could stay home with proper home-care support.

(5) Investing in home care saves money, as daily services cost half the price of a long-term-care bed and one tenth–seventh the daily cost of hospital beds.

The provincial government's cuts to home care in Manitoba has resulted in chronic staffing issues that caused the WRHA to cancel 27,000 home-care appointments in the month of April 2022 alone.

Manitoba—many clients in Manitoba only receive home-care services once a day, whereas countries such as Denmark offer up to six visits a day.

Home-care workers in Manitoba are paid poor wages, are offered little benefits, lack sick time and are overworked, resulting in difficulty retaining and attracting workers.

(9) Home-care workers have been without a contract since 2017, due to this provincial government's interference in labour negotiations.

(10) Investing in home care is a proactive approach that would save the Province millions of dollars as well as allow more Manitobans to age in place.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health and the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care to immediately increase investment in home-care services so that home-care workers can be paid fair wages and clients can receive the level of service they require.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Sorry—this is the French—I apologize—I will just start with the petition.

The background—sorry—I just thought—no, no, it's okay—I'm just going to read a petition to the Legislature.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, JRL, has been served notice by the Red River Valley School Division, to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school by March 31st, 2023.

The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by the renowned Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and has been home to JRL for 48 years.

A photo of the auditorium captioned, the regional library, is published in a 2008 document titled, heritage buildings in RM De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

JRL and RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

Students that are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Ninnerville [*phonetic*], Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys and the RM De Salaberry.

To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This has been signed by Renae Kehler, Saphire Thomas-Hudson, Spimi [*phonetic*] Guan and many other Manitobans.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, JRL, has been served notice by the Red River Valley division to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school, by March 31st, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by a renowned Manitoba architect, Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned, the regional library, is published in a 2008 document titled, heritage buildings in RM De Salaberry and St. Jolys—St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

(4) JRL and RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) The students that are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its

fourth largest collection of French language–French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

(2) To request that the Minister of Education to recognize the value of—that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

* (15:10)

And this is signed by Michelle Van Kettler [*phonetic*], Steven Baete, Tabitha Baete and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Madam Speaker: The House will now consider the opposition day motion of the honourable member for St. Johns.

I will now recognize the honourable member from St. Johns.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare), that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the provincial government to respect and follow the provisions of The Elections Act and confirm that the next general election will take place on October 3rd, 2023.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm pleased to get up on this really important opposition day motion because I think it's important for Manitobans to know when they're going to be going to the polls and if this PC government is actually going to adhere to Elections Manitoba laws.

Most folks in the province will know that we have a fixed election date under our legislation. What that means is that Manitobans know the date of the next provincial election. And the reason for that—the background for that is that so Manitobans can prepare themselves, to get ready to participate in our democratic processes. A very important part of living in Manitoba is to participate in our democracy and to vote in the next government that folks want to see.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And, unfortunately, since the PCs came into power, what we've seen is actually a move towards not adhering to the fixed election date. We know that in 2019, we know that a former premier, Brian Pallister, called an early election. And he gave several indications to media that he was probably moving towards a—breaking the election law and calling an early election.

I think it's important to put on the record that we know that Brian Pallister—first off, he didn't work his full four years that he was supposed to. He didn't want to work those full four years, even though he tried to, like, make Manitobans—he tried to, like, you know, bribe Manitobans that they were going to be, you know, the most progressive and most improved province across Canada and that he was to do his work, and he was so excited to be the premier.

But, in fact, that wasn't the truth because he cut his term a year short. And then we also know that he very arrogantly told the media that, in fact, while he was premier, that he planned on taking about eight weeks of holidays in Costa Rica. And so it was clear that Brian Pallister didn't want to do the work of running a province. It was—it's clear that he didn't want to be the premier.

But what we now know, as well, Deputy Speaker, is that not only did he not want to do the work of being the premier and he wanted to sit at his palatial—his palace in Costa Rica for eight weeks a year; so he didn't want to do any of that, but we also now know that he called an early election because he wanted to retire.

At the end of the day, the premier didn't want to do his full term because he didn't want to work; he wanted to be in Costa Rica and then he called an early

election. He broke the election laws because he wanted to retire. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Fontaine: Like, not only did he not want to do his job as the premier, one of the most sacred positions in all of Manitoba—you're running a province—he didn't want to work at all. He literally just wanted to go to Costa Rica, relax on the beach, maybe get his wife to continue to, you know, look at his emails while he's there because even when he was the premier he didn't even want to answer his emails. That's how little he wanted to work.

So, meanwhile, he breaks the election laws, he makes—he forces all Manitobans to go to an election before they—a year before they were scheduled to go to, because at the end of the day, he didn't want to work.

I don't know. I know as a Manitoban, I'm curious why he even bothered running at all. Like, why didn't he just retire before he came back here to be the opposition leader and then to take on one of the most sacred positions in all of Manitoba? Why not just retire to Costa Rica? Why put Manitobans through an early election? That's selfish and simply just not right.

And so, the opposition day—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —motion that we're here debating today, Deputy Minister, is very—it's a very important one because Manitobans deserve to know whether or not this government is going to adhere to the fixed election date and will not call an early election.

Now, let me just say this, Deputy Speaker, let me say this for—before anybody starts to kind of try to spin my words.

Regardless of what the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) chooses to do, if the Premier chooses to break the election law and call an early election—I know that the member over here is bored and yawning. I know democracy bores these members here, but Manitobans actually want to hear about democracy and that democracy operates in the way that it's meant to.

So, as I was saying before, folks over here loudly yawned about democracy, it doesn't matter, again, if the Premier decides to break the fixed election date and call an early election in spring; we're ready. Every single member of our team on this side, every single member that we have already nominated, is ready to go.

We're ready to get this election on. We're ready to show—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —Manitobans what we are wanting to do, how we can have a better province with—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —people that actually care about—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It's 2022. We have microphones. I can hear without the member yelling. We're not that far away. And I would say to all members, on all sides, please keep the volume down so that we can do what we're meant to do here.

The honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) has the floor.

Ms. Fontaine: I appreciate that, because I was having a hard time hearing myself with all of the heckling that was going on.

So—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —as I was saying, our NDP team has been working so hard—so hard—to show Manitobans that we are on the side of Manitobans, that we care about their lives, we care about their families, we care about their jobs, we care about the environment, we care about our health-care system, we care about the education.

We are ready. So if the Premier decides that she no longer wants to work and wants to call an early election, we're ready to go. We are so ready. All of our candidates are ready. So, I just want to put that on the record that if she decides to do it, it's no bother to us. We're ready.

However, having said that, I think that it is important for—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —Manitobans to prepare themselves. Are we having an early election or are we going to be having an election in October 3rd of 2023?

Manitobans deserve to know that. Manitobans deserve to know how and when they're going to participate in our democracy and hopefully who they're going to be voting in a new government in 2023.

So, let me just say this, Deputy Speaker. The reason why we put this opposition day motion is because

we're concerned. We know that the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) believes that there's one set of rules for her and every single one of her PC caucus, and there's another set of rules for the rest of us.

* (15:20)

We know that the Premier has broken election laws, and we know that the Premier doesn't seem to think that she has to adhere to the rest of laws like we do here. And let me just add a couple of things here.

I think it's important to put on the record that we know that during the Premier's leadership race, there were several things that went sideways. And let me just put some of them on here. Despite the party's own—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine:—rules stipulating that election ballots must be mailed out as of October 11, the PC Party was a week late to announce how many new members had been signed up during their leadership contest. And I know nobody in this Chamber wants to talk about Ken Lee, but let's talk about Ken Lee for a couple of minutes.

The former chief financial—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine:—officer for the PC Party, and someone who opposed vaccine mandates, had put his name in the running, tried to buy his way into the premier's office. It's important for Manitobans to know that a supporter of Ken Lee was offering people—voters—he was offering voters for the new—the next premier a zero-interest, 100-year loans for the \$20 PC Party membership.

I don't know how he planned on collecting them 100 years in the future. That seems to be a bit—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine:—problematic but, in fact, Deputy Speaker, it was reported that upwards of 4,000 memberships were sold. And what that means is that—*[interjection]*—again, like, one minute ago—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine:—they were bored and yawning, and now there's clapping for an anti-vaxxer who managed to sell 4,000 PC memberships, meaning that the PC Party is infiltrated by a bunch of anti-vaxxers who didn't want to stand up in the midst of a global pandemic.

That's shameful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): So the fixed-election-day law in Manitoba has an interesting history. It was brought in by Gary Doer after it was called for for a long time, I think by the former MLA for this House and now current Member of Parliament, Kevin Lamoureux.

And one day, I remember clearly, Gary Doer brought in the bill and it was called the fixed-election-day bill, and he introduced it, but they didn't actually distribute it. And it was at the beginning of question period, and Kevin Lamoureux ran into the hallway and quickly gathered up some media and declared victory, that he had gotten this fixed-election-day law.

And then later in the day—quite a bit later in the day, the bill actually got distributed. And it was found out there was a whole lot of other stuff in that bill other than just a fixed election day, including the vote tax, and some other anti-democratic sorts of things that were buried into it. And then Mr. Lamoureux had to go out and disavow his support for the actual bill, because he didn't actually read it. So it's got a long, sort of, history. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: And then Mr. Doer spent a fair bit of time explaining that the fixed election bill—date bill wasn't actually a fixed election date, because you couldn't stop the House from dissolving if there was a motion of non-confidence, or if—for a lot of other reasons.

And so then Mr. Doer spent time explaining that, that it—there was a lot of reasons why it wasn't actually a fixed-election-day law. And we've seen that play out. But what's really interesting here is how the NDP seem to be bringing this forward, and I heard the member opposite, the Government House Leader talk about how we need to ensure that the law is followed, that there's one set of rules for one person, and there's another set of rules for another person.

So I was doing a little bit of research, and so first I go to Twitter—not that Twitter should be your primary place for research, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I figured I'd take a look. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: And I came across a Twitter site entitled the Lac du Bonnet NDP. Now, I'm—I think that

it's a valid site. It looked valid. There's a picture of a candidate there I think who's running for the NDP. And six days ago, this particular candidate typed out after a tweet, their last words were: call the election.

Six days ago, the NDP candidate for Lac du Bonnet was demanding that the election law be broken and that it be called. Now maybe that was just, you know, a one-off. Sometimes people make mistakes, right, when—and they regret it later on.

But, no. Actually, three days ago the same Twitter site, the Lac du Bonnet NDP, and this one has now a picture of the MLA for Wolseley and the Lac du Bonnet candidate, the candidate for Radisson, and the candidate for Springfield-Ritchot in the picture on the Twitter site, and the last words on the tweet are call the election, demanding that the election be called three days ago, exactly contrary to this motion.

Now, members might say it's only one candidate, surely that couldn't have happened again. Well, there's somebody by the name of Chris Wiebe, who apparently is running for the NDP nomination—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: I will—I'll get to the comments made by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) shortly, but this particular individual also put out a tweet demanding—and this was only—well, this was actually in July, so this was in the summer—he put out a tweet and said, call a provincial election, demanding that a provincial election be called outside of the election law date, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well, let's go a little further, because maybe, you know, candidates just do candidate things and you never know—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —what the candidates might do.

But then there's an MLA, the MLA for Fort Garry, who put out a tweet. This was in August. August 26th, he put out a tweet and he said, it's time to call an election. In August, he wanted to have an election, exactly against the very motion that the NDP have brought in today—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —wanted to have the election called early—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Now, I know that maybe that could have been a mistake by the member for Fort Garry

(Mr. Wasyliw), but then I continued to look at a few of his other tweets. Most of them are not only erroneous and not edifying, but six days ago, the same member, the MLA for Fort Garry, put out a tweet that says, the election can't come soon enough. He wanted the election called on that day.

But, you know, it may have just been a mistake. It might have just been that individual member. So I figured, surely people wouldn't put this into Hansard if they're going to bring forward an opposition day motion saying that we need to adhere to the set-election-day law, but, you know, there is somebody called the member for Concordia.

The member for Concordia—now, this—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —and I figured—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —I know. I think he knows where this is going, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: But this—in his defence, this was a long time ago. This was a long time ago; this was October 26th. So it was almost a week ago, so, you know, lots of things could have changed.

But a week ago, he stood in this House in his spot right across the way, and he was concluding a speech and he says, I urge the government to call the election and let's hear from the people of Manitoba. And then less than a week later, he sponsors a motion that says, don't call the election.

I hope that the government House leader who said that there's one set of rules for one person, another set of rules for another person, will talk to the Lac du Bonnet candidate—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —talk to the candidate for—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —talk to the candidate for Dawson Trail, go to her colleague and speak to her colleague and say, this isn't—you know, this isn't aligned to our motion. It's exactly opposite of what our motion said.

But I kept researching, I kept researching and I found another quote. This quote goes back to April of this year and there was an individual who stood up in this House on that day and said: We need to have an

election; call an election. That was the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) who demanded that an election be called.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. *[interjection]* Order. *[interjection]* Order. *[interjection]* Tone it down.

Mr. Goertzen: One set of rules for one person, another set of rules for somebody else.

So the Opposition House Leader who sits there now, she could just turn to her right, to the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), who demanded that an election be called, or she could just turn to her left and talk to the Leader of the Official Opposition who demanded that an election be called.

* (15:30)

Or, I've got another option for her, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because on April 22nd of this year, there was an individual who stood in this House and said: Let's go to the polls; call an election. Do you know who that was? It was the Opposition House Leader, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who stood in this very House—*[interjection]*—stood in this very House—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: One set of rules for one person—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —another set of rules for another person. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —April 22nd, 2022. So we now have the Leader of the Official Opposition speaking against their own motion. We now have the member for Concordia speaking against their own motion. We have their candidates in Lac du Bonnet, in Springfield and in Dawson Trail speaking against their own motion. And we have the person who brought the motion who's speaking against their own motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, again, I ask the government House leader: turn to her left and ask her leader why he wants to break the law; turn to her right and ask her colleague from Concordia why he wants to break the law; and then go in front of that mirror and ask herself—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. *[interjection]* Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —why she's demanding—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I'm going to have to call the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) to order. The rambunctiousness is loud and disruptive. And the speech may be received enthusiastically by some but we've got to have some decorum in the House, and I'll call any member that behaves in such a manner to order.

And the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) has the floor.

Mr. Goertzen: To conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll give a little advice to the members opposite. Hansard is not written in invisible ink. It stays there for a long, long time. Twitter is not the modern-day version of an Etch A Sketch, where you just write something then you shake your screen and it all disappears.

These are members who've been calling for an election on Twitter, in the House, on Facebook, on Instagram, on social media. So don't come to this House then and stand up on a soapbox and say there's one set of rules for somebody and another set of rules for somebody else, because if they want to see what that actually looks like, they should all just go to their caucus and look in that great big mirror that they have hanging on the wall, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): We know that that side doesn't respect election rules. That's why we've called this opposition day motion. We want them to tell us if they are going to call an early election or if it's going to be on October 3rd: simple question.

They can stand today and vote with us and say, yes, we will call the election on October 3rd. Let Manitobans know exactly when the election is going to be. Or are they going to do what Brian Pallister did, which, you know, the—they seem to be falling in line day after day, with calling an early election and breaking election rules.

So, you know, the member stands up and says, oh, this side wants to call an election. We're asking: when are you calling it? Are you calling it on October 3rd? That's all this motion is asking for. So it's simple. Yes or no?

The member got up, couldn't even tell us whether that was going to happen. So are they going to break it? Probably, because they don't respect the election law rules here in Manitoba. We know that they think that they operate by another set of rules than other Manitobans do. We see that all the time.

You know, we know that they have no conscience when it comes to breaking election rules, when it comes to lining their pockets with funds to, you know, support their election. They have these big corporate sponsors that they like to make sure that they give, you know, contracts to that support them. We know that they give money out of our province year after year, while Manitobans here are struggling.

They want to know when is the election going to be called. And this opposition day motion calls for that, asks for this government to let Manitobans know: will it be called October 3rd? Yes or no?

You know, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) got up. Did that minister let Manitobans know when the election is going to be called? No. They talked about other things besides that, about the other rules that they operate by that are above Manitobans.

Well, Manitobans are struggling here in our province. You know, they're raising milk rates, they're raising hydro rates, but yet they won't tell us when an election is going to be called.

Manitobans want to know. They've been sending me emails, they've been sending other people—other MLAs on this side. I don't know if they even bother with that side because they know that that side never listens.

They say they listen. They say, oh, we're consulting. We know what their consulting means: we're going to bring a pot of coffee and some doughnuts and, you know, invite three people. And that's their consultation. That's not the way that consultation works and Manitobans are sick and tired of this government operating that way. They want to be heard and they know that this side of the House listens.

They know that we will strengthen health care, something that they've weakened over and over and over. You just have to look at Grace Hospital, you know.

So this government can tell us when is an election going to be called. Is it going to be October 3rd? Yes or no? Simple as that. That Minister of Justice could have got up and said, yes, we'll vote in favour of you. We are going to have an election October 3rd, 2023. That's all we're asking. This is what this motion calls for.

You know, we have a Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) that—her predecessor, Brian Pallister, he operated above the rules. We know that. They know that. Now his 'predecess'—or his protégée is probably going to do

the same thing. They are probably going to call an early election and Manitobans deserve to know when that election's going to happen. They sent Manitobans a year early to the polls.

And the member from St. Johns nailed the nail right on the head: Brian Pallister didn't want to work. He wanted the notoriety of being the premier of Manitoba and that was it. And then he abandoned Manitobans, you know. We, on this side, actually believe that we pushed him over the edge and pushed him out and, you know, he's gone into permanent retirement from politics because he is someone that didn't want to listen to this side, didn't want to listen to the party of the people, those that are listening to Manitobans.

So is this government going to do the same thing that Brian Pallister did? Are they going call an early election or is it going to be on October 3rd? That is the question. That's what this motion is about, but will they answer that? Probably not.

The Premier actually issued a formal caution from Manitoba's—she was issued a formal caution from Manitoba's Commissioner of Elections for breaking election laws. Again, you know, different rules for that side. They think that they can operate and do whatever they want. It resulted in a benefit to a candidate, and I don't believe that it was appropriate, you know. We have a \$5,000 candidate on that side that, you know, bought and paid for.

When is this election going to be called? We want to know. Manitobans want to know. And again, you know, this is about accountability. This is about letting Manitobans know when they're going to go to the polls. Why can't this government let Manitobans know a simple question?

The Premier went in front of the media and said, well, you know, it'll be called by October 3rd. Well, that's pretty vague. Is it going to be called in May? Is it going to be called in June? Is it going to be called in July? Is it going to be called in August? Or is it going to go in line with the election rules and be called on October 3rd? But probably not because again, this government seems to operate by their own rules above any others.

We have a Premier who forgot to, you know, declare \$31 million in real estate—\$31 million. And this is who is running our government.

So, you know, are they going to call an election? Maybe she's going to forget to call an election like she forgot to file the \$31 million. Who knows? Going to

leave the Manitobans holding the bag for an election.
[interjection]

And, you know, the member from Lac du Bonnet is heckling over there, and that member can get up and—[interjection]—that member can get up and tell us, is an election going to be called October 3rd, 2023? That member probably doesn't even know. That member probably—he sits at the Cabinet table, but probably is maybe not privy to that, who knows? But that member can get up, if he knows, and tell us whether an election's going to be called early or whether it's going to be called on October 3rd.

So again, you know, it's—we have a Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) who refuses to follow rules. It's always been a different set of rules for that side. But when it comes to this side, we want to know when the election is going to be called.

We want to be able to tell those constituents who have been calling our office, who have been emailing our office—some of their constituents on that side, because they don't even bother calling them because they don't do work on that side. They don't work weekends. They have a Premier who, we know, their calendar was void of anything to do. So when is the election going to be called? Is it going to be called on the weekend when they're not working? Huh, I don't know. But who knows?

* (15:40)

Again, they don't follow their own rules, and it stipulates that it has to be called on October 3rd, 2023. But, you know, there's some speculation and, you know, members opposite, you know, are probably speculating, too, wondering hmm, is it going to be called early?

I know members opposite are dropping off like flies. I'm not running, I'm not running again; we don't know how many more are not going to be running on that side. I wouldn't want to be running with that crew, either, because you know what—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —they don't operate the way Manitobans want a government to operate. They want a government that's going to stick to rules, which are election rules, which is October 3rd, 2023. They want a government that cuts health care continually and lies to them and says that—or sorry, I apologize for that—misleads Manitobans in saying that they're investing when we know that health care is even worse under this government.

So, Manitobans want to know, when is this government going to be out? When can they vote them out? So, that is the question. That's what this opposition day motion is about.

And again, the Justice Minister got up, failed to answer anything that had to do with the election, you know, was vague on, like, maybe they don't know.

But, you know, I know that he makes a lot of decisions on that side, so he probably knows when it is but is kind of keeping tight-lipped over there. We saw that this week, you know, flip-flopped, we'll support and then we won't support.

So, are we supporting an election in line with the law for October 3rd, or are we calling an early election? That is the question. And again, you know, members opposite can get up and tell us that if they know that. Do they even know that? Are they going to stand with their Premier when they break the election law and say yes, let's call an early election.

But you know what, it's actually not—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —advantageous to that side to call an early election, Deputy Premier, because they—they're way behind in the polls, and they're sinking even further and further and further into the—like, yes, they're going to be behind the Liberals pretty soon.
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Smith: Anyway, again—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —I don't know how many more are going to leave on that side, but again, they should stick to the election rules. Tell Manitobans when we're going to the polls and quit playing games.

October 3rd, 2023, or not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Got a couple of tough performances to follow there, particularly the member from Steinbach with his intense Internet research. And clearly that's a mainstay of his party is—that's how they do their research. As we heard through the pandemic, that's how they did their research.

So, you know, the whole point of this is to really get them to give a straight answer for a change. And I realize it's very hard for them to give a straight answer

because they don't like giving straight answers, because somebody might do some Internet research on them and find out that they said something and, you know, it's kind of a shame.

The question is, when are they going to call the election? It's a pretty straightforward question. I mean, we have a fixed-election-date law that the previous premier felt quite comfortable violating. We have a current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) who danced rather unimply around the question and wouldn't give a straight answer.

We have the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) who stands up and, full of much bluster and—you know, I think he missed his calling, he probably should have been an actor in some cheap, low-budget theatrical—because his overacting is really to the extreme, but—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —you know, to each his own, I guess.

So, the question is—and, you know, he's looked up a lot of people's Twitter feeds to see what they said, and really, what they're saying is quit playing around. Quit playing games. Tell us when the election is going to be. If you're going to play these games for the next two months, three months, six months, quit it. If you want to call an early election, go ahead, break the law now and call it. If you want to keep playing silly games, which is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —apparently what they really want to do—what they really want to do is to keep playing silly games while they try and figure out some way that they think they can win the next election.

And they're hoping that some magical thing will appear on the horizon, and they're hoping it'll be sooner rather than later because I'm sure they're scared to death that the later they go before they call an election, not only will they be lower than the Liberals, they'll be right off the face of the political map.

So what possible reason would the Premier, Government House Leader, MLAs have for not committing to following the fixed election late—date as it's set for October? Well, will the economy get worse or better? Will inflation go higher or lower? Will they have more health-care disasters to answer for the longer they wait, which, by the way, the health-care disasters are disasters of their own making.

Speaking of the member of—from Steinbach, he was the master of that disaster. He was the original Health minister in 2016 that designed the disaster that health care's become.

But I'll give him credit. He is smarter than some of his colleagues because he dumped that steaming pile into a different member's lap to try and deal with. That member said, don't worry, we got it, when clearly they didn't. That member passed it off to then the current Premier who, during her term as Health minister, was unremarkable, to say the least.

And now we have another Health minister who has continued to follow the member from Steinbach's game plan, from when he was the minister, to destroy health care. And they stand up every day and say, oh, misinformation; here's how much money we're spending. Well, I can tell you, coming from the North, that health care now is an endangered species.

So why would they want to go earlier? Well, because they can't hire a doctor, they can't hire a nurse, they can't hire an ambulance attendant, they can't hire cleaning staff because it so destroyed health care in the North that they may want to go early before more of these chickens come home to roost on the things that this government has destroyed in this province.

I know, certainly people in the North aren't going to be fooled by them all of a sudden running around like springtime, throwing money left, right and centre—well, pretending to throw money. Let's face it, they're not really going to throw that money. They're big on making a lot of announcements about what they're going to do, but they're not so big on actually doing it.

So the question is, really—and they have the opportunity here today to clear up any confusion, to answer the question once and for all: Are they going to follow the fixed election date, which would be October 3rd, 2023? It's a pretty simple question to answer. I don't know why we spend the day debating it. Well, I do know why we spend the day debating it, because this government, this Premier refused to answer the question.

They refused to answer the simple question: Will they follow the fixed election date? Will they go to the polls on October 3rd, 2023, or will they give Manitoba a Christmas present they didn't want, although, maybe Manitobans do want that Christmas present and have them call an early election so that they can get rid of this bunch sooner rather than later before they have a

chance to do any more damage to the province of Manitoba.

So the question is really simple because we try and keep the questions simple so that they're not struggling to come up with an answer. But even—doesn't matter how simple the questions are, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The answers seem to elude this bunch across the way.

* (15:50)

Follow the fixed election date or not? Yes or no? You know, that's pretty simple, but we listen to the member from Steinbach with all his bluster and carrying on—never did answer the question, though, did he? He told us about his ability to do Internet research, although I suspect he didn't do it. He probably had assigned some—*[interjection]*

Well, the member from Steinbach says he did. Imagine the Minister of Justice, the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), the supposed brains of that operation, got nothing better to do with his time than play games on Twitter. Wow, that's quite amazing. It's really quite amazing.

So, you know, the member from Steinbach, the Government House Leader had the opportunity to answer the question once and for all, shut us down—we wait a minute—we've got nothing more to say because he answered the question—they're going to follow the law. They're going to make sure that the election is October 3rd, 2023—or no.

Much like everything else with the PC Party, we don't care about the law; we're going to do what's in our best interest, which is how they conduct themselves. We've seen that time and time again. Certainly, the former premier decided to call an early election because he thought it was in his best interest, which is why fixed election laws came into being in the first place, to try and take some of that political gamesmanship out of the system.

But PCs being PCs don't believe that they have to follow the same rules as the rest of the world. And, certainly, we've seen that with this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) who doesn't follow conflict-of-interest rules, private email addresses, any number of other questionable practices during their leadership campaign.

So, why won't they answer the question? I mean, the press asked the Premier point blank and she danced all around the place, wouldn't give an answer. We brought forward this opposition day motion to

provide the government, to provide the Premier, the opportunity to provide the answer. Follow the fixed-election-date law, call the election for October 3rd, 2023, or keep playing around, keep Manitobans wondering will they have to go to the polls in January? Will they be going to the polls in February? Will they be going to the polls in March? Will the farmers have to take time out of seeding to go in May?

Who knows? Whatever game this government, these members, think will bring them the most benefit, that's the game they're going to play. Just tell us: When's the election going to be? Give us a date. Do it today—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I have worked on a few elections before there were fixed-date election laws, when there weren't any rules.

I do remember, I think it was April 2007, when then-premier Gary Doer stood with Stephen Harper and made an announcement about the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We knew that there was an election going to be called, but I didn't think anyone would actually make an announcement and call an election that same day. But it did happen.

Our campaign launch was outside the Grace Hospital—their health care was a disaster. But I do want to just mention when we're talking about the previous commitments of the members of this government when it comes to fixed-date or set-date election laws. The current Premier brought forward bill 4 during the First Session of the 40th Legislature in 2016 to establish a standard 28-day election period, fixed-date general election periods.

And I'll just quote, October 4th, 2016, the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), who was then minister of Infrastructure, said: This proposed legislation establishes a 28-day election period for a fixed—I should say, a set date for a general election. The NDP always like to have fixed elections. I prefer to use the term set election dates. But this is changing from a variable of 29 to 35 days, and by doing this it means you have a standard 28-day election period. It allows all candidates, no matter what party, no matter whether they're affiliated with a party or whether they're independent, as long as they meet Elections Manitoba criteria to become a candidate, it puts an amount of fairness back into it because they can then budget. They can not only budget their campaign funds, they can budget their time and budget to be able to become candidates and to run as candidates in the

election. And the more candidates we have, the better elections and the more democracy is served in Manitoba.

My colleague, the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé), said: Today, under the new Progressive Conservative government, we uphold our election commitment to fix election dates in the respect of public interest. The choice is to support those professional recommendations and make what's right for the people of Manitoba.

The member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), who's now a minister, said: Today, under the new progressive government—Conservative government, we are standing by our commitment to fix election dates in respect of the public interest.

The member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin), who was then the member for Morris, said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and put a few brief words on the record in relation to bill 4, The Elections Amendment Act. Any opportunity that we have, as a Legislature, to improve accountability, to approve transparency and, more importantly, to improve fairness when it comes to elections in the province of Manitoba is something I think all members of this Chamber would be willing to endorse and put positive comments on the record.

Wise words indeed, I would say.

Now, in the last election—2019—it was called in the middle of summer, more than a year early. And it also had one of the worst turnouts in any election in decades. In terms of that election, my party received something like 60 or 70 thousand votes; the NDP received about twice that; the PCs received about three times that. But the largest group by far—about five times as that—were the people who didn't vote at all.

We had far more people who didn't vote at all than every single person combined who voted to elect the Progressive Conservatives. In fact, I think it may have been more than the Progressive Conservatives—the vote for the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP put together.

And no one should be happy about poor voter turnout. Nobody should be happy about unengaged voters, or the fact that—or any of the many reasons why people may not vote, including the sense that they don't feel informed, that they're frustrated, or that they haven't actually had a chance—an opportunity to be—to engage with politicians.

And, I mean, I think I agree very much with the opposition's concerns on this, simply because there are so many concerns about democracy and rights and rule of law right now; and that includes the way we run elections. Democracy is—you know, it's under attack in Canada and around the world. People are losing faith in democracy and its 'capacity' to actually deliver because, sometimes, the people who are in charge won't play by the rules.

And we see people attacking the credibility of elections as a way to deny people the right to vote. We're seeing that in the US. I mean, we saw what was in—effectively a coup, and an attempt to force the vice-president to overturn the legal results of the election in the US. That's horrific.

A similar thing is happening in Brazil right now, where a progressive leader won, beating Bolsonaro—Lula has beaten Bolsonaro but Bolsonaro is refusing to concede, and you've got truckers blocking access so that they can't actually get it changed.

So—and it's also worth saying: there are official attempts—I mean, here in Canada, there was the current leader of the Conservative Party of Canada brought forward a bill bent—built around—or, designed around voter ID, which would have stripped away the vote of 500,000 people in Canada, including a number of people who are seniors who have difficulty because they've got disabilities.

That's the track record. I mean—and this is about denying people the right to vote and—in rolling back time.

When people talk about the results of the 2016 election in the US, people will argue about campaigns, but one of the most important facts about that election, it was the first election in 50 years in the US to be fought without the protection of the Voting Rights Act. That was lost; the Supreme Court stripped millions of African-Americans of the right to vote and stripped states of the capacity to make sure that those people had—and that unquestionably, it had a difference of something like 3 million votes in the US.

Because—we have to recognize that access to the vote is one of the most precious things we have. It is guaranteed in the Canadian Constitution. It was only guaranteed in the Canadian Constitution as of 1982. And it's not as if—look, parties in Manitoba or Canada, we've all—every party has had some sort of, I would say, scandal involving shenanigans—let's say shenanigans to be polite—when it comes to either election financing or dirty tricks.

But the importance of having a fixed-date election, or at least being allowed to prepare—I'm not going to defend it on the basis of what's good for parties. It's about what's good for democracy and what's good for Manitobans.

It's good for Manitobans because, if all candidates have a chance to get out and see and talk with as many people as possible, that is good for democracy. It's good for Manitobans, and it's good for the parties, not from their—from their capacity to actually reach out and learn and actually hear and listen on the ground to what's happening in Manitoba, you know.

* (16:00)

And I'll say—look, Billy Bragg once said, you know, the biggest problem is not conservatives or even far-right media; it's our own mistaken conviction that no one cares and everyone is the same and that nothing is never going to change.

That these are internal things that we have—and these are the sort of things that when you breed 'cynicism' around elections and breed 'cynicism' around democracy, you end up basically telling people to stay home, because you're sending a message that their vote won't count. And that's—that is, frankly, toxic to democracy.

I've always believed that everyone's vote counts. It doesn't—and whether you win or lose, the fact is that you're expressing your opinion about whether—about your belief in that individual. The fact that maybe they didn't get all the way does not negate the fact that you voted for them. It does not negate the fact that you voted for them and somebody else, because it was an honest expression—one hopes—of who you want to see and want to represent you and the kind of community you want to live in.

And to—every single one of us knows there's more to politics than the narrow band of what gets reported in question period or the work we do in the community, the work we do at the door, the work we do in this building, is much more. And there's much more to democracy and the cover of elections that does not engage with ideas. We talk a lot about scandals and polls, when voters want to feel heard. And so, having a fixed-date election is about allowing voters to feel heard to the greatest extent possible.

And we—look, we live in a deeply unequal society. That's a reality. But we recognize we have to set aside those inequalities at certain times and treat people as equally in court, as a matter of justice, and

at the ballot box, when everyone is defined by their rights as a citizen.

And the story of progress is usually the story of people being fully recognized as persons under the law. The tragedy in—of the past is when we fail to recognize people as persons under the law, or as full human beings. And progress is when we recognize and allow those people to have the vote, or they actually are finally recognized as having the votes—the rights they should have had all along. And I said, the right to vote is protected under the Canadian constitution. That only happened 40 years ago.

And campaigning, as I said, it's an opportunity to engage with Manitobans in a meaningful way. That takes time. Not just by going by first impressions or a viral video or a tweet or an attack ad, but by building community or by building a movement, which is what each of us in each of our parties is trying to do.

So this is why it's a thing that's—it's a—if we're going to be serious about fairness, and if we're going to be serious about free and fair elections, we need to stick to the law and respect it.

Thank you very much.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): You know, I know we're having a little bit of fun in the room today about this opposition day motion, but there is some seriousness to this.

I mean, when I am in my constituency office and I'm meeting with different folks, like—last week, I was in my office meeting with some home-care workers from the WRHA, and they listed out so many issues that they've been having. And I've had the honour and privilege to be able to raise their concerns here in this House during question period.

You know, at the end of those meetings that I keep having with various home-care workers throughout the province, you know, at the end, you know, they always say: well, when is the next election, anyway? You know, they really do want to know.

And I tell them, well, there is a fixed election date of October 3rd, 2023, but the truth is is we don't know if this PC government is going to adhere to the law or not, so we just have to get ready because we don't know when that date is.

I was meeting with another constituent. This person runs a group home, and she and her family help folks with learning disabilities—intellectual disabilities, rather. And, you know, they have about five clients that they serve in their home with feeding and

housing them and providing different kinds of entertainment for them.

And this family, it's—this—community assisted living funds are so under-resourced, they can barely make ends meet to even feed themselves and these individuals who live with them.

And they're asking me, what can I do to try to help them? And I say, well, you know, we can try to raise your concerns to the government; we can write some letters to them.

And you know, after detailing all these challenges that they're having, again, then they ask me at the end, but when is the next election? Is it going to be next year, is it this year? Because you know, most people aren't, you know, up to speed just like us, you know, with what's going on in politics in—here in Manitoba; most people are just going about their own days and weeks trying to get by.

And I said, well, it's October 3, 2023, which is next year; that's the fixed election date. But again, we don't know because the government can call it anytime, just like they did in 2019 when the former premier Brian Pallister called the election over a year early.

And so, there is a lot of seriousness. There are a lot of people, there are a lot of Manitobans, that are hanging on, trying to get by and hoping for a change in government, hoping for a government that will prioritize their needs, and waiting for this election. It's not that we need it to come earlier—although there are many folks that do and have expressed that—but we would just like to know when is it going to be, if they're not going to be—if the PCs are not going to be abiding by the fixed election date.

You know, fixed election dates prevent governments from calling snap elections for short-term political advantage. They level the playing field for all parties, and the rules are clear for everybody. That was from former premier Stephen Harper, when their government instituted fixed-election-date law at the federal level. But then in 2008, Canadians watched as the Prime Minister Harper broke his own law and called an early election.

So, there's a lot of disenchantment, cynicism, towards politicians like us because we keep—or, the governments keep breaking the laws that they're instituting themselves, and that's not a good thing at all.

And, you know, we're just bringing this opposition day motion to give the government of the day a

chance to prove—and they can agree. They can vote yes and clearly state their intention that they are going to be adhering by the fixed-election-date law—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Notre Dame has the floor. Order, please.

Member for Notre Dame, you do have the floor. You can keep going.

MLA Marcelino: There are other jurisdictions that are doing, currently, a better job than we are right now, of this system of fixed election dates that aren't actually being followed.

If you take a look at the United Kingdom, there is a mechanism that they're using there within their fixed election rules, where the government there can call an early election only if they lose a confidence vote or if there is a supermajority of MPs representing two-thirds of the seats in the Commons and they agree to an early vote.

And we also have, in our midst, a very distinguished professor emeritus here in political studies at the University of Manitoba, Professor Paul Thomas, who has suggested to, I think, you know, multiple parties here, some suggestions for how to amend fixed—this fixed-date election law.

He suggested that, because early election calls are illegal, there's no real way for the courts to, you know, put their oar in, because they will resist being dragged into settling partisan disputes.

But then when governments call early elections, again it deepens citizen cynicism towards the political process, and the Governor General and the lieutenant general get drawn into or get entangled into the political fray, and that's not good for the institution.

So, some recommendations that he provided was to require that the Legislature—our Manitoba Legislature—vote explicitly in favour of an early election, requiring a simple or an extraordinary majority of the members of the Legislature to debate for a minimum requirement of three days, for the public to gain some understanding of whether or not an early election is truly justified.

* (16:10)

And so, with those few words, I just wanted to add to the record that there are some other jurisdictions that are doing a better job of how we're doing it today. There are, you know, eminent minds such as Professor Thomas, who has made some suggestions to

improve the way our electoral processes are currently happening and those are some things that we should consider.

And again, we're bringing this opposition day motion to get some clarity from this government so that we can also provide that clarity to our constituents about what is going to be happening this year with election or not.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I want to thank my colleague, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), for bringing this motion forward because this is an important motion due to the very fact that we've just come out of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, Deputy Speaker, one that certainly requires once-in-a-lifetime measures, once-in-a-lifetime pieces in place that governments would do, so that people can have a more predictable way out of something like the pandemic.

Right now, what we're seeing in a lot of our constituency offices are people that are having difficulty accessing government services and, you know, they are distracted, Deputy Speaker, by trying to make it through the day. Families are really concerned not only about the cost of living; they're also concerned about the predictability of their government and what they're going to do.

We have fixed-election-date laws and they're important. And a lot of the pieces that cause low voter turnout like we have seen in the past number of elections are a cynicism towards the people that are governing our citizens, and we have to do our very best to guard against that.

In a recent Ontario provincial election, 40 per cent voter turnout. That is—that's a shocking number. That doesn't—how does anybody govern legitimately with a 40 per cent voter turnout? And that is in a large part because of calling elections early we have these situations.

Even when election isn't called early, Deputy Speaker, we have low voter turnout phenomena happening because people are really rightly focused on trying to make it through their day-to-day lives. They're focused on ensuring that their government is providing a health-care system that is stable, that is providing a school and education system that is stable, one that they can rely on.

Right now, we're not seeing that. And it's leading and building to cynicism.

This past election in—with the City of Winnipeg, we had a 37 per cent voter turnout. And that was with a fixed election date. By having this motion in place, Deputy Speaker, this gives us the opportunity to talk about how important it is to vote so that we can have legitimacy to our democracy. It will give us time to get out there, to get at the doors and talk about how important it is to be a democratic citizen.

Democracy isn't just simply a noun, Deputy Speaker, and it's a verb. It is something that you do. When you are being democratic, you are going to the voting polls. When you're being democratic, you are learning about what a government is doing instead of being distracted by, really, their day-to-day concerns. And this is something that we can do through the support of this opposition day motion, ensure that people have a chance to take a look at what's going and make informed choices.

I know this is difficult to get through, Deputy Speaker, but I'll try to do my best to keep everybody alive and paying attention to this very important debate this afternoon. I see the member from—I don't know, I forget, I forget the actual constituency—

Some Honourable Members: Red River North.

Mr. Altomare: Red River North. And you know what, I will say the member from Red River North, I do have friends in that 'constit'—and I can't believe that I actually forgot the name of that constituency, and I apologize to that member for doing that.

But in all seriousness, another important piece to recall—to remember here, Deputy Speaker, is we can't find ourselves playing into this—to cynicism that's beginning to creep into our government here—into our system of government, and we have to do our very best to guard against that.

In speaking to constituents, they're not—they're rightly concerned right now with this government and what they're providing for Manitobans. They see a bit of a disconnect between the reality of their everyday lives and what's being actually provided for them or the services that are being rendered. And we kind of get a bit of a—at least, when we're sitting here in this House, we only—we're in this bubble.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

But when we get out—get out like we will next in 'constit' week, we can hear what our constituents are telling us and what are—saying is. And what they need

right now is predictability, Madam Speaker—and welcome back to the Chair—because this is something that coming—*[interjection]*

Well? Can I not say that? Can I say Madam Speaker? *[interjection]* Oh. Okay, got you. That's the second time. Thank you for that direction.

I do want to ensure, at least with my constituents, that we're doing our very best within that fixed-date framework for an election.

So, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I'll cede the floor to other colleagues who want to speak in support of this motion.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): It's my pleasure to speak to this debate and about this opposition day motion that says that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba calls on the provincial government to respect and follow the provisions of The Elections Act and confirm the next general election will take place on October 3rd, 2023.

So, how I understand this is that this motion is not telling the government what to do, but this motion is simply talking about the transparency and accountability, because the PC government is the one who is on driving seat now.

So, the people riding a bus, they would look at the driver to see where that bus stops, how it goes, what are the risks and so on. So the problem here is that the driver is not responsible enough or transparent enough or honest enough to tell the stakeholders, which is passengers in that case and Manitobans in this case, that what they plan to do.

When somebody is voted to power, that means they are the voice of the people. They are the representative of the people who voted them in, and they are accountable and responsible to answer the questions that those people who voted you into power, they're asking.

But this government lacks clarity on this question. They can simply say that the next election would be on October 3rd, 2023. Yes or no? If they plan to announce the election early, they can announce that, as well. But they are neither this way nor that way. Why is that?

We need to look at what's happening in the bus. How confident is the driver? Things are not right there because when we look at that caucus, many of them, they're deciding to not run in the next election. I don't know why. They might know. And people start guessing why they are not running again.

And if you just think about a few people starting from the previous premier, Brian Pallister, simply quit. And then the member for Kirkfield, Scott Fielding, resigned.

* (16:20)

And then I've heard that the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Smook) is not running again and the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler)—I used to be his critic—he is not coming back to the political system again.

And then the member from Midland decided not to run. And then the member from McPhillips thought to run for Midland and something happened that now, he is in no man's land; Midland, this land, that land, no land. I don't know what's happening. They might think of running from the same riding, McPhillips, that—the riding that they ran away from.

So, things are not all right.

So, I think that the leader is confused here. That's why she's not able to tell Manitobans that what her plan is. But to be honest, these decisions are important decisions. And when we sign up for public office, especially politics, we need to be accountable. We sign up for accountability. We sign up for transparency. We sign up for honesty.

And these decisions are so much important that they have an impact on lives of the people of Manitoba. How? I would quote an example because I've been working on the Ag file for so many years now.

The people who are leasing Crown land, they are upset because of the timing, because of the lack of clarity on the part of this government. They had plans to change Crown land lease regulations. Everything was ready, but they did not disclose to Manitobans or the Crown land ranchers that this is going to happen after—bold and underlined—after the election.

So, once they got into office, they thought of announcing that decision. And that decision has impacted so many ranchers. I have met hundreds of them. No proper consultation was done. And just think of somebody who has been tilling that land for 45 years, improving that land, putting dugouts there and having fences around those fields, is now being told that you're kicked out because during the auction process, somebody else took that land.

So, what about their retirement plan? What about the blood and sweat they invested in that land?

Talk about the unit transfers. Those people who planned 45 years back that when they planned to retire they will sell their piece of land along with the Crown land lease so that there are buyers for that.

And now that unit transfer is no more available. It's about having served in a department for 45 years, and on the day of your retirement, someone tells you there's no pension.

How does that sound? I have met those people, and those people, they are very, very upset with this government. And some of them have said this so clearly, that: To tell you the truth, I have been supporting PCs all my life; this is going to change now. That won't be the case anymore because they feel betrayed. They feel deceived.

So, Madam Speaker, there are rules. The government can call the election early. It's in the rules, but it's up to the person on the driving seat to use or abuse the rules.

There are so many tools that we are provided with. Social media: you can use it; you can abuse it. We have weapons, ammunition: we can use it; we can abuse it. Even food: we can use it; we can abuse it. And the power: we must use it, not abuse it.

So, in this situation, it seems like the abuse of power towards political benefits of your own party. Rules are in place because of a reason. For any situation that demands that elections should be called early, that's the situation where you use these rules but when you think that, hey, this is an opportunity—if we called an election right now, we could win.

But you know, Madam Speaker, the things which are not durable; they're not durable. They would fall apart. How long can you expect them to be usable?

So, what I think is this government needs to do the right thing, tell Manitobans what their intention is: do they plan to call an early election or the election is going to be on the set date, which is October 3rd, 2023?

Because they need to be accountable, they need to be honest, they need to be transparent. But Manitobans know that they are not. Manitobans know that they are not ready to tell the truth to the people who voted them into power.

So I would say this is not the right use of power. It sounds like abuse of power. I would, once again, request them to tell Manitobans what their plan is.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member—oh, the honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Much as we would like to have a provincial election as soon as possible so we could have a Liberal government sooner, we believe that there is legislation which has set a fixed date, that that was the intent of the legislation—that, in this case, it be October 3rd, 2023, and that that's when we should have the election.

We had the debate previously in this Chamber about having or not having a fixed election date, a set election date, and it was thoroughly debated. There was a reason for having a set election date. There was a feeling that it will provide for voters, the ability to plan; for parties, the ability to plan better; and Elections Manitoba, the ability to plan better, with the result that, for Manitobans, we would have the best possible government.

And that government wouldn't be based on whether an existing government could sneak in an early election if they wanted. It would be based on having an election date that everybody would know about, that people who were planning to note—vote or participate would be able to arrange their schedules so that they're going to be here for the election and able to participate as much as they would like.

The—there are advantages for parties in having—knowing when the date is; having candidates prepared, having platforms prepared and all these sorts of things. And the better that each party can do, the better competitive an election we will have and the better likelihood we will have a good government following that.

We've, of course, all seen the problems that have happened with the current government and the current problems that happened with the NDP government. And that's, of course, why we believe that a Liberal government is clearly what's needed at this time.

Now, what is surprising to me is that the NDP have put—of all the issues they could have put on the table for their opposition motion, they chose this election date issue. It should have been already confirmed that the election date was going to be on the—October the 3rd.

* (16:30)

And what we really should be debating is the mess that the current state of health care is in, and the

NDP should've been putting forward, in this opposition day motion, the ideas they have for changing, for improving, health care.

Clearly—clearly—there is a desperate need. I, certainly, as an MLA, am getting emails and phone calls every day about the terrible condition in—people who are having to go to emergency rooms. I got a call yesterday, 80-some-year-old gentleman who has been a lifelong contributor to Manitoba, and he had to get an MRI scan. Well, you'd think that it would be able to schedule it quickly. But, in fact, he was told, no, no, we can't schedule it; you have to come into an emergency room, and then we can get you an MRI scan.

And so, he went in to look around at the—we know, what the wait-lists were and picked the hospital with the shortest wait-list and with an MRI scanner in it. And then he went there, and when he got there, they said, oh, oh, yes, but our wait time doesn't actually start when you arrive. It actually starts when you're triaged, and it might take an hour or two to triage you.

And so, he was flabbergasted that the—what he had been told on the board, or on the web, was not very accurate, because of this waiting time for triage being added on.

And, you know, for a gentleman who's in a tremendous amount of pain, who is, you know, anxious, doesn't want to spend a lot of time sitting in a cramped emergency room where he may more likely pick up COVID or other problems than he would in other locations, you know, it is—I won't repeat some of the words that were told to me about how horrible the health-care system is in treating people inappropriately and poorly and making their pain, their anxiety, worse instead of better.

It can be added on that, you know, he had been waiting for a month to get some tests done to know where he was, and in that period he had not had a physician sit him down and tell him, you know, what exactly was going on, what the procedure was going to be, what the results were so far.

I mean, it was really disheartening to go through this sort of experience. And, as I said, the language that was used was not pleasant and not pleasant toward the health-care system. We clearly need to be improving the health-care system. We need to be focused on making sure that people can get the care they need, when they need it, quickly, instead of having to wait hours and hours.

I got another call yesterday and again this morning from a fellow who lives near St. Boniface.

But when he went there he said it was so chaotic that he ended up going to the Health Sciences Centre, and he had to wait 13 hours there, but it wasn't quite as chaotic as St. Boniface, apparently.

This is what people are facing, people who have broken limbs, people who have a lot of pain, people who are trying to get the best care that they should be getting. And here, they're going through turmoil in order to try and get the care that they should be getting easily, quickly and of high quality.

So, these are the sorts of things that we really should have been talking about here. We have today and tomorrow for this session. And the state of health care is unquestionably the biggest issue that we are facing today, and it is a legacy of poor NDP and PC management. And we saw today, we had people from Diabetes Canada visiting with us. And we sat down with them and we looked at, you know, what's happened in the last 25 years, since diabetes was declared an epidemic in 1996.

And the line, in terms of the number of people with diabetes, just goes straight up and it doesn't change, whether you've got a PC or an NDP government. It just goes straight up. And it really is a mark of how poor the approach to preventing and helping people with diabetes has been and continues to be.

That line was exactly the same under the Conservatives and exactly the same under the NDP. In the same slope, there wasn't a difference between the two of them. And this is the sort of thing that we should be talking about. We need to be getting in the game in terms of having a better approach to diabetes.

Madam Speaker, there is much, much more that I can say, and much more that needs to be done, including making sure that the access to insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors is not restricted to those less than 25, but there should be public funding all the way up to seniors.

Thank you.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): When asked this fall if—about if she made a decision to call an early election, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) did not rule it out, saying I will commit to having an election on or before that date. Obviously.

She went on to say there's lots of speculation—different things out there, that are being said, but that's a decision we'll make as a government moving forward.

Madam Speaker, it's really disappointing how indecisive this Premier has been on many issues. But

here's another example of that indecision and, really, kind of acting coy and playing games with Manitobans about, you know, information they deserve to have.

And I want to address the previous speaker's remarks. The member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) feels that this isn't an important issue for debate today. He said that instead we should be debating health care. So, I just want to remind the member for River Heights that every single day since we have been in this session of the Legislature, every day, the Manitoba NDP caucus fights for health care. We will continue to fight for health care.

I certainly understand why this is an issue of urgency for him because, simply, as a Manitoban, I'm sure he's desperate for the NDP to get into government, for that election to happen sooner than later, so we can actually begin to fix health care in this province.

But we also can talk about multiple things in this House. And so, today, I want to talk about—a little bit about why fixed election—why a set election date matters to Manitobans.

One of the experiences that I had running for election in 2019 was just the conversations at the door with so many people who just simply were not prepared for an election. It was a bit of a mess because it was running at the same time as the federal election. It felt like five minutes earlier we just had a municipal election.

Obviously, this builds cynicism and confusion in the electorate. I have been told many times that Conservative parties do do better when there's lower voter turnout, so I understand the rationale. But it's a really 'cynis'—can't say that word—it's a lot of cynicism to decide that—to just play with the election date in order to have lower voter turnout. It's a blow to democracy, actually.

But it's not just the voters. I mean, it's the key thing about the election. It obviously is voters knowing about it, knowing that there's going to be an election, preparing for it. But it's the impact throughout society and the culture.

* (16:40)

You know, my experience working at—in a community service, when there's an unexpected election call, it completely changes people's expectations about funding promises and commitments that have been made to organizations. In some cases, if organizations have funding from the Province, they actually

can't even advertise or make announcements about their programs or things that citizens would need to know about.

When there's a sudden election call, constituency offices close down and community members who rely on support from those offices suddenly can't turn to that anymore.

So, by a surprise election call, by not letting citizens know about it, you know, that's certainly something that this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) could do. She could decide—like, I know that that side of the House really doesn't want to run during summer elections; they want to be able to get away. But if they make that decision that they want to get it out of the way by June, just let us know now. Let this—organizations that rely on this information know now. Let folks know that there's going to be potential changes in how things are run in the province in a much shorter time than they're expecting.

So, I think I just want to add to that, that being an MLA is an incredible privilege. I know from the last three years it's the greatest privilege of my life. And I understand the responsibility that comes with it.

And so, I think it's important that we take that responsibility seriously, that part of that responsibility is being open and transparent with the electorate, understanding that not a single person is in this space because we got here by ourselves. We were voted into this space. We were selected by our communities to be here, and we deserve to give them straightforward information so that they know when the next election is and they know what to expect and can plan for it.

So, I call on the Premier and I call on her party to take that job seriously, to take that communication seriously, to show Manitobans that they actually do respect The Elections Act and that they're not above the law—that instead of continuing to break Elections Manitoba laws, that they will, in this case, strive to uphold the provisions of the Elections Act and confirm the next general election will take place on October 3rd, 2023.

Thank you for your time, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Hate to say it, Madam Speaker, but I think we—we've kind of witnessed a waste of an afternoon. Fear, division, intimidation, conflict—and I'm just talking about, you know, this—the NDP caucus meetings.

No, Madam Speaker—[interjection]—well, it didn't take long for the heckles to come.

I—you know, I just want to show due respect for all the research that was done by my colleague and his staff, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), on just exposing the complete hypocrisy of the NDP front bench. You know, it's—they're so disconnected from themselves, in a sense, and you see that by the kind of words that they'll say one day and then they'll say something another day. I think it's been said that they're talking out of their—the two sides of their mouth, I think, would be the polite way to express where they're talking from.

But, just to remind everybody, if you've missed some of the early commentary, you know, when I first started doing my own research, I focused mostly on Twitter—I'm not a big Hansard researcher—and I noticed that we have a candidate for Dawson Trail who said—what was it? Just call a provincial election. A candidate for Lac du Bonnet who said, call the election. A candidate for Kirkfield Park, of all places. Kirkfield Park, if I understand correctly—I mean, legislatively—they're pretty much guaranteed to be calling an election in Kirkfield Park in the next few weeks.

And again, the NDP candidate in each of these ridings—the NDP candidate from Dawson Trail, the NDP candidate for Lac du Bonnet and, of all things, the NDP candidate for Kirkfield Park—saying call a provincial election ASAP. So, that's the message of the NDP candidates.

Now, none of them are sitting MLAs.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: None of them are sitting MLAs, so I can understand that, you know, there might be some claim that perhaps the caucus here might stand apart from their—of their candidates and there might be some firm talking-to.

But apparently not because, you know, even today, in this Chamber, from the loge, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) said, call the election. He wants one today. What he's really saying, by the testimony of his own members, is he wants to break the law. And all of you just sit there and think it's okay for him to say that.

You should know better. You should be looking for a united message.

And if the members in the backbench of the—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —NDP—and the members on the backbench of the NDP know that I respect them probably more than—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —the front bench does. And that's been made clear time and time again, and it's being made clear again today, that there is no respect for the opinions of the backbench of the NDP. Because they've said today that to call an early election would be disrespectful to Manitobans, would be unconscionable. And yet, their own members, their own leaders, say call an election as soon as possible.

So I was—really, I was wrestling. I was trying to understand to what end is the conflict that is happening here in the NDP—I know that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) figured they could go into their caucus and look into a mirror. I'm sure it's cracked by now, whatever might be in there, from all the conflict that occurs in there. But, in any case, I do want all my—NDP members to go to their homes and take a look in the mirror and ask themselves, what kind of party do you want to be part of?

Do you want to be part of a party that says one thing and then not just does another, but then says another only a matter of days later or even the same afternoon? I don't think you want to be a party—a member of a party like that, and I think you should have enough pride in yourself to say that you shouldn't do that.

Now, there's an opportunity for the NDP backbench. I know that you understand that your current caucus is divided. I get that. You might think that you have to stick to your current leadership team in order to attain some kind of a united front, but you don't. You don't. Okay? You can send them packing. You can send them where they ought to be going. You can pick leaders—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —of your own that are going to actually lead with integrity.

This is the kind of leadership you should be looking for, this kind of leadership that I have in my party. That's why I'm still here and not wandering across the aisle. I'm here in my party because we have integrity. The members opposite, they're not even in government yet and they're showing a complete and utter lack of integrity—a complete and utter lack of integrity.

There's chaos—there is chaos on the benches opposite—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I think everybody's fully aware that I cannot hear at this point. And while everybody might be thinking they're having fun by all this heckling on the topic that's before us, I'm going to ask everybody to please show respect.

This is an issue that's been brought before this House, and we should be respectful in listening to people, whether we like what they're saying or not. And that applies to all members of the House.

Mr. Teitsma: Thank you, Madam Speaker, appreciate the opportunity. I mean, I'm really only about halfway through my time here, and yet the NDP seem to not be able to handle the simple truth that I'm handling to—handing them—to them this afternoon.

Now, I think—I did a little bit more research and I did find a little bit more information about what's going on in the NDP benches. I—my Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) made it clear that he has on the record—not just the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), who sits to the right of the House leader; not just even the Leader of the Opposition, who sits on the left of the House leader who's introduced this motion—the House leader herself is on the record saying, just call an election already.

This is the message that your front bench is telling you. So then, why would they bring a message like this forward? And I think I figured it out. And that's because the last piece that I saw was a paid advertisement, a paid advertisement by the Manitoba NDP.

And I'll just take a step back to remind you that Manitoba NDP central—when it comes to elections, they've got quite the record. You know, back in 1999—it did take many, many years to come to light—but back in 1999, 13 of 57 election returns were filed faithfully by the candidates in their various ridings. And then they were changed. I don't know if you guys remember this or not. You might want to do some research because, as the NDP candidates in each of these ridings submitted their paperwork, somebody at NDP central decided that they change—they would change what was reported. Why? Because it could get them a bigger—some more cash, maybe take a little bit of extra money on the refund.

* (16:50)

This is what the party did in 1999. It didn't even get raised in any forum of public atmosphere until 2003, and even then, it was kind of quietly, quietly noted that they paid the \$78,000 that they had stolen

back. And I say stolen because they had explicitly altered documents. Now—unbelievable.

And I mean, I've spoken even with unsuccessful NDP candidates, and this is a warning not just to the NDP candidate for Dawson Trail, Lac du Bonnet, Kirkfield Park, Radisson or anywhere else, it's a warning for every NDP candidate that thinks that maybe they won't win the next election; watch your back. Watch your back because NDP candidates that have run have come to me afterwards and they say, how come it is that I have a \$30,000 knife in my back? How did that happen? How do I have a \$30,000 knife in my back?

And the answer is, well, it was nicely inserted there by NDP central who promised them that they would transfer them funds to pay for whatever electoral expenses they might incur and then said, well, you lost, so shut up and suck it up. Okay.

And, understandably, these people do not subsequently want to run.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I'm going to call members to order. Members may not, as I said, always like what's in debate, but we all have to respectfully listen to each other.

And I would just caution the member for Radisson that the language that was just placed might not be particularly nice, and it is generating disorder. So, I would caution the member on using language like that.

Mr. Teitsma: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the apology.

I do recognize that that language is wholly unpleasant. I'm quite shocked that the NDP central members would use it with their own candidates. Now, or—in fact, I think those same words were used to a young woman who had experienced sexual harassment while working as an NDP staffer.

Now, we all know, I put it—made it clear to the members that the NDP central party falsified records, that they left candidates hanging. This is the party that is central to the control of all you folks, and you have a responsibility, collectively—sorry, the NDP members opposite have a responsibility collectively to make sure that their party isn't that kind of a party. But they still are.

So, as I was saying, there is a paid ad; it's a paid ad that's being put out by the Manitoba NDP central.

And what does it say? It says you should be afraid that maybe, perhaps, there's an early election, and so that way, we can raise some more money. They want more money.

This is a fundraising ploy. That's what we've been spending legislative dollars on all afternoon. Just a cheap and silly way for the NDP to try to extract some more money out of Manitobans by scaring them into thinking that an early election is coming. I say, shame on them. Shame on them. They should know better. They should do better.

They should be led better, and they should pick for themselves better leaders than the ones they have right now.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the opposition day motion in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

Do members wish to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The motion reads: that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the provincial government to respect and follow the provisions of The Elections Act and confirm that the next general election will take place on October 3rd, 2023.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

I declare the motion carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.
[interjection]

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker—

An Honourable Member: No, Madam Speaker. I was up first.

Mr. Goertzen: She recognized me, actually.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the honourable House leader for the opposition was in her chair and up first, so I am going to have to recognize her first.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, is—can we have it recorded as unanimous?

Madam Speaker: The motion is—oh, is there agreement of the House to consider it passed unanimously?
[Agreed]

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Goertzen: It's a point of order, which is probably more of a point of a clarification.

On this one, my friend and I, the Opposition House Leader, agree, because I, as well, wanted to call it unanimous. I'm glad that we've all agreed on that.

So, I will let you rule it not a point of order, and then I'll ask to be—it—5 o'clock.

Madam Speaker: And I would rule that that was not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is 'journed' and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

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