

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXVII No. 11 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 30, 2022

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): 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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 216—The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Right to Repair Electronic Products)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey), that the consumer protection amendment act, right to repair, now be read a first time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Elmwood, seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon, that Bill 216, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Right to Repair Electronic Products), be now read a first time.

Mr. Maloway: This right-to-repair legislation empowers Manitoba consumers and fosters sustainability by requiring manufacturers of electronic devices and appliances to make manuals, parts and tools necessary for repairs available to consumers and independent repair shops at a reasonable price. If not, the manufacturers must replace products.

Products covered by this right-to-repair legislation would include smartphones, tablets, laptops, washers, dryers, refrigerators. Manitoba consumers would have the same right to repair as consumers in the European Union have, beginning in 2022.

Canada produces 750,000 tons of electronic waste annually, and right-to-repair legislation will be a giant step forward in reducing this waste by giving Manitobans access to products that are made better and last longer.

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

Bill 217—The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 217, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la gouvernance et l'obligation redditionnelle au sein du système de santé, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill provides for increased accountability in our health-care system and provides for the annual appearance of the Shared Health and of the regional health authorities at committees, as we currently now do to Crown corporations.

The concept is that there will then be ability for members of the Legislature to ask questions directly of these important organizations which play a vital role in our health-care delivery.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister, and I would indicate to the House—oh, no, I don't have to indicate anything for that. I would indicate to the House the honourable minister, the honourable Minister of Finance.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today in the Assembly and table the government of Manitoba response to the economic review of Bipole III and Keeyask Generating Station ERBK report.

Thank you.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Ministerial statements, and I would indicate to the House that the 90 minutes time was given, as per the rules.

Donation to Winnipeg Foundation

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): For 100 years, The Winnipeg Foundation has provided stable grant funding to support remarkable charities throughout our city.

Their endowment model helps our community come together to respond to our most pressing needs, and their work helps transform Winnipeg into a more inclusive and equitable place to call home.

Manitobans are uniquely generous, giving more to charity per capita than the people of any other province. Throughout the year Manitobans donate millions of dollars to support The Winnipeg Foundation's work in our community.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, this week, one of those Manitobans made history.

At a press conference yesterday The Winnipeg Foundation announced that it had received a \$500-million donation from the late Miriam Bergen, owner and president of Winnipeg company Appleton Holdings Ltd.

* (13:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ms. Bergen's contribution is the largest gift ever made to a Canadian charity by an individual. Her generosity is stunning. It will transform The Winnipeg Foundation and have a positive impact on our community for generations to come.

Ms. Bergen passed away earlier this year, but her life and legacy are a shining example to all Manitobans.

Growing up immersed in the family business, she inherited Appleton Holdings and its Edison Properties development company from her late father, Martin Bergen, an immigrant who came to Canada following the Second World War.

From a young age, she took immense pride in the family business and possessed a powerful sense of community. During her time as president of the company, Appleton Holdings grew at a rapid rate. Thanks to her leadership, the company currently owns or manages 27 properties, primarily in North Kildonan, and employs 200 people, many of them long-time employees who Ms. Bergen regarded as family.

But most of all, Ms. Bergen lived her life as a quiet philanthropist, donating to many worthy charitable causes throughout Winnipeg, often anonymously.

With this donation—the final donation of her life—she has secured a place in Canadian history.

She has made an indelible impact on our community for decades to come, and we are all forever grateful for her for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask that all members of the House join me in thanking The Winnipeg Foundation for their work, as well as Ms. Bergen and her family, for their extraordinary generosity.

Thank you.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Giving Tuesday had a special importance for The Winnipeg Foundation this year. They announced yesterday that they have received the largest gift ever made to a Canadian charity by an individual—a \$500-million bequest by a local business owner who passed away earlier this year.

Miriam Bergen, was the owner and president of Appleton Holdings, a privately held company that operates as Edison Properties and employs more than 200 people. She was known for always using what she had to help others, often donating anonymously.

One of her final wishes was to ensure that her family's legacy was not sold off and dissolved. Because she did not have an heir to give her company to, she made the decision several years ago to work with The Winnipeg Foundation to keep her family company's legacy alive after her passing.

The donation came in the form of shares in Appleton Holdings Ltd. It is the first time The Winnipeg Foundation has received a donation in the form of private shares, and it allows the business to stay intact while still doing enormous good for the

community, which was Bergen's wish. The money will be used as an endowment fund, with \$25 million given out annually to Winnipeg charities. At a time when many charities are struggling, this money could be life-changing for them.

One of the unique aspects of this gift is that there were no instructions on how the money could be spent, meaning it can go to the organizations that need it most, which may change over time. Bergen's generous donation will help The Winnipeg Foundation do their important work for our communities, and the positive impacts of it will be felt by charities all across the city for years to come. The perfect legacy for a person who dedicated her life to helping others.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Deputy Speaker, The Winnipeg Foundation, established in 1921, had its centenary last year—100 years in 2021. It has made extraordinary contributions to Winnipeg.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine what Winnipeg would be like without The Winnipeg Foundation; it has done so much.

A huge thank you is owed to Miriam Bergen who has made this extremely generous gift. We thank Miriam, no longer with us, but her legacy will live on thanks to this gift.

Thanks are also due to Martin and Ruth Bergen, her parents, who established the company, Appleton Holdings and Edison Properties, and built it up. And I think it's noteworthy and should be mentioned that thanks are due to all those who worked at the company and helped make it the extraordinary success that it has been.

Before her passing, Mrs. Bergen was no stranger to philanthropy. Giving to community organizations was a big part of how Miriam showed she cared about people. And much of her giving was anonymous because she felt it was the act of giving, not necessarily the recognition.

This gift will make an enormous difference. It will be a legacy gift as a result of her generosity.

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank Mrs. Bergen and the family for this incredible and historic gift that

will ensure that the city of Winnipeg and our community thrives for generations to come.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now, we have with us in the public gallery a couple of student groups, one from Portage Collegiate Institute, I believe 24 grade 12 students under the direction of Brett Geisel. And they are from the constituency of Portage la Prairie.

We welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

We also have seated in the public gallery from River East Collegiate—this is not a repeat; they're sending many classes here. I know that you might think I just read the same one every day, but it's a new group of grade 9 students, 20 of them under the direction of Mr. Cochrane. This group is located in my constituency, Rossmere.

We welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming ministerial statements, the honourable Minister of Education, and I would indicate to the House the required 90 minutes' time was provided in accordance with the rules.

Financial Literacy Month

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I am pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge that the month of November was proclaimed as Financial Literacy Month.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the importance of ongoing education for Manitobans' kindergarten-to-grade-12 students pertaining to consumer awareness and financial literacy.

Financial literacy is more than just knowing about money. With financial literacy, you are able to gain the skills and knowledge that is needed to manage personal financial well-being with confidence, competence and awareness of the world that you are surrounded by.

When it comes to Manitoba students, knowledge about personal finance is essential to developing confident and responsible youth, empowered to make informed decisions throughout life. This knowledge can contribute to overall well-being and leadership skills.

Introducing financial concepts to students lays the foundation of economic awareness and can provide opportunities to explore and analyze implications of decisions from a transdisciplinary perspective, across perspective—or, aspects of life.

Teachers and school staff are able to have a profound influence on student engagement and learning to help students understand the costs, benefits and implications of both personal and local financial and economic issues, contexts and dynamics in learning experiences.

Not just Manitoba students, but all Manitobans are given the opportunity to learn how financial and economic matters and considerations relate to not only future careers, but in life as a whole. It will enable an informed pathway to explore, develop and realize potential and move toward life and career goals.

Our Manitoba government encourages all Manitobans across this great province of ours to engage themselves in financial literacy learning.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (13:50)

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Financial Literacy Month is observed all over Canada during November. It is a time to highlight the importance of financial literacy and connect community members to resources that help them maintain healthy financial habits.

Now, more than ever, with the rising costs of living as a result of inflation, Manitobans need to find the right balance with which to manage their finances. They need to be well informed to make important financial decisions for budgeting, obtaining loans, savings and investments.

I assure Manitobans that they are not alone in these times. There are resources available to aid them regardless of their financial situations or goals.

As part of Financial Literacy Month, the Government of Canada has provided education and assistance to Canadians, such as access to financial goal calculators, budget planners and mortgage calculators. These can be found on the government website at no cost.

Here in our province, we have MoneySmart that helps Manitobans make informed financial decisions and protect themselves from financial fraud. Recently, MoneySmart launched a financial literacy hub where

parents, teachers can gain meaningful financial knowledge. Their programs help parents plan for the future and provide resources for teachers to incorporate financial lessons into their classrooms.

It's important that our children are financially literate. When we help families gain stronger financial literacy, we are putting all of us on a much firmer footing for the future.

I urge Manitobans to make well-informed financial decisions this holiday season and to use the resources available to them to learn more.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Lamoureux: November is Financial Literacy Month, and I rise to speak about the importance of developing skills to make smart financial decisions.

When people refer to having a rainy day fund, this is in part to recognize that emergencies happen and that we need to be prepared for what life may throw at us. However, there is a lot in our control, too.

Currently, interest rates are rising, which will cost consumers more to borrow money. There is high personal debt, a theme familiar for many Manitobans.

And in recent Statistics Canada reports it was noted that Canadians are paying about \$1.82 in credit market debt for every dollar of household disposable income.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is important for many groups, but for the sake of time, I want to share two examples: No. 1, seniors, many of whom are living on a fixed income. Seniors' rents often go up. Their grocery bills have gone up. Often prescription medication isn't being covered. Home repairs are unaffordable, and their dental work and hearing aids have no coverage. These are just a few examples.

And No. 2, students, especially international students, who continue to take on such debt as they are forced to pay more taxes. They have had their health-care coverage taken away from them. They have no tuition fee gap-cap, and they have increased co-op fees. This is on top of the cost of living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during Financial Literacy Month, I want to encourage all Manitobans to take

advantage of these resources provided at both federal and provincial levels to learn about debt management. Know your rights when borrowing money and financial options.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Happy Holidays

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): The holidays are coming and Christmas is near, / We have just two more question periods to hear the NDP jeer, / The snow has come down and the days are becoming merry, / Just yesterday we allowed dogs in the gallery, / Who, while cute, were very hairy, / As children begin to count down sleeps in their bed, / Manitoba has two new MLAs: Obby Khan and Eric Redhead—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I am loathe to spoil the mirth of the member's statement, but I am beholden by the rules to indicate that we have to refer to members by their constituency or title.

The honourable Minister of Health can continue.

Ms. Gordon: I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The candies are out in bowls, and the trees are all set, / With even cheaper electric rates, thanks to our government reducing Hydro's NDP debt, / As Santa gears up in his big red suit, / The Manitoba—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Gordon: —Liberal leader—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am loathe to interrupt the mirth of the member's statement, but there is a rule that these member statements really do need to talk about constituency issues, not government policy.

I'm obliged to—and that applies to ministers. So, I'm obliged to convey that to the House. That's my duty in this Chair, and so I have to do that.

The honourable Minister of Health, though, does have the floor.

Ms. Gordon: My apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As Santa gears up to head to the Southdale constituency in his bright red suit, / The Manitoba Liberal Leader hesitates to greet him with the St. Boniface salute.

As children are getting tucked in their beds in Southdale, / Our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is fighting to keep streets—crime off our streets, / As MLAs we know the weight of the duties we carry, / So to all honourable members: may your holidays be merry.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Gordon Landriault

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Today I would like to honour Gordon Landriault, who recently retired from his job as constituency assistant and chief of staff to our Member of Parliament, Niki Ashton.

I have known Gord all my life, and he has been such an important person to me and everyone who cares about social justice in our community.

Gord has long served elected representatives in the North to make sure we are connected to your concerns. He also knocked on so many doors, and very committed to our communities.

Gord has been known to many in the North as Mr. NDP for over 40 years, and he has dedicated decades to working for the party and spent countless hours connecting with people in the North and helping to make voices heard by representatives and governments.

He also spent time working for federal NDP candidates in the riding, including Rod Murphy and Niki Ashton, in their roles for MP for Churchill, as well as provincial MLAs Ron McBryde, Harry Harapiak, Frank Whitehead and my father, Oscar Lathlin, and myself.

Just this past year, Gord was the recipient of the David Woodbury award, which the New Democrats give to a community, a party member who have been pioneers for social justice and have committed to the community, and as well—and it was well deserved for his commitment and dedication to his work and volunteerism.

On July 29th of this year, Gord had his last day in serving as constituency assistant and chief of staff for Niki Ashton before retirement, and he is now able to spend his days with his beloved grandchildren, his wife, Lillian, and family.

I want to thank Gord for everything that he has done for the many community members and representatives

for whom he has spent years dedicating hard work making—towards making our society more equitable and welcoming. More than all of this, though, he has also been a great friend, a father figure. I truly want to wish Gord all the best in his well-deserved retirement, until the next campaign.

Ekosi.

Drs. Bruce and Janice Waddell

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Shoal Lake and area is without the services of resident veterinarians after the retirement of two long-serving vets this summer.

Drs. Bruce and Janice Waddell—a husband-and-wife team—called it a career on July 31st after operating the Shoal Lake Veterinary Clinic for 35 years.

The Waddells graduated together from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon in 1985. The MLA for Selkirk was also a member of this class and is a good friend of the Waddells.

Bruce and Janice were married in 1986, and, after practising in the Interlake and Winnipeg respectively, they were informed of an opportunity in Shoal Lake. On September 1st, 1987, they purchased the practice of Dr. Don Finlay and began operating the Shoal Lake Veterinary Clinic.

* (14:00)

This clinic is one of 27 provincially and municipally funded clinics in Manitoba and is owned by seven municipalities. The clinic serves residents over an approximate 10,000-square-kilometre area.

With their outgoing personalities, the Waddells immediately became a part of the community. Over the years, they raised five children—four boys and a girl—and were very involved in sports and music. Their daughter Heather recently followed in their footsteps, graduating as a veterinarian in Saskatoon.

Bruce was the founder and still is the only head coach of the Park West Outlaws high school football team. His patient, caring attitude towards players is renowned in the area, and the program would not have survived without Bruce's dedication. Wins don't mean as much to Bruce as the development of the players into young adults.

While the search continues for permanent veterinarians for Shoal Lake and area, Bruce and Janice are enjoying their retirement after a career that saw them on call, day and night, for 35 years.

I ask all honourable members to join me in saluting and thanking Drs. Bruce and Janice Waddell for their dedicated service to animal owners in Shoal Lake and area.

Cody McDonald

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Today I rise to pay tribute to a local Transcona student who is excelling in his studies at Murdoch MacKay Collegiate, a high school located in the constituency of Transcona, and who was recently recognized for his achievements at the Manitoba Indigenous Youth Achievement Awards.

Cody McDonald is 17 years old and a Red River Métis who calls Transcona home. Cody has always enjoyed learning and, as a result, has attained marks of 100 per cent in nine different courses from a range of subjects including geography, chemistry, physics, precal, biology, Canadian law and global issues.

Cody is also an integral part of the Murdoch MacKay Indigenous academic achievement program, helping with everything from Truth and Reconciliation day events to planning for the school's inaugural Reach for the Top competitions.

He has also created a traditional clothing line and is learning the Michif language, along with Inuktitut and Cree.

Cody is quoted as saying: Work hard to achieve your goals, never forget where you come from and the incredibly rich heritage of our people.

Cody's achievements were recently highlighted at last week's Manitoba Indigenous Youth Achievement Awards and in an article by columnist Niigaan Sinclair. Cody was nominated for the award by Kim Dudek and Dana Jansen, his teachers at Murdoch. These awards have been in existence for 28 years, beginning in 1994.

Other award winners were present when Cody was honoured last week, including Murdoch alumni Kody [*phonetic*] Laurin, Ashton McIvor, who also said that this was a night when we got to celebrate who we are.

Deputy Speaker, we are lucky enough to have Cody in the gallery this afternoon, joined by his support network: his mom, Crystal; Dad, Bryan; and his teachers, Dana Jansen and Kim Dudek.

Please join me in congratulating Cody for his amazing accomplishments.

Koats for Kids Campaign

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and call attention to the United Way Pembina Valley's Koats for Kids campaign.

The Morden and Winkler chapters of the United Way recently amalgamated, and the new United Way Pembina Valley has the common goal of serving the people in our two great communities. Koats for Kids collects and distributes new and gently used coats, snow pants, toques, mitts, scarves and boots to children and adults in need of warm clothing.

In November, hundreds of donations were dropped off at the Morden and Winkler fire halls in their large red Koats for Kids bins. Some residents specifically purchased new winter items like mitts, toques and scarves. Some items were lovingly handmade; others were collected and given to families in need.

The items were collected and brought to the local Best Western hotel. They were laundered, they were hung on racks and on November 8th and 9th, the items were made available for distribution to Winkler's Central Station Community Centre and Morden's 500 Stephen St.

Organizer Audrey Armstrong says this program requires a lot of community involvement and she thanks all the organizations for their commitment.

This year's event saw newcomers to Canada including newly arrived Ukrainian families, as well as many local residents, with lineups of 100 and 200 people looking for winter items. And with the increase in demand, the United Way Pembina Valley board is already discussing ways to increase donations for coats to kids program next year.

The initiative shows how much need there is out there and it shows how much people are rallying to meet that need.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Legislature, I want to thank the United Way Pembina Valley president, Chris Willsey, the board, the businesses and organizations that stepped up to meet the need to keep everyone warm during this winter cold season. Your hard work and dedication to the community is greatly appreciated and will make a difference.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care System Reform Number of Beds Available

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): No one trusts the PCs when it comes to health care or public education. Not one person. Not in Transcona, not in Radisson, nowhere in Manitoba. That's because they have made deep cuts to our health-care system since they became government in 2016, and we're feeling it every day.

Data compiled by media show the cuts: a drop of 136 beds across the Winnipeg hospital system since 2017. 'Theose' are cuts that made health care worse, Deputy Speaker.

Does the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) believe cutting beds from our health-care system was the right thing to do?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): What the NDP offer Manitobans are empty promises and no plan, but our government has a solid plan to help Manitobans.

That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Health budget for 2022 alone, \$482,000 to increase seats at the University of Manitoba respiratory therapy program, \$50 million for HSC Operation Excellence, \$2 million for Swan River's CT scanner and so much more.

What is their plan? They have no plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona, on a follow-up question.

Mr. Altomare: You can't start a fire in 2016, watch the flames lick the house and then see it burn completely down, then come out with a couple of pails of water, throw it around and say you're saving the system. That's not a plan.

But you know what? They continue to refuse to listen, and every PC MLA on that side of the House supported these cuts right from the get-go. As a matter of fact, the former—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —premier equated quality health care to the number of beds.

Well, it does matter, actually, Deputy Speaker. You have worse health-care outcomes when you have fewer beds.

Why did the Premier support cutting the beds from our hospitals in Winnipeg?

Ms. Gordon: More smoke and mirrors from the no-plan NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to join the First Minister on November 10th to announce our plan: \$200 million to add 2,000 health-care professionals to the health system. And, on that day, we announced nine premiums and incentives that we will deliver on for nurses: a weekend super premium, a recruitment retention incentive, a full-time incentive, a full-time weekend worker incentive, a wellness incentive, licensure reimbursements and more.

Again, I ask, what is their plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker? No plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Altomare: Our plan is simple: just don't cut health care. Right? *[inaudible]* in 2016. We warned them, Deputy Speaker, years ago—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —that cutting beds from our hospitals—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —would lead to worse health-care outcomes. Now we are seeing terrible ER wait times and their cuts have caused it.

The Premier should explain why the PCs didn't listen, but they went ahead and cut health care anyway. And the Premier also needs to tell Manitobans whether she will reverse her health-care cuts, and will she do that today.

* (14:10)

Ms. Gordon: Will the member for Transcona ask the former Health minister, NDP Health minister, if she has found the magic wand, Mr. Deputy Speaker? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: Our government is not dependent on magic wands. That is why we are addressing our ER wait times with—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —concrete action and concrete plans: a \$1.2-million expansion of the physician-in-triage program to free up nurses in the emergency department, expediting alternate-level-of-care patients, creating space in medicine units, sending stable patients who

live outside of Winnipeg back to their home location and more—

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

Rural Paramedic Services Collective Bargaining Contract

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Deputy Speaker, rural paramedics and allied health-care workers are speaking out. They're frustrated that they can't work their full scope of practice.

They're angry that they've been left out and left behind by the PCs, with no contract for years. And they don't understand why other provinces like Saskatchewan can offer better pay and more—and better benefits for their work.

Why is this government leaving rural paramedics behind?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that the members opposite are going to have a question period filled with a litany of false information.

But I'm so glad that I'm able to stand in the House today and correct the record. We are working with our paramedics. We are working with our allied health professionals, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're at the front line having conversations with health-care professionals; that's where the best ideas are found.

We are implementing those solutions. Again: \$200 million to add 2,000 additional health professionals, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a follow-up question.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the pandemic it was rural paramedics and allied health-care workers that stood up for Manitobans. They helped patients in their most difficult situations.

And yet, the PCs have left them behind. They've done nothing to help with better pay or better working conditions. Paramedics are burning out because of the stress, and the PCs are doing absolutely nothing to help.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) simply tell this House why her government has failed rural paramedics across our province?

Ms. Gordon: Our government has committed \$8 million in Budget 2022 to hire 35 additional primary-care

paramedics. We are expanding the advanced paramedic training program with 32 new refresher seats, and 16 seats with Red River College Polytechnic.

Manitoba Health is also working in partnership with municipalities—again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming to a table of solutions to hear from the front lines. Three meetings have been held and more are planned.

In addition to purchasing new ambulances, we are doing what needs to be done to ensure paramedics get the services that they need in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: Ask anyone in rural Manitoba, and they'll tell you personal stories about the importance of paramedics in their community.

We know that every minute matters, and we should be—and we owe it to our front-line health-care workers to support them. Instead, the workers are falling further and further behind because of this PC government's cuts.

Their cuts have consequences; it's wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Will the Premier and the government apologize for failing rural communities and rural paramedics for so many years?

Ms. Gordon: I was so pleased to be part of the announcement in Portage la Prairie and Crystal City, where our government invested \$3.8 million in new EMS infrastructure. So, new stations were established there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We're improving call volumes and the emergency response system, another investment of \$3.5 million. We purchased 65 new ambulances to refresh one third of the province's fleet, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we will continue to do more. This is just the beginning for paramedics.

Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Elimination of Public Outpatient Services

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Deputy Speaker, publicly insured outpatient physiotherapy and occupational therapy services are an essential part of our health-care system. It's why other provinces provide access to these services to help patients properly recover.

Five years ago, this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and this government cut that service. The result is worse

health-care outcomes; 2,000 people annually lost access to this essential health-care service.

Will the minister admit it was wrong to cut this service for so many Manitobans?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Physiotherapy is available to support successful recovery for hip and knee orthopedic patients in Winnipeg, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This year alone, we have completed 1,601 hip replacements and 2,109 knee replacements. And so, to support this work, our Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force is planning to complete 800 additional hip and knee surgeries in Winnipeg over the next three years.

I'm proud that our government is making physiotherapy available to individuals living in Winnipeg.

MLA Asagwara: Deputy Speaker, in 2017, dozens of physiotherapists and occupational therapists were fired by this government.

The member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) says that this hurt Manitobans. He says, and I quote, outpatient physio was paid out of pocket and some did not receive the rehab they needed. End quote. It's a shocking admission from that member.

This government's cuts hurt. It's wrong that they fired these health-care professionals.

Will the minister do the right thing and apologize for firing physiotherapists and occupational therapists from our health-care system?

Ms. Gordon: I want to highlight some of the good work that was just reported today by the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force.

Their work now includes backlogs in pediatric care. The task force has already supported and moved a proposal to implement the—to implementation, which will eliminate the pandemic backlog for fetal alcohol syndrome disorder and autism spectrum disorder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, within the next 18 months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are continuing to move forward to address the needs of Manitobans, and I invite members opposite to get on board.

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

MLA Asagwara: Deputy Speaker, the minister won't apologize, I suppose, then, for firing physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

And she also won't apologize to the thousands of Manitobans who haven't been able to access rehab as a result of that terrible decision.

I wonder if she'll apologize for gutting public health care in Manitoba, for the five-year-ago decision they made to fire not only thousands—sorry, fire physiotherapists and hurt Manitobans who needed that support, but also the ongoing impacts in our health-care system.

This government just wants to pretend those cuts never happened, Deputy Speaker. And their plan is to fire even more health-care workers.

Deputy Speaker, why is this government so intent on privatizing health care here in Manitoba?

Ms. Gordon: Will the members opposite apologize to the 231 patients who have self-identified for out-of-province orthopedic hip and knee replacement surgeries, effective November 29th? Under their leadership, they said, they wouldn't allow anyone to access this type of care.

I also want to continue to highlight some of the outcomes for the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force. The pandemic backlog for cataract—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—surgery has now been fully eliminated. We have half the pandemic backlog for ultrasounds, from 4,500 procedures to under 2,000. We've completed 1,900 and—I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy—

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

* (14:20)

Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Elimination of Public Outpatient Services

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), the legislative assistant to the Minister of Health, says his government's cuts resulted in, and I quote, outpatient physio was being paid out of pocket, and some did not receive the rehab they needed. End quote.

That is still the case with many Manitobans being left behind. Public health care needs to be publicly available.

Why is this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her Health minister, why are they—have they left so many Manitobans behind, and failing to give access to this essential health care?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that the member for St. Johns is continuing the false information that is being placed on the record. Physiotherapy—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—is available in—to support successful recovery for hip and knee orthopedic patients in Winnipeg. It's also available in the other regional health authorities.

And I think the members opposite should be—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—focused on the incredible outcomes that the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force has provided thousands and thousands of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a follow-up question.

MLA Fontaine: Again, Deputy Speaker, the member for Radisson is the one who said that Manitobans should not pay out of pocket for essential health care, which post-operative physiotherapy and occupational therapy certainly is. He's upset with his own Premier, and we would agree.

That's why these things were offered in the hospital. It was free; it was public. Rather than restore this public service, this government has chosen a limited private option at three private clinics. That's the wrong approach, Deputy Speaker.

Will this Premier restore public physio and occupational therapy today?

Ms. Gordon: Mr. Deputy Speaker, physiotherapy within the public health system is available to support a successful recovery for hip and knee orthopedic patients in Winnipeg. It is also available at all the regional health authorities—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon:—across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 2022 alone, we have completed 1,601 orthopedic hip replacements and 2,109 orthopedic knee replacements. Is—are members opposite saying that the individuals that receive these out-of-province surgeries—I'm sorry, these outpatient surgeries, should not receive this care, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

I would like them to explain to Manitobans.

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

MLA Fontaine: This Premier fired dozens of health-care workers. These workers were critical in helping patients recover from their surgeries. Five years ago, this PC government cut them.

And for their patients, and I quote, they did not receive the rehab they needed. End quote. Again, another direct quote from the member for Radisson—the Minister of Health's own legislative assistant.

It was a mistake. He knows it. We know it. They've never apologized. And if they even want to start to repair the damage, they need to restore what they've broken.

Will they hire physio and occupational therapists and restore a public system for supporting people after surgeries?

Ms. Gordon: I know the member for St. Johns wants to deflect from the great work our government is doing through the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force, but I won't allow that to happen.

We have completed 776 cardiac surgeries in 2022. We've completed 66,312 MRIs. This year, The Maples gynecology program has now provided 33 successful procedures to Manitoba women. They would say, no, you cannot get that.

We—St. Boniface General Hospital has added an additional eight outpatient cases a week, and will be reducing the endoscopy backlog by 416 cases per year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Health-Care System Privatization of Services

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Tory playbook on privatization is on full display this afternoon: they cut positions in the public system, they cause mass disruption in our hospitals and clinics, then they turn the private sector, handing over the public good for private benefit.

That's what's happening right now in our hospitals—hundreds fewer registered nurses, an astonishing \$40 million per year being spent on private agencies. Sensible solutions have been proposed, like the float pool in the public system, and this government has taken no action.

Will the minister reverse the cuts and ensure care by the bedside in the public system today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Our government is listening to the front line.

That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was on site at the Health Sciences Centre, on site at St. Boniface Hospital, on site at the Grace general hospital, because we want to hear from the front line.

When we hear from the front lines, we take their feedback and we create solutions. We sit at the table of solutions with unions, stakeholders and individuals from the front line. That is where our action plan—our health human resources action plan—of \$200 million to add 2,000 health professionals was derived from, doing what members opposite do not do—by listening. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure who this minister is listening to. Given her cuts, there's nobody—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: —working at these hospitals.

Thousands of positions are vacant in the public system. Dozens of hospital beds have been closed. It's the old Tory playbook: fire nurses, cut funding to health, then claim there's no choice but to then turn over our hospitals to private benefit.

This government is now spending \$40 million per year—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: —on more private agencies, more than three times what it was four years ago. That's not fiscally responsible; it's wrong.

Will the minister stop their cuts and ensure care by the bedside in the public system today?

Ms. Gordon: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Fort Garry needs to apologize to all the front-line workers for saying that the individuals that I'm speaking with, I'm listening to, are no—like, who are they—they're nobody.

Mr. Deputy—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —Speaker, they ran the health-care system for 17 years on a wing and a prayer. Their Health

minister was searching at all times for a magic wand. Our government is digging out of the mess they made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the \$200 million will allow for nine premiums and incentives to be delivered to Manitoba nurses: a weekend super premium, a recruitment retention incentive, a full-time incentive—

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

The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wasyliw: Once again, we have to remind this minister: a press release is not a plan.

A year ago, they promised a float system for nurses and never delivered, and—yet another broken promise from a broken minister.

Forty million is being spent on private agencies. It's hurting the public system. Public—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —nurses are working overtime. They can't get the rest they need. Meantime, private agencies are provided more money and flexibility. This is what happens when public health care gets cut: hospitals and health staff can't keep up, the waits are higher than they've ever been. This government is on the wrong track.

Will the minister reverse her cuts and ensure care at the bedside in the public system today?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

* (14:30)

Please pause the clocks.

We have today and tomorrow, and it would be good if we could make the best of these last two days.

I'm asking all members, please, to keep volume at a reasonable level. That doesn't necessarily mean silent; it just means I need to be able to hear.

And let's have some order and decorum, as we've heard in the last couple of weeks.

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): The opposition is talking a great show about support for health care and other initiatives; that's all it is. That's all it is, is a show. That's all it is, is a show. That's all it is, is a show.

They had the opportunity to invest—to allow \$31 million invested for seniors, and they voted against it. They voted against it.

They voted against 'enhancing' infection prevention—controls—infectious staff to control staff. They voted against 200 full-time housekeeping staff, allied health care for seniors in personal-care homes.

Madam Speaker, they talk the show, but they don't walk the walk. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Privatization of Lifeflight Air Ambulance Service Request to Restore Public System

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been over three years since the PCs privatized Lifeflight Air Ambulance services.

We warned the PCs that this decision was short-sighted and would result in worse patient care, and that's exactly what happened. We've seen a decline in the quality of service, with planes not being properly staffed, staff not having the right training and equipment and patients having to wait longer periods of time.

It's clear the PCs' health-care agenda is more focused on dollars and cents than it is on the quality of patient care.

The PCs could do the right thing today and reverse their privatization of Lifeflight.

Will they commit to doing so today?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, it's quite sad that the member doesn't know that, under the previous NDP government, they were the ones that used private air carriers for Lifeflight, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They had a whole list of airlines that they would go to to ask for the next person to go up with. No—with compensation just what it was that day; no chance on finding efficiencies.

They're the government—they were the government that signed the sole-source contract with STARS. We're the ones that have made it work, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Keewatinook, on a follow-up question.

Mr. Bushie: Privatizing Lifeflight Air Ambulance services is yet another example of the PCs prioritizing private profits over patient care.

In the time since they sold off the critical service in 2019, we've seen an increase in wait times, planes not being properly staffed and staff without proper training or equipment. This has resulted in a worse quality of patient care.

The minister should do the right thing and reverse the privatization of Lifeflight.

Will he do so today?

Mr. Helwer: Well, again, I want to remind the member opposite that about 70 per cent of the flights were run by the private sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The other ones were two aircraft that the provincial government owned. One was usually out of service because it needed to be repaired. The other one, when it was able to run, was, you know, it wasn't the top aircraft, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, again, that is the former government across the way there that signed a sole-source, untendered contract with STARS and—that was contracted. They didn't look to the market. They signed it, we've made it work with STARS. They are a necessary part of our air ambulance right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But, they broke it, and we've had to fix it.

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

Mr. Bushie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, again: the PCs prioritizing private profits over patient quality care.

Lifeflight provides critical air ambulance services to Manitobans. It's incredibly important that planes arrive on time and with staff who have the right training and equipment. Yet, since the PCs 'priorvatized' this service, we've seen the opposite happen. This decline is the quality of care. This puts Manitobans at risk.

It's clear 'priorvatizing' Lifeflight was a mistake. The minister can make things right by reversing the privatization of Lifeflight.

Will he do so by committing to that today?

Mr. Helwer: Well, the member opposite's trying to rewrite history, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll talk more about history later on.

But right now, we need to understand that that was the former government that destroyed this. They used the private sector, due to the benefit to the private sector and to the benefit of the patient, when they needed the help; 70 per cent of those flights were with

the private sector. But they didn't have a good process in place for how that worked.

We changed the process. We made it work better. It's for the benefit of the patients in Manitoba. Good care when they need it, where they need it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Viral Infections in Schools and Daycares Request for Spread Prevention Plan

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): We are seeing an increase of flus, colds and all viruses throughout our school systems. We know contaminated air is a big factor into this, and even though we have been calling for upgrades to ventilation systems in schools and child-care facilities for decades, this idea continues to be ignored by both the NDP and the PCs.

Manitoba needs to do a better job at prevention.

With the number of illnesses circulating in our community, what is this government's plan to prevent the spread?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): So, when our department took over the responsibility of building schools and maintaining them, we found that school divisions were not spending money on ventilation systems. So we gave them money to do that. We spent tens of millions of dollars upgrading those ventilation systems that wasn't done, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A lot of work that was done with engineers to make sure that it would—that it'd be done efficiently and safely. And increasing the airflow was the major suggestion that they had. And that's what we followed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We started with the oldest schools, and we're working our way to the newer schools to make sure that students and staff are safe.

Post-Secondary International Students Request for Cap on Tuition Fees

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Today, I met with Manitoba association of post-secondary students, who are advocating to protect our international students, and they've joined us today in the gallery.

Currently, international students are being forced to pay more taxes. Their health-care coverage has been scrapped. They have no tuition fee cap. And they have increased co-op fees.

An example of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Those studying data science and machine learning, currently a job in demand here in Manitoba, has gone up from \$1,500 to \$8,300.

Will this government stand up for international students and implement a cap on international student tuition fees?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): You know, throughout my travels to post-secondary institutions across our province, when I talk with international students from Bangladesh, from India, from Pakistan, from Nigeria, I ask them questions: Why did you choose Manitoba?

They chose Manitoba because they have a connection here, because of the cost of living here and because of our low tuition costs—one of the lowest tuition costs in Manitoba compared to British Columbia and Ontario.

While I thank the member from Tyndall Park for attending the immigration public consultations, I just want to let her know that there's international students—there is a substantial backlog at the IRCC level with regards to permanent residency. We have reduced our PNP wait times from more than two years under the NDP to six months or less.

And we want the federal government to take action so we can welcome more newcomers to Manitoba, the home of hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Household Radon Exposure Request for Reduction Plan

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, once every three days, someone somewhere in Manitoba dies from lung cancer caused by exposure to radon, as this report I table documents.

Radon is widespread in Manitoba homes. The fact that radon causes lung cancer has been known for many years. The lack of action by successive NDP and Conservative governments in Manitoba poses a threat to the health and livelihood of our citizens.

Why have the NDP before them, and now the PCs, in six and a half years done so little to reduce radon exposure in Manitoba homes?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Again, I thank the member from River Heights for bringing up radon gas concerns again in the Legislature. And the member from River Heights and I have had a couple of discussions on this already.

I've made a commitment to the member to move this issue forward to ensure that we are acting in the best interest of Manitobans with the best science, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also mentioned in this House, and it's on the record, that I've had my home tested—I live in rural Manitoba—for radon gas.

* (14:40)

We recommend that Manitobans do that, and we're going to be there to support them.

Construction on Legislative Grounds Discovery of Message in a Bottle

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): We've heard the word history a few times today, and I do hear that a surprising piece of history was discovered recently here on the Legislative grounds.

And so, I'm wondering if the Minister of Labour could please update this House on this amazing discovery and how this history connects this building to the Province of Manitoba.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Thank you to the member from Brandon East for that great question. Always thrilled to work with him here; great representative for the city of Brandon.

So, a few weeks ago, when the construction crews were working on the plinth in front of the Legislature, they made a surprise discovery. Now, it wasn't Michigan J. Frog from the Warner Bros. cartoon—you might have to look that up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was a while ago—but I will table what we discovered there.

It was a message in a bottle and—stashed in the concrete structure—dating back to July 30th, 1921. And I had deciphered a few of the words on here, and it says, on account of the prohibition, we are unable to adhere to the custom of depositing a bottle of brandy under the stone, for which we are extremely—I think it says sorry.

And it's signed by J.B. MacGraham, who's the stonemason—

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

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

The honourable member for St. James.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

**Federal-Provincial Child-Care Agreement
Daily Maximum Fee in Manitoba**

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): This week, I spoke to a family in my constituency who were paying \$1,200 a month for child care for their two infants.

For each of their infants, they're paying a total of \$30 a day for care. And that's not including lunch fees and all of the other costs associated with child care.

Can the minister explain: Why is this family paying \$30 a day per infant almost a year and a half after his government signed an agreement to make child care \$10 a day?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): The fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the member—if he would take the time to do more research than just a Google page, he would find out that the agreement signed with the feds outlines the fact that the—we, in Manitoba, are the lowest child-care fees across the country.

To just pass along the information, I have no problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —of the member from St. James forwarding me that correspondence. I'd definitely have my staff look into it. But just to let the family know—

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

Mr. Sala: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government has sent millions of dollars to Manitoba to give families \$10-a-day child care, but now we've learned that Manitoba will be the only province in all of Canada not to reduce their daily maximum fees to an average of \$10 a day.

Instead, the PCs have created total chaos for parents and the child-care sector with a subsidy approach and a rollout plan that is confusing at best and incompetent at worst.

It's fallen on volunteer parent boards to decide which family gets how much money. PC mismanagement means there are wild inequities, with some families getting a lot of money and other families getting zero, and ultimately no Manitobans are receiving \$10-a-day rate this government promised them.

Will the minister admit he's bungled this rollout, and will he apology—apologize to families for his broken promise?

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from St. James should stand in his place and apologize for the 17 years of dark days under the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —previous NDP government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that in this—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —province of ours, we have child-care fees that range from \$2 a day—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Please pause the clock.

I can't hear what the minister is saying. I'm asking for some decorum so that I can at least hear the minister's answer.

And the same is true for those asking questions as those answering questions—I need to be able to hear.

The honourable Minister of Education has the floor. I'll give him 20 seconds to complete his answer.

Mr. Ewasko: Oh, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, as I was saying, here in Manitoba, parents pay from \$2 a day to \$20.70 a day. We are three years ahead of schedule, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are going to have \$10-average-a-day daycare fees by March of 2023. *[interjection]*

It's unfortunate that the member from St. Johns wants to speak. She can stand up in the next question—

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

Mr. Sala: The only person that should be apologizing is this minister, for costing families thousands of dollars this year. Parents have enough messes to clean up; they don't need to clean up messes caused by this PC government.

The minister promised families he'd give \$10-a-day child care. He signed an agreement and sent out multiple press releases about it. Provinces across the country are using federal monies to reduce their daily maximum fees, but in Manitoba, a year and a half since their big announcement, no family is paying \$10 a day.

Instead, millions in federal dollars have been frantically thrown around because this minister didn't have a plan. PC incompetence is costing families.

Will the minister apologize to parents for costing them thousands in federal supports, and will he commit to actually delivering on \$10–

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

Mr. Ewasko: In May, the member across the way was criticizing daycare centres that were producing—that were reducing child-care fees to all families, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now he's standing up, he's flip-flopping—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —like his leader from the NDP, like a pickerel on the dock.

We are increasing spaces, we are lowering fees, we are increasing wages and we're increasing tuition rebates, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We, on this side of the House, care about the early childhood education sector. Them, on their side of the House, they want to go back to the old hat, dark days of the former NDP government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Wow. I think I had more hair three weeks ago.

The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

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 this petition is as follows:

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

(2) 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.

(3) 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. Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of heritage site.

(4) The JRL and Red River Valley School Division 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) Students that are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleeferd [*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.

Therefore, Deputy Speaker, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

* (14:50)

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that 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 a memorandum of understanding 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.

This petition, Deputy Speaker, is signed by Josée Curé, Eva Kreger and Suzanne Jones [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Provincial Road 224

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding

communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

(2) The road has been in poor condition for years and has numerous potholes, uneven driving surfaces and extremely narrow shoulders.

(3) Due to recent population growth in the area, there has been increased vehicle and pedestrian use of Provincial Road 224.

(4) Without repair, Provincial Road 224 will continue to pose a hazard to the many Manitobans who use it on a regular basis.

(5) Concerned Manitobans are requesting that Provincial Road 224 be assessed and repaired urgently to improve safety for its users.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to complete an assessment of Provincial Road 224 and implement the appropriate repairs using public funds quickly as possible.

This petition has been signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

Ekosi.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to the 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 to a great deal—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—or—(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 great 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-curricular 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 government—in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by Gursinder [*phonetic*] Gill, Harminder Singh, Harshpreet Singh and many other Manitobans.

Lead in Soils

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) In December of 2019, the provincial government's commissioned report on lead concentrations in soil in Winnipeg was completed.

(2) The report found that 10 neighbourhoods had concerning levels of lead concentration in their soil, including Centennial, Daniel McIntyre, Glenlem-Chambers [*phonetic*], north Point Douglas, River Osborne, Sargent Park, St. Boniface, West End, Weston and Wolseley-Minto.

(3) In particular, the predicted blood levels—blood lead levels for children in north Point Douglas, Weston and Daniel McIntyre were above the level of concern.

(4) The Weston Elementary School field has been forced to close down many times because of concerns of lead in soil and the provincial government's inaction to improve the situation.

(5) Lead exposure especially affects children aged seven years and under, as their nervous system is still developing.

(6) The effects of lead exposure are irreversible and include impacts on learning, behaviour and intelligence.

(7) For adults, long-term lead exposure can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney problems and reproductive effects.

(8) The provincial government currently has no comprehensive plan in place to deal with lead in soil, nor is there a broad advertising campaign educating residents on how they can reduce their risks of lead exposure.

(9) Instead, people in these areas continue to garden and work in the soil and children continue to play in the dirt, often without any knowledge of the associated risks.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take action to reduce people's exposure to lead in Winnipeg, and to implement the recommendations proposed by the provincial government's independent review, including the creation of an action plan for the Weston neighbourhood, developing a lead awareness communications and outreach program, requisitioning a more in-depth study and creating a tracking program for those tested for blood levels so that medical professionals can follow up with them.

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

Security System Incentive Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Cities across Canada and the United States, including Chicago; Washington, DC; Salinas, California; and Orillia, Ontario are offering home security rebate programs that enhance public safety and allow for more efficient use of their policing resources.

(2) Home security surveillance systems protect homes and businesses by potentially deterring burglaries, reducing homeowners' and businesses' insurance costs.

(3) Home security surveillance systems can also be remotely monitored with personal electronic devices such as smartphones.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to work with municipalities to establish a province-wide tax rebate or other incentive program to encourage residents and businesses to purchase approved home and business security protection systems.

* (15:00)

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights—[interjection]

I have recognized the honourable member for River Heights to speak. We can happily—

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I defer to the member from—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. The honourable member for Notre Dame.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

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

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 Manvinder Shoker, Amandeep Deol, Naginder Gill and many Manitobans.

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

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

Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss,

patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

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

Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an otolaryngologist or audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

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

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

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

New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those for whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health.

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

Signed by Lorraine Fotheringham, Linda Toch [*phonetic*], Kathryn O'Shaughnessy and many others.

Foot-Care Services

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, N-RHA, previously provided essential medical foot services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and the surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and the region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications and inadequacies or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health service provider, and the need of foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the service of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition 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 a student and as immigrant, 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; includes 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.

* (15:10)

(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 the college and university levels could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction would 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 Kirandeep Benipal, Sukhchain Singh and Gurpreet Singh and many others.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other petitions? Seeing none, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****House Business****Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):**

I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations will meet on the following dates: (1) Monday, December 5th, 2022, at 9 a.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022; (2) Monday, December 12th, 2022, at 1 p.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal years ending March 31st, 2004 through to 2020 and for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022; (3) Tuesday, December 13th, 2022, at 1 p.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022; and (4) January 12th, 2023, at 12 p.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable—[interjection] The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, an additional committee to announce, Monday, January 16th, 2023, at 1 p.m. to consider the annual report of Efficiency Manitoba for the fiscal years ending March 31st, 2019, 2020 and 2022.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations will meet on the following dates: (1) Monday, December 5th, 2022, at 9 a.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022; (2) Monday, December 12th, 2022, at 1 p.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal years ending March 31st, 2004 through to 2020 and for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022; (3) Tuesday, December 13th, 2022, at 1 p.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022; (4) Thursday, January 12th, 2023, at 12 p.m. to consider the annual report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022; and (5) Monday, January 16th, 2023, at 1 p.m. to consider the annual report of Efficiency Manitoba for the fiscal years ending March 31st, 2019, 2020 and 2022.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call this afternoon concurrence and third reading on Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended); and second reading on Bill 6, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 7, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act; Bill 9, the liquor, gaming and cannabis control amendment and Liquor and Lotteries Corporation amendment act; and Bill 10, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Social Responsibility Fee Repealed).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that this afternoon, we will call concurrence and third readings—third reading for Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended).

We will also call second reading for Bill 6, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act. Also, second reading for Bill 7, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act. Also, second reading on Bill 8, The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act. Also, second reading for Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act; and second reading on Bill 10, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Social Responsibility Fee Repealed).

In light of what has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader, I am now calling for concurrence and third reading Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended).

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS**Bill 4—The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022
(Employment Standards Code Amended)**

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the Minister for Municipal Relations, that Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: I'm pleased to rise once again and—for third reading of Bill 4. Very happy to see this important piece of legislation move quickly through the approval process.

This bill sets Manitoba's minimum wage at \$14.15 per hour, effective April 1st, 2023. The next predicted increase will be based on the consumer price index, which will fulfill our commitment to reach the area of a \$15 per hour minimum wage by October, 2023.

This phased-in approach helps to relieve some of the economic pressures on Manitoba workers while lessening the impact on small businesses' bottom lines as much as possible.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Labour Management Review Committee for their input on Manitoba's minimum wage and the perspectives that were brought forward on behalf of stakeholders.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to this bill?

I see the honourable member for Flin Flon has risen and indicated a desire to speak.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I'd like to say it gives me pleasure to rise and speak about this miserly minimum wage bill again, but it doesn't bring me any pleasure to rise and speak about Manitoba workers that are being disrespected yet again by this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know the only reason that this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and this government did anything when it came to minimum wage was because they were in danger of being dead last and they didn't want to be outdone by Saskatchewan.

* (15:20)

That's the only reason; not because they really believe that paying hard-working Manitobans a decent hourly rate is the right thing to do, but only because they didn't want to be last. They're quite happy being second-last. That's good enough. It's good enough for this government. It's not good enough for workers in this province.

We all know that somebody who's working full-time, earning what's presently being paid as a minimum wage, they can't afford to live on that. We already know that in April 1st—go figure, that's the day they decide to make the next increase—the only fools aren't the workers of Manitoba, though. *[interjection]*

Imagine. Imagine. Imagine, you know, we hear the Minister of Parks beaking off that that's the end of the fiscal year. They didn't have to wait 'til the end of the fiscal year. They could've raised it to \$15 an hour last year. They could've—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

MLA Lindsey: —raised it to \$15 an hour today. They could've raised it to \$15 an hour last week.

But they chose not to. They chose to wait until April 1st of 2023 to implement the next phased-in approach to maybe, as the Minister of Labour previously indicated, to maybe—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —get close to \$15 an hour, just prior to the next election.

You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Maybe if the Minister of Parks actually spent some time listening to Manitobans rather than listening to himself, he might actually realize that being paid the current minimum wage is basically starvation wages. And he, along with the rest of his members, should be ashamed of themselves.

But they're not. They're—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

MLA Lindsey: —not. And I hear other members—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order.

I'm calling—I am calling the Minister of Environment, Climate, Parks and the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) to order.

I also would caution the member for Flin Flon: to insinuate that any member of this Chamber is a fool is unparliamentary. So, it's a caution. To say something is ill-advised or language of that nature is probably more in line with how things are said here. But to insinuate somebody is a fool is not how things are done here.

So, I'm just asking we could dial things down, have some debate and let the member speak. And if the member could stay on topic, that would be great, too.

MLA Lindsey: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I certainly take your wise words under advisement, and would never, never make that comment again in such a way as to imply that.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Manitoba working people are fully aware that this government, that this Minister of Labour, that this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is more than happy to leave them behind.

When they talk about, well, why didn't you raise it? Inflation at the time that we were in government wasn't running at 8, 9 per cent.

Manitoba workers, in the last couple of years—well, let's back up even prior to the last couple of years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When this government first came to power, they had, in their heads, that they had to attack working people right from the first day they set foot in this Chamber as the government. They did any number of things to ensure that it was harder to become unionised.

But what was the most egregious thing they did so early in their mandate, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What they did was they froze minimum wage. No increase. So, right as soon as they got elected, they ensured that hard-working families in Manitoba were left behind. Then they implemented some raises later on to the minimum wage of—what was it, a nickel—making sure, yet again, that Manitoba workers on minimum wage weren't keeping up.

A number of other provinces recognized that where their minimum wage were, which—we were not dead last; we were not second last when they came to power. We weren't first, either, unfortunately, but people could actually afford to live and pay their bills. But, as the world changed, other jurisdictions after 2016 realized that \$15 an hour in 2016—in 2016, six years ago—was the right number. And several jurisdictions moved to ensure that minimum wage was \$15 an hour.

Alberta, the bastion of right-wing conservatism, went to \$15 an hour. The sky didn't fall, Mr. Deputy—acting—deputy—whatever—Speaker. The sky didn't fall in Alberta. And it still hasn't fallen.

BC raised their minimum wage. Once again, the sky didn't fall. And, once again, study after study showed that the narrative that this government and many right-wing governments put forward, that, well, if we raise the minimum wage, businesses will go out of business; once again, that's shown to be not true.

There was no mass shutdown of small businesses in Alberta. There was no mass shutdown of small businesses in British Columbia. There was no mass shutdown of small businesses anywhere in the world that raised the minimum wage at that time to \$15 an hour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$15 an hour might not have been the right number in 2016. It sure as heck isn't the right number today. We know that people that work full-time hours, if they got \$15 an hour today for full-time hours, would leave them still below the poverty line, taking into account what the current rates of inflation are, taking into account everything that's transpired up to this point to leave them behind.

So, what is the right answer? And I see the member from Steinbach is looking confused because he doesn't seem to realize that when they froze minimum wage, people had loan payments because they couldn't run out and buy a brand new car and pay cash for it. So, they had loans and credit cards trying to survive.

And when they froze the minimum wage, those payments didn't go away; they just got put off to the back burner and the minimum amounts paid. So now, to get to \$15 maybe, perhaps, by October 2023, all those payments have built up. And yet, if they were starting with a clean slate in October 2023, somewhere close to \$15 an hour would not be sufficient.

And that, keep in mind, Assistant Deputy Speaker, is if someone is working full-time hours. How many people earning minimum wage are trying to survive on part-time hours? How many people on minimum wage are working more than one job, trying to survive, trying to raise a family, trying to survive? How many hard-working Manitobans have been left behind by this government and continue to be left behind by this government?

* (15:30)

While this government has created tax breaks for multi-million-dollar, multinational corporations, while they've made tax breaks that most of that break goes towards their rich friends, it doesn't trickle down to help people on minimum wage.

While the building that somebody may be paying rent in living on minimum wage, while that building—the owners of that building may have gotten millions of dollars in a tax rebate from this government, the lowly person renting that suite didn't get that same break. They're still struggling to try and make ends meet.

While we see governments talk about economic recovery, what they've left out of that conversation, in particular, is minimum wage earners in this province. They, the people that earn minimum wage, are not included in this government's plan for economic recovery because this government clearly doesn't care

about those hard-working Manitobans who aren't millionaires. It's a shame. A lot of really decent folks.

And this government continues with the myth that, well, it's just teenagers living in their parents' basement that are earning minimum wage. We know that's not true. They know that's not true. And that's the really galling part is they keep that myth going while they know full well that it's single mothers, that it's people of Indigenous ancestry, it's more recent Canadians, it's the BIPOC community that's largely been affected by these miserly raises and freezes to minimum wage. It's the most disadvantaged people in society that this government refuses to recognize, refuses to ensure that they get ahead.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, what is the right answer? Is it \$15? Well, we know that's no longer the right answer for a living wage for Manitoba. We've seen various studies that talk about it being \$16 and some-odd cents in Winnipeg.

And it was interesting at the committee hearing on minimum wage that one of the presenters from CCPA had presented some charts that talked about the minimum wage requirement for a living wage in northern Manitoba was less than Winnipeg.

So, we asked the presenter about the cost of groceries in northern Manitoba, and they said, well, they were very limited in their study in that they used Statistics Canada numbers that didn't take into account if you live in a fly-in community, if you live in one of the northern communities that depends on trucks bringing food in; that really, \$16 an hour, \$18 an hour, may not be the right number based solely on what the actual costs are.

I just saw a thing yesterday, as a matter of fact, talking about gas prices. And people in the city are, oh, it's \$1.60, it's \$1.50, what are we going to do? Tadoule Lake—\$3.09 per litre.

How will people in a community like that survive on \$15 an hour, part-time work, perhaps? They still need to drive places, particularly when the winter road is open. They need to be able to spend the 12 hours going across that winter road to try and stock up on things to take back home with them at more affordable prices in Thompson than what they will ever see in Tadoule.

They have no choice, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, but to try and stock up when that winter road is open, which, by the way, every year, it seems, that winter road is open for a shorter and shorter period of time, which means that they have to be able to afford

to stock up when they can get out of their community. But this government doesn't take that into account.

They don't take into account that, while the price of gas in that community is \$3.09 per litre, even in Flin Flon it's generally 5, 6, 7 cents a litre more than even in The Pas. And yet, people in those communities are forced to drive hundreds of kilometres for work, even at minimum wage jobs.

They're forced to drive, minimum, hundreds of kilometres to get health care because this government has ensured that health care in the North has disappeared. We've seen people have to drive themselves from Flin Flon to The Pas to get emergency medical care because there's no ambulances available.

But does this government stop and think for one minute about the increased costs for those people that are trying to survive on minimum wage? And I know lots of businesses in the North say, well, we can't get workers because they only want to pay minimum wage, the Walmarts of the world, for example, multibillion-dollar corporations that wonder why people won't come to work for them when they can't afford to.

What is the point of going to work four hours a day to get paid not enough to live on? We know that hard-working Manitobans deserve better than this.

So, we know that there's various formulas out there that can be used to come up with what is actually a living wage, and it may be \$16 an hour today; it may be \$18 an hour in some jurisdictions. We know that what this government is currently paying for minimum wage does not come close to meeting the needs of working Manitobans.

We know that people are making hard choices. Do we pay the rent this month? Do we put healthy food on the table for our kids this month? Do I miss the credit card payment this month? Do I put gas in the car this month? Those are choices that no member in this Chamber has to make. But people trying to survive on minimum wage are making those hard choices every month because of where the minimum wage is presently set and, unfortunately, where it's going to be set going forward for the next year.

We know that the formula that this government came up to after they froze the minimum wage and then tied it to the inflation rate from last year left people behind all those years, and then all of a sudden, along comes an inflation rate of 8 per cent. Workers have been left behind and this government refused to recognize that.

* (15:40)

Other governments recognized that, due to inflationary pressures, minimum wage needed to go up immediately. This government didn't do that. They didn't listen to recommendations from their Labour Management Review Committee. And I will admit that there was split recommendations from that committee, where labour understood that people needed to get paid more; and business, of course, looks after business interests.

But Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, here's the problem: when this government gives tax breaks to their wealthy friends, they don't put that money back into the economy. They hide it, they do things with it to ensure that the taxman can't get their hands on it.

But we know that when people that earn minimum wage, or for that matter, most people that work for hourly wages, period, even if it's not minimum, spend that money back here in Manitoba. They spend their money in the very businesses that are struggling for business right now, that don't want to see people get paid more.

Yet, it's those same people that are going to go to the hardware store and buy something that's broken and been broken for a while. It's those same people that may decide on a Friday night that we haven't had a meal out for two years. Let's go to that local restaurant. Let's support that local business.

We know that it's people that are earning those wages that now can afford to go to the grocery store and stock up on a few more things that they haven't been able to afford. We know that it's people earning low wages that keep that money going in the economy.

It's interesting to note that there's some reports in the paper today about some oil companies that were making grossly increased money, profits. Did that money go back into the economy to help their jurisdiction?

No, it didn't. It went into shareholders' pockets, to ensure that oil prices stayed high, to ensure that gas prices stayed high. It didn't go back into the local economy to help those local businesses that are afraid of what will happen when the minimum wage goes up.

And that's where the government fails, yet again. Because they could help small businesses understand that just the act of raising the minimum wage isn't going to put them out of business, because this government knows as well as we do that that is not what's

happened in any jurisdiction that's raised the minimum wage closer to a living wage. We know that businesses didn't shut down. They know that businesses didn't shut down.

Certainly, I understand local businesses, small businesses, being concerned that that may happen. So the government has a responsibility to show them that that is not historically what's happened. That people that got that extra money bought the kids a new pair of shoes, bought some extra groceries, made their mortgage payments, made their rent payments, helped the local economy grow.

And that's really what's so sad, is this government perpetuating the myth and not helping to educate all Manitobans that, really, what it means to raise the minimum wage to a living wage lifts people out of poverty, helps address issues around gangs, drugs, education.

Just keep in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker: at the same time this government chose to freeze minimum wage and then raise it at such miserly rates, they also cranked up tuition, making it harder for those Manitobans trying to survive on minimum wage to send their kids on to post-secondary education so that they could get jobs that didn't hold them in poverty. This government has tried to make sure that the next generation of kids are only the elites that will get that education. They've tried to ensure that those living in poverty today, that their kids will also live in poverty.

And we know that there's tremendous opportunity through education for young people to become productive members of society, to take on roles as doctors, nurses, things that we're so desperately short of, to become tradespeople, to help build a better Manitoba. But this government also cut out the requirements for apprentices on major projects because they didn't want average Manitobans getting ahead, it only wants the elite Manitobans to get ahead.

And that's such a shame. It's really—it's a crime that so many people that could be our next leaders are being held back because of where this government has decided to put minimum wage, where they've decided to put their economic priorities, to not help the people that need the help the most. It's such a shame that this government has stifled the growth of Manitoba for Manitobans.

They should be ashamed. They should all look into their own souls today and tomorrow and really look at the Manitoba they're leaving behind, particularly with what they're doing with minimum wage.

They're leaving Manitobans behind. They're leaving the next generation of Manitobans behind. They're leaving people out of the opportunity to be a part of a better Manitoba for all Manitobans, simply because this government does not want to help all Manitobans get ahead.

They're quite happy to cut cheques to millionaires at the same time they're cutting health care; at the same time they're cutting spending in education; at the same time they're raising tuition, keeping kids out of post-secondary education.

Minimum wage should be a living wage. And if it was a living wage, we could be in a Manitoba that all of us could be so much more proud of because we would be building a Manitoba for the future. We would be building a Manitoba that included all Manitobans. We'd be building a Manitoba that began to address the inequities of income distribution. Poverty, ill health, drugs, gangs; all those things can start to be addressed when people can afford to live decently.

And for so many Manitobans, the only chance they have is for this government to actually listen and raise minimum wage to a living wage, and to do that now. Not to wait for some election gimmick in 2023 to try and convince people that they're going to be the saviour of minimum wage earners.

Because I can tell you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, they are not—they don't like poor Manitobans. They never have, and they never will.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I—it's my honour to put a few words on the record here today. I was thinking when the member from Flin Flon was speaking about how you could tell a lot about a community by how it treats its most vulnerable. And I'm going to take that expression a little further: you can say a lot about a government by how much it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

* (15:50)

And in Manitoba, we're talking about 38,000 citizens—38,000 citizens—that this government doesn't respect, that this government doesn't believe should live with dignity, that this government doesn't feel any moral responsibility to improve their daily lives.

I don't know of any other issue that we've dealt with here in this Chamber since I've been elected that more clearly spells the difference between our party

and the governing party and what we value and who we value.

You know, oftentimes, people describe the PC Party as a coalition of privileged interests. That they're not so much as a party, but it's a handful of people who have their hand in the cookie jar of Manitoba taxpayers. And it is a collection of special interests. It's various groups that want to gain power for the purpose of skewing the rules of our economy so it works for them but doesn't work for anybody else.

And one of the cardinal rules of government—at least, from a progressive point of view—is that even though somebody hasn't voted for you, you represent them. And we, on this side of the House, represent all Manitobans—those who vote for us and those that don't.

That's very different from the governing party. The governing party doesn't view that way, doesn't see themselves as representing all of Manitobans. In fact, they break up Manitoba into little bits and pieces, and they have a good Manitoba and they have a not-so-good Manitoba. And the good Manitoba is whatever special interest funds their political party. Those are the good people. Those are the people that you have to listen to, and those are the people that they come here and fight for, and those are the people that they, you know, put forward in legislative agenda.

Unfortunately for Manitobans, that's very few people. There's very few donors to the PC Party and, therefore, very few people that this government actually feels a responsibility to or feels beholden to them.

And it's interesting watching this bill go through the House, because you know that in their heart—dark heart of hearts, they don't support it; they don't want to be doing this. This is the legislative equivalent of them going to the dentist's office, and they just want to get this done and forget about this whole business.

You know, when they took office, one of the—another great failure of this government, one of their eternal shames—we had the fourth highest minimum wage in Canada. Now, that isn't perfect; that isn't great. But we certainly were better than average. And of course, since that time, under this government, we've actually fallen to the lowest. And it was only because they were embarrassed, they were ashamed, they were 27 points down in the polls in Winnipeg, that they came up with this.

And maybe call it prairie rivalry, but when an equally retrograde government in the province next

door is going to raise their minimum wage higher than our retrograde government here, they actually had, at least, the presence of mind to be embarrassed by that. And it was only because of that public embarrassment did they act.

But when they acted, they did the very minimum reaction. They made it so that we are only slightly better than Saskatchewan. We're certainly not catching up to BC or Alberta or Ontario, and they have no interest in that.

And—because they have no vision for an economy where everybody in Manitoba wins. That's not their view of how we build Manitoba; that's not a view of how we build our economy. They have a handful of special interests that fund their party, and as long as they're doing okay, as long as their companies are all right, then they feel like they've done their job.

We don't believe that on this side of the House. We believe that all Manitobans should benefit from the Manitoba economy, that all young people have a future in this province, and that they have a place here, and that we can build something very special in this province, and that we can be a model, not only for other provinces, but other jurisdictions.

And, sadly, they—the very impoverished vision that this government has, they want us to be a low-wage, call-centre economy, because it somehow suits the special interests that keep the engine going over at their party office. And that's really unfortunate because we are in a cost-of-living crisis and this government has mismanaged the economy incredibly.

When they took over the economy in 2016, it was red-hot in Manitoba; it was the fastest growing non-petrol economy in the country. Since then, because of their cuts and austerity and the loss of all these family-supporting jobs, our economy has nosedived. We are now the seventh fastest growing economy in the country.

We have, to the shame of this government, actually become poorer as a province. We have lost GDP in the last three years. There's only three—well, two other provinces, including us, that have gotten poorer in the last few years. Everybody else, even because of COVID and all that, have—their economies have grown; they have gotten richer.

And this government has no response to that. They have no vision about how we can have an inclusive and democratic economy, and how we can enrich Manitobans and pay for our services. They've concentrated—their whole economic plan has been

squandering taxpayer money on tax cuts for out-of-province billionaires.

Well, you know, that's fine to make the Koch Brothers hundreds of thousands of dollars richer, but that doesn't make Manitobans richer. That doesn't create any jobs here. That doesn't alleviate poverty here.

You know, our jurisdiction is behind others in Canada for research and development. We're not innovating in this province. And probably one of the most shocking statistics that I've read recently—and it's searing, absolute searing indictment of the mediocrity and incompetence of this government—is that Manitobans are getting poorer, that there are less Manitobans now than in 2016 who can afford to own their own home.

And for most middle-class Manitobans, that is basically the source of their wealth and what they're able to pass to their children and grandchildren. And under this government, housing has become so unaffordable—and this was before the pandemic—that fewer Manitobans are actually in a position to own their home than they were in 2016.

So we have all become poorer as a province, and this government has no answers. Why? Well, because the special interests that run their party and give them their marching orders and say what legislation can and can't pass, and how much the minimum wage can be—well, they're doing just fine. And they can afford their houses just fine. And they really don't seem to care about, you know, their nanny or their gardener or the people who build their deck, and whether or not they can get by.

And that's really a shame because, I mean, we are talking about a Stefanson government—well, basically, both the Pallister governments—this is a party of millionaires, by millionaires, for millionaires, and there's this mean-spiritedness to it where they just don't seem to be able to connect or relate to Manitobans. And they certainly don't care about how Manitobans live, and have actually gone out of their way to make life less affordable for Manitobans.

And, you know, let's talk about the cost-of-living crisis, because it's very specific. It is, in Manitoba, fuel. Well, we know that international fuel companies have been making record profits, and so it's very much been funnelled by greed. Let's talk about grocery stores: Loblaw's has been making absolutely super profits, and this government just seems to accept that.

There's been talk in other quarters of Canadian politics of bringing in a windfall tax to these petroleum companies, to these massive, Superstore-type

grocery chains, in order to make sure that they also pay their fair share, that there's some solidarity with these companies and the people of Manitoba, so that they're not taking advantage of the situation and causing greed-based inflation.

* (16:00)

And, of course, the third big cost that's going up for Manitobans is housing, and that's directly on this government. I mean, there's a failure to act when it comes to gas, there's a failure to act when it comes to groceries, but housing is in the purview and the responsibility of this government.

And, of course, it's no accident that people can't afford to buy a home, that rents are skyrocketing—a very modest one-bedroom apartment in the city of Winnipeg will run you \$1,200-plus—and how people cannot afford that anymore.

Well, this government turned around and they sold off huge tracts of social housing, right? And when they did it, what was very interesting, of course: our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was the Housing minister then, and, of course, our Premier owned \$31 million in residential apartment buildings, including a large apartment building in my riding.

And, leaving aside the ethical breach of forgetting that she sold it and reporting the \$31 million sales, there is something even more troubling about the special interests that are involved in here. You have a Premier who is—her side hustle is a commercial landlord business, who's also in charge of social housing and selling off our housing stock. Which basically means that, if you are a low-income Manitoban, you have less options of where you have to stay, and, of course, you know, the market prevails that if there are less of something, the costs goes up, so those very landlords can now make more money, because they can jack up the rent.

Well, they said: well, you know, we froze rents. Well, did you? Because we know that this government turned around again, our Premier—who was a commercial landlord, also the Housing minister—guaranteed that 100 per cent of landlords' requests for above-guideline rent increases would be approved. We have tenants in our ridings that were—saw their rent go up 10, 20, 30 per cent in a year.

So, again, if you're a special interest and you donate to the governing party and you happen to be a landlord, well, you're doing really good. You're doing really good, and they're there for you and they got your back.

Problem is, they don't have anybody else's, and they don't have Manitobans' backs. So, that's where we're at.

So let's talk about who actually is affected by this. Who are the 38,000 Manitobans that this government feels so, so comfortable leaving behind? Fifty-six per cent of minimum wage-earners are women. The majority of 'minimage'—minimum wage earners are adults—it's not your 16-year-old with a McDonald's job—and 62 per cent of earners are 20 years of age or older. These are people that work full time at minimum wage jobs to feed their family.

Sixty-three per cent of minimum wage-workers are not students; 58 per cent work for firms that employ more than 100 people—it's your Walmart; it's your McDonald's—companies that make billions of dollars a year, who can absolutely afford to pay living wages but don't, because it is a business strategy for them to save on labour costs by driving down their own workers' pay.

And more than half of 'minimage' workers have worked at the same job for over a year. And not once has this government ever tried to justify their opposition to a living wage based on economics. In fact, they have no real intellectual defence of their position. It's just simply: our donors don't want it, so that's what we're going to do. Because there is no intellectual defence here.

We are the last jurisdiction—in Manitoba—to catch up with other jurisdictions. And the benefit of that, if you want to call it that, is that you've seen what happened in Alberta and BC and Ontario, and the sky didn't fall. In fact, there is so much research now that shows that if you actually want boost your economy, paying your lowest wage workers a living wage is a fantastic economic strategy to do it.

And why is that? Well, if you are living a subsistence poverty lifestyle, you spend every penny that comes in. So, unlike the Stefanson's government's friends, the Koch brothers, they're not going to notice two hundred and fifty—\$300,000—whatever this government gave them last year. That's going to go into a bank account or another investment. They won't even know that that happened. It'll be some random entry in an accountant's ledger. Nobody will have even bothered to tell them, because that's essentially tip money for somebody like the Kochs.

But a dollar an hour for somebody who is running out of food at the end of the month is huge. A dollar an hour when your kids haven't had new clothes in a

year is huge. And they're going to spend every dime of that, and not only are they going to spend it, they're going to spend it in Manitoba at Manitoba small businesses.

And it's a myth that small businesses are against minimum wage. In fact, there's a number of new small-business advocacy organizations that are very progressive, that understand the economics, that know that not only are they workers, they are also consumers. And if you don't have anybody in your community that has any money, they can't spend it in your shop.

And if somebody has a living wage, they're going to spend that money in your shop. And guess what? You get wealthier. And that minimum wage laws boosts economies and can boost Manitoba's economy and can boost small business in Manitoba, which, again, this government seems to have no plan and no interest in helping small business.

I'm a small-business owner. I've been for years. Nobody at my office makes minimum wage. And what's the other sort of economic advantage about minimum wage laws is that not only does it directly help the 38,000 people who work and live on minimum wage in Manitoba, it helps everybody else. Because I can tell you, as an employer, every time there is a minimum wage increase, we increase the wages of everybody else to keep pace in our shop. And, in that way, we can ensure that people have a living wage.

So—and when we talk about a living wage, we're not even talking about, you know, trips to Mexico or anything. Far from it. And I guess this government doesn't understand that. It's—we're talking about basic household necessities. A worker earning a living wage is basically just covering food and shelter and clothing, and they're not taking on more consumer debt than they need to. So it's not a situation where people would live large in Manitoba with a living wage, but they would live with dignity and they would live with security.

And we know that when people live with economic security, they live less stressful lives; they have less conflict in their lives; they have better educational outcomes for their children; that they often avoid conflicts with the law; they use the health-care system less than people who are struggling financially because their lives are more stable and less chaotic, and they can live instead of survive.

And, right now, the perverse situation that we have in Manitoba is we have a lot of people that are just barely surviving, and this government could care less.

And, you know, it's penny-wise and pound foolish because, if you invest in the people of Manitoba, you will get that investment back tenfold, because there'll be less use of the health-care system, less use of the child-care system. There will be more graduation at our high schools and more people translating that education into good-paying jobs and more taxes. There'll be less stress on the health-care system through less, sort of, poverty-related health-care costs.

* (16:10)

All that saves Manitoba money. All that extra economic activity from people who are living a subsistence, marginal living, where they're spending that extra dollar an hour in local stores means that there's more tax revenue from our small businesses; our small businesses, which are at the brink, that tell me that this government has ignored them, that they are collapsing under the weight of COVID debt, and this government, of course, doesn't see them, doesn't feel a responsibility for them and is ignoring them. That's the type of thing that will actually save them and ensure that their business can keep going and that they can still keep employing Manitobans.

So, when we look at what has been wrong with the PC approach, first of all, again, this was more about managing a problem than actually wanting to give people a living wage, that this government is philosophically opposed to 38,000 Manitobans living with dignity. I—it's amazing that a political party could take that position, but here we are. But here we are. This mean-spirited government that doesn't feel the responsibility to 38,000 Manitobans.

And so we had, you know, a millionaire, Brian Pallister, come along and say, well, I got to manage this problem because it's embarrassing and, you know, we look like jerks, and so I'm going to bring in this minimum wage law and we're going to set the rate really low, at \$11, and then at a time when inflation was running less than 2 per cent a year, we'll only allow it to increase by inflation every year.

So, what the government did is they legislated poverty. They weren't actually raising minimum wage; they were putting a cap on it. And they were essentially preventing 38,000 Manitoba families from succeeding.

And then we see what the big problem is is that we have a cost-of-living crisis. Rent is going through the roof again; this government's responsible for that. Groceries are gouging people. Again, this government is impotent and will do nothing about it. And gas stations are making record profits. Again, this government's completely silent on that.

And it is now 5 per cent, 6 per cent, 7 per cent inflation. But, of course, with this piece of legislation, the government can't react with any kind of speed, with any sort of dispatch, and it's completely obvious that the legislation failed. There is an express acknowledgement from this government that their legislation's failed because they've had to come back now and legislate increases because their legislation didn't actually meet the moment. It wasn't sufficient for what was facing Manitobans now.

So, by us passing this law, I think there's a recognition that this government is in over its head, that it doesn't know what it's doing when it comes to regulating the economy and minimum wage. And so, this government has been forced to act.

Now, what's a living wage in Manitoba? And, thankfully, we've had some academics review that. And because things have skyrocketed, especially groceries and rent, the living wage is gone up in Manitoba. So, in 2022, the living wage in the Winnipeg area is now \$18.34. In Brandon, it is \$15.66. In Thompson, it's \$16.25.

And when we're at committee, we certainly questioned the witnesses about what was the discrepancy between Winnipeg versus Thompson and Brandon. And, of course, the answer was, and—again, another failing of this government. It is the cost of rental housing, which has skyrocketed in Winnipeg. Obviously, it's gone up in Brandon and Thompson, but not to the same extent. And so, because that is often the biggest expense that Manitoba families are facing, that affects the actual living wage rate here in Manitoba.

This is wholly within this government's control. They can do something. They can alleviate. They can act.

But this government has consistently sat on its hands and said, well, it's not our problem; we're not going to do anything. These people don't donate to my party, you know; I don't know them. So, you know, good luck, and I'll wave to you when you're sleeping in a bus shelter.

So, that's where we at—[interjection] Or take a picture. Or, yes, come down and, while you're living on the street, I'm going to engage in some, you know, tourism and take photos.

So, it's time in Manitoba to immediately raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. I mean, it was probably time four years ago to do it. And then, once we get to a \$15 minimum wage, then we got to start talking about a living wage in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: What is a living wage?

Mr. Wasyliv: Well, my friend asked what was the living wage. It's—this year, and it'll probably go up, is \$18.34 in the city of Winnipeg, you know.

And the fact that this government won't even entertain that discussion and what—this bill and this debate today is about preventing that from happening, that they are trying to throw roadblocks in and say look, you know, we raised your minimum wage, what are you talking about, you know? You're—you know, you may be starving, you may not be able to afford your apartment but, you know, it's \$15. What are you complaining about?

So, this isn't about helping Manitobans; this is actually trying to prevent that help from coming. And this is about the government trying to manage public relations and abandoning 38,000 Manitobans.

You know, this government could absolutely increase the minimum wage immediately to \$15; we don't have to wait to April 1st. And by making the minimum wage into a living wage, it is going to be a huge boost for our economy. We are going to be able to attract workers to Manitoba, ones that we need. We are going to be able to keep low-wage workers in low-wage jobs because they will actually be able to support their family without having to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. There'll be less churn and turnover in small businesses, there'll be less costs for small businesses to retrain. These are the things that will actually help grow the Manitoba economy.

So, now, just to comment here, here's some of the attitude from the government. I'm quoting from Brian Pallister, millionaire premier, when he's discussing why minimum wage doesn't help eliminate poverty. He said, it's a mitigation tactic that is seen on the surface to be helping but really doesn't reduce poverty.

He said that on CBC, December 29th, 2016. I can't think of a more out-of-touch comment from somebody who had a seven-car garage. I—and that's beyond offensive and obviously inaccurate.

And here's another quote from our former millionaire premier: You jack up the minimum wage, you know what you do? You reduce entry-level jobs. You stop young people from being able to get into the workforce in the first place.

So, it's the poor people's fault. So, if we just lower their demands for, you know, food and housing and dignity, you know, they could be working for free. And why isn't that what they want to do? And our—and it befuddled your former leader and our shameful past premier.

So, with those very brief comments, thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and share some words about Bill 4 and speak to minimum wage. And the last two speakers, those are—they're interesting speeches, and I'm going to—I might have to adjust them a little bit, but I'm going to focus on the bill here for now.

It is overdue, the issue of minimum wage. And when we think about how much the cost of living and inflation has, in fact, gone up—and I'm speaking specifically about Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker—when we think about grocery bills and how much they have gone up, when we think about the price of gas and how much it has gone up, it is not fair to expect that Manitobans, in any way, in any career, are able to keep up with the cost of living right now. Everyone is having to change their ways of living, how they are spending their money, what they are choosing to do with their free time, because of it.

* (16:20)

And I'm happy that we were able to actually speak about financial literacy earlier today in these Chambers, because I think it is important that we're spreading this information and helping each other out wherever we can, in whatever ways we can, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, I think about the small businesses, and they were affected so much during the pandemic. I know I had endless emails and phone calls and conversations with small businesses for—everything from dance studios to restaurants to local community pop-ups. And every single business was affected.

And it's not just the small businesses, many in which had to close down because they were not given the supports that they needed from all levels of government, but it's also bigger businesses.

And I haven't asked for permission yet, so I'm not going to state the business that I'm talking about, but

I have one business owner who came to me. He owns a few franchises and he is now having to let employees go. Even though he is a big business owner, he is having to let employees go because he cannot keep up now with minimum wage going up, because we are not providing—in this case, him—the services that he needs to be able to maintain his businesses that are contributing so much to our economy here in Manitoba.

And I think about, you know, I have two friends right now who work in group homes and care homes, and they tell me about how they're making minimum wage. And when you ask them about their day, they will tell horrific stories oftentimes, where they go into work and they literally have their hair pulled while at work, making minimum wage.

It is something we need to be revisiting: wages across the board, making sure people are being paid for the efforts that they are putting in, into their careers, into their jobs, making our province a better place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I do want to spend a little bit of time, just—I find it very difficult, sometimes, to listen to the NDP and just the amount of hypocrisy that comes out of their mouths sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Just this afternoon, we heard from the member from Flin Flon and the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), and I know that they're newer MLAs—I know—I believe the member from Flin Flon got elected when I got elected in 2016, and the member for Fort Garry a couple of years ago. But they have to understand the past of the—and the history of the NDP party.

The NDP party completely destroyed the finances here in the province of Manitoba. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP, they're known for writing these blank cheques.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And they're known for that because it's dangerous, Mr. Deputy Speaker; money left, right and centre with no consideration, no foresight, no planning for the future. And that is why our province is, in fact, in the state that it is.

If it wasn't for the NDP—and I'm just going to list a couple of examples, Mr. Deputy Speaker—if it wasn't for the NDP, our Provincial Nominee Program would not be the total disarray in which it was six years ago. People were waiting four or five years just to hear

back if they were going to be accepted within the Provincial Nominee, and that was under the NDP.

So, for them to come into these Chambers and say, we know how to manage money, no. We can't forget this. And I'm not trying to give credit to the government, because they haven't done much better, but the NDP completely destroyed the finances here in our province.

We can talk about long-term-care facilities and just the disarray, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux) has the floor. I would ask we show a respect and allow her to speak. The level of heckling for the number of people in this room is too much.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know people don't want to admit to the past here in these Chambers.

But the reality is, when the NDP were in government for 17 years, they did—they completely destroyed the finances here in our province. And the PCs—yes, they like to use the line that they're cleaning up, but at a certain point, they have to take responsibility, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another thing that this—the former NDP government did: they really, really messed up our long-term-care facilities. That's why we have such long wait-lists right now to this day.

And I don't think they've yet, to this day, recognized that personal-care homes are not the only type of facility. We have supportive housing homes. We have retirement homes, 55-plus homes. We have hospices. We have seniors who are still in hospitals because they have nowhere else to go. And this program—or, this problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is rooted under the NDP.

And that's why we need a change from the NDP, we need a change from the PCs and, I would argue, we need a Manitoba provincial Liberal government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, you know, the last—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: —example that I'm going to share—and, you know, the member from Wolseley says that is hilarious, but I don't think so. I think that is what democracy truly is. We have parties here in the province to contribute to our democracy. We don't want

to keep going back and forth, PC and NDP; these problems are being dug deep.

We need a change altogether, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's why the last topic I'll talk about—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I'm calling the opposition benches to order, including the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

Ms. Lamoureux: You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it fascinating that the members are making such a joke out of this. They need to go back and look at the history of their party. They probably should've done that before they decided to run for the party.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also think about our justice facilities. Our justice facilities are completely packed; we don't have space. And under the NDP government, they actually closed down so many of our services that we needed.

When we talk about all the funds that were going into—*[interjection]*—oh, I have a member shouting across the way about relevance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm literally talking about funds that are going into—or, were going into youth justice committees that were cut under the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know it's uncomfortable to be criticized in this place. That's part of how this place works.

So, let's allow the member for Tyndall Park the liberty to say whatever she wants. Everyone has the same opportunity.

Ms. Lamoureux: I really appreciate your guidance. I recognize it is a hot topic—the topic of minimum wage, here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for bringing it back to minimum wage. I was just going to encourage her to do that, and the words were on the tip of my tongue and I was standing up when she did that very thing.

So, please continue.

Ms. Lamoureux: Again, I thank you for the guidance there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And as members of this House know, oftentimes when you begin to be heckled, you often want to respond to the heckling, and so as I was sharing I was responding to what was being heckled across the way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I'm going to leave my remarks at that, and—not impressed that it took this long for minimum wage to go up. I think that this government needs to do more to ensure that all the small businesses and people who need the extra resources to maintain small businesses and the jobs that they are doing—they are provided these resources.

And I've got to admit, they're doing a better job than the NDP, though.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolesey): It's going to be a hard act to follow, but I'll do my best.

Just before I jump straight into talking about minimum wage, I will remind the member who spoke just before me that the NDP did have 10 balanced budgets in a row. That's an important part of history.

And it is hard to remember so far back—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor: —because, you know, folks don't like to do that. But last night, I attended the West Broadway Biz association AGM, and what I was struck by was that small-business owners were not talking about the increase in minimum wage. They weren't—well, a couple of them did talk to me and said they were in support of it—but nobody was complaining about it. Nobody was bringing it up as a concern for the survival of their small businesses.

What the—and that is important to understand, because we've heard a lot of fear mongering from members on the other side of the House; people—you know, members who are wealthy, members who are speaking out in support of their wealthy, large-business-owning friends, that somehow having a fair living wage and increasing the minimum wage will somehow harm the business sector.

Yet, for small businesses in my community, this was not even on the agenda of their AGM. But these business owners are well aware that when minimum wage was increased in Ontario, employment grew, including in the retail, food services and other hospitality industries that are well-represented in this West Broadway area.

* (16:30)

What these business owners were talking about, though, was the impact of poverty and homelessness on their businesses. They were talking about the impact of people in our community not having access to

public washrooms, meals or housing. They were talking about the impact of bad provincial policy on their businesses. They were talking about folks they know who used to be customers who are now, and I quote, down on their luck and now homeless in the same neighbourhood.

But we know these folks aren't down on their luck because it's not actually about luck. It's about the will of government to ensure that people have affordable housing, a fair wage and mental health supports if they need it. This government has shown their lack of will time and time again.

Imagine how much better the small businesses in my community and in your community would fare if everyone who lived in the community made a living wage, including a minimum wage that could lift them out of poverty. How many more people could just buy groceries, spend money at our local coffee shops and restaurants, pay for haircuts or walk into a bakery or a bookstore and buy a family member a gift or treat themselves to something?

But people working below the poverty line never, ever get to do that. It is better for workers, it is better for small businesses and certainly better for our communities when people are paired a—paid a fair wage and are able to take care of their families and participate fully in society.

In 2019, the Manitoba NDP committed to a \$15 minimum wage. It's almost four years later, and it is time to immediately raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and then quickly move towards a living wage in Manitoba.

Raising the minimum wage is important, but this bill does not increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. As the cost of living continues to rise and life gets more and more expensive for Manitobans, this is an inadequate increase in the province's minimum wage. The PCs have also chosen to increase the minimum wage in a convoluted way, rather than simply increasing it to \$15 an hour right now.

Manitoba had one of the highest minimum wages in the country before the PCs took office, and many minimum wage workers are now forced to work two or more jobs just to make enough money to get by. And that's wrong. No one should be in poverty, including minimum wage workers that are working full time.

We have been hearing from countless Manitobans who are concerned about affordability and the rising costs of living, especially when it comes to buying

groceries, rising gas prices and paying their bills. The rising cost of living is making life unaffordable for many Manitobans and making it harder for them—for families—to make ends meet.

The rising cost of living means that the minimum wage loses its purchasing power as the cost of everyday essentials, like groceries and gas, continue to increase. It means that Manitoba's already low minimum wage is even lower now than it was months ago.

In January 2022, Canada's annual inflation rate reached 5.1 per cent, which outpaced wage increases of 2.4 per cent over the same period, and was the first time the annual inflation rate exceeded 5 per cent in more than 30 years. Rising prices of goods and services is even more detrimental for those with low and fixed incomes and those living off of limited savings.

Recent studies have shown that more than half of Canadians say they can't keep up with the cost of living, and seven in 10 Canadians report being stressed about money as inflation rates continue to grow. Nearly 40 per cent of parents indicated that they face challenges paying for child care, and we've certainly heard lots in this House today about exactly why Manitoba parents are struggling with child care, thanks to this PC government and their bad policies.

The pandemic has reinforced just how important front-line workers are. It's also shown that, despite their importance, many of them are not making a living wage. Manitoba workers don't want a one-time bonus for risking their lives during a pandemic. They want a living wage every day forever, paid sick leave and stronger work protections.

Manitobans were looking for hope in the recent Throne Speech, hope for some economic relief and hope for a better future for their kids. But the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) failed to meet the moment.

We believe that the PC government should immediately increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and then ensure it becomes a living wage so no Manitoba who work—no Manitoban who works full time has to live in poverty.

Increasing the minimum wage and making it a living wage would help attract workers to industries that are currently experiencing labour shortages and would ensure no worker who works full time will have to live in poverty.

If the members on the other side of the House had read the briefing paper or listened to speeches made at committee by the Manitoba Federation of Labour,

they would know that household spending accounts for 56 per cent of Canada's GDP. Ask almost any small-business owner what they need to grow their business, and just like the members—the businesses in my community, they will say that they need customers with money to spend in their shops.

Low-wage workers spend the largest proportion of their take-home pay on consumer goods and services. When lower income households see a sustained rise in incomes, they spend virtually all of it. Much of it goes to food, rent and to other areas of the local economy. In fact, many minimum wage earners, such as those working in grocery stores and food services, spend a considerable amount of their earnings at the very businesses they work at; adding money to their pockets means they have more money to spend there.

If they had read the briefing paper and spent any time reading Hansard or at the committee table listening to Manitoba Federation of Labour, who represents about 125,000 workers in this province, they would also know that the types of workers who would benefit from substantial increases in the minimum wage include 56 per cent of minimum wage earners—oh—earners are women.

The majority of minimum wage earners are adults and 62 per cent of earners are over 20 years of age or older. Sixty-three per cent of minimum wage workers are not students, and 58 per cent work for firms that employ more than 100 people. More than half have worked in the same job for over a year.

Recently, I supported garment industry workers on the picket line. Some of these workers had been making minimum wage for 30 years. These statistics clearly counter the common misconception that most minimum wage earners are young students living rent-free in their parents' basement.

I don't know about you over there, but I have one of those rent-free young people living in my house, and I dream of the day when she can make enough money to actually be able to pay rent, buy groceries, pay for heat and water, phone, all the things that are necessary to be able to launch and make it out on her own. *[interjection]*

And my colleagues are chuckling over here, but it's a real thing. It's a real thing to have. A lot of you have experienced this. I have a 21-year-old going on 22, who finds it almost impossible to think about moving out. And a lot of her friends are in the same situation, even having graduated from university, but many of them working minimum wage jobs or even

slightly above, but it's simply not enough. And I—and some of your kids may be in the same boat, but my baby's not a trust fund baby, so until she can make some more money, it's going to be a long time of trying to make it work in our household.

So, these numbers dispel the myth that most minimum wage earners work for small mom-and-pop shops, and that minimum wage is just a starting wage that workers quickly transition above. Most minimum wage workers work for big employers, and most have had that same job for over a year, which, you know, I come back to that day on the picket line with those garment industry workers. They were merely looking for a 30-cent-an-hour raise, 30 cents above minimum wage, workers who had worked doing a really hard job for 30 years.

And, you know, we take that kind of work, that invisible women's work, for granted; invisible work of immigrants to this country who are struggling, who can't—who can barely put food on the table, let alone ever take themselves for a nice haircut or buy something special for their family.

We know that food prices have soared in recent months. Harvest Manitoba says that demand for hampers is at an all-time high and continues to break its previous records, which is not the type of record breaking we ever want to celebrate.

Harvest Manitoba has seen an increase of 30 to 40 per cent of their pre-pandemic volumes and expects that number to increase with rising fuel prices. Other food banks and organizations that help people in poverty are reporting similar numbers. Harvest said it delivered 12,000 food hampers to local families in February, the most they've ever delivered in a single month.

* (16:40)

Food insecurity is also a significant issue for many First Nations communities and especially in northern Manitoba. First Nations communities in northern Manitoba already pay high prices for fuel and groceries, and many are worried about the impact rising costs will have on struggling families.

The remote community of Barren Lands First Nation in Brochet, about 940 kilometers north of Winnipeg, is one of 121 northern and isolated communities eligible for the federal Nutrition North Canada program, which is 'subsidy' applied against the total cost of items such as fruit and vegetables, milk, meat, bread and some non-food items such as diapers and menstrual products, shipped by air, ice

roads, sealift or barge. However, residents still struggle to purchase enough food and especially healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, as they are often unaffordable.

The recent war in Ukraine is also contributing to rising food and energy costs. Ukraine's farms feed millions around the world, and the country is often called the breadbasket of the world. Russia is the world's largest supplier of wheat and, together with Ukraine, accounts for nearly a quarter of total global wheat exports. And the burden of these prices falls heavily on the most vulnerable.

At this time, with minimal—a minimal increase to minimum wage, not nearly enough to actually support working Manitobans; with the cost of milk going up because the government decided it would be okay for the cost of milk to go up; at the same time, the PCs continue to make life less affordable for renters.

They ended their freeze to evictions and rent increases in the middle of a pandemic. They eliminated the education property tax and in the process, reduced a tax credit for renters. They say that rents were temporarily frozen but then still accepted applications for above-guideline rent increases. And while renters are losing out, landlords are getting nearly seven times more in education tax rebates than the average homeowner.

We know that the PC government approved 100 per cent of rent applications in 2019-20—sorry—of above-guideline rent applications in 2019-2020, resulting in some renters paying 30 to 50 per cent more for rent. Imagine doing that on minimum wage. Imagine doing that on this ridiculously low, some of the most embarrassingly low minimum wage in the entire country.

Deborah Kunkel, a senior on fixed income, saw her rent go up \$300 a month after the PCs lifted the eviction ban and approved an above-guideline increase. Higher housing costs and less support mean families and seniors living below the poverty line will have to make difficult decisions between housing, food and medications.

It's clear that the PC government is out of touch with the reality of what Manitobans need, and they refuse to establish a living wage.

The education tax rebate, which first took effect in 2021, provides \$40 million for railroads, pipelines and out-of-province corporate landlords. In fact, the largest recipient of the new education tax rebate are

the owners of the Polo Park shopping centre, Cadillac Fairview, which received a cheque totalling more than \$1 million.

The Progressive Conservatives voted in favour of legislation that gives the biggest payouts to big businesses—many, many big businesses that are paying people well below the poverty line because our minimum wage is too low.

What we need is a real focus on the priorities of Manitobans. We put forward an amendment to exempt railroads, pipelines and out-of-province corporate landlords from the payout, but that was voted down by the members opposite.

We have a PC government who believes that raising the minimum wage doesn't actually help to eliminate poverty. It's a mitigation tactic that's seen on the surface to be helping but really doesn't reduce poverty. That's a quote from the former premier, Brian Pallister.

And we've certainly heard nothing to indicate from this—from the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) that she sees it any differently. They have publicly said that raising the minimum wage hurts young people. You jack up the minimum, you know what you do? You reduce entry-level jobs. You stop young people from being able to get into the workforce in the first place.

So, the PCs' minimum wage increases have kept our minimum wage as the second worst in the country. The increase they made this fall was inadequate. No one should be forced to live in poverty, especially not while working full time.

Prices for almost everything are going up and Manitoba minimum wage workers are just falling further and further behind.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Is it the pleasure—is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure—I suppose I should say the question before the House is Bill 4, the minimum wage adjustment act—third reading and concurrence of Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 6—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will now proceed, as previously announced by the honourable Government House Leader, to bill—second reading of Bill 6, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), that Bill 6, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: It's a pleasure to speak today on the Manitoba Public Insurance amendment act. Members will know that I'm the minister responsible for the MPI act but, of course, MPI is a Crown corporation and so it operates independently.

But when the act needs to be changed, generally, what happens is that the officials from MPI will come forward to the minister and say, these are the different proposals that they're looking to change within the act. And then, as the minister, I bring those forward.

That's separate and apart from things like earlier today, I announced the Crown corporation committee on MPI, which will be held next week on Monday. And at that committee, it allows the opportunity for all members of the House to come and ask questions of Manitoba Public Insurance officials. And they then get those answers on the operations of MPI.

So, sometimes, there'll be questions about future rate setting or different reserve funds, or those sort of things. Those questions are appropriately asked to MPI officials in the committee. But as minister responsible for the act, not necessarily operations of MPI, I bring forward changes for the act. And that is what this is. This is an amendment to the act.

So the bill would do a few different things and I'll briefly describe each of them. It'll modernize aspects of the personal insurance protection plan, which provides benefits to Manitobans who are injured in motor vehicle accidents.

The four amendments that I'm advancing on behalf of Manitoba Public Insurance are intended to ensure that the Personal Injury Protection Plan continues to provide both value for money for ratepayers

and appropriate supports to victims of all ages who are injured in a motor vehicle accident.

Members will know, and some will have been here, I think, when MPI went to a no-fault insurance system where it took most of the litigation—not all of the litigation; there are still a few nuances which one can litigate on. For example, I think you can still litigate on the fault.

* (16:50)

So, if you got into an accident, you can—and you assign 50-50, as an example, for fault, I believe you can still litigate on whether or not that fault is not properly assigned, or you can take that to small claims court, I believe, and say that I believe that this should be a different fault assessment.

But the litigation on the quantum of injuries doesn't exist under no-fault insurance because we have things like the Personal Injury Protection Plan and other plans that allow for payment through Manitoba Public Insurance.

So, the first amendment that's contained within this bill will allow for Manitoba Public Insurance to direct benefits to a person in trust when a claimant has impaired cognitive functioning. This will ensure that funds which are meant to support victims of accidents who have impaired cognitive functioning are used appropriately to support the victim's care.

So this is about ensuring that funds go into a trust for the individual who would be designated to get those funds but may not be able to make proper self-determination in terms of the use of those funds.

And so, of course, there are many different places within statute and law that we put people in the care of someone else, either financially or physically or, some cases, both. But this is ensuring that money goes in trust and then it can be appropriately distributed to somebody who otherwise has impaired cognitive function.

The second amendment will expand the income replacement indemnity coverage to Manitobans over the age of 65 who have a pattern of seasonal employment or an offer of employment at the time of injury, further aligning with supports for the Province's seniors strategy.

So this is ensuring that, you know, for example, an individual who is maybe 65 years age but they only

work, you know, four or five months of the year generally, if they were—but they have a regular pattern of that employment—if they were to get injured during the time when they weren't working, their benefits might be less because, you know, they might be looked at and gone, well, they weren't working at the time of the injury, and so their amount of money they'd be eligible for wouldn't necessarily reflect the fact that they had a regular pattern of work and they would've returned to work in whatever the seasonal time that would be but for the accident and the injury.

So it is about improving the benefit for individuals who are 65 or older and have that seasonal pattern, which we're seeing more and more, I think, these days, as individuals return to work after retirement, maybe, from a job. And particularly in these days of a tight labour market, there are more opportunities for individuals who are 65 or older to be able to return to work.

So it's a benefit that otherwise might sometimes have been called a loophole or a gap in the system, where otherwise people might fall into that gap.

There's another amendment, and currently MPI is allowed to recover money that was paid to a person who was not entitled to it as a result of that person providing false or inaccurate information. The—this third amendment will allow MPI to recover from a claimant any funds that were paid to a third-party service provider as part of a fraudulent claim.

So, as—and this can be, of course, questioned at committee as well; we'll have MPI officials there. But my understanding from this is, of course, where MPI will often do examinations of fraud, whether or not a claim was a fraudulent claim, and they, of course, have the ability to recover funds from the individual who was involved with that fraudulent claim, but sometimes money flows to a third-party service provider that's involved—not—they're not involved with the fraudulent claim other than they provide services to the individual who claimed, falsely or fraudulently, benefits.

Now, this wouldn't be, then, MPI getting that money back from the service provider, because they might very well have been an innocent victim as well. They might not have—they wouldn't have been party to the fraud or known about the fraud.

But if money had gone to that service provider, it would allow MPI to get that money back from the

claimant himself or herself who had made the fraudulent claim and caused money to be paid to a service provider. And so, it's important about maintaining the integrity of the MPI system.

The final amendment will ensure that when MPI has an agreement in place with another jurisdiction, residents of those other provinces are not compensated twice for the same accident and that out-of-province insurers are not off-loading their responsibility to compensate their insured onto Manitoba Public Insurance.

So, one might imagine a Manitoban driving in our province with a resident of Saskatchewan in the car, for example, and—coming back from the Grey Cup or something; I don't know.

But getting into an—and that's—I know it's a little fresh, I shouldn't be raising those issues yet—but getting into an accident then. The Manitoban, of course, is insured in Manitoba. But in all likelihood, the Saskatchewan resident would be insured by their insurance provider.

And so, this brings clarity to the fact that the Saskatchewan resident should be paid out by their insurance provider and the Manitoba resident should be paid out by the Manitoba insurance provider, MPI.

So these are really four—I wouldn't want to say simple amendments because some of them are complex in terms of their drafting, but they all either bring clarity to a situation like ensuring we know who is getting insurance from who, or they provide an additional benefit.

So in the case of a senior who's 65 with seasonal employment, it provides a benefit that they might otherwise be excluded from. In the case where somebody has a cognitive impairment, the ability to put money into trust is about protecting them as an individual.

So there's a number of different things within these amendments that I think are beneficial to rate-payers and to those who might be claiming different support through Manitoba Public Insurance.

Now, I think the members, as we get into a question period relatively shortly, members might have specific questions about the operation or details of MPI and how it relates to personal injury protection, is one example.

I would ask members, you know, to have some leniency on me in terms of those because in question period, of course, I try to answer questions fully and appropriately in the Department of Justice, but with MPI, this is an operational issue sometimes.

And so members might be tempted to get into operational questions in this question-and-answer period which is coming up which might be more appropriately directed at the committee that we're going to have on Monday. If members have operational questions around MPI, reserve funds or rate setting or those sorts of things, they are naturally—or they should be naturally asked at the MPI committee on Monday and not here in terms of this question period.

As it relates to the act, where there are questions about the amendments in the act, I will endeavour to answer them if I can during this time or I may take them as notice and answer them in the committee that we're going to have at some point when this bill is called to committee either—well, probably more likely in the spring, I suppose, of next year. And we can have officials answer the questions at that time.

But it's important to bring clarity about what the minister who's responsible for the act can answer as opposed to officials who are actually operating the Crown corporation.

So, just a conclusion, you know, as we are entering the holiday season, and I hope you'll give me a little latitude, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would say, because it's related to MPI, that this is the time where people are often at festivities. We're back to those again, thankfully. Sometimes people 'imbide' in different things at these festivities.

MPI is running the Operation Red Nose—or sponsoring, not running it—they're sponsoring Operation Red Nose again in Manitoba. And we had the launch of that just a little while ago.

And, of course, it was made clear there from the officers who were at the launch of Operation Red Nose that it is up to individuals to have a plan to get home safely during the holiday season.

So if you're planning to drink or do other things that might impair your driving, make sure you have a plan before you go to the festivities that you're going to get home safely.

And Operation Red Nose can be part of that plan, or there might be other things that one could have

in place for a plan. But it's very important that Manitobans do that because we want everybody to get home safely this holiday season and have a wonderful Christmas and other celebrations that are happening at this year.

So with that, I look forward to questions that members might have during the question-and-answer period.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, a question period of up to 15 minutes will be held, and we will deal with that at that time.

This House is, therefore, adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

Have a good evening, everybody.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Health-Care System	
Bill 216–The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Right to Repair Electronic Products)		Wasyliw	375
Maloway	365	Gordon	375
Bill 217–The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act		Johnston	376
Gerrard	365	Privatization of Lifeflight Air Ambulance Service	
		Bushie	376
		Helwer	376
Tabling of Reports		Viral Infections in Schools and Daycares	
Friesen	366	Lamoureux	377
		Helwer	377
Ministerial Statements		Post-Secondary International Students	
Donation to Winnipeg Foundation		Lamoureux	377
Stefanson	366	Reyes	378
Brar	366	Household Radon Exposure	
Gerrard	367	Gerrard	378
Financial Literacy Month		Wharton	378
Ewasko	367	Construction on Legislative Grounds	
Altomare	368	Isleifson	378
Lamoureux	368	Helwer	378
Members' Statements		Federal-Provincial Child-Care Agreement	
Happy Holidays		Sala	379
Gordon	369	Ewasko	379
Gordon Landriault		Petitions	
Lathlin	369	Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library	
Drs. Bruce and Janice Waddell		Altomare	380
Nesbitt	370	Provincial Road 224	
Cody McDonald		Lathlin	380
Altomare	370	Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools	
Koats for Kids Campaign		B. Smith	381
Friesen	371	Lead in Soils	
Oral Questions		Lindsey	381
Health-Care System Reform		Security System Incentive Program	
Altomare	371	Maloway	382
Gordon	371	Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools	
Rural Paramedic Services		Marcelino	382
Wiebe	372	Hearing Aids	
Gordon	372	Gerrard	383
Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy		Foot-Care Services	
Asagwara	373	Redhead	384
Gordon	373	Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools	
Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy		Sandhu	384
Fontaine	374		
Gordon	374		

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 4—The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act,
2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended)

Helwer	385
Lindsey	386
Wasyliw	390
Lamoureux	395
Naylor	397

Second Readings

Bill 6—The Manitoba Public Insurance
Corporation Amendment Act

Goertzen	400
----------	-----

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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