

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

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

Vol. LXXI No. 37A - 10 a.m., Thursday, April 19, 2018

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 19, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I am advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader (Mr. Cullen) indicating that the government caucus has identified Bill 212, The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act, as the first of their three selected bills for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 24 permits each recognized party to select up to three private members' bills per session to proceed to a second reading vote and requires the House leader to provide written notice as to the date and time of the vote.

The Government House Leader has therefore advised that the question will be put on second reading of Bill 212 today, April 19th, 2018, at 11:55 a.m.

* * *

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, is there leave to consider second reading of Bill 222?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave this morning to proceed to Bill 222? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 222—The Residential Tenancies
Amendment Act**

(Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs)

Madam Speaker: We will then move to second reading, Bill 222, The Residential Tenancies

Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs).

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I am very proud, on behalf of our caucus, to bring this idea of mine forward. *[interjection]*

Oh, you might need that part first. Sorry. It's an exciting day.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that the residential—Bill 222, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Altemeyer: On behalf of our caucus, I am very proud to bring forward Bill 222, an act which is all about protecting tenants from excessive rent increases in the face of high utility costs and also to bring forward the idea of how this government could be playing a useful role in enabling landlords and building owners to help them fix up their buildings.

I want to start with some direct stories about the enormity of the problem that is faced. In the West Broadway neighbourhood alone, which I'm proud to say is a large part of the Wolseley constituency, over 90 per cent of the residents who live there are renters and they, as is the case for renters everywhere, are caught in a horrible Catch-22 situation when it comes to utility costs.

Tenants always are the ones who end up paying for the utility bills in the buildings that they live in. Those costs are either included in the rent that is charged to them or they pay the utility bills in addition to the rent that they pay to the building owner.

Tenants, however—Madam Speaker, it's a little loud in here—but, in any event, tenants do not own the building in which they live, so they do not have the right to make any physical improvements to their home because the property is owned by the landlords.

Landlords, similarly, are caught in a very similar Catch-22 because they have no incentive, understandably, to fix up the building—not a direct

incentive, anyways, because as utility costs rise, under Manitoba law a landlord or property owner has the right to seek a rent increase to cover rising utility costs under The Residential Tenancies Act. In this way, utility costs are always passed on to the tenants and the landlord has no direct financial incentive to fix up their building to reduce these costs. Tenants are the ones who end up getting squeezed time and time again.

And this government is not making things any better. In fact, they have actively made things worse on several fronts, and let's just take some recent examples. The upcoming carbon tax is being introduced without a single new program in place to help anybody access funds to reduce their utility bills. Our caucus has been very clear. We are not opposed to bringing in a carbon tax per se. We believe that all of the revenues should be used to offset negative impacts on vulnerable people and used to fight climate change, and this government isn't doing either of those things.

So that is fundamentally unfair, and all of the tenants in my constituency and all of the tenants in Manitoba are going to be paying more when the carbon tax is applied and when their building uses natural gas or any other fossil fuel for home heating, and tenants have, right now, no legal recourse or opportunity to have any protection from that.

This government is also, through its new—well it's now new-new board at Manitoba Hydro, is pursuing a dramatic 70 per cent increase in the hydro rate in Manitoba by the year '24-25. All of that is going to be passed on to tenants and our caucus, again, has demonstrated that there are alternate ways to improve the financial health at Manitoba Hydro, such as using more of our domestically produced fossil fuel-free electricity here in Manitoba which would triple, Madam Speaker, triple the amount of money that Hydro currently earns compared to when they sell their excess power on the spot market.

Instead, this government is just throwing up its hands and saying, no; rate increases are the only way to go. We're not going to help anybody improve the quality of your building, and for tenants, they are the ones who are going to end up bearing that cost.

And third, and finally, Madam Speaker, just recent examples. We have Rent Assist. Low-income people in Manitoba, whether they are on social assistance or whether they are seniors, whether they are students, whether they are low-income working poor, the way that we designed the Rent Assist

program when we implemented it provides benefits to all of those people based on how much they pay in rent and how much—what their income is.

* (10:10)

This government has now proudly stood up and whacked the budget for Rent Assist by another \$1.9 million this year. They consider that a success story. I am appalled that they believe that stealing money from low-income people is a good thing to do.

This proposal here today helps low-income tenants. Madam Speaker, it protects them from at least the high utility costs that this government is turning a blind eye to, actively pursuing, while they also—in this government—are undermining the Rent Assist program which is helping so many thousands of people.

And so the act itself, I hope, receives passage here today. If the government does not pass Bill 222, if they choose to speak it out, it will be an enormous slap in the face to every single tenant in Manitoba. The bill is not even a page long. This is not a complicated concept. All the bill requires is that a landlord must demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to reduce the utility burden in their building before they would be allowed to increase rents above the rate of inflation. It is not as if we don't have the technology to put in better windows or better insulation or to fix up the roof or replace a boiler. All of these things can happen. The only thing blocking it is political will, and it will fall to this government to tell Manitobans whether they care about tenants, whether they will join with us today in protecting tenants in this very reasonable way, or if they are once again going to turn a blind eye to a good idea for whatever reason they may come up with. I really do hope they support the bill.

I also want to emphasize, Madam Speaker, that this legislation is one half of the policy idea that I am bringing forward here today. The other half relates to financial incentives for landlords to fix up their buildings. As an opposition MLA, as you know, I am not allowed to put any reference in any legislation that concerns government spending or money-related matters.

That is true for this Legislature, this Chamber, no matter which party is in government or which one is in opposition. So I'm not disputing that fact at all, but I do want to make it absolutely clear that this government can and should be actively helping

landlords with financial incentives to help them fix up their buildings and reduce the utility burden for tenants.

There is a win here on so many different fronts. If the government would just do the sensible thing they would employ thousands of Manitobans rather than having fewer full-time jobs—7,500 fewer full-time jobs, if I'm not mistaken. In Manitoba we would be increasing full-time employment, going from building to building fixing up our aging housing stock. We would be reducing our climate emissions by making our buildings more efficient. We would be helping tenants with their utility burden and we would be keeping more of Manitoba's economy, more of the money in Manitoba's economy circulating here rather than going to jurisdictions to pay for fossil fuel imports.

All of these benefits are readily available if this government would simply take a look at the situation and do the right thing. Instead, what have they done? The programs that were in place that are technically still in place over at power smart have been completely undermined by this government's incompetent handling of the Efficiency Manitoba file. Power smart is now incapable of bringing any new programs or offering any new incentives to help landlords or tenants or business owners or government agencies or individuals to make further progress in improving our housing stock because this government has said they're going to go in a new direction, which is completely invisible and has no budget, no staff, no plan and no timeline for when it will show up. Other than that, it's working just fine, Madam Speaker.

So you cannot blame Manitobans for being angry at this government. You cannot blame tenants for being angry at this government. We are bringing forward a reasonable proposal today that protects tenants, which calls for the government to support landlords in doing the right thing. I look forward to the debate that ensues and I look forward to this government joining with us in protecting tenants or giving us every opportunity to go across this province and tell tenants this government does not stand up for them or their concerns.

Thank you very much.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the

following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party, this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties, each independent member may ask one question and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I'd just like to make a comment. The member stated that it is a short bill, and that's correct. And I notice there isn't a definition section in the bill.

Can the member opposite please explain what he defines as reasonable, what as—reasonable is under this legislation?

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): In discussing this bill with Leg. Counsel, they advised that the most appropriate course in due practice would be for government to establish those criteria in regulation. So it would not appear in the bill itself.

The suggestion that I have made previously, and which I will repeat here, is it seems reasonable to me that any improvement to a building that has a 20-year payback or better is pretty reasonable.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I know all members of the House will want to get behind the member from Wolseley and support this bill.

I wonder if he could tell us how this bill will serve to protect tenants in older buildings.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, I thank my honourable colleague for the excellent question.

My own constituency, of course, has—I'd be surprised if there's very many buildings, very many original buildings, that are less than 100 years old. Manitoba has amongst the oldest housing stock in the entire country, and that means that while many people have done good work over the years to maintain these blocks, there are enormous opportunities in older buildings in particular to reduce water costs, to reduce electricity costs and to reduce heating costs. So there would be benefits everywhere, but in older buildings in particular, not just homes, but businesses and community centres and places of worship as well.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just two things: one is to ask the minister what—I mean, the member what discussions he's had with landlords and with tenants with regard to this bill and the measures in the bill, and, second, is there a provision in the act to have regulations, or would that need to be added to the bill?

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, I have had many very good conversations with both tenants and landlords around this combination of ideas. I have had to explain why it is, based on our rules here at the Leg., that I can't include the financial incentive side of it. So I do my best to communicate that aspect. But people want to do the right thing, and that's really the good-news story that I can bring forward to the Chamber for here today.

Obviously, tenants are feeling squeezed on lots of fronts already. Landlords are not necessarily opposed to doing the right thing, but they do have some understandable concerns and they would like to see some financial incentives offered.

So I thank the member for the question.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to ask the member, with Rent Assist and the increase in the hydro rates, what is the practical difference between the two, and is the Rent Assist going to be consistent with the increase in the Manitoba Hydro rates?

Mr. Altemeyer: It's a good question. I doubt I'll get 'er done in 40 seconds, but I'll try.

Rent Assist and hydro rates are both going in the wrong direction. Hydro rates are going up and Rent Assist is going down. So this government has removed any connection between the reality of what renters are facing and the trajectory that renters will be facing under their watch.

So, ideally, Rent Assist recipients would still be receiving the annual inflationary increase. Instead, this government's draconian cuts are so bad that renters are ending up with less money. Their entire inflationary increase has been wiped out and they are left with even less money to then pay for the higher hydro rates that are coming up.

* (10:20)

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, this legislation is very vague, specifically requirement for reasonable upgrades. Can the member please explain who decides what is reasonable under this legislation?

Mr. Altemeyer: As I mentioned earlier—I don't know, maybe he's working off a sheet that has the same question and he didn't hear it asked and answered earlier, but Leg. Counsel advised me that establishing what was reasonable would be more appropriately housed in regulations under the Residential Tenancies Act. So the first step is to do the right thing today and move this legislation

forward so we change the law and then it would be incumbent upon government to establish in regulations what criteria they wanted to put in place.

I would advise them to avoid tying the definition of reasonable to any particular technology or even any particular existing code because those both change. I think the payback period approach, which I mentioned earlier, is a better way to go.

Mr. Allum: It's interesting to me because most reasonable people understand the definition of reasonable, but I guess the Tories don't.

I wonder if the member could tell us, are landlords responsible for covering the costs of updating the building to keep water, heating and electrical costs low under this bill or is there a more progressive option?

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, I thank the member for the question. Landlords and tenants can arrange the payment of rent and the covering of utility bills in different ways. There are hot rents, in which the rent paid by a tenant includes the utility costs, or there's cold rents where a tenant pays rent and then they pay utility bills above and beyond that.

The more progressive option that we are bringing forward here today is for the government to step in and provide reasonable financial incentives to the—to property owners so that buildings get fixed up, Manitobans are employed, emissions go down and tenants save money. We need to be protecting tenants, same as we protect all Manitobans, and this is a very good way to do that.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): My question is that sometime, who are landlords who have just one house they're renting out because they want to create some equity part later. Sometimes, when their tenants, they leave their water on and the bill is huge and the City is not covering it, they go after the landlord.

How that going to be recovered, and is there maybe the member need some amendment to protect those poor landlord their bill?

Mr. Altemeyer: I thank the member for the question. I think the most appropriate way for that type of scenario to be addressed would be through damage deposits, which is what's done already, so that if a utility bill is really large or if a tenant damages a unit, then whatever damage deposit they were required to put up front is then forfeited and goes to the landlord.

If the damages are in excess of the damage deposit, my understanding is the landlord can certainly pursue civil action and remediation through the courts. But this—that aspect does not directly fall under this piece of legislation I'm bringing forward today, although I certainly acknowledge my colleague has raised a valid point.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): The member speaks about rising Hydro rates. Can he maybe tell the House here about why he wasn't concerned about increased Hydro rates when his party rushed Bipole III and Keeyask without proper PUB approval? Why didn't the member care about rates then? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: I could ask the speaker of the governing party why they did not take the initiative to build the third bipole after there was a blackout in Manitoba, which was narrowly avoided during the Filmon era. No one disputes the fact that the third bipole was required and—*[interjection]*—rising utility rates are a necessary—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —challenge that needs to be addressed. I have brought forward a reasonable idea here. I have every confidence that this would make a very good difference for renters in the honourable member's constituency and in the constituencies of all government members. Who wouldn't like to be able to go to their tenants and their constituents and say I've helped bring in legislation—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Allum: We know that the government has traditionally recognized market rates as being the way for Manitoba Hydro forward. We have, on this side of the House, wanted hydro rates to stay low for Manitobans.

How could the government ensure hydro rates stay affordable for Manitobans?

Mr. Altemeyer: There's many things that this government can and should be pursuing, and we should always be keeping the welfare of our citizens and our industries, our businesses, fully in mind. I remain baffled why it is that this government has made absolutely no mention of the potential to sell greenhouse gas-free—virtually free—hydroelectricity to Saskatchewan and earn billions of dollars in new revenue for our province. Saskatchewan earns or has over 75 per cent of their electricity generated from

fossil fuels. For us, it's 1 per cent fossil fuels. It needs to happen, and that would be just one way that rates could certainly—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for this question period has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I'm glad to have the opportunity to be speaking to Bill 222 today, brought forward by the member from Wolseley, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs). It gives me the opportunity to put some facts on the record that I think are needed badly.

Well, Madam Speaker, for decades Manitobans have enjoyed some of the most reasonable hydro rates in the world. Hydro has been Manitoba's crown jewel. Affordable hydro rates were responsible for bringing companies into Manitoba to add to our economic development. This is very important for Manitobans because economic development is important. It's not only important to bring businesses in, it's also important to the citizens of Manitoban, because whether they be tenants or they be owners of homes, hydro rates are important.

Madam Speaker, good government is one that makes difficult decisions necessary to ensure the protection of sustainable, quality services for their citizens. During the past decade of NDP government, Manitoba has suffered debt, decay and decline. The NDP never made any difficult decisions for the betterment of Manitoba. They always took the easy way out. They felt that if they spent more money on a problem it would go away. Well, we, as well as all Manitobans, know this does not work. Manitobans showed their disappointment in the NDP in the election of 2016.

Madam Speaker, I believe the member may have misnamed part of this bill. Instead of Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs, perhaps it should read: protecting tenants and all Manitobans from NDP mismanagement. I have a hard time sitting in this Chamber listening to members opposite speak about how they care for taxpayers after seeing what they did when they were in government. They gave Manitobans some of the highest tax increases in recent history, not caring for Manitobans. Some members have admitted that they are to blame for the hydro rate increases, but they say it is our problem

now. It seems some members opposite would like to see hydro rates go up in Manitoba so they could blame us for their mismanagement. That's not caring for Manitobans, that's just playing politics. All they want to do is get re-elected, no matter what it costs Manitobans today or in the future.

* (10:30)

This bill talks about reasonable hydro rates, reasonable utility rates. I can remember reading in an article in the Winnipeg Sun where the NDP claimed that Bipole III and the hydro dams would not cost Manitobans a single cent. This was on the front page with a picture of the then-premier. We all know that was a tall tale. Manitobans will be paying for the NDP mismanagement on hydro files for decades. The NDP made politically motivated quick fixes that resulted in unsustainable spending and massive debt. Our children and grandchildren will be saddled with this debt through no fault of their own, whether they own a house or they rent an apartment. It's the NDP's fault that we—that they are saddled with such a debt.

The hydro rate increases that the member from Wolseley wants to protect tenants from is a direct result of NDP mismanagement and political interference of Manitoba Hydro. What about the rest of Manitoba families that are being asked to pay more for hydro thanks to the NDP? Do they not count? Are they not as important as everybody else?

Manitoba Hydro's debt will double to \$25 billion within the next three or four years. This is because the NDP rushed decisions to build the bipole line and Keeyask dam. They did this without Public Utility Board scrutiny. What is the use of a PUB if you don't give them the ability to look at all the options that Hydro had? We are letting the PUB do their job.

Every single major hydro capital project commissioned by the NDP was behind schedule and over budget, creating serious issues for Manitoba's crown jewel. That's the reason hydro rates are going up, Madam Speaker. It's because of the previous government. Wuskwatim, over budget by \$1.1 billion, 85 per cent higher than expected and over two years delayed. Bipole III expected to cost over \$5 billion, more than \$1.5 billion over budget and nearly a year behind. Keeyask skyrocketed by \$2.2 billion to \$8.7 billion and it's nearly two years delayed.

Manitobans are now left to pay the bill for the NDP's poor decisions, along with all the hydro rate payers, including tenants. So much for the NDP's promises that these hydro projects would not cost

Manitobans a single cent. Manitobans are on the hook for all of hydro debt, and that's thanks to the NDP broken promises.

Madam Speaker, once again, the NDP are playing politics with Manitobans. The member from Wolseley has introduced Bill 222 to make it look like they are concerned about tenants' rights. Clearly, they aren't. Otherwise, they wouldn't be delaying Bill 12. The Residential Tenancies Act already provides incentive to landlords making improvements that increase the energy efficiency of their residential complex. That is already available.

The amendments proposed in Bill 222 are not necessary and do not add to the value of the existing process. This bill requires landlords to make reasonable efficiency improvements but does not define what is considered reasonable. Who will decide what are reasonable improvements? Making a determination of what is considered to be reasonable for each property would be subjective and lead to delay in processing above guideline applications.

More red tape and longer wait times are what the NDP are standing up for in this bill, not for the rights of tenants. Where have the NDP been the last 17 years when it comes to tenants' rights? The NDP didn't care about tenants when they ignored and neglected needed repairs in Manitoba Housing units, resulting in over \$500 million in deferred maintenance. They were not concerned then. Why the big concern now?

Why did they refuse to raise rental allowances for low-income tenants while they were in government? Madam Speaker, we were the party that called for social-assisted housing allowance to be increased to 75 per cent of median market rent rates, not the NDP.

Madam Speaker, this bill is not about tenants' rights. It is about taking attention away from NDP mismanagement that has put Manitoba into a financial mess that is hurting all Manitobans. If the NDP were concerned about Manitobans, they would support Bill 12. They would support Efficiency Manitoba, a new demand-side management Crown corporation to deliver efficient initiatives in Manitoba—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker, earlier, when the member from Wolseley was making his speech, he stood up and said it's too loud in here. I would appreciate if he would keep quiet as well.

If the NDP were concerned—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smook: Our system in Manitoba in most cases allows landlords to legally raise rent once every 12 months, providing the increase is within the guidelines and they give tenants three months' notice. In 2018, this is 1.3 per cent. There already are numerous rules and regulations that landlords must follow. Why does the member want to create more?

Madam Speaker, one of the costs that tenants have, along with utilities, is insurance to cover their belongings in their suite. Before the 2011 election, the NDP went and knocked on doors, promising no taxes. Well, the first thing they did after getting elected was add items that PST was charged on. One of these items was home insurance, costing Manitobans an additional 7 per cent.

Madam Speaker, I was a volunteer firefighter for over 25 years and I did attend fires that people lost everything, and the sad part was they had no insurance to cover their belongings. Their response, when asked by the fire chief if they had insurance, was no. They couldn't afford the insurance. How many more Manitobans could not afford insurance after the NDP added PST to insurance?

Madam Speaker, to add insult to injury, in the next budget, the NDP increased the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. Where was the member from Wolseley then? Why was he not standing up for Manitobans then? He voted for those tax increases, which put an extra burden on Manitoba taxpayers and tenants.

I see my time is running out. Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, just a few remarks on this legislation. I think that the legislation acknowledges two important items, one of which is the fact that tenants' costs are significant and that we as legislators should be looking very carefully at ways that we can help with the situation in Manitoba where tenant costs have been high and have been rising. And, certainly, if there's things that we can do in that respect, that would be good.

The—and reducing the energy costs is certainly a reasonable approach, and certainly, at a time when we're looking at addressing climate change, when we're looking at improving energy efficiency all over the province, that rental units are a good area to be

looking at in terms of what the opportunities are for improving the energy efficiency of buildings and for upgrading buildings.

The—in order to work, this measure, I think, would need to have some further discussions with landlords. And, certainly, in order to be workable, I suspect that it would be best with some sort of subsidy for rehabilitation of rental units and upgrading of rental units. I think that this is an area where a dialogue would certainly be helpful and that bringing this to committee stage so that we could have that extended dialogue and bring in and to have people who are landlords and tenants come in and talk about this area, which is, I think, a useful area for us to be looking at.

So I hope that members will bring this forward to committee stage so that, in fact, we can have that discussion. Whether this bill as it is is the right answer, I'm not so sure, but I do believe that having that discussion and looking at this area as an area where we could improve our energy efficiency province-wide is certainly a good idea.

Thank you.

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to speak on Bill 222, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

* (10:40)

Again, as we all know, two years ago, the people of Manitoba elected a new government. They voted for change, positive change, change that would focus on a better plan for a better Manitoba, a better value for taxpayers, better education results for students, better care for seniors and families, better opportunities for jobs.

And I'm very honoured to have been elected two years ago. I'm very proud to serve my constituents of St. Norbert. I'm very proud to be part of a team that is focused on fixing the finances, repairing our services and rebuilding the economy.

And during the two years that we have been in government, tough decisions have had to be made. What we inherited from the previous NDP government was not sustainable for the people of Manitoba. And so when it comes to Bill 222, the NDP are clearly playing politics with this legislation. They introduced Bill 222 to make it look like they care about tenants' rights. Clearly, they don't as we know they are delaying Bill 12.

All of a sudden, the member from Wolseley is concerned about hydro rates when he full—he knew full well under the previous government, which he served under, wasn't concerned with increased hydro rates when the NDP rushed Bipole III and Keeyask without proper Public Utilities Board scrutiny.

The NDP obviously is in love with the red tape, and there was definitely a lot of it under their watch. There is a reason why Manitoba's economy was stagnant under the previous NDP government. You want to know why? A stagnant economy because of 906,824 regulatory requirements equalling lots of red tape. Madam Speaker, I say again 906,824 regulatory requirements, almost a million regulatory requirements. Not zero million, a term once used by the member across from me while in QP.

The proposed amendment in Bill 222 is not necessary and it does not add value to the existing process. Putting value and NDP together is an oxymoron, Madam Speaker, and I have said time and time again, the NDP like to perceive themselves as the so-called champions representing immigrants, but they made them wait up to three or four years for the Provincial Nominee Program applications. The NDP also like to perceive themselves as so-called champions for the poor, but yet the Manitoba Child and Family report poverty under their watch was a chronic nightmare with the highest poverty rates. The proposed amendment in Bill 222 clearly shows the member from Wolseley, he and his NDP government want to be champions again. Well, they are champions in red tape.

The Residential Tenancies Act already provides incentives to landlords making improvements that increase the energy efficiency of their residential complexes. The member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) knows, in most cases, landlords can legally raise rent once every 12 months. They must give a tenant at least three months' notice. He also knows the rent increase guideline for 2018 is 1.3 per cent, effective January 1st, 2018, and he also knows tenants must be given proper written notice at least three months before a rent increase take effect. Just to make clear, to explain for the member and his colleagues in opposition, if a landlord wants to increase this rent on January 1st, a tenant must receive the notice on or before September 30th.

The amendments proposed in Bill 222 appear to duplicate the incentives already in place for landlords and appear to add additional administrative burdens,

the member's infatuation with red tape to the current application process. The amendments would only hinder the process and interfere with the jobs of directors, causing additional time and additional work hours.

For 17 years, the NDP refused to raise rental allowances for low-income tenants and, in their time in government, made long wait times and red tape a concern for tenants who object to rental increases above the prescribed rate. This change under Bill 12 removes the ability of tenants to object to rent increases that either comply with or less than prescribed annual rent increase, which in 2018 was 1.3 per cent.

Over the past two years, as noted by our PC government, 40 objections were filed with 30 of those referred to Residential Tenancies Branch officers assigned to deal with outstanding repairs required for suites, something that will not change. Under these circumstances, tenants are going through a process that won't help them in the end and will potentially add unnecessary safety risk.

Bill 222 requires landlords to make reasonable efficiency improvements, but it does not define what is considered reasonable. Speaking of reasonable, the NDP never cared about taxpayers when they increased the PST. Because of their fiscal mismanagement, they needed to take advantage of someone, that someone being the Manitoba taxpayer, hard-working families, small business owners, seniors, post-secondary students, low-income earners. They didn't care.

The NDP never cared about ratepayers when they recklessly proceeded with Bipole III and Keeyask. The rate increases we see now are a direct result of NDP mismanagement and political interference of Manitoba Hydro. Thanks to the NDP government, which that member was a part of, Manitoba families are now being asked to pay more.

And what is the member proposing this morning on top of the rise in hydro rates? More red tape with his proposed amendments, Madam Speaker. You think one would learn from their mistakes, but certainly not this member and his team in opposition. Mind you, I don't know many members there, but if there is a team there, it seems like a divided locker room over there, if you ask me.

Spend and tax more plus more red tape equals today's NDP. The good news is we have a PC government, a government that I'm proud to be part

of, a government that will bring the largest tax cut in Manitoba history, tax cut that'll take money off the Cabinet table and, in fact, on the kitchen table of every home in Manitoba. Manitoba will save more than \$230 million in taxes over the next two years, including to the stakeholders we are talking about today: the renter and the landlord. Most renters eventually want to move and be homeowners. Our government increases those chances and will do so eventually, moving 30,000 modest-income Manitobans from the tax rolls.

Madam Speaker, Bill 222 creates more red tape. And longer wait times are what the NDP is standing up for today, not for the rights of tenants. The member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) and the NDP refused to raise rent allowances for low-income tenants and, in their time in government, made long wait times and a red tape a concern for tenants who object to rental increases above the prescribed rate. For 17 years, the NDP refused to raise this.

This legislation is very vague. Specifically, the requirement for reasonable upgrades, he wasn't able to clearly answer the question. One thing that is clearly—that is clear is The Efficiency Manitoba Act. Efficiency Manitoba will create more opportunities for property management companies to become more efficient. Our PC government is establishing Efficiency Manitoba, new demand-side management Crown corporation, to deliver energy efficiencies initiatives in Manitoba.

In 2014, the PUB Needs For and Alternatives To panel recommended that Manitoba Hydro be divested of DSM responsibilities as the government of Manitoba established an independent, arm's-length entity to deliver government-mandated DSM targets. There is no need for these proposed amendments for Bill 222 because Efficiency Manitoba will be required to meet legislated saving targets for both natural gas and electricity. It will be accountable for performance through PUB oversight and would be subject to ongoing financial auditing by the Auditor General. The new DSM Crown corporation will be driven towards a performance-oriented approach and a culture that can deliver more value to Manitobans as we invest in clean growth opportunities.

During a decade of debt, decay and decline, the NDP never made a difficult decision. Our PC government is making those difficult decisions necessary to ensure the protection of sustainable, quality service for the people of Manitoba. Some of these tenants and landlords are seniors. I am, for one,

relieved that funding for Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living is the highest level of funding in Manitoba history, \$6.2 billion. Bill 222 does nothing but again but delay Bill 12. Why doesn't the NDP get on board and support the issues and cause that help Manitobans like better care, better care by adding \$7.7 million for expanded dialysis treatments? Our budget brought great news for those who suffer from chronic kidney disease, and there is a need, as we are the second highest province with individuals who suffer from this disease. Patients who are affected are very happy about this investment.

Bill 222 is a roadblock, a waste of time, and we should be debating on more meaningful legislation that is results orientated, positive results-oriented, like commitment to lower ambulance fees, and this budget reduced it by \$85 to \$340; we are on track to reach our target of \$250.

The NDP made politically motivated quick fixes that resulted in unsustainable spending, growth and massive debt. Bill 22 is not a quick fix. It is not even a fix. What is a fix is a better family care addressed in budget—in our budget.

So, Madam Speaker, I know I'm running out of time, but I just want to say that we don't believe in red tape; the NDP does, and we want to do what's best for the taxpayer and for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's certainly my pleasure to rise today on this gorgeous spring morning to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 222, as proposed by my honourable friend from Wolseley.

*(10:50)

Madam Speaker, if this bill were to pass, it would require landlords to make reasonable efficiency improvements to their building before the Residential Tenancies Branch can grant a rent increase above the maximum allowable annual standard.

Now I know this member believes he is acting in the best interest of tenants, but Avrom Charach, a spokesperson for the Professional Property Managers Association of Manitoba, says it's not fair to people who own buildings. He says most of his costs and most of his members' costs have never gone up less than the annual rent control guideline, and that many of the increases, like property taxes, are beyond the control of landlords.

So it follows that the member of Wolseley could have lobbied his minister when in government to push this amendment forward under the previous NDP. Charach says that this bill basically says that a landlord cannot apply to recover any increased costs unless they spend more money on energy efficiency.

Madam Speaker, I'm a landlord myself. Full disclosure. I know that in order to apply for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nesbitt: —any increase to a tenant's rent above the guideline, I must prove that the increase is necessitated by increased costs.

The Residential Tenancies Act already provides incentives to landlords making improvements that increase the energy 'efficiency' of their residential complexes. The amendments proposed by this member in Bill 222 appear to duplicate the incentives already in place and add additional administrative burdens to the current application process.

While the member proposes to add more red tape with this bill, his party also is objecting to removing red tape from the process in Bill 12. Current tenants have the right to object to a rent increase that complies with or is less than the prescribed annual rate increase. Over the past two years, 40 objections were raised, with 30 of those being referred to the tenancy branch officers to deal with issues such as repairs to suites, something that will not change under Bill 12.

What will change when Bill 12 passes this fall is that the burden put on the Residential Tenancies Branch to deal with objections to rent increases that are already prescribed in regulation will be removed? Less red tape, Madam Speaker, and no false hope for tenants thinking their rent increase might be rolled back.

There are many things in this bill that are troubling, but the biggest one is reasonable. Define reasonable. The member says a landlord must make reasonable efficiency improvements. Who determines reasonable? Of course, this could be prescribed in regulations but would always be subjective, based on the opinion of an individual Residential Tenancies Branch officer. Is installing a low-flow shower head reasonable or could a landlord be forced to install a new energy-efficient furnace,

costing him thousands of dollars? What is reasonable to one person might not be reasonable to another.

We know the member was part of a party that was not reasonable to Manitobans in many cases when they were in government. Was it reasonable to apply PST to home insurance and the insurance paid by landlords to insure their buildings? Was it reasonable to raise the PST by a full percentage point, especially after they told Manitobans that would never happen? How about bipole II and Keeyask? Was it reasonable to proceed with these projects?

The NDP believed these decisions were all reasonable and didn't care about any hardships they imposed on taxpayers then and the effects their reasonableness is having on the lives of citizens today and into the future. The rate increases we are seeing now are a direct result of NDP mismanagement and political interference with Manitoba Hydro. It's amazing that the honourable member from Wolseley can stand here today asking for support for tenants when his government is responsible for hydro rate increases.

Madam Speaker, there's absolutely no need for Bill 222. Applications for rent increases above the annual guideline are based on the landlord's cost increases. It is a fair process that hears both sides. Decisions on whether to allow an increase are made on the basis of the financial information provided, comments by the tenants, and the landlord's response to tenants' comments. Consulting, as my honourable friend says.

There is also an appeal mechanism, whereby either the tenant or landlord can appeal the decision within 14 days. I don't believe putting more restrictions on landlords will benefit tenants. Owners of residential complexes have huge investments and want to maintain their investment. In most cases, they make repairs and improvements in a timely manner, to keep their buildings in a state of repair, as this is their business and livelihood.

Our government believes in working with tenants and owners of residential complexes to ensure there's fairness across the board.

Madam Speaker, I would submit today that the NDP are playing politics with Bill 222. They introduced it today to make it look like they care about tenants' rights. Clearly, they don't, as they have said they will delay Bill 12 until the fall. Manitobans were fooled by the NDP in the past, but not anymore.

Manitobans know they have a government that is committed to putting more money on the kitchen table, instead of the Cabinet table. Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I do wish to rise today in the Chamber to put some words on the record regarding Bill 222, but before I do that, I would like to say this is our second-year anniversary as a government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

An Honourable Member: Best government ever.

Mr. Smith: Best government ever, exactly. When we won a historic majority government and, you know, I think that's a reflection of the policies of the previous administration. Certainly, after 17 years of debt, decay and decline, the people of Manitoba had enough. And, when the election 2016 rolled around, I think they spoke quite clearly and I believe that now, when members opposite introduce legislation that tries to try and backtrack, they know that some of the legislation they introduce may not pass, so they don't have to be accountable or pay for anything. They try and make it look like they're the party of the middle class, that they're the party of the people, but in reality, they're the very party that increased taxes on working Manitobans, by increasing the PST by 1 percentage point, expanding the scope of the PST and then making working Manitobans pay more for their own political benefits.

Buying votes with people's money is shameful, and, Madam Speaker, I think it's unfortunate that members opposite still haven't come to grips with that. Until they do, I think Manitobans will continue to vote for our party and a government that is concerned about how their tax money is being spent.

Madam Speaker, I know it's been raised a few times here in the Chamber, but the question with regards to the word reasonable. Now, reasonable's a very flexible term; we don't know exactly what that means. So—and if it's not defined properly and outlined in the legislation as such, the—my concern is that it's—it becomes a—it does become a bit of an issue because if you can't define the word reasonable, then it's open to interpretation. It's open to interpretation and, unfortunately, being open to interpretation, we know that doesn't really help either the landlord or the tenant. I've been both—you know, I've been a tenant myself—and I've had a good landlord. And a lot of friends of mine are landlords as well, and they do, as my friend from Riding Mountain, here, had

said that he's a landlord, and you know, landlords actually have an investment. This is invested in a property, in a building. There is skin in the game. They actually have an interest in maintaining that investment and their customer, the tenant. Unfortunately, I know there are some landlords that are less than reputable, but again, we have a tenancy branch that deals with that very issue.

Unfortunately, what this does—it seems to be more regulation, more red tape and more confusion. And on top of that, we don't even define the word reasonable here in the legislation. So it's open to interpretation. Anybody can interpret it the way they wish. Ties time up of both the judiciary and the tenancy branch. There's no clear definition, there's no clear direction, it just seems like it's a bit of a—more red tape that the NDP can use to make it look like they're doing something, when the reality is they're not. And, unfortunately, that has been, you know, the last 17 years of government.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 9—Workers Compensation Coverage for Work Related Stress

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and the time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Workers Compensation Coverage for Work Related Stress, brought forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, that,

WHEREAS all workers deserve to be safe, healthy and happy in their workplaces; and

WHEREAS any worker experiencing a mental health issue due to a traumatic event in the workplace, abnormal stress arising in the course of employment, a change in working conditions or the nature of work performed, as well as discipline or termination should be protected and compensated; and

WHEREAS the Workers Compensation Act Legislative Review Committee (Committee) is undergoing a legislated review of the Workers Compensation Act and compiling legislation to improve coverage for Manitoba workers; and

WHEREAS as part of this review, the Committee should consider mental health and the impact of stress related mental illness on Manitoba workers and their families; and

WHEREAS the Committee should explore expanding Workers Compensation coverage to workers experiencing a stress induced mental disorder if it arises out of and in the course of a worker's employment; and

WHEREAS the coverage should recognize all stress induced mental disorders diagnosed by a physician or psychologist as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; and

WHEREAS to ensure this review is transparent and clear to all workers and employers, the Workers Compensation Board should publish the full report on the Committee's review on its website or by other public means after it has been laid before the Legislative Assembly.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to expand coverage for workers comp for workers experiencing a stress-induced mental disorder borne out of a worker's employment, and to publish the report of the committee's review online.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: As the member did not read it exactly, is there leave to accept this as printed? *[Agreed]*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to expand coverage for workers experiencing a stress induced mental disorder borne out of a worker's employment, and to publish the report on the Committee's review online.

Mr. Lindsey: We've heard several of the members opposite talk about reasonableness, and, clearly, when we talk about an injury to a worker being properly compensated, that's reasonable. I think they would all agree with that, that through no fault of the worker, he gets—he or she gets hurt at work, that workers compensation is there to provide for them when they are incapable of working.

So would it be reasonable, then, to say that an injury is an injury is an injury? Well, of course, it

would, and I'm sure the members opposite would strongly agree that that is a reasonable conclusion, that any injury caused from work or in relation to your work should be compensated if you're no longer able to perform your work.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I know that many of the members opposite may see Workers Compensation as red tape that they want to do away with, but I've spent many years fighting to make the Manitoba workers compensation system better, better for injured workers, which is the whole point of a workers compensation. It's insurance so that workers are covered when they get hurt at or from their work.

We made great strides in that process when the NDP were in government, but in the process of trying to be reasonable and not push the envelope too far so that it was too burdensome on employers—because that's always what their concern is, is the bottom line—is we didn't push the mental health issue as far as we could have.

So the whole process should be about gradual improvement in the system, and, really, that's what this is about. It's ensuring that an injury to your mental health arising out of your work is covered under workers compensation, the same as an injury to your leg, an injury to your back, an injury to any other part of your body is covered under The Workers Compensation Act.

Now, we were successful a number of years ago in getting a single traumatic event that causes stress, that causes mental health issues, covered under workers compensation, but as anybody who has worked for a living knows, there are any number of things that cause stress at work that lead to potential mental health issues that are not caused by a single traumatic event, but are cumulative in their nature.

Whether it's at a time that a company, a corporation, a workplace is deciding to downsize and workers are concerned that they will be the next on the chopping block, that causes stress. I know we've heard some ministers say that that's just disloyalty. They've apologized for that, I accept that; but those are things that over the course of time, lead to mental health issues. Whether it's constantly changing shifts, whether it's bullying at work by a co-worker, by a supervisor, by management, those things build up over time.

And I know from 20 years in the health and safety field that there are multiple examples in most, if not all, workplaces of workers suffering those kinds of work-related stress issues that there was no recourse for them. They landed up—if they were in a unionized workplace, they may have had some sort of sick-benefit arrangement, otherwise they landed up going off work and not being covered by anything, or they tried to tough it out at work, causing further injury to their mental health.

Those are not the right outcomes. It causes an increased load on our health-care system because, eventually, those workers land up with a multitude of other diseases, injuries, because of the simple fact that their mental health injury wasn't ever tended to properly.

Workers compensation is there, should be there, must be there, to cover all injuries that workers face.

Once upon a time, things like asbestosis weren't covered by workers compensation. They are now. As the science progresses so that you can determine the cause of injuries, then it's reasonable to expect those to be covered under workers compensation. The science is there now to show that workers, because of stress-induced mental disorders, need time to recuperate.

And, you know, it's not just the case of a worker showing up saying I've got a mental health issue; I need to take time off. The same as any other injury, there has to be medical evidence to back that up. And this coverage should recognize that all stress-induced mental disorders diagnosed by a physician or a psychologist as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders are covered. Whereas right now, doctors—your general practitioner, of you're lucky enough to live in a jurisdiction that has one of those—will say yes, you're suffering from stress, but I can't—because I don't know what your workplace is. Nor do they particularly want to go down that road and fight with the employers to try and get that covered when, in fact, there is no coverage anyway.

So this is just the natural progression of a workers compensation scheme that's initial purpose was to provide workers who get hurt through no fault of their own, with an insurance package that will compensate them somewhat, because no one should think for one second that a worker wants to stay on

workers compensation because they do not get paid anywhere close to what they're losing.

But we need to make sure that the proper things are in place to recognize work-related stress issues, work-related mental health issues so that the proactive business can take place to try and prevent some of these injuries to workers, no different than we put safeguards in place to prevent other injuries to workers.

And certainly the Workers Compensation Board, through funding various things, has been instrumental in driving some of that. The workplace health and safety act has driven some of that.

* (11:10)

So, you know, I heard members opposite talk about reasonable and I heard them say they didn't understand what reasonable meant. This is a case where this is the natural and reasonable progression of a workers compensation scheme that will protect workers, that will help workers, and I expect all members of this Legislature will stand in support of this.

House Business

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Ms. Fontaine: Good? Perfect.

Deputy House Speaker, pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino). The title of the resolution is Standing Up for Worker Safety.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was moved by the opposition—[interjection]

On—pursuant of rule 33(8), I am now announcing the private member's resolution to be considered for the next Thursday on private members' business will be on—put forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park. The title of the resolution is Standing Up for Worker Safety.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—[interjection] Okay. Question period.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held and questions that may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be addressed—asked by a member from the other party; any subsequent questions must be followed in rotation between parties; each independent member may ask up one question; and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

The honourable member for Point-Point for Douglas. *[interjection]* Okay, sorry. The honourable member for Morris.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I'd like ask my colleague, the member of Flin Flon, if a individual's place of employment played hip-hop music in the background—let's say misogynistic, homophobic music, like, for example, his own leader, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), and I'll quote: It's a new day, so I don't know whose mouth my insert offensive comment is in; or, that's why your girl is dreaming about my semen on her inner legs.

So, if a place of employment played that in the music in the background, would that qualify as a stressful situation?

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a question—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —as low as that really doesn't deserve an answer.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I just want to commend my colleague for, first off, bringing—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —this resolution. There's so much nonsense, noise over there—and I do want to commend the way that the member handled such a ridiculous question from the member for Morris.

So I would ask my honourable colleague, what types of protections are currently in place for employees who seek time off to deal with mental health issues?

Mr. Lindsey: I'd like to thank the member for that question, and it's a very good question because, really, right now, if a worker needs to take time off because of a mental health injury caused by their

work, there really is no protections. There really is very little in place to help protect those workers. That's the whole point of bringing in this resolution, is to provide something for those workers that have suffered a mental health injury at work so that they can get the help they need so that they can get better.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I just have a question for the member for Flin Flon. When producing this resolution, I assume that he has consulted with many stakeholders and those who would be affected by such a change. And considering that there's no clear definition of how to prove whether it's a work-related or it's a personal stress that is causing the actual mental illness, could he please tell us who he has consulted with and the information he gleaned from that?

Thank you.

Mr. Lindsey: Certainly, over the course of 20 years in the health and safety field, I've talked to many—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —workers and employers and health-care professionals about this very issue. So there are ways to determine the causes, the relationship between a mental health injury and work because there are any number of determinants that can be identified through the proper investigation, the same as you would investigate any other accident or injury that happened at work to determine the causes.

Ms. Fontaine: Again, I just want to recognize my colleague for that very succinct and articulate answer.

I would ask my colleague why it's so important to recognize stress-induced mental disorders under The Workers Compensation Act.

Mr. Lindsey: Thank you, and that's a very good question.

I guess why is it important to recognize any injury to a human under The Workers Compensation Act—because that's the whole point of the compensation act.

Right now, the single traumatic event that causes a mental health injury, that causes stress, is recognized under The Workers Compensation Act. So it's only reasonable then, as you're able to show that a work-related stress has caused this injury, that it should be covered under The Workers Compensation Act the same as any other injury.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I'd thank the member for putting forward the resolution.

And my question relates to the nature of stress on the workplace. And maybe the member can give some examples. And also to whether in—with firefighters, we give a presumption that lung cancer is work related. Does the member envisage that there would be situations where such a presumption might also apply in this circumstance?

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member for that question, and it is a very good question.

Certainly to just say that any workplace would have that stress, that any worker in any workplace would have the presumption of that may be going too far. But, with the proper investigation, one can determine that there are stresses in a particular workplace or a group of workplaces that do lead to this kind of stress. So then, those types of injuries should be covered.

Mr. Martin: In the resolution, it notes about mental health issues due to a 'trumatic' event.

I'm wondering if the member can advise whether, say, a cab driver who had been physically assaulted and subject to a barrage of racial comments by, say, the member Fort Rouge, would that classify as compensation under his compensate—or, under his plan?

Mr. Lindsey: Really, that's the kind of childish behaviour we can expect in this House from this member? It's somewhat sad.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lindsey: Any—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: Any worker that suffers a workplace injury should be covered under compensation.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Point is that I don't think that's a childish behaviour of about talking about the taxi drivers—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Saran: —and when they are being beaten, then—they're—name calling—because of racism.

And, on the other hand, I would ask the member: Will the politicians—or, the MLAs who have to deal with House leaders, and—will they—are under stress. Will that be covered under the compensation?

Mr. Lindsey: Well, that's an interesting question.

And to the first part of the member's question, certainly taxi drivers that suffer from work-related stress—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: Certainly, taxi drivers that suffer from work-related stress, be it from racism or anything else, should be entitled to the same coverage under workers compensation as anybody else.

And the last time I looked, I don't think MLAs are covered under The Workers Compensation Act.

Ms. Fontaine: Again, I want to just commend my colleague for answering what are increasingly just more ridiculous questions from the Morris—the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) and the member for Maples.

So I will ask my colleague, Deputy Speaker, how The Workers Compensation Act—

* (11:20)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —recognizing stress-related mental health illnesses, facilitates the process for employees seeking time off work.

Mr. Lindsey: Certainly, as a worker suffers or when a worker suffers a work-related injury, be it a mental health injury or a physical bodily injury, the process should be very similar, that first you have to identify that you've had an injury, seek medical attention for the injury, make sure, then, that there is that accommodation made, be it time off or some other accommodation in the workplace, the same as if you had a physical injury. There can be—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time is up.

Mrs. Guillemard: I'm curious, for the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) has had 20 years sort of studying and consulting on this particular issue, if he could maybe try to explain why his party, while in government, didn't act on this for 17 years if he clearly had the information to offer?

Mr. Lindsey: As I previously did explain if the member had been listening that as we progress and the science catches up with that which workers already know—we did not want to overreach by including everything in the compensation act at the

time, and there was a push at that point in time to cover all work-related stress. What was included was stress from a single traumatic injury that originally wasn't covered under workers compensation. What this is is the next step in ensuring that workers that suffer from a work-related injury to their mental health from ongoing stressors at work that are clearly identified as causal, then that that worker is—

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

Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is open.

Any speakers?

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): It's always—it's disappointing that the member for point—or, sorry, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) doesn't like to hear the comments by her own leader. These are direct quotes from her own leader. These have not been altered in any way. So maybe she should take that cause up and her outrage that she likes to feign up with her leader.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I read the resolution from the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey). It does note that all workers deserve to be safe, healthy and happy, and more importantly, it does note that workers who are subject to 'traumatic' event that results in abnormal stress during the course of employment should be protected and compensated.

Well, that, actually, last comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is interesting, the idea of compensation, because under that government's watch, under the NDP, not only was there a history and a pattern of sexual harassment and sexual assault of staff, but, more importantly, there was a culture of concealment. We've heard that time and time again. I believe at last count, in the newspapers it was indicated that at least 12 individuals have come forward with incidents that happened under the NDP when they were office—when they were in office—when they were subject to unwanted attention by NDP MLAs. One of those individuals—and this ties into the member for Flin Flon's, again, call for compensation, noted that when she and a MLA Cabinet minister were passengers on a plane heading to a community in northern Manitoba for a government announcement, that I was—and I'm quoting—I was trapped. When you're in a small plane, you can't escape. He asked if I liked being tickled

and I said no. Then he put his hand under my skirt and attempted to grope me. I said no and don't, pretty forcefully, end quote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an individual, a political staffer under the NDP, who clearly was a victim of sexual harassment and sexual assault. And so what happened? What recourse was left to this individual, and what recourse is the members opposite saying should have been available?

Well, unfortunately for this young woman, this was not the only incident. She notes again, and I quote from the paper, that she notes that the NDP MLA grabbed her foot and attempted to put it towards his genital area. But that ended when others entered the room. She complained to her boss about the NDP MLA's behaviour, who went to Michael Balagus, then-premier Greg Selinger's chief of staff. Quote, he came back with suck it up, end quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

She goes on to say, and I quote: and then I spent the last four months there in the basement. I was in a room where you had to go to the basement, and then you could go up to a room between the basement and the first floor. There is no further depth you could go. The IT folks are there and they didn't know why I was there. I was given no assignments, not a single assignment. It was constructive dismissal. I didn't even come in for the last six weeks. They didn't even know I didn't come in. End quote. She went on to say that when she quit due to that stress, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she asked the NDP for two weeks severance pay, and I quote, which I thought was minimal. She said Balagus and the NDP denied her request.

So, again, here's an opportunity for the NDP—and when they stand up today in the House and they say that workers deserve to be safe, healthy and happy—they need to be protected. *[interjection]* And I appreciate the members clapping, but, unfortunately, their enthusiasm for a safe workplace doesn't extend to their own staff, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their own staff that was sexually harassed and assaulted by NDP MLAs during their tenure. The staff who were literally told to suck it up, to toughen up—truly, an unfortunate legacy by the members opposite.

So here you have an situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where an individual who, under a 'normous' amount of stress, is constructively dismissed by the NDP, shunted down into the basement, literally, to do nothing. She asked for compensation, and the NDP, today, who ask for compensation, denied that compensation to her.

But what's interesting, though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that individual, that chief of staff—that former chief of staff, Michael Balagus—the NDP didn't have a problem giving him compensation when he left. And, in fact, Michael Balagus earned \$159,000 and received a severance package of \$180,000, for a total salary in his final year of employment of \$339,000.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP will give compensation to the individual who says suck it up, but to the victim they give nothing. That is the legacy of the NDP, and it is truly, truly an unfortunate legacy.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this young woman, she is not the only victim of the NDP's culture of concealment and harassment. Another brave young victim came forward. She talked about how then—when she was with the NDP MLA, that they put his hand on her knee. They talked about sex acts he enjoyed. She also lodged a complaint with her boss. It was relayed back to me, basically, had to, quote, shut up and suck it up, end quote. They weren't going to do anything, she said. There was an election coming up and nobody was going to take any action in regards to my complaint. End quote.

Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, this is the legacy of today's NDP. This individual became, and I quote, stressed and anxious, and eventually took a three-month mental health leave, did not return to the Legislature. Quote, I really felt like I was insignificant and my complaints weren't even respected or even acknowledged. You really don't feel like working in that type of environment. End quote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was the environment created, promoted and enjoyed when the NDP were in office. In fact, the same individual that the NDP had no problem giving some \$339,000 worth of severance to—the member of Minto actually lined up behind him as their campaign chief when Theresa Oswald attempted to 'usurp' the premiership of Greg Selinger. So had Theresa won, Mr. Balagus would actually be back in the building again.

*(11:30)

An Honourable Member: That's disgusting.

Mr. Martin: You know what—and that—absolutely—you know, one of my colleagues I can hear in the background made the comment that that is disgusting, and it absolutely is, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But it doesn't end there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because if you look at the NDP's own staff lists, you will find an individual there, an individual named Liam Martin. Liam Martin is another former chief of staff, who also received, again, \$146,000 compensation when he left. Again, you compare that to the zero compensation that an individual who was sexually assaulted and harassed by an NDP MLA got—and again, you can see where the NDP's priorities lie.

Well this individual, this Mr. Liam Martin, well, surprise, surprise, he's back again as Mr.—as the member for Fort Rouge's (Mr. Kinew) chief of staff. So, when these victims come forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they come forward and they say that that culture of concealment that led to this, it continues under the NDP. It is not a surprise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member opposite, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), again, he talks about how individuals, again, need to be safe, healthy and happy. The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) has brought in legislation to prohibit women being forced to wear certain footwear. She talked about that—how high heels was the sexualization of women, but she didn't touch on the fact that in some instances a uniform that a waitress or a waiter may also be a issue of sexualisation.

Their own leader, and again, I will quote, because the members opposite don't enjoy hearing the words of their own leader, but I will quote: the waitress bringing me lunch is wearing a Star Trek uniform, hashtag 'jizzin' in my pants. End quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

That's the member for Fort Rouge, the Leader of the Official Opposition, who said to a woman, to a waitress, that your uniform that you are wearing has got me so turned on that my own—that apparently this caused this individual, the member for Fort Rouge, to ejaculate in his pants, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is truly, truly the creation of a unsafe work environment.

I wish I had more time to highlight the hypocrisy—

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

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I mean, it's actually, on this side of the House, it's almost a relief when we hear the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) get up and speak because we know when the member for Morris speaks, we know that

the government's side has no actual objection and no actual argument against a resolution that's being put forward by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) this morning.

And let me just say that if the matters that the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) went on for 10 minutes just now are truly concern for him, he will rally his colleagues and he will say, I'm concerned about workers. That's why we're going to pass this resolution this morning, and that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Yes, we've had to listen to the member for Morris go on for 10 minutes, and we appreciate if he gave me the same consideration.

If anything he put on the record is anything other than his shallow, political attack, then let him rally his colleagues and pass this resolution before we have a vote on a bill at 11:55, and if they don't, then we will know—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —that the member for Morris is nothing more than a mouthpiece for the nastiest attacks that have nothing to do with protecting workers, with protecting people in this province.

And I hear the member for Morris now trying to backtrack, because he has no intention, nor do his colleagues, of having this resolution passed, because at the end of the day, if they don't pass this resolution, they're going to make it very clear they could not care less about the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —psychological well-being of workers in Manitoba.

And let's take a look at what the resolution actually says, and I will encourage the member for Morris—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —to close his mouth—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I'm going to suspend—like, I'm just going to let—remind everybody just, you know, be cordial to each other when it comes to speaking here at—I just want to give the opportunity for the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) to present his speech.

An Honourable Member: And if we look at what the resolution actually says—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Minto.

Mr. Swan: —we know that The Workers Compensation Act Legislative Review Committee is currently undergoing a legislative review of The Workers Compensation Act. And they will be coming back, we presume, with recommendations for how to improve the workers compensation system, which I would hope every member of this House supports.

And what this resolution speaks to is asking this committee to consider mental health and the impact of stress-related mental illness on Manitoba workers and their families. And the goal, certainly, would be to find a way that The Workers Compensation Act can provide coverage for individuals who suffer a mental illness—stress-related mental illness as a result of their work.

And what really is the workers compensation system? It's been described, basically, as a bargain between employers and employees. Before there was a workers compensation system, employees who were injured at work could try to sue their employer. It was difficult for employees to be able to afford to have a lawyer, but at the same time, for employers, it was also very expensive and difficult to have to have a lawyer to fight those lawsuits with an uncertain result.

The workers compensation system, although it compensates workers for being injured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is actually a very, very important bargain. And it's one of the ways that in Canada, in the United States, in Great Britain and many other countries—one of the ways the workplace has improved and economic development has occurred. And over time, as the member for Flin Flon has pointed out, the definition of what's contained in a workplace injury has developed. It has changed. And, frankly, as we know more and more about the stresses and the injuries that workers can sustain, that is a field of injuries that is expanding.

And there's nothing prescriptive in this resolution which demands that any particular thing happens; it's merely asking that the committee consider this issue, come back with its recommendations, but that those recommendations actually be available to all of us as members of this Legislature so that if there are things which aren't carried out by the government, we can ask questions.

And frankly, if it's a report that's good and the government agrees with them, I expect we'd have pretty quick agreement on amendments to a workers compensation act.

But I want to talk, in particular, with the time I've got left, about some of the impacts on people working in the health-care system. And we know from—well, from anecdotal evidence, I suppose, from our friends, from our families, from our neighbours. We also know from workers coming forward and their representatives coming forward that mental health issues for those working in the health-care system are very, very real. We know that nurses, health-care aides, others, are already more likely than many other workers to suffer physical injuries—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: We also know—well, I'm glad the members opposite think that those working in the mental—in the health-care system, who are getting injured, is funny, because I'm going to enjoy very much printing off this Hansard and taking it to people working in the health-care system so that they'll know, when I was speaking about this issue and wanting to protect them, that the members opposite thought this was a joke—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: So I would appreciate—even if the members, then—despite the member for Morris's (Mr. Martin) comments, if they're not going to pass this resolution today, that's fine. But they just need to know that we will be reflecting on the words that are being said today, as we should whenever an important resolution's being passed—*[interjection]*—and they will have to answer—well, knock yourself out, says the member for Morris. You know, when I'm going around the province and talking to people working in health care, they are increasingly frustrated by the way that this government has demonstrated a complete lack of respect.

Just last Friday, I was with the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) up in Flin Flon. There was 175 people that came out both from the Flin Flon side and also the Saskatchewan side of the border to talk about their concerns about the health-care system. And that day we met with individuals working in the health-care system.

We heard from health-care aides working at the local personal-care home. There's supposed to be six workers taking care of residents at any time. But in

fact, many times, they reported to us that there are as few as three people looking after the residents of that personal-care home because this government has been cutting money to the authority, and the authority either can't or won't fill important positions to make sure that the personal-care home is fully staffed.

Well, first of all, that can lead to more physical injuries because residents need to be lifted; they need to be moved; they need to be helped.

* (11:40)

But the fact that there's only three workers some nights looking after residents, is also a sense—a source of great stress for those health-care workers. And you can talk to nurses in any facility, you can talk to health-care aides, you can talk to other health-care workers, and they will tell you how frustrating it is as we go along and there are fewer and fewer people to do very, very important work.

We have nurses saying they break down on their shifts because they can't provide the care that they want to, that they're trained to do, that in their heart they know they want to do, because they don't have the time. They have too many people to look after, and it's not getting any better. We know it's only getting worse. With the latest health budget we know it's going to get much, much worse for people working in the system.

We heard from nurses at St. Boniface general hospital about mandatory overtime. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) didn't get it when I asked the question. He wanted to talk about overtime. I'm talking about mandatory overtime when a nurse gets to the end of her shift and she's told by her supervisor that she can't go home because there's not another nurse showing up to take over her patients.

Well—and I hear the members chattering opposite. How would they like to come to the end of a 12-hour shift and be told that they can't go home? They can't go home to look after their families. They can't go home to rest. What do they think happens to those nurses that are forced to work mandatory overtime? Don't they understand—

An Honourable Member: That's a Monday night.

Mr. Swan: Well, the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) doesn't care, but I do and so do my colleagues who are New Democrats who are elected to protect our health-care system and to stand up for

people working in the system. And maybe the members opposite don't understand how that could create difficulty and stress and, yes, mental illness for people who are forced to work in that whole system where they can't even go home at the end of their shift.

So this is not a prescriptive resolution calling on a specific set of rules or regulations. This is simply asking the committee, which is already tasked to do work to broaden the circle, to take a look at stress-induced mental illness and to report back to all of us with their recommendations and how we can build a safer system working with the health authorities, working with the employers and employees to try to deal with these situations so that we don't have workers that are having to take time off, so employers aren't losing the time of those people who are working.

It's only the right thing to do. I hope the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) talks to his colleagues. I hope that they exercise some common sense, but also some humanity today and we can pass this resolution and work on making Manitoba a safer place.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record about this resolution and it's quite timely that we are talking about, you know, work-related injuries to mental health based on ongoing stressors in the workplace.

We have seen in the last year, a historic amount of coverage and attention on what the impacts of stress on a workplace can be, particularly as it relates to harassment. I believe that that is one of the key, or—the most stressful environment that people are dealing with in their workplace, is when they're not free from bullying, and sexual harassment, and intimidation.

The #MeToo movement, of course, would show us results of many, many workplaces that have been what I would describe as toxic. And I believe that if we do not address that toxicity in the workplace, we certainly will not achieve our goals in having equality for all people in the workplace, especially women in the workplace. I certainly do think that there's a direct correlation between the gap in pay between genders and this issue of workplace intimidation and bullying.

And we do know that the cumulative effects of being bullied and intimidated in the workplace

certainly do result in mental health issues and ongoing struggles in achieving their—you know, an outcome in the workplace as well as in personal down time. We know that stress in the workplace is not something that is left behind in the workplace, that it is something that carries on into the personal life.

And so our government is really aware of the importance of setting a tone at the top leadership in the province in terms of developing safe workplaces. And this morning I was thrilled to spend some time with a roomful of grade 5 and 6 girls who are learning some new skills and being introduced to a variety of trades, and learning that they can achieve any destiny that they set their mind to.

And the one thing that I thought, I hope that these girls will never encounter, is a workplace that also includes bullying. And we've heard a lot of examples of workplaces that have not been kind to women, especially male-dominated workplaces: the trades, the STEM field and, of course, politics, which is the nature of our workplace.

So, to set the tone at the top and to ensure that workplaces are free of harassment and intimidation and 'bulling', I was pleased that our government did announce a no-wrong-door approach to ending sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace.

And, just recently the—you know, and I have to commend everyone who's been involved in this, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) who's the head of the Civil Service Commission, our Premier (Mr. Pallister), as well as the Clerk of the Executive Council have been instrumental in opening up forums and roundtables.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And, just recently, we sent out an email to all employees in the—who work in the civil service, that we are having roundtables of sexual harassment in the workplace roundtable all throughout the province. I think these roundtables will be very significant in terms of helping us get a good sense of what the problem is in terms of harassment in the workplace, and then how we can address it.

I think a full transparent process is integral to understanding the magnitude of harassment in our workplaces. And without that full transparency I do not think that we will be able to make the progress that we desire in the Manitoba government to eradicate harassment and bullying and move forward

in a manner that is conducive to respectful workplace.

So I would encourage anybody who works for the civil service or works in government, anybody who works in this building or in government throughout the province to either register for one of these roundtables or they can also submit information through an anonymous survey that would also be taken into consideration. There are some people who, I know, it's hard to come out and share stories of harassment and bullying in the workplace, and if they prefer an anonymous route to disclosure, that is certainly an avenue for them.

And we will be sharing the results of this survey. Of course, not with complainants' names attached to them; we will be very respectful of their privacy. But we will be sharing the results of this roundtable and these sexual harassment workplace roundtables as well as surveys that we will be taking.

And I really do commend the Clerk of the Executive Council for the communication that he's done with the civil service, and basically sending out a lot of communication that a respectful workplace is one that is free of all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment.

Now, in terms of the transparency, we do know that that is very important to create change, and we are leaders in the province. Here, our caucus takes that responsibility very seriously and we're committed to a very open and transparent process. And I know the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) had taken a lengthy examination of the workplace that existed in this building prior to our government coming into power two years ago today. And I know that the members opposite, they did name a duo to hear the sexual misconduct reports within members opposite.

And I do note that the information coming out of this sexual misconduct inquiry has not been released publicly, and I do certainly hope that members opposite would play a leadership role and know that transparency is of utmost importance when we're changing culture, when we're changing social norms; we really have to play a leadership role, and transparency is at the heart of that.

So I would encourage them to take heed and to report publicly what they have found, and more importantly, what steps they are taking so that they can set the tone in their shop in terms of addressing sexual misconduct and harassment and bullying,

because, again, we do know that a workplace that is not free of intimidation or bullying or harassment is one that undoubtedly, there will be employees suffering in silence and in darkness with the legacy of what is happening on—in their workplace.

* (11:50)

And so I encourage everyone in this building, everyone in this Chamber to take a stand against bullying in the workplace, harassment in the workplace, and to do the right thing and disclose it and ensure that we do have a no-wrong-door approach in the provincial government.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to say a few words.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) for bringing this forward.

This is a serious issue, and it is, I believe, important for us to be able to treat mental and brain health issues as well as physical issues in a serious and, at the same time, reasonable way under the workers compensation. I think that this is complicated enough that we need to have a—I would suggest something like a paper which talks about examples, which provides us a better definition or illustration of what is included in stress. We need, if we're going to approach this, to have some consistency among physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists. We need to be sure—under current circumstances some insurance plans which cover mental health, for example, will require a diagnosis from a psychiatrist.

We need to make sure that we are on the right track in terms of how we approach this so that it can be treated fairly and consistently throughout the province, and I think that that's going to be more difficult than with a physical injury where you have a broken bone or something like that. And we're breaking new ground, I think, in this respect so we must treat—tread well and carefully.

We need to have a better understanding of how you decide when stress is work related or not, or whether there's an additive component in terms of work based on the individual. I think we need to understand that there are—each person is different and that we need to be able to recognize—I give you an example. I had working for me an individual with a significant mental health issue. He was more susceptible to stress, and so we had an arrangement in the office that, you know, if we had a, you know, a

stressful circumstance, which we do for time to time, that, you know, we'd make sure that things were covered and that he wasn't put in a position where— you know, stress might be acceptable for somebody else would be very problematic for him.

So I think that that is also an important issue. I think we need to recognize that there is good stress as well as bad stress, right, that putting a deadline on getting something done is not, you know, necessarily harmful stress, as it were, but needs to be done in a way that is reasonable for the work environment.

And we need to be able to make sure that, if we're moving forward on this, that we get it right, because the last thing we want is to move forward on something which is going to be very problematic.

I thank the minister for her comments, as well, in recognizing the seriousness of bullying and harassment in the workplace, and I think that there is an opportunity here to build on what is here.

I'm not sure that we're all the way here in terms of being able to implement this, but I think that there—with a lot more work that we could be.

So I thank the member for bringing this forward.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I just want to say that I am quite surprised that there isn't more emphasis on preventative measures, which was a topic of concern during most of the NDP's questioning in question period yesterday. I suppose

when you don't know how to prevent stress and poor behaviours within your own—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Fort Richmond will have 10 minutes remaining.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 212—The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act

Madam Speaker: In accordance with rule 24, and as previously announced, I am interrupting this debate to put the question on the first selected bill for this session from the government caucus, Bill 212.

The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 212, The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act.

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

* * *

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you seek leave of the House to call it 12 o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to call it 12 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 19, 2018

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 9–Workers Compensation Coverage for Work Related Stress	
Speaker's Statement		Lindsey	1571
Driedger	1561		
Second Readings–Public Bills		Questions	
Bill 222–The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs)		Martin	1574
Altemeyer	1561	Lindsey	1574
Questions		Fontaine	1574
Smook	1563	Guillemard	1574
Altemeyer	1563	Gerrard	1575
Allum	1563	Saran	1575
Gerrard	1563	Debate	
Fletcher	1564	Martin	1576
Reyes	1564	Swan	1577
Saran	1564	Squires	1580
Nesbitt	1565	Gerrard	1581
Debate		Guillemard	1582
Smook	1565		
Gerrard	1567	Debate on Second Readings–Public Bills	
Reyes	1567	Bill 212–The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act	
Nesbitt	1569		1582
A. Smith	1571		

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

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>