

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

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.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have some opening comments to make.

So, good morning and welcome to a special sitting of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. For the reference of all members and for anyone watching today's proceedings, I will note that by agreement of the House leaders and the MLA for River Heights, the House shall sit today in three two-hour time intervals: 10 a.m. to noon; 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.; and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

I would like to thank you all for being here, and I would like to also acknowledge that, while it is contrary to our usual practices to refer to the absence of any MLA from this Chamber, as you can see we have a limited number of members present in the Chamber today. This has been agreed to by the parties as a means to achieve better physical distancing for members in the Chamber.

I would note, though, that MLAs not present in this Chamber are monitoring the proceedings remotely and will be following along as we go through business today.

I would also note that I have been advised that, due to the limited number of members present today, the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) will be acting as government whip for today only.

Members will find on their desks a document outlining the steps taken by our Sergeant-at-Arms to protect members and staff during this pandemic sitting. In addition to that, I wanted to tell you that, for any bills introduced today, we will not be distributing them directly to members. Rather, as the bills are made available, staff will place them on the table on

the west side of the Chamber, and I would ask members to pick up copies for themselves. This measure will reduce the number of hands touching each document and therefore reduce the risk of transmission.

I would also add that we do have gloves available in the message rooms for any member who would like to use them. I would note for members that these measures that have been implemented in consultation with and the approval of Manitoba's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Roussin.

I would also like to explain the presence of the two tables near the east loge today.

As members would know, whenever bills are considered in the Committee of the Whole in this Chamber, staff from Legislative Counsel are required to be present. Usually, such committee consideration is brief, and therefore the law officer attends individually.

As we are expecting several bills to go through committee today, Legislative Counsel needed to be fully prepared to assist all MLAs with questions or amendments to propose. Accordingly, later today when we resolve into Committee of the Whole, additional staff from Legislative Counsel are required to be present in the Chamber along with their laptops and other equipment. Leave is not required for this as these staff are required to be here. I am relating this for the information of members who may have wondered why there were extra tables and equipment set up.

As well, I would also like to mention for the information of all members that I have asked the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to investigate the technological and procedural arrangements which would be required to allow the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to meet and conduct the full range of its business in a virtual session.

As you can imagine, this is a complicated matter to consider. In the coming weeks, as we learn more about what is required to make this happen, I will consult with the House leaders and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). Once the four of us agree that a safe and secure method for allowing MLAs to participate in proceedings of the House in a virtual session has been achieved, we will put that plan in

motion and advise all MLAs accordingly. I will note that before the House could meet virtually we would be required to meet again with MLAs here in this Chamber to facilitate agreement in person on the required procedural and legal provisions.

I would like to conclude by recognizing the obvious fact before us: that we are living in unprecedented, stressful and scary times.

I want to thank you all again, members and staff, for being here and for doing your duty for the people of Manitoba. Many people have worked very hard to make this special sitting possible, including many who worked through the Easter long weekend. I would like to particularly acknowledge the work of our clerks, House leaders and their staff, who have gone above and beyond to make today as safe and productive as possible.

People of Manitoba are depending on us today, and I am confident that we will not let them down.

Thank you.

* * *

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Yes, on House business, Madam Speaker.

And in addition to those that you have thanked, I would also like to thank you for your leadership over the past many days and the past many weeks in preparation for this special sitting.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have a number of separate leave requests to make, and I'd like to ask you to please canvass the House for each of these items in the turn that I present them: (1) I am asking for leave, for the duration of today's sitting, to allow MLAs to speak in debate from a seat in the Chamber other than their own and also to prohibit requests for a quorum count and, with the exception of the Speaker, to limit the representation of members present in the Chamber today participating in debate and being eligible to be counted as part of a recorded division vote as follows: 12 MLAs for government caucus; six MLAs for the official opposition caucus; and one independent Liberal in the Chamber at a time.

Madam Speaker: For the duration of the today's sitting, is there leave (a) to allow MLAs to speak in debate from a seat in the Chamber other than their own, (b) to prohibit requests for a quorum count, and (c) with the exception of the Speaker, to limit the

representation of members present in the Chamber today participating in debate and being eligible to be counted as part of recorded divisions as follows: 12 MLAs from the government caucus; six MLAs from the official opposition caucus; and one independent Liberal in the Chamber at a time.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank members of the Chamber.

I would also ask if there is leave to introduce for debate the following bills: Bill 54, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act; Bill 55, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Bill 56, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act; Bill 57, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act; Bill 58, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; Bill 59, The Public Health Amendment Act; and Bill 62, The Fuel Tax Amendment and Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act.

*(10:10)

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to introduce the following new bills:

Bill 54, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act; is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Bill 55, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Bill 56, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act; is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Bill 57, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act; is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Bill 58, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Bill 59, The Public Health Amendment Act; is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Bill 62, The Fuel Tax Amendment and Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act; is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: I thank members of the Assembly.

I'm also asking for leave to have a limited version of routine proceedings today following these leave requests, including just the following business in this order: introduction of bills just agreed to in the previous leave request; a ministerial statement from the First Minister on the COVID-19 pandemic with responses from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont)—asking for a leave to

waive the usual 90 minutes notice provision for ministerial statements as part of that; an abridged version of oral questions would follow, waiving the 40 minute time limit, no supplemental questions, question rotation in the following order: three official opposition questions, then one independent Liberal question, followed by three official opposition questions and then one independent Liberal question followed by an additional three official opposition questions; and one independent Liberal question following that. When this rotation is complete, oral questions would then conclude, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have a limited version of routine proceedings today following these leave requests, including just the following business in this order: introduction of the bills just agreed to in the previous leave requests; a ministerial statement from the First Minister on the COVID-19 pandemic with responses from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), waiving the usual 90 minutes notice provision for ministerial statements; an abridged version of oral questions as follows: waiving the 40 minute time limit, no supplementary questions, question rotation in the following order: three official opposition questions, one independent Liberal question, three official opposition questions, one independent Liberal question, three official opposition questions, one independent Liberal question. When this rotation is complete, oral questions will conclude.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Is there leave to consider and put the questions in all of the remaining stages of the bill process today for the following bills, and Madam Speaker, I will call these bills one at a time to ask that you seek agreement for each one individually in turn, the first one being Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider and put the questions on Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the second being Bill 8, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider and put the questions on all remaining stages of Bill 8, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act?

Is there leave?

Oh, I should clarify here, and I'm going to restate that because it's for today only. So is there leave to consider and put the questions on all remaining stages of the bill process today for Bill 8, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied, and I would indicate that, for Bill 4, when we were considering that, it was for today only, just to be clear, and that has been agreed.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, could you also ask for leave—similar leave provisions for Bill 15, the liquor, gaming and cannabis control amendment act and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation amendment act.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider and put the questions on all remaining stages of Bill 15 today, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: In addition, could you ask for those leave provisions for Bill 22, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2020?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider and put the questions on all remaining stages of Bill 22 today? The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2020, is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Goertzen: Bill 30, The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider and put the questions on all remaining stages today of Bill 30, The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: In addition, same leave request for Bill 44, the public utilities rate protection and regulatory reform act, various acts amended.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider today and put the questions on all remaining stages of Bill 44, The Public Utilities Ratepayer Protection and Regulatory Reform Act (Various Acts Amended)?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, Bill 49, The Building and Electrical Permitting Improvement Act (Various Acts Amended and Permit Dispute Resolution Act Enacted).

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider today and put the questions on all remaining stages of Bill 49, The Building and Electrical Permitting Improvement Act (Various Acts Amended and Permit Dispute Resolution Act Enacted).

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Goertzen: And, finally, Madam Speaker, a similar request for leave provision for Bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider today and put the questions on all remaining stages of Bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Seeking leave to allow all bills considered at committee stage today to be considered in the Committee of the Whole rather than a standing committee.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow all bills considered at committee stage today to be considered in the Committee of the Whole rather than a standing committee?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the House for that.

I'm asking for leave for any bills with registered presenters considered at committee stage today, is there leave to waive rule 92(7) so that two days notice of the meeting would not be required, and also to allow any registered presenters to provide a written submission which would be included in today's

Hansard transcript, provided they can submit their documentation before 4:30 p.m., April 16th, 2020.

Madam Speaker: For any bills with registered presenters considered at committee stage today, is there leave to waive rule 92(7) so that two days notice of the meeting would not be required and also to allow any registered presenters to provide a written submission which would be included in today's Hansard transcript, provided they can submit their document before 4:30 p.m., April 16th, 2020?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: And, finally, Madam Speaker, is there leave for the House and—not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted on all bills which pass concurrence and third reading today.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the House to not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted on all bills which pass concurrence and third reading today?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 54—The Emergency Measures Amendment Act

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 54, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 54, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act.

* (10:20)

This legislation provides the provincial government with additional tools to respond to challenges that arise during a declared state of emergency. These changes are part of the Manitoba Protection Plan to support the efforts of our front-line workers and protect Manitoba's most vulnerable residents from the negative effects of COVID-19.

This bill provides the provincial government with authority to make three types of orders: emergency orders, temporary suspension orders and reporting deadline variation orders. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly is also granted authority to issue

reporting deadline variation orders for officers of the Legislative Assembly and MLAs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Bill 55—The Employment Standards Code
Amendment Act**

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Relations (Ms. Squires), that Bill 55, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: I am pleased to introduce Bill 55, the employment standards amendment act. The bill will add new provisions to The Employment Standards Code to ensure that workers cannot be terminated or otherwise disciplined by employers because they need to be away from their jobs for reasons related to COVID-19 crisis.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Bill 56—The Family Maintenance
Amendment Act**

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 56, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: I am pleased to introduce The Family Maintenance Amendment Act to the House today. This legislation provides the Maintenance Enforcement Program with greater flexibility to respond to the needs of its clients who are experiencing great difficulties due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you very much.

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

**Bill 57—The Regulated Health Professions
Amendment Act**

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I move, seconded by the

Minister of Justice, that Bill 57, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les professions de la santé réglementées, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: The proposed amendments would extend to all health profession regulatory bodies the right to waive registration and practice requirements for health professionals from other provinces and from the United States in the case of a public health emergency and in the case where those health professionals are required to assist in dealing with the threat, and also it would allow those regulatory bodies to waive or modify registration or practice requirements for former members of the profession.

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

**Bill 58—The Residential Tenancies
Amendment Act**

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 58, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: I'm pleased to introduce the bill today. The bill will temporarily amend The Residential Tenancies Act to freeze rent increases that were set to take effect as of April 1st, 2020, and for subsequent months while the amendments are in effect; limit landlord-issue notice of termination or evictions, effective March 24th, 2020, to specific circumstances including unlawful activities that pose an imminent risk to health or safety; and prohibit late fees for non-paying rent due on April 1st, 2020, and for the subsequent months while the amendments are in effect.

The proposed amendments are intended to remain in effect until they're repealed by proclamation.

Madam Speaker, Bill 58 aligns with the fulfillment of our commitment to assist tenants affected by COVID-19 who are experiencing financial hardship, whether it is loss of job, layoff, less work hours or who are in self-isolation.

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

**Bill 59—The Public Health
Amendment Act**

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Conservation and Climate, that Bill 59, The Public Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the amendments sought would give additional authority to the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer to issue an order prohibiting or restricting persons from travelling to, from or within a specified area or requiring persons who are doing so to take specified actions.

The amendments would also allow the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer to order persons to take specified measures to prevent the spread of a communicable disease, including persons who arrive in Manitoba from another province, territory or country.

And all the exercise of these authorities would be subject to ministerial approval.

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

**Bill 62—The Fuel Tax Amendment
and Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act**

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 62, The Fuel Tax Amendment and Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: The bill provides legislative authority for the implementation of much-needed administrative and tax relief in response to COVID-19 pandemic.

Madam Speaker, in making these changes, our government is committed to supporting Manitobans and businesses during these unprecedented times.

I am pleased to present the bill to the House, Madam Speaker.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

COVID-19 Statement

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Our province, our nation—in fact, the planet faces an unprecedented series of challenges of unprecedented scope and unparalleled danger.

The COVID-19 virus has infected millions of people throughout the world. It has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and the numbers continue to rise with each passing day. Hundreds of Manitobans have been impacted by COVID-19. Four Manitobans have died because of the virus. We mourn the passing of each of them, and we convey our heartfelt condolences to their families, their friends.

Nous pleurons le décès de chacun d'eux. Nous envoyons nos sincères condoléances à leur famille et à leurs amis.

Translation

We mourn the death of each of these people, and we present our sincere condolences to their families and friends.

English

Our economy has also been impacted by this virus. Many businesses are struggling. Thousands of Manitobans have been laid off at their jobs.

There is no medicinal cure for those affected by COVID-19. There is no vaccine to prevent others from being infected. Until a cure is found and an effective vaccine is created, each of us—all of us—have a responsibility to prevent the spread of this virus and the harm caused by it.

All generations have had challenges, Madam Speaker. Others at least as great as this one. Our challenge is to wash our hands with soap frequently, maintain social distancing and support our health professionals with the medicines and the equipment they need in order to be safe and to care for those who are suffering from the COVID-19 infections.

And we will do this by doing what Manitobans have always done in response to a crisis: we will protect the vulnerable, we will face our challenges together, strong and united.

Nous sommes confrontés à nos défis ensemble, forts et unis.

Translation

We face our challenges together, strong and united.

English

This is what Manitobans are doing every single day. This is what our government is doing, inspired by the values of Manitobans, with their Manitoba Protection Plan, components of which will be implemented today through the actions of the Legislative Assembly.

C'est un plan qui met la santé et la sécurité des Manitobains au premier plan.

Translation

It is a plan that puts Manitobans' health and safety first.

English

It's a plan that puts the health and the safety of Manitobans first, a plan that addresses the needs of Manitobans impacted by the economic harm caused by this virus, a plan that supports small businesses throughout our province, a plan that ensures Manitoba will be ready for recovery when COVID-19 is defeated.

* (10:30)

There should be no doubt, Madam Speaker, that defeating COVID-19 is truly a team effort. Every Manitoban has a role to play and I believe Manitobans are up for being part of Team Manitoba.

We owe our thanks to our health-care workers on the front line. We owe our thanks to the daycare workers caring for the children of essential staff. We owe our thanks to critical service providers, including our truckers, our grocery store workers, to our chambers of commerce too, and our business and trade associations who are working hard to protect our economy. And, Madam Speaker, we also owe our thanks to the thousands of Manitobans who are volunteering their time to help others in need.

Tout au long de ses 150 ans d'histoire, le Manitoba n'a jamais relevé un défi qu'il n'a pas pu surmonter.

Translation

Throughout its 150 years of history, Manitoba has never faced a challenge that it could not overcome.

English

Throughout its 150-year history, Manitoba has never met—Manitobans have never met a challenge that they could not and would not overcome. Our province remains undefeated because of its strength, the unity, the resolve of generations of Manitobans that came before us and that live here now. And now the torch has been passed to us.

We will follow the example of those who came before us. We will win this fight, and when we do, all of us here and throughout our beautiful province will share the pride in knowing that we did this together, that we did it together as Manitobans.

And in 2021, when we will be celebrating the unflinching unity of Manitobans that for the past 150 years has given our province the strength to overcome every challenge placed before it, we will know—with even greater certainty than we know now—in the coming years, that the only thing better than today in Manitoba will be, Madam Speaker, tomorrow in Manitoba.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, to all the health-care workers and essential service providers out there, we say thank you. To all the families, renters, child-care workers and small-business owners who are stressed right now, we hear you. And to the government, we say we are ready to work with you to help Manitobans, and yet, we also remind you that a strong opposition makes government perform better.

Now, our team has been working on many important ideas to help Manitobans weather this challenging period, and I'll share a few of these plans now, with humility, to get at the idea that perhaps incorporating these ideas would advance our province's response to the pandemic.

First, there are many small businesses and renters who are suffering hard times right now. With the money that the government is paying to a call centre to patch people through to federal hotlines, the government could have financed the borrowing costs to launch more than \$150 million in no-interest loans to small businesses and to landlords. By financing this more than \$150 million in no-interest loans, they could have provided relief to small businesses and renters right across Manitoba.

Second, the government has announced a plan to cut wages and to cut work days for those in the public sector. This does not make sense during a recession. When you've got so much financial pain, to cut one of

the few sectors that's still moving will only make things worse. It will hurt all of us, not just those who work in the public sector. It will have negative spinoff effects and hurt the small businesses and essential services which are still operating during this difficult time.

And third, the government is currently not willing to allow financial oversight for the billions that they are asking for the privilege of spending right now, other than to perhaps table a report some six months from now. Instead, we propose that there should be regular virtual committee meetings to scrutinize government spending during this emergency. There's nothing burdensome about telling Manitobans how we are spending their money during this time.

We serve a higher calling than partisanship here today. We serve the interests of the people of Manitoba, and we stand ready to work with the government to help fight this pandemic as Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Alors, à tous ceux qui travaillent dans le système de santé, nous vous remercions. À tout le monde qui travaille en provision des services essentiels, je vous remercie. Et tous les Manitobains et Manitobaines durant ce temps-ci qui voient des grands défis, nous vous écoutons. Nous sommes ici aujourd'hui pour vous appuyer, pour vous aider et puis pour vous servir.

Merci beaucoup.

Translation

To all those working in the health-care system, I thank you. To everyone working to provide essential services, I thank you. And to all Manitobans currently facing difficult challenges, we hear you. We are here today to support you, to help you and indeed to serve you.

Thank you very much.

English

Thank you. Miigwech.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I ask for leave to speak to the ministerial statement, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the member does not need leave. That has already been granted.

Mr. Lamont: I want to thank everyone who's stepped up in this crisis. Merci à tout le monde dans notre système de santé, dans nos garderies, nos épicerie.

Translation

Thank you to everyone working in our health-care system, in child-care centres and in our grocery stores.

English

Thank you to our health-care workers, child-care workers, grocery store workers and everyone who's providing services on the front lines, and thank you to every Manitoban who is part of this effort of fighting COVID-19 by staying home and staying safe. And our deepest condolences to all those who've lost loved ones.

We do need to step up to provide people security, especially job security, in this crisis. There are times in our history where the private economy has gone up in flames and jobs and businesses go up in smoke. And at times like this, the worst thing we can do is add to the conflagration with more layoffs, freezes and cuts.

And it's important, Madam Speaker, to say there is more than one crisis going on. There is a COVID-19 shutdown, there is a collapse in the price of oil and too many Canadians were already facing a debt crisis before this began.

But this crisis was not caused by too much spending on not-for-profits or too much spending on non-essential workers, and the crisis was not caused by EAs or early childhood education workers or hydro workers. It was not caused by small businesses.

And I will quote the Premier (Mr. Pallister), from his state of the province speech, that some things don't cost; they pay. Education and educated students don't cost; they pay. Infrastructure doesn't cost; it pays. Health care for every Manitoban does not cost; it pays. And public services don't cost; they pay.

Keeping people in jobs will not cost. It will pay, because every single person that people are talking about laying off also spends their hard-earned pay to keep the economy going, and at a time when people are living in fear for their health and safety of themselves and their loved ones, not knowing how they will pay their bills, not knowing whether they will lose their business and their life savings, what Manitobans need above all is security.

We need support for laid-off workers. We need support for small business to cover their basic costs so they can rebound from this crisis, because thousands of Manitobans have lost their jobs or have already given up looking.

I've spoken many times in this Chamber about the fact that over half of Manitobans are on the verge of insolvency. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his caucus should know that many of those people are people who work for government in that precarious position. There are thousands of low-paid precarious workers who work—funded by the public sector, who won't be able to pay their mortgages or rent if they are laid off.

There is no need for brutal austerity or need for massive tax hikes. There is no need for the threats of deeper layoffs and cuts, but I recognize that the Province cannot do it alone. It does require the Government of Canada and Bank of Canada to step up. In the UK, the Bank of England has become—begun direct financing of government, an idea that has been endorsed by the Financial Times.

If we are looking at the worst recession since the 1930s, we need to look to that era for solutions. The Bank of Canada and the Government of Canada must step up to assist the Province of Manitoba and help stabilize the books of the Province, Manitoba Hydro and municipalities.

We have lived through greater challenges. My great-grandfather died in the Spanish flu of 1918, leaving a widow and six young children who were bankrupted. My father was born in the middle of the Depression in 1933 and grew up in Headingley in a converted 10-by-12 grain shed he shared with his four brothers and sisters and his parents.

In the end, the measures that we took to get out of the Depression paved the way for the creation of a middle class in Canada. We have forgotten the lessons of the Depression and been dismantling the institutions and social safety nets that were brought to pull people out of that disaster and to protect us from another one.

There are times the private sector melts down and government is the only institution with the tools and resources to step in and rebuild. This is one of those times. We cannot shy away from it. The tools to avoid untold suffering are available to us, so long as we seize them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Provincial Financial Assistance

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We find ourselves in extraordinary times these days—it goes without saying—and our team

has returned to collaborate with the government in the hopes of providing some direct financial assistance to Manitoba families who are struggling with great economic and financial difficulties during this period.

* (10:40)

Across the country we have seen many premiers announce various forms of direct financial assistance. Ontario has increased payments to seniors. BC is providing benefits to workers and to renters. New Brunswick is topping up wages to people who are on hard times. These are just a few examples of how provinces can act to put more cash in hand to their citizens during this recession.

To date, Manitoba has not offered any direct financial assistance.

Will the Premier use the emergency session today to provide immediate and direct financial assistance to Manitobans?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Even before this pandemic, Madam Speaker, we had a colossal challenge here in Manitoba as Canada's most heavily indebted province. Our debt-service costs were enormous, over \$1 billion for the first time in Manitoba history, and those challenges, those fiscal challenges are very real.

That being said, in the face of this unprecedented challenge we have already made available hundreds of millions of dollars of direct assistance to Manitobans in various forms, and we plan on continuing to do so to make sure that we protect our most vulnerable citizens first and foremost, Madam Speaker.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Financial Assistance for Small Business

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, this government is the only provincial government in Canada that is not providing direct financial assistance to families and to small businesses during this difficult time. Now, federal supports are helping some, but there are many others who are falling through the cracks. There are many small businesses in Manitoba that do not meet the conditions to qualify for the federal programs, as one example.

Now, because of this, half of Manitoba small-business owners are not confident their business will survive if current conditions last until the end of May. It is time for us to work together to support these small businesses. Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia,

other provinces have put similar measures into place as we are suggestion—as we are suggesting.

Will the Premier use this session to offer direct financial assistance to small businesses so they can make it through this difficult time?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We have been working diligently with the small-business community and the small-business representative groups. Various organizations were directly involved in advising us on our strategies around essential business declaration to pursue the health and safety of Manitobans. They worked co-operatively with us. They'll continue to work co-operatively with us as we actually move forward on agenda items now that we have clarity around the federal programs, which was not sufficiently clear as late as last Thursday.

Madam Speaker, we are able to then make sure that we understand what those cracks are the member refers to. To act in duplication of unclear federal programs would be a waste of money, time and, actually, a waste of the resources that small-businesses people find so precious and want to guard.

We'll continue to work with the business organizations and with the individual small-business owners to support them in every way possible as we have throughout our entire administration.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Reduced Work Week for Public Service

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): The concern that we have is that what is being squandered is this short runway that many small businesses have in Manitoba, so we encourage the government to step forward with direct financial assistance.

We also know that yesterday's announcement with respect to those who work in the public sector is a mistake and it will compound the impacts of this recession that we are currently in. It is also at odds with the economic direction of a former prime minister who this Premier (Mr. Pallister) served with. In 2008, even Stephen Harper, who no one would accuse of being a tax-and-spend politician, said during a recession it is the role of government to keep jobs in place and to keep people earning wages.

Now, of course, you don't have to be a Conservative to feel the same way. There is a broad economic consensus that governments have a special

role to keep the economy moving during times of financial crisis.

Will the Premier back down from his plans to cut the public service that will have dire ramifications for the rest of the economy?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Rich, coming from a political organization that never saw fit to do anything but take more money off the kitchen tables of working families throughout our province. Public servants and private sector workers bore the brunt of 15 tax hikes in just 14 years.

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is we have put billions of dollars back into the hands of Manitobans through reduced taxes and regulatory infringements on their ability to generate incomes, and we'll continue to support the front line in our health-care system.

When some are called to step up and support the front line, they do. Madam Speaker, this government numbers among those who will stand up and support the front line.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Financial Assistance for Small Business

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): My Manitoba Liberal colleagues and I have been inundated with concerns about small businesses across Manitoba. They are telling us they will lose everything they have worked for. We asked businesses and chambers of commerce across the province whether they would prefer the PST off insurance compared with direct assistance with fixed costs, and the response was overwhelming, that businesses don't want additional loans and most were not in favour of the PST reduction, but they do need fixed costs covered so they can bounce back.

Is the Premier going to let a record number of small businesses go broke on his watch, or will his government step up with a program to help, as all other provinces in Canada have done?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, we've already developed numerous mechanisms to assist small businesses with tax deferral, with business supports, with restaurant industry support, with support to laid-off employees and employers during the layoff period that we do not know how long it will extend, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, but we want to act in concert and partnership with the federal government as well. And, so that we do not duplicate their programs, we have been evaluating their programs to

make sure Manitobans who are eligible to use them can and are encouraged to do so.

The federal government has adapted some of their programs sufficiently to our satisfaction to now serve Manitobans better. For example, they proposed a wage support program initially with a subsidy of 10 per cent. It wouldn't have taken a single bureaucrat in Ottawa to administer that program. No one would've applied. After the urgings of myself and other premiers, they raised the subsidy amount to 75 per cent, but still clarifications are not being offered by Ottawa. We need those clarifications so that we can make sure Manitobans who are eligible for that program can use it. When we get those clarifications, we'll be able to fill the—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Front-Line Workers WCB Benefit Extension

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Every day, thousands of essential workers are doing their part to provide health-care services, child-care services, operate grocery stores, among many other roles. These workers are putting themselves at risk every single day during this pandemic for the betterment of their fellow Manitobans. This government should be making sure that the right type of WCB coverage is in place for these workers. If someone gets sick at work, they should know they will be protected. The Minister of Health has previously criticized health-care workers instead of helping them. That is the wrong approach.

The Premier and his minister have the opportunity today to do the right thing and make sure presumptive workers compensation coverage for all workers—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): No one has worked more diligently with front-line workers and in support of them than this Health Minister. Not any Manitoban has worked harder to support front-line health-care workers than this Health Minister. No one has worked harder: online self-assessment tools, Health Links, community screening sites all over the province, lab tests, thousands of them, new medical equipment, virtual care. Madam Speaker, many, many, many other initiatives initiated by the Health Department led by this minister, and the best the member can come up with is a harsh criticism of the Health Minister. I would say this is inappropriate at any time, but it's

especially inappropriate now. No one puts the best—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —no one puts the best interests of front-line health workers at a higher level than the Minister of Health of this government.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Universal Coverage for Child Care

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, in the midst of a pandemic, the Premier is putting parents and child-care centres in an impossible situation while, unbelievably at the same time, Madam Speaker, shaming dedicated early childhood educators. We continue to receive story after story from parents forced to pay parent fees to keep the spot that they are not using because they've lost their job, from essential service workers who are still waiting for child-care spots three weeks later and from child-care centres who are facing shuttering their doors for good.

The Premier refuses to do the right thing by covering 100 per cent of public child-care centres.

Will the Premier commit to 100 per cent—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (10:50)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, the member wouldn't know the right thing if she tripped over it, Madam Speaker.

The fact is this minister has stood up for children aging out of care. This minister has stood up on behalf of the homeless. This minister has stood up for people with disabilities. This minister has stood up and defended the child-care industry and the people who work in it. And, Madam Speaker, she has also stood at the forefront of defending parents who should not be charged for child care that is not being given to their children. That's what this minister has done.

So, Madam Speaker, this government will continue to stand up and provide child care, for example, to emergency front-line workers when they need it. Over 2,000 Manitoba front-line workers—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —have child care because of this minister's actions.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Financial Assistance for Small Business

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Manitoba's small businesses are struggling during this crisis. While federal supports are welcome, it may not be enough and there are many Manitoba small businesses who do not qualify. Estimates are that the average rent for a small business is over \$13,000 a month.

This is an impossible amount for small businesses to manage when their—in some cases, their incomes have dropped to as low as zero. Other provinces are stepping up, we know, to fill this gap in the federal programs and to help these small businesses stay afloat.

Will this government put forward a real plan that helps small businesses pay their rent?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): This comes from an NDP opposition that, when they were in government and had the chance to stand up for small-business people, did nothing of the kind. They did not increase the tax exemption for small businesses. They raised the income taxes on small-business owners. They increased the PST on all the workers in small businesses. They put the PST on the benefits packages that small-business owners and employees depend upon. They jacked up taxes on small businesses, Madam Speaker. They're no friend of small businesses.

This government has taken necessary steps to support small business since it came to government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —four years ago this week, Madam Speaker, and we'll continue to take measures to support small businesses in this province because, unlike the opposition, we understand that the foundation of Manitoba's economy is those very businesses.

Ninety-Day Prescription Ban Dispensing Fee Coverage

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We understand that restricting access to prescription drugs from 90 days to 30 days is a necessary part of this crisis, but it is adding costs for many seniors and others with fixed incomes during this situation.

We've heard from a constituent who will face thousands in—of dollars in extra out-of-pocket charges for an anti-rejection transplant drug that they need to

stay alive, and seniors on fixed incomes are seeing their dispensing fees double.

While maintaining drug supplies is critical, we don't—we believe that extra costs should not fall on seniors or on pharmacists.

Will this government commit to covering the dispensing fees for pharmacies so long as this—90-day prescriptions are banned?

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

As the member knows, there are many, many issues that arise in jurisdictions in all provinces that we are dealing with. And in concert with all the other provinces in Canada we did, in an abundance of caution, at the instruction and strong request of the colleges, seek to restrict the ability to fill prescriptions in the meantime to protect that supply.

I can assure that member that this government is fully aware of the impact and is working co-operatively with the regulators, with the associations and with our partners in other jurisdictions to get this right. In the meantime, this government continues to offer broad relief to all Manitobans.

Canadian Emergency Response Benefit EIA and Rent Assist Clawback Concerns

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, COVID-19 hurts the most vulnerable in our society. Many Manitobans are struggling just to have enough food to eat. There are thousands who rely on income and—Employment and Income Assistance and Rent Assist to meet daily needs. This needs to be enhanced during this time.

Many people in receipt of these benefits are now eligible for the federal Canadian Emergency Response Benefit. These funds will make an enormous difference in the lives of people who need it the most.

British Columbia has said that they would not claw back any of these benefits and the federal employment minister has recently asked provinces to follow BC's lead.

Will the minister do so and will the minister expand Rent Assist for low-income people and EI benefits during this time?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I thank the member for the question.

We just had a call yesterday with my counterparts across the country and are having these very discussions.

What I will say to the member opposite is that already investments in our non-EIA Rent Assist have nearly tripled since the previous NDP government, Madam Speaker. We are also investing nearly 25 per cent more in EIA than the previous NDP government, at the same time controlling volume and growth, getting more Manitobans back to work.

So we will continue to work with those front-line service providers, and I want to thank them at this time for the incredible work that they're doing. Many of them are working from home right now, and I want to thank them for all of the work that they're doing to ensure that people are able to get the EIA supports that they need.

MPI Premiums Rebate Request

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are still paying for their auto insurance during this pandemic, however, there are far fewer cars on the road and a big drop in accidents. The result is that Autopac claims through Manitoba Public Insurance have plunged. There were 4,000 less claims in March compared to the same time last year, and it's expected that we will see low numbers of claims for the foreseeable future.

Private insurance companies in the United States are already returning millions of dollars to their customers as claim rates drops. The Ontario government has echoed this move. Manitoba Public Insurance is owned by the public and Manitobans are hurting. It just makes sense that premiums would be rebated to the public.

Will the minister commit to returning MPI premiums to ratepayers today?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I thank the member for the question. And part of our government's announcement, Madam Speaker, many announcements that we're making to support Manitobans, again is working with our Crown corporations to ensure that issues are brought forward and Manitobans are protected.

And to name a few, you know, Manitoba Hydro, Centra Gas, MPI—MPI is to relax practices on policy renewals and collections, instructing Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries not to charge interest on receivables.

We're not only helping Manitobans but we're helping businesses as well, Madam Speaker, and we will continue to do so through this pandemic.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Spread Prevention in Correctional Centres

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Correctional facilities are at an increased risk for exposure to COVID-19 due to overcrowded, but—overcrowding, but also because, Madam Speaker, at any given day there are hundreds of staff going in and out of our correctional facilities, including correctional officers, health-care providers, counsellors, elders, police, et cetera, et cetera.

I've had countless correctional staff reach out to me in the last weeks indicating that they have no access to PPEs, nor have they been given any training on how to deal with a COVID-19 situation in respect to folks who are incarcerated there. I've also had folks, family members reach out to me who are concerned for their loved ones who are currently incarcerated.

Will the Premier release a detailed plan on preventing the transmission of COVID-19 in correctional facilities?

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do appreciate the question; it allows me an opportunity to correct the record today.

First of all, I do want to thank each and every one of the staff working within Justice, certainly the front-line workers and all those that are managing through this pandemic. Clearly it is a 24/7 operation. We are working very closely with the public health officials, developing strategies in the event that this virus may spread through our facilities. We have testing of inmates. We have monitoring of both inmates and our staff as they come in and out of those facilities, and we've also—are providing protective—personal protective equipment to our staff and also to inmates in certain situations. So, clearly, we're taking measures and we're taking various strategies to protect—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Support for Homeless Population

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Six weeks ago on March 2nd, Manitoba Liberals called on this government to release it's plan for COVID-19. We said there needed to be a particular focus on

vulnerable Manitobans, First Nations, people with low incomes, and seniors. And right now we are concerned the government is not providing enough supports for the most vulnerable, especially the homeless.

There are not enough safe places to go; people who are homeless are at risk of COVID-19, and unless they have a roof over their head they will put other vulnerable people at risk as well. I was told that an individual was discharged from hospital, after an amputation, straight to a homeless shelter, which gives an indication of the lack of available facilities.

We are looking at passing legislation today that will ticket people for not following social distancing rules.

* (11:00)

Will this government ensure that people who are homeless have a home, and not just a fine?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Our government's invested over \$1 million already and we expect to invest significantly more in expanding the capacity of homeless shelters in Winnipeg. We've added more than 140 shelter beds to help us respond. So the member should have confidence that our concerns echo his own in respect of vulnerable citizens in our province.

We've repurposed a vacant housing building to create new beds. We've created new beds in co-operation with the Salvation Army and the Siloam Mission. We are working diligently to ensure that our most vulnerable population is as well protected as is possible, given the unprecedented nature of what we must face together.

Madam Speaker: As agreed, that concludes oral questions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call step one of the financial procedure of the tabling of Supplementary Estimates; followed by continuing second reading of Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; and then a second reading of Bill 15, The liquor, gaming, cannabis control amendment and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation amendment act; and Bill 30, The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: Orders of the day—we will now deal with step one of the financial process and I would recognize the honourable Minister of Finance.

Messages

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I have two messages from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, respecting appropriation for the COVID-19 response and supply, the loan acts, as well as supporting documents which I'd like to table.

Madam Speaker: Please stand for the reading of the messages.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of additional sums required for the services of the Province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2021, and recommends these Supplementary Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And also, the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba an Estimate of the sum required for the authority to borrow for the services of the Province and recommends that Estimate to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Madam Speaker: We will now move to second readings of—[interjection]—'debet'—[interjection]

We will now move to debate on second readings of Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control—[interjection]

Okay, let me start again.

I will now call debate on second reading of Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; and second reading of Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act; and second reading of Bill 30 The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act.

Bill 4—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So we will start, then, with debate on second reading of Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

Is there leave to allow that bill to stand in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave is denied.

The floor is open for debate.

The honourable member for St. James—*[interjection]*—the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) has already spoken to this bill.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I just want to rise to put a few words on the record today so that we are availing ourselves of the opportunity to have debate on the bills that the government has brought forward.

Bill 4 is a piece of legislation which would increase the borrowing authority of Manitoba Hydro. I would just share with the House that I did receive a letter from the CEO of Manitoba Hydro, Jay Grewal, who indicated her support for this bill, and the rationale that was spelled out, actually, I think bears some attention.

What the CEO of Manitoba Hydro was spelling out is that I'm sure they would support this bill in normal times, but that there is perhaps an even stronger impetus to support it right now, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reason being that liquidity markets, given the fact that so many government are rushing out to try and secure credit at this time, that the liquidity markets are very crowded, and this is making it difficult for Manitoba Hydro to use their normal debt instruments that they would float on the market. And without recalling the exact verbiage or phraseology of the letter, I believe the CEO did describe how they are being forced into some rather unique and exotic techniques to try and secure these loans during this difficult period.

I think we all understand that Manitoba Hydro is probably seeing a ton of residential demand in terms of people staying home and having to use their hydro power to stream content online or to do their Zoom meetings or to participate in the teleconferences and charging their phones throughout this whole period. However, there is also likely a downturn in terms of the industrial users of Manitoba Hydro. There are also less manufacturers operating at full capacity. And, as a result, some of the revenue that Hydro typically counts on has disappeared.

So with those facts in mind, it does make sense on the face of it that Manitoba Hydro be allowed to have the ability to have a higher debt ceiling with which they can currently operate under and—you know, so I would thank the CEO of Hydro for their willingness to engage directly with MLAs, and we'll likely be following up with follow-up questions and further

conversations with Hydro's leadership just because it is a very important Crown corporation that all Manitobans deserve to have insight into and to know that it is being properly stewarded.

I also want to just point out for the benefit of the Legislative Assembly, it is our understanding that while this change in policy with respect to debt at Manitoba Hydro could be accomplished through this piece of legislation, perhaps it could also just be run as a matter of course. Cabinet, as an example, could provide an order to provide this increased borrowing authority to Manitoba Hydro. However, recognizing the situation that we're in, we were, you know, willing to allow this to come forward today and, of course, to have the opportunity to debate this bill for some time.

So I put those few comments on the record with respect to that correspondence with Manitoba Hydro directly. And then I would further add that it is our view that Manitoba Hydro, and now Efficiency Manitoba, that all of these Crown corporations operating in this space are essential to us being able to fight the existential threat that is climate change while also still having a role in powering the economic development of the province of Manitoba. We all know Manitoba Hydro creates many, many good jobs, not only in the construction of projects, but also for the people who maintain the lines or the people who are operating the day-to-day activities of Manitoba Hydro. And so we want to see Manitoba Hydro to be a very strong, publicly owned corporation.

And so while we are willing to entertain some, perhaps, housekeeping changes as this legislation contemplates, we are not willing to see any of the proposed changes under other legislation, such as Bill 44. It's very important that Manitoba Hydro remains a public utility so that Manitobans can have the full benefit of both the financial engine at the heart of Manitoba Hydro, but also of its possibility of being a dramatic tool in turning around the fight against climate change that we all know that we have to succeed on.

As a result, we will be working very hard on this issue. We will be working steadfast with community organizations both in the environmental sector and indigenous organizations to also ensure that Manitoba Hydro reconciles itself with its past impacts on First Nations and Metis and other folks in the province. We know that there were some very dark periods in the past where grave sites were flooded out, where traditional hunting and trapping grounds were flooded out.

* (11:10)

And in the case of Grand Rapids, I would just share the words of Ovide Mercredi, former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations and former party president of the Manitoba NDP, who said, with a great amount of anguish in his voice, that he will never see the mighty Grand Rapids flow again in his lifetime.

So these are the sort of impacts that we have to reconcile with, but we're very optimistic that with a steady hand, a progressive hand, no doubt wielded by the Manitoba NDP, that we can build Manitoba Hydro up into that economic powerhouse, that it can address the challenges of climate change and that it can work to remedy the negative impacts that it's had, particularly on indigenous communities who have borne the human cost of Manitoba Hydro electric development in the province.

So with those words on the record, I just want to thank you, Madam Speaker, for having the opportunity to weigh in on debate today.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 4, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill 15—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to second reading of Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act now—be now read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Crown Services, seconded by

the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Wharton: Madam Speaker, the bill amends two acts: The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act, and The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act.

The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act creates more options for consumers by expanding liquor sales to takeaway and delivery food services, Madam Speaker. The—Restaurants Canada, of course, and restaurants food services association have been looking for this change in legislation for a number of years and we're proud to bring it forward today.

The second amendment proposes two amendments to the liquor and lotteries corporation act to remove current reference to beer under the distributor section, which limits distribution from private distributors and replaces it with beverages—alcohol categories, Madam Speaker. This amendment will allow third-party distributors to distribute a wider variety of products, creating a more efficient distribution system which allowed for expansion of retail opportunities for beer vendors.

Thank you.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): This bill amends The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act and we know this will allow the holders of specified types of liquor licences to sell beer, wine, cider and coolers to customers who order food for delivery or takeout from licensed premises.

So during this unprecedented time, it's important that we work co-operatively to support Manitoba's small businesses, Madam Speaker, and that's why we've agreed to pass Bill 15 today to provide restaurant industries another important source of

income during this difficult time so they can continue to employ hundreds of Manitobans to be there to welcome—

An Honourable Member: Ask him a question.

Mr. Sala: Thank you. Apologies, Madam Speaker.

So I'd like to ask the following question. Restaurant employees are given the responsibility to cut off customers believed to have overconsumed. Will the same onus be placed on drivers?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I certainly appreciate the question from the member from St. James.

Madam Speaker, again, as the member from St. James mentioned in his preamble, this is important for Manitoba restaurants, Manitoba businesses, small businesses in Manitoba. And again, when it comes to delivering liquor, there are, again, some training processes that have taken place. As a matter of fact, companies like SkiptheDishes have taken those training courses and those will now be expanded with the hopeful passing of this bill today.

Mr. Sala: No speech this time, I promise.

Restaurants can be open for—as late as 2 a.m. based on their scheduling. Are there any regulations in place to restrict alcohol deliveries after certain hours?

Mr. Wharton: As the member knows—again, he's reviewed the bill—there are a number—initiatives in the bill, Madam Speaker, that are related to not only the delivery of food but delivery of liquor.

One of them is, again, ensuring that all pricing is based on menu pricing, Madam Speaker.

And we know that restaurants are open different times now during this pandemic and we can appreciate that their hours are less and as we go through this together, we'll ensure that hours are acceptable not only to restauranters but to the public as well.

Mr. Sala: What regulations and safety measures can the government commit to or has put in place to ensure the safety of drivers?

Mr. Wharton: Again, the LGCA has assessed consumer and public safety risks right now, Madam Speaker, as low. Delivery drivers must, again, be 18 years of age and certified by the LGCA's Smart Choices responsible sales and service program, the

program that I spoke about briefly in my previous answer.

So these are some of the initiatives that LGCA will be working through as we go through the process to ensure the safety, No. 1, for not only the consumers but also the drivers and the restauranters.

Mr. Sala: Who is consulted to determine the viability and potential outcomes for this bill? Has the risk to delivery drivers been considered?

Mr. Wharton: Again, we're a government that prides ourselves in consulting, Madam Speaker, and that's exactly what we've done. We've worked with all stakeholders with respect to this bill and as we continue to go through the bill and the process and, again, hopefully pass the bill today in this House, we will continue to work and consult with restauranters, the public in general, to ensure that we get this bill right.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

The honourable member for St. James, on debate.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Returning back to where I'd previously ended there, as I was saying, we've agreed to pass Bill 15 today as the Manitoba NDP to provide restaurant industries another source of important income during this difficult time so they can continue to employ hundreds and hundreds of Manitobans to be there to welcome back—Manitobans back to work after this uncertain time passes. And I know in my own community, Madam Speaker, there are many businesses that are in support of this bill, so I am pleased to be supporting this as well.

Now, while Bill 15 gives Manitobans more options to receive alcohol at their homes and a new way to enjoy restaurant food at home, we have to make sure we recognize the large responsibility that's being placed on delivery drivers with this bill—significant amount of responsibility, Madam Speaker.

They need to check ID at the door, according to the government's own release, and that raises a number of really critical concerns. Identification in a normal setting—for example, in restaurants, bars or clubs—can be difficult enough.

With the likelihood of these deliveries happening at night or in short interactions, there's no guarantee that this can be done efficiently, and we do have significant concerns around the apparent lack of

training for individuals who are going to be doing this work and there are significant risks that are being posed to those individuals who'll be required to do that ID'ing on the doorstep.

Another major area of concern is the question of overconsumption on the part of the recipient and the challenges—the very real challenges—drivers will encounter in such circumstances. Imagine, again, Madam Speaker, having these exchanges on the doorstep of a customer. This could be a potential cause for conflict or at least some kind of an issue that these drivers will not be appropriately trained for. So this is another key concern.

* (11:20)

So, for example, servers are given the right to determine when to cut off certain clients that appear to be overly intoxicated and managers or other staff are always on standby in case an incident occurs with a belligerent customer. However, these are home and often solo deliveries. So will the onus be again placed on the driver to determine if the delivery recipient is also beyond those legal limits and how will they be protected in that said situation?

These are significant concerns we have with this bill, Madam Speaker, and these are questions that we think need to be answered. General safety measures for employees in various fields are in place to prevent employees from harm or potential harm in the work environment. The government must ensure employers and providers of the restaurant alcohol deliveries set regulations in place to protect their employees.

As we saw with the multiple liquor thefts in 2019 leading into the new year, liquor store employees are in unsafe work environments. Therefore, with even more precarious circumstances and the vulnerable position that drivers are being placed in with Bill 15, the government must ensure that safety measures are put in place. And at this point, Madam Speaker, that is not clear to us.

We believe the safety of workers and all Manitobans must always be top priority. That's why we support the bill. We do want to see emphasis being placed on ensuring the safety of those Manitobans that are being put into these positions of needing to deliver alcohol on the doorstep, to make assessments as to whether or not that customer has overconsumed and to ensure that that individual, that customer is of the appropriate age to consume alcohol.

So, while we welcome this new initiative to help keep Manitoba businesses afloat and people

employed, we still have to ensure this is done in the safest and most responsible manner possible.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm just looking at the Clerk's table to see if I get approval; they can still hear me through the mask. Excellent.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 15—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act. I will be keeping my remarks short, as we fully support this amendment and believe it to be a good decision. We want to be doing what we can to keep businesses up and running. So as long as restaurants have the proper licencing, this bill will allow people to order alcohol as long as the alcohol is the same price as the dine-in services, and delivery drivers must be 18 years of older, be certified by LGCA's a-Smart Choices program and conduct mandatory identification checks.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on the bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act.

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

Bill 30—The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to bill—second reading of Bill 30, The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 30, The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pêche, la Loi sur les forêts et la Loi sur les parcs provinciaux, be now read a second time and referred to Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Guillemard: It's my pleasure as Minister of Conservation and Climate, and on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development (Mr. Pedersen), to speak today on Bill 30, The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act.

The bill amends three acts to allow the electronic sale of resource-based licences, such as hunting and angling licences, along with park vehicle permits. Bill 30 supports moving Manitoba forward with enhanced online opportunities and the modernization of an outdated manual licensing process. E-licensing is about improving customer service, convenience and accessibility. Going forward, hunters, anglers and park users will be able to buy their licence or permit online with the push of a button anywhere, anytime. This is especially important under the current, unprecedented pandemic we are facing right now. Adding an online purchasing option is even more important today than ever before.

With emergency measures in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19, e-licensing allows Manitobans a way to still obtain their required licences and permits without having to enter a store, thereby adhering to social distancing orders. The rollout of this system to the public will be a phased approach, selecting fishing and hunting licences and park vehicle permits will be available first, and then other licences and permits will come online over the next 12 months.

With anything new, it's anticipated there are going to be some transition challenges. E-licensing will be a change to government operations and how public access government services to purchase their licences.

In recognition of prolonged public awareness, campaign will be launched through advertising and media coverage. Government has already been in contact with, and will continue to work with user groups, stakeholders and vendors to answer questions and find solutions.

Moving to e-licensing will bring Manitoba in line with other jurisdictions across North America by providing 24-hour, seven-day-a-week and 365-day-a-year access to resource-based licences and enhanced customer service.

I look forward to an-all-party support for this important bill so we can have a quick passage through the House.

Thank you.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I'd just like to begin with a small point of clarification.

And I'd just like to ask the minister if Manitobans who do not have Internet access will still be able to buy licences at retail locations.

And if, perhaps, the minister could add exactly how would those provisions apply during the current pandemic, I guess. Would they only be available at retail locations that are also operating as essential services? If she could provide some clarity there, it would be much appreciated.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Yes, I'd be happy to answer that question.

There will also be a phone number that people who do not have Internet access can call and they can arrange to have their licences and permits purchased that way and sent out through the mail, and that option will remain on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Kinew: And I thank the minister for the answer there.

I'm curious, just on the question of conservation, I'm wondering whether the increased convenience of securing a licence may have an impact on conservation, whether any sort of modelling has been done by the department just to see what the impact of these changes would have either on fishing or hunting stocks in the province.

Mrs. Guillemard: There will be no changes in terms of what our requirements and our observations of practices of hunting or fishing have been in years past. So this only changes the mechanism in which you receive your permits. The monitoring of our fish stock, of our wildlife will continue as it has for years past and we will maintain our sustainability practices.

Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I'm curious to know what sort of impact may be visited on small lodges and outfitters across the province—just wondering what sort of anticipated impacts on them the minister can foresee.

Mrs. Guillemard: Thank you to the member for the question.

We have been in constant contact with all of our lodge owners and anybody who will go through this transition-year-time as we learn a new process. And certainly we've had positive feedback from a number of vendors who have signed up to continue this service for those who are seeking licences. And we will endeavour to work very closely as we transition to this new mechanism.

But so far we have gotten, as I said, a positive feedback from those who are using the system. We are five days in now. We are seeing quite a huge uptake in this process and we will continue to work well with all stakeholders. Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: Just to put a question, a clarification building on a few of those previous points.

So, is it the case that if there's a small, you know, lodge or, you know, a northern outfitter who may not have access to Internet, would they be able to, you know, provide this licensing through this sort of telephone and mail combination that the minister had previously described?

* (11:30)

Mrs. Guillemard: It'd be correct. The telephone line is available to any and all participants who are looking for permits or a licence, and our attempt here through our department will be to support all vendors to update their systems. Where there is spotty Wi-Fi there will always be the phone line availability as well as to anyone who are visiting lodges. They will be notified before making their reservations that the required licences can be done online so they are well prepared before visiting our wonderful lodges in this province.

Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: Yes. I assume that this bill will not impact rights-based harvesters in the province, but I would note for the House that there has been, you know, some history with respect to some Metis harvesters in the province.

So I'd ask the minister whether there are any impacts based on, you know, Metis hunters or fishers who may be practicing their rights?

Mrs. Guillemard: Thank you for the question. As I had stated before, there are going to be no changes in terms of who is permitted or the numbers that are allotted to various community groups or any of the rights. There are no changes to any of the hunting or fishing rights that have previously been granted,

Mr. Kinew: I would just clarify the record that the hunting and fishing rights of indigenous harvesters are pre-existing to Confederation and were therefore never granted by the Crown. They existed since time immemorial and they have been recognized under the Canadian constitution rather than having been granted.

So just to build on that. Since hunting and fishing rights are amongst the most clearly defined treaty and Aboriginal rights in Canada, what sort of consultations under section 35 of the Canadian constitution did this government carry out since the introduction of this legislation?

Mrs. Guillemard: I, too, will clarify that when I was referring to granted rights, I think that we all acknowledge that we are not the creators of this world we all share, and the granted rights we are given are from powers beyond this Chamber and powers beyond any of our human capabilities. So, to clarify that I absolutely do recognize that it is not granted by human powers, but it is respected and recognized by this government, the rights of all peoples.

And in order—and to respond to the actual question, I will say that the consultation process was followed appropriately and we have had no raised concerns to this date from any—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Would the minister undertake to bring back some documentation of the consultation she just referred to the next time the Legislature sits?

Mrs. Guillemard: I'd be happy to.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Just a question of clarification. I know that we had a bill briefing on this, but when it comes to, say, a small store that sells licences currently, whether in a place where there's no Internet access, you say that people will be able to call from the phone there, but there'll be—will the licence still be available onsite? I sort of think that it could be like one of these parking lots where you end up driving to the other side and you should have paid some place else to actually get out.

So for those places, will they still actually be, even if they're calling or if they're—will there—a paper or will a licence be available onsite at those individual places so that if somebody walks into a store, they call from there, that that licence will be available to them onsite? In rural locations—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Guillemard: Thank the member for the question. There will be a transition year where there will be select vendors who have requested to have a few paper copies available just as we all adapt and learn to the new system. We're hoping to phase that out over the long term and become completely online or over the phone, which it would be a mailed out copy of these licences and permits that are asked for.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: There any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I just wanted to take a few moments to put some words on the record because I'm somebody who is very fortunate to grow up around hunting and fishing, and now as a parent I'm very fortunate to have the opportunity to raise my sons to learn how to hunt safely and also to learn how to fish in a way that ensures the sustainability of the lakes and the rivers all across the territories that we call home.

I do want to just put a small proviso on that, you know: even though I grew up around a ton of commercial fishers, my, you know, childhood diet essentially consisted of walleye, or pickerel as they say in Manitoba. I grew up in northwestern Ontario, but they call it pickerel here in the province I now call home. But even though that was such a staple of my diet growing up right until about, you know, age 35 or 36, we've now discovered that the most recent addition to our family is actually allergic to fish and so we're not going to be having too much more walleye or pickerel. Probably won't be able to go to too many fish fries, you know, going forward. So that's a bit of a change, but it's one that many of us as Manitobans are going through.

I was in line at Tim Hortons prior to the start of the pandemic and I was talking to a commercial fisher, a non-indigenous man from Gimli, actually, and we're talking there at Tim's and shared the same anecdote, and he said, you know what, I'm a commercial fisher myself on Lake Winnipeg and one of my grandkids is

allergic to fish too and so we're having to adapt all of our traditions, whether they're family traditions, cultural traditions, what have you.

And so I guess this bill is similar in the fact that it's an update on an existing practice. So where there was previously licensing requirements, now we're getting the opportunity to procure those licenses for Manitobans online, and because the world is what it is today, of course, this makes sense just on the face of it.

I'd also share with the House that we did receive a letter from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, who, of course, represents many members and many clubs right across the province and they're always very strong advocates for their membership, and they did point out what I do take to be a serious point, which is, because of the public health precautions that are being put into place right now around social distancing and physical distancing, that many hunters and fishers in the province won't even be able to secure their licenses using the old techniques, the pen and paper technique, if you will, because many of those vendors are now closed as a public health precaution. So it makes sense to provide another avenue for people to secure these licenses, to do it online, especially because we know that, you know, people are going to be wanting—people are going to want to fish once the ice opens up everywhere across the province.

And importantly, I think we also want to bear in mind that being out on the land angling, hunting, just being out there in the bush right now is one of the healthy activities that we can undertake—*[interjection]* Well, I hear some back and forth on the other side. Again, I would draw a distinction between angling and net fishing, right? Net fishing is currently undertaken perhaps by ice fishing, sometimes, you know, through other means, and the reason why we use the term angling is so that we can draw a distinction between those sport fishers who would be using a rod and reel to cast and pull their pickerel/walleye out of the lake, as opposed to the commercial fishers who would be casting the net, using a, you know, a jigger under the ice there to be able to pull out sustenance to not only feed their family but drive the economy.

Now, of course, since this is eliciting such a strong response of cheers and, you know, good humour from the government side, perhaps I'll delve and, you know, go into the deep history of the Anishinabe people and explain that there is actually

such a thing as a linguistic distinction in our language as well. When you talk about angling, the correct verb there is gwaashkwebijige, which means she or he angles using a rod and reel. However, if you're fishing using any other technique such as a net, it's a different verb: giigoonyike. Giigoonyike is the verb that applies there, and so it is a very important distinction and it is one that's not lost on those of us who grew up around the lakes.

And so, anyways, getting back to the subject at hand. The point that I was making earlier is that if these public health precautions continue, especially into the summer months and perhaps even further into the year, or should we see a condition where perhaps we alternate between relaxing some of those precautions and then ramping them back up, if we start to see cases re-emerge, et cetera, et cetera, I do think being out on the land, whether you're fishing or, you know, practicing other forms of your relationship to food and to being out there on the land, that is one of the healthy ways that you can still practice physical distancing and yet get out of the house and be out there.

* (11:40)

Of course, I would remind Manitobans that the current public health advice is to not take unnecessary trips, you know, outside the province, and so hopefully we're keeping that within the province, and to not, you know, go for an extended journey to another region within Manitoba—again to try and keep it relatively close to home.

But if you're lucky enough to say, you know, live within a short drive of one of the lakes, or live within a short drive of a forested area, then that is perhaps a good activity for you to be able to continue during the time of the pandemic.

And certainly, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation articulated their argument using almost exact same words. They were advocating for their members' right to continue to go out on the land, and that's an argument that makes a lot of sense to me, just given—again—the brief bit of information that I shared about how I grew up. And, of course, for many indigenous families, the relationship to the land is essential.

I would note that Dr. Barry Lavallee, who is the medical expert for the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak—as part of their advice to First Nations people, particularly in northern Manitoba, to respond to the pandemic, was not only should people go to the

grocery store only once a week, that one of the other provisions that some northerners may be able to take, is for hunters actually to fill the freezer, and thereby limit the contact and the necessity of going out in public.

So again, this is all part of a response that our province can share and can work on together to try and improve the health and the mental health and the well-being of people in the province.

And of course, it's always an issue that I like to, you know, think about and sort of practise in my own life, the ability to be out there on the land and to, you know, spend time in the bush—doesn't necessarily have to be hunting, could even just be, you know, looking for medicine, or could just be out there looking for, you know, that sense of peace and stillness that comes when you're out there in the bush by yourself or with a few close immediate family members. It's always like that, Madam Speaker.

And, just returning to the issue of, you know, the bill here. You know, we were willing to let this one pass; though we're not keen to have non-COVID legislation coming forward today, I think that there is an argument that this piece of legislation does respond to the current environment that's been created by the pandemic, in part articulated by the Wildlife Federation there, and so is the reason why we were supportive of having an opportunity to debate this and see this legislation before the House today.

So with those few words on the record, I would once again thank you for the opportunity to rise and to share my thoughts on this legislation.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We've also agreed to let this move forward, because we do see this as important—or, legislation that is relevant to dealing with the COVID crisis because it provides people with an opportunity to purchase licences online without having to go to individual shops or places of business.

I do just want to, if I may, it was a follow-up on the question that I asked of the minister. I do—I would urge the government to consider ensuring that there are—that it is possible for people to buy licences on-site, even because huge parts of rural and northern Manitoba have very poor or non-existent Internet service. If somebody ends up making their way to a beloved hunting spot where they have been going for years and all of a sudden aren't able to buy a licence or are told that they—you can make a phone call and

you'll get a licence in a week or two weeks, that won't actually serve hunters or—and others who would otherwise benefit from this legislation.

I am slightly wary also of overcentralization, that while we are bringing this forward to—making sure that people can conveniently buy licences online, there's still the issue that I—that sometimes what is a—convenient, low-cost for government is not always convenient or low-cost for our customer or for our provider.

So I would urge the government to also consider maintaining, throughout this transition, the capacity for local businesses to continue to provide licences, especially recognizing that they may have little or no Internet service.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Any further members wishing to speak on debate?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 30, The Fisheries Amendment, Forest Amendment and Provincial Parks Amendment Act.

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, is it the will of members to call it 12 o'clock?

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

That has been agreed to. The hour being 12 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1 p.m.

CORRIGENDUM

On March 10, 2020, page 668, second column, under the heading **ROYAL ASSENT**, the first paragraph should have read:

Acting Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. David Lees): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

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