

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

Oh. The—[interjection] Order.

The honourable member for St. Boniface?

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Yes, I rise on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable leader of the—the honourable member for St. Boniface, on a point of order.

**Mr. Lamont:** I am raising this point of order at the earliest possible opportunity. It relates to statements made in the House yesterday. We had to see Hansard to confirm what was said and this is the first opportunity we've had to raise the issue. It also required some research.

We are concerned that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) has been misleading the House by suggesting there is a legal precedent or a legal reason that blocks this government from calling an inquiry into bribes and the construction of the police headquarters.

Yesterday, in response to questions on the subject of calling a public inquiry into the construction of a new police headquarters, the just minister—Justice Minister cited Derek Olson, and I quote from Hansard, quote: And the truth is, as stated by Derek Olson, a senior litigator and a former commission counsellor for the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry—an inquiry that was called into the handling of family services system when the NDP were in government—said that there certainly is a preference to see civil proceedings concluded before an inquiry is held to avoid possible inconsistencies or conflicting results.

However, on Monday, Mr. Olson was quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press, quote: Derek Olson, a senior litigator and a former commission counsel for the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, said there is nothing stopping the provincial government from holding an inquiry into a matter currently being held in a civil court. End quote.

Given that the minister is reading prepared quotes, it is clear that he was prepared to present an inaccurate interpretation of those remarks to the House, which is why we believe it was deliberate.

Further, last Thursday, in answering questions on the same topic, the Justice Minister claimed the government would follow the law and refer to precedents of inquiries not being called because previous NDP governments in Manitoba had also dragged their feet by calling public inquiries.

Madam Speaker, the fact that the NDP dragged its feet on two of the worst scandals in Manitoba history isn't an excuse and it's not legal precedent and it is not the law. Government decisions do not set precedent; courts do. What the Justice Minister cited is not a legal precedent or ruling and these are not just technical matters. It is being deployed by the government as an excuse not to take action on a matter of great public interest.

Manitobans deserve the truth about the inquiry as well as an inquiry itself.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Yes, on the same point of order, Madam Speaker.

I know that the member opposite might be stinging from a loss yesterday, Madam Speaker, and he may be losing on this point of order as well.

The issue, when it comes to the public inquiry, and I stated it yesterday, and I quoted it clearly—and, in fact, he requoted it for me—I did quote Derek Olson, a senior litigator and former commission counsel for the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry which was called into the NDP's handling of the family services system, and, clearly, the—Mr. Olson said he'd preference just to see civil litigations concluded before an inquiry is held to avoid possible inconsistencies or conflicting results which might influence either the civil proceedings or the inquiry. That is what he said. That is what I quoted, and that is absolutely right.

While there is civil litigation going with dozens of 'sittle' litigants still going, it is not appropriate, as confirmed by the individual who is involved with the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, to call an inquiry.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** Miigwech, Madam Speaker, on the same point of order.

Just a couple of things. First off, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) is a little late to the game. We've been talking about and trying to implore this government to do what's right and call a public inquiry on the scandal at the City with the police headquarters. So, again, he's late to the game.

I will say, and I'll repeat—it bears repeating here in the House that it does—as any civil litigation does not prevent the government who is sitting right now to calling a public inquiry. The mayor of Winnipeg has said so. The mayor of Winnipeg has said that it would help the City, and we've said it multiple times in the House, including yesterday, when we asked the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) to call a public inquiry.

Finally, Madam Speaker, let me just say this: I'm going to ask everybody in the House to stop using the name of Phoenix Sinclair to make a political point. I had the—*[interjection]*

And you know what, I would be quiet and let me finish.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. *[interjection]*

Order, please. When, you know, issues like points of order, matters of privilege come before the floor, I would ask for everybody's co-operation, that I need to be able to hear everything that is being said so that I can rule appropriately.

So I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I will share with the House and why I ask to stop invoking the name of Phoenix Sinclair is that I am probably the only person in this Chamber that actually was at the site where her body was found, along with the family, along with the RCMP, along with the chief and council of Fisher River Cree Nation. And so I know what that did for everybody. So I'm asking for folks to stop invoking her name in this Chamber.

Miigwech.

**Madam Speaker:** I would like to remind the House about the purpose of points of order. A point of order is to be used to draw the Speaker's attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about parliamentary language.

I therefore respectfully indicate that this is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Point of Order**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** On a point of order, I think it's important to put on the record, Madam Speaker, because I think it's a departure of how we do things in this House, but I was quoting the Winnipeg Free Press that directly quoted the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

If the member opposite believes that the Winnipeg Free Press is somehow invoking—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** —something in a negative way, she—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** —may want to take that up with those who write the Winnipeg Free Press, Madam Speaker.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

\* (13:40)

I'm not going to allow this to denigrate into a quarrel or an argument on the floor of the House. I think the points have been made and I'm going to urge everybody to please respectfully demonstrate to each other and to everybody that is watching that we can actually conduct some business in a democratic manner in this House.

So I'm just going to end this here and indicate to the member that he did not have a point of order, and let's proceed with the rest of the day.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### **Bill 226—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products)**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 226, The Public Schools Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Union Station, seconded by the honourable member for St. Johns, that Bill 226, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products), be now read a first time.

**MLA Asagwara:** Every day, students in Manitoba miss school and activities because they can't afford menstrual products. Period poverty needs to end.

And that's why I'm proud to introduce Bill 226, which will require menstrual products to be free, available—free, sorry, and available free of charge in all public schools.

I'm looking forward to the unanimous support of the House regarding this bill, which will remove barriers for all students who menstruate.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Madam Speaker:** I do have a report to table.

In accordance with section 19.5(2) of The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Conflict of Interest Act, I am tabling the 2021 Annual Report of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

### Purple Day

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I'm pleased to rise in the Chamber today to recognize Saturday, March 26th as Purple Day, the international awareness day for epilepsy.

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder characterized by recurrent, unprovoked seizures. A person is diagnosed with epilepsy if they have two unprovoked seizures that were not caused by some known and reversible medical condition.

In Manitoba, approximately 23,000 people live with epilepsy and/or seizure disorders, and one in 10 individuals will experience at least one seizure in their lifetime.

Purple Day was created in 2008 by Cassidy Megan, a young woman who became motivated by her own struggles with epilepsy. Cassidy's goal is to get more people talking about epilepsy in an effort to raise awareness about the myths, and bring people who suffer from epilepsy together to know they are not alone.

In 2009, Cassidy and the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes joined the Anita Kaufman Foundation to globally launch Purple Day. Their partnership with organizations and individuals to promote epilepsy awareness has led to a variety of businesses, schools and many more organizations joining the fight to raise awareness about epilepsy.

The Epilepsy and Seizure Association of Manitoba is an association comprised of volunteers that provide services such as information and education to Manitobans with epilepsy and/or seizure disorders and their families.

In honour of Purple Day, the Epilepsy and Seizure Association of Manitoba hosts a fundraiser entitled Purple Day Bunny Hop. Participants can purchase a kit that contains Purple Day awareness bracelets, the Secret Adventures of Tiny Toba book, sponsor sheets and colouring sheets. On Saturday, March 26th, participants are encouraged to wear the colour purple

and do 100 bunny hops to raise awareness for epilepsy.

On May 10th, I want to highlight that our government invested \$4 million towards expanding the Health Sciences Centre here in Winnipeg's adult epilepsy monitoring unit. It was a crucial step toward reducing the need for patients to travel outside the province for treatment by providing care that is closer to home.

The expanded adult unit followed the creation of a pediatric epilepsy surgery program in 2018. Our government is continuing to broaden the array of speciality services and is committed to continuing to make these important investments in order to provide better health-care services sooner for all Manitobans.

On Saturday, March 26th, I join with the association to encourage all Manitobans to wear purple in support of international awareness day for epilepsy to raise awareness for epilepsy and seizures disorders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, Purple Day is for epilepsy awareness, and we want real action for those living with epilepsy.

Unfortunately, the PC government has been slow to take action. In 2017, they received a \$2-million donation for equipment that could have helped Manitoba children suffering from epilepsy. But more than four years later, the Province still hadn't bought the equipment and declined to offer a timeline for when it would be ready.

There's also a significant vacancy for neurologist positions of 54 per cent, Madam Speaker. Prominent doctors left because this government failed to keep its promises. Last year, Dr. Demitre Serletis left the province because of a lack of provincial support for a treatment program, and I quote: It's a lost opportunity, he said. I genuinely feel it would have been very well done. Where it's situated in central Canada, there's a large population of underserved patients. Epilepsy surgery is one of the most cost-effective strategies in modern times. End quote.

That's not an overstatement. Provincial programs have been able to recuperate the costs within two to three years of this type of investment.

Madam Speaker, this government has been failing Manitobans on health care, and that includes Manitobans with epilepsy. They have delayed installing equipment, and the neurology program is in complete disarray.

We acknowledge Purple Day for epilepsy awareness and we commit to doing so much more on this side of the House than this failing government.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, much greater awareness of epilepsy is badly needed. There has been much progress in the treatment of epilepsy in recent years, including major advances in imaging techniques to understand the focus of epileptic seizures and in the surgical treatment of epilepsy.

Lillian Moore, when she was 15, had such brain surgery performed by Dr. Demitre Serletis at the Children's Hospital in Winnipeg. Dr. Demitre Serletis was leading a team to treat children with epilepsy and used a novel Zeiss Kinevo 900 neuro microscope to see the area of concern very clearly so that the surgical procedure could be made easier. It was reported in April 2019 that Lillian had been seizure-free for almost a year.

Last year, December the 2nd, I was at a Doctors Manitoba Awards dinner where Dr. Serletis received a major award for his groundbreaking work in developing a collaborative multidisciplinary team looking after children with epilepsy. His activities led to the opening of the first pediatric epilepsy monitoring unit in Manitoba. Dr. Serletis was able to provide these successful surgeries of a type that hadn't been done before in Manitoba.

Sadly, Dr. Demitre Serletis, an incredibly talented person and a wonderful human being, has since left Manitoba as a result of the Conservative government's failing to fulfill promises made to him when he came here. Dr. Serletis's loss was tragic and devastating for Manitoba and for the children who were hoping to have their surgery done here for their epilepsy.

I raise these issues today on—in advance of Purple Day, the international awareness day for epilepsy, because it is important that we all know what has happened and that there is a better way forward.

Thank you.

\* (13:50)

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Grants Old Mill Museum

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development):** Madam Speaker, today I want to recognize Grants Old Mill Museum, located at 2777 Portage Ave. on the banks of Sturgeon Creek in the heart of Kirkfield Park.

The mill you see there today is a replica of the water-powered mill that was built by Cutlerd [*phonetic*] Grant in 1829 to help feed the Métis people. This was the first watermill west of the Great Lakes using mill stones and water power to grind wheat into flour.

Today the mill is owned by the City of Winnipeg and the day-to-day operations and programming are provided by the St. James Assiniboine-Assiniboia Pioneer Association. Their main purpose is to share the history of water-powered mills, the story of Cutlerd [*phonetic*] Grant and the importance of Métis people in the settlement of the Red River.

Currently, plans are under way to restore the mill. The logs used to make the walls have reached the end of their life, and a structural engineering company and a log building specialist from Parks Canada have been brought in to assist in the planning and restoration.

Grants Old Mill plans to open up on May 21st, Madam Speaker, and we hope to enjoy a full summer of tours and events for the first time in three years. Each summer they host two main community events: Cutlerd [*phonetic*] Grant Days, on the second Saturday in July, and Pioneer Days, the second Saturday in August. The mill also participates in destinations for open—or Doors Open Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, I want to personally thank president Reg Sims, past president Nancy Fluto and their board for their dedication to the preservation of Grants Old Mill.

I also ask for leave to include the entire 2022 board of the St. James-Assiniboia Pioneer Association in Hansard to recognize all they do to maintain the mill while sharing and preserving our rich history of the mill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Nancy Fluto, past president; Reg Sims, president; Kris Keough, vice-president; Daryl Frame, secretary; Ken Fluto; Colleen Smith; Stacey Jones; Marc Brandson; Laila Yesmin; Brian Higgins; Vanessa Von Drongelen; Jackie Swan; Scott Gillingham*

**Madam Speaker:** I would just like to remind members that they no longer have to ask for leave to include names in Hansard.

### Defend Winnipeg

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the organizers of Defend Winnipeg. Defend Winnipeg is a collective of Indigenous folks, people of colour, youth and allies who actively organize around issues pertaining to community well-being.

For weeks on end, downtown area residents were subjected to incessant noise due to honking, train horns, fireworks and other blaring sounds from those occupying space in proximity to the Legislature.

These actions resulted in downtown businesses losing income at a time where they could least afford to do so. There were reported incidents of public and targeted harassment rooted in homophobia, racism and gender-based harassment.

Defend Winnipeg quickly mobilized to provide area residents with safe walk options, to act as a space for people to report incidents or concerns and, on February 12th, organized a counter-protest. This counter-protest saw hundreds of community members and supporters show up and feel empowered, connect with one another and show the occupiers that the intentional disruption and harm to area residents was unacceptable. The goal of this demonstration was to unite against misinformation and white supremacy that has caused so much damage and harm across our province and country.

As the MLA for the area, I've heard countless reports of how people—of how the occupation, rather, had negative impacts on the mental, physical and emotional health of residents. Many downtown residents are students, seniors, young families, those working overnight shift work and folks with sensory needs.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) had a responsibility to send a clear message to the convoy for the disruptions to cease but she refused to do so. Instead, she was fine with Union Station residents enduring weeks of disruptions.

Thank you to the organizers of Defend Winnipeg for bringing community together during that difficult time, and thank you to all Union Station residents who continue to not only care about the wellness of our communities but reflect that by way of their actions.

Thank you.

### Growth of Female Hockey in Manitoba

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Today I want to recognize the tremendous growth of female hockey across the province of Manitoba.

Hockey Manitoba statistics show that over 20 per cent of registered players are females.

Gone are the days when girls had to play on boys' teams. There are now leagues dedicated to female hockey in rural areas as well as the city of Winnipeg.

In my constituency of Riding Mountain, the Yellowhead Chiefs program fields both female and male teams in the U15 and U18 AAA programs. The Chiefs, made up of players from a 100-kilometre radius surrounding Shoal Lake, play against regional teams from across the province.

The 2022 Hockey Manitoba provincial championships were held over three weekends featuring 10 separate tournaments for female age groups ranging from U11 to U18.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud today to recognize teams from communities I represent who came home with medals.

At the U11 Rural B Provincials held in Hamiota, the host team won the silver medals. Hamiota struck gold at the U15 Rural B Provincials held in Foxwarren.

Birtle captured the gold medals at the U18 Rural A Provincials held in Pierson. The host Elkhorn team won the silver medals in the U13 Rural C category.

And this past weekend the Assiniboine Community College Cougars won the American Collegiate Hockey Association division 2 title in St. Louis, Missouri. Defenceman Madison Barteaux of Foxwarren is a member of the Cougars.

Madam Speaker, not all of the girls who participate in the sport of hockey will have the chance to have an Olympic gold medal around their necks like Ashton Bell of Deloraine, Jocelyne Larocque of Ste. Anne and Kristen Campbell of Brandon. But everyone who participates in hockey benefits from the physical exercise and the social interaction of being part of a team.

I want to close by thanking the coaches, parents and volunteers that contribute to the success of minor hockey programs across Manitoba.

### Bill Taylor

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to recognize today an outstanding teacher and leader in my constituency.

Mr. Bill—William—Taylor works at Frontier Collegiate in Cranberry Portage and was one of two teachers in Manitoba to receive the Science Teacher of the Year Award for 2021 from the Science Teachers' Association of Manitoba. He received a plaque and \$250, which he promptly donated to the Frontier Collegiate alternative energy project.

This project involved his current topics in science 30S students and a working group consisting of representatives from the school and the CEO of Kynetic Energy. This project is a local action aimed at addressing the issues of global climate change and shows how solar and wind energy can power some items in Mr. Taylors' classroom.

Mr. Taylor graduated with his bachelor of education degree from the University of Lethbridge in 1989. In the early years of his teaching career, he worked in York Landing and Wasagamack with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. He remained in the community as they assumed local control of education and worked as vice-principal for several years.

After this, Mr. Taylor held various positions as principal at other schools and remained at Frontier Collegiate where he was a principal for several years. He's a firm believer that teaching is a calling and has had the pleasure to continue his teaching career at Frontier Collegiate for the past 15 years.

Mr. 'Teelor'—Mr. Taylor fell in love with northern Manitoba and has never felt the need to leave. He found a rewarding career and enjoys working with students on many science-related projects.

Bill was also recognized by the Manitoba council of international co-operation, MCIC, as an action-oriented educator, and the provincial government for his efforts as a teacher in the area of sustainable development.

He's an advocate for his—

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to allow him to complete his statement? [*Agreed*]

**MLA Lindsey:** Thank you.



He is an advocate for his co-workers in his role as a union representative with the Frontier Teachers' Association, which he takes very seriously.

Please join me in recognizing Mr. Bill Taylor's outstanding efforts as an educator and a leader.

**Yan Jiang**

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, today I have the pleasure of recognizing the positive work of Waverley constituent Ms. Yan Jiang. Ms. Jiang is the founder and executing leader of the Winnipeg Chinese Senior Association since 2016.

The vision of the WCSA is to offer special life-style programs for seniors using intergenerational volunteers to deliver innovative opportunities for healthy and happy aging, community cohesiveness and intercultural appreciation.

WCSA has organized 17 health lectures on cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, liver diseases, dementia, sleeping and more on COVID-19 and vaccines, with an average of more than 100 participants in each lecture. They also offer many other activities related to fitness and hobbies, including tai chi, aerobic fitness, vocal music, cooking and many others.

WCSA has more than 1,200 members, the majority of whom are 55-plus, Chinese and immigrants. WCSA has established collaborative relationships with many organizations in the community.

\* (14:00)

Ms. Jiang was awarded, in 2018, the Winnipeg community service award and, in 2019, she received the Premier's Volunteer Service Award. Her remarkable initiatives perfectly meet the specific needs of her community. More than 100 hours of teamwork have made these clubs and classes available for all participants to enjoy throughout the year. These clubs and classes were highly appreciated by the members and very well received by the public.

I invite my colleagues to join me in congratulating Ms. Jiang for her service to the community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

**Fort Whyte Constituency  
By-Election Results**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the people of

Fort Whyte made clear last night they do not like the approach of the Stefanson government.

This was the seat of Brian Pallister, their most favourite leader of all time.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** But you know what? That's not a safe seat anymore, Madam Speaker. In fact, today people are wondering—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —whether Steinbach is even a safe—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

I would ask the clerks to stop the clock.

I knew this was going to happen. I didn't think it would be that loud.

I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, then. This is an orientation session for a new member. This is not the way to start it. So I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, to demonstrate that democracy does work here in this Chamber, that we respectfully listen to questions and answers, and do what the people sent us here to do. So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, to complete his question.

**Mr. Kinew:** People today are wondering if Steinbach is a safe seat.

And if you're a member for Southdale, Kirkfield Park or Kildonan-River East, wow, you've got a lot to think about, Madam Speaker, particularly when it comes to the things that our team has been talking about on health care, education and the cost of living.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) simply admit that she's getting it wrong when it comes to what matters most to Manitobans?

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Deputy Premier. *[interjection]*

Order.

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier):** It was—great day, yesterday, to see democracy in action here in Manitoba.

Certainly, the people in Fort Whyte have been waiting for a few months to cast their ballots. They've come and they've cast their ballots. I know the members sitting out in Fort Whyte, they're excited about having a high school in Fort Whyte, Madam Speaker, our government is delivering on.

And I will say, and I just want to—I want to say a great Manitoban has won the election. We want to welcome Mr. Obby Khan to—as MLA-elect for Fort Whyte. We want to—welcome here to the Chamber today.

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

### Health-Care System Reform Surgery Backlog and ER Wait Times

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Yes, it's really something to come down on your first day and to see the sinking ship that is the PCs in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, evidenced no more by the fact that they have to get the member representing Carberry up because they're worried about that seat. They're worried about the Westman.

Again, we heard a message loud and clear from the people of Fort Whyte. They reject this government's approach—particularly, they reject the fact that the surgical wait-list is getting worse under this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). The Stefanson government can only hold press conferences while, month after month, thousands of more Manitobans are waiting for surgeries and diagnostic tests.

Why doesn't the Premier simply acknowledge what the people of Fort Whyte and the rest of Manitoba are saying: this government's health-care cuts are simply wrong.

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite is factually incorrect: record investments in health care.

We know Manitobans' top of mind is the reduction in surgical and diagnostics. That's why, under the Premier's direction, we put together a task force specifically to deal with diagnostic and 'surgeway' backlogs that have accumulated during the last—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cullen:** —two years because of COVID.

I think, hopefully, the members opposite understand how complex the health-care system is. That's why we've brought in a team of experts to deal with

the backlogs that have been created during the pandemic, and they actually are making improvements in terms of those wait-lists.

Madam Speaker, we know there's more work to do. We know it's top of mind for Manitobans. We're committed to doing that work. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Let's not have comments deteriorating here in the Chamber, please.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, that was remarkable, Madam Speaker.

During their seventh year in office, now the PCs recognize that the health-care system is complicated. Of course, that's after seven years of cuts. Seven years of cuts, Madam Speaker. You think they would've taken a moment to appreciate and study the complexity of the health-care system before they destroyed it. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** We saw the worst outcomes of any province during the pandemic during our third wave. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** We saw some of the worst outcomes from anywhere in North America throughout COVID-19, Madam Speaker. And wait-lists, when it came to ERs, were increasing even before the pandemic began. Now, you have 170,000—some people waiting for a surgery or a diagnostic test.

Will this government simply stop cutting health care?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Madam Speaker, again the preambles are completely misleading and quite frankly dishonest.

Record investments in health care for Manitobans. We know the reduction in diagnostic and surgery numbers, that's first priority for Manitobans. We've committed to that. We've created a task force. And in fact, we're even improving on—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cullen:** —some of these numbers. CT scans: down 12 per cent. MRIs: down 13 per cent. Ultrasounds: down 16 per cent. That's even 1 per cent more than the NDP got in yesterday's vote.

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

**Manitoba Hydro Rates  
Future Increase Concerns**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It's clear what Manitobans think of this government: it's a failure. And we see that every time we go gas up at the pump, every time we go to the grocery store, every time we open our hydro bill.

Life is getting more expensive because of this PC government. They approve increases to the cost of milk. How does that help families? They approve at the Cabinet table, and then jam—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —through the Legislature, more expensive hydro bills—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —for everyone in Manitoba. How does that help people in Borderlands? How does that help people in Fort Richmond? Madam Speaker, it does not.

As the cost of living keeps going up and up and up, this government is more and more out of touch.

Will they simply start today to turn this ship around by committing that they won't raise Manitoba Hydro rates any more?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, I welcome a question on Manitoba Hydro.

Now, we know what happened under 17 years of NDP reign. In fact, when we talk about Bipole III and Keeyask: \$4 billion over budget, Madam Speaker. And then they had the 'audacity' to go out and tell Manitobans that they would not bear the costs of those cost overruns. But they have, and Manitoba taxpayers, Manitoba ratepayers, have to pick up the tab.

That is why we've brought in Bill 36: to protect Manitobans, to protect the integrity of Manitoba Hydro. That is great news, and I'll tell you what else is going to be coming on April 12th: more good news.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Bill 36 is the hydro-rate-increase-because-of-the-poor-mismanagement-of-the-PC's act of 2022.

They did it before. It was the only time in Manitoba history that a government increased hydro rates through—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —legislation. That's what they did. Now they're back at it for act 2, Madam Speaker.

\* (14:10)

Manitobans know the facts on this issue: their hydro rates went up this winter because of this PC government. Manitoba Hydro, under this PC government—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —sent a reply-all email to everyone in the province reminding us that our hydro rates went up because of their mismanagement, because Brian Pallister couldn't even be bothered to take a meeting with the board of Hydro.

Will they finally change their approach and commit today that they won't raise hydro rates anymore? [interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Madam Speaker, here was the NDP's plan: triple the debt of Manitoba Hydro. That was their plan then, it's probably their plan going forward. We haven't heard their plan—how to fix and stabilize Manitoba Hydro.

We are taking the initiative with other methods, as well as Bill 36, to stabilize Manitoba Hydro, to protect Manitoba ratepayers. And then—the bill goes even further to make sure that there's debt-equity targets in there.

We're stabilizing Manitoba Hydro and at the same time protecting Manitoba ratepayers.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, the people of Manitoba built up Manitoba Hydro over the years to be a source of cheap and affordable hydroelectric utility bills.

Along the way, Manitobans made smart choices to also drive the economy and to help us solve the climate crisis.

Now, we know that more work—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —needs to be done to reconcile the impacts of Hydro on—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —Indigenous nations in Manitoba, but one thing that we absolutely do not need is more rate hikes from this government set at the Cabinet table.

Our plan is simple: keep hydro rates low.

Why do the PCs disagree with that plan, and will they commit today to stopping the hydro rate hikes? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Madam Speaker, again, the NDP tripled the debt of Manitoba Hydro. Somebody has to pay for their mismanagement. Unfortunately, that's going to be on the backs of Manitoba Hydro ratepayers.

This Bill 36 establishes debt-equity targets. It puts caps on increases, in terms of hydro rates. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cullen:** The NDP destroyed Manitoba Hydro. We're here to stabilize Manitoba Hydro, at the same time protecting Manitoba ratepayers.

Bill 36 is a great bill. Lots of extra work there for the PUB to make sure—and PUB will be regulating all increases in terms of hydro rates at Manitoba Hydro.

**Madam Speaker:** Can I ask the table to stop the clock.

I'm just going to—a couple things. One is, I would just like to remind members, you may not like the questions or answers that are being given, but each member has that right to ask, and I think we have a responsibility to show, respectfully, that we can listen to both sides. That's what democracy is all about and I think we need a better demonstration of that at all points.

There's been a deterioration in the last number of weeks, I think, in the behaviour of this House, and I think we need to see some improvement.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** On that note—on a happier note, I would like to introduce—we have a guest in the gallery: a former member from Swan River, Ron Kostyshyn. And we welcome him back to the Legislature.

### Surgical and Diagnostic Services Timeline to Clear Backlog

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** The wait-list for surgeries and important diagnostics continues to go up, up and up. It grew by 6,300 in one month. That's a failure.

Madam Speaker, almost 170,000 Manitobans are now waiting in pain, waiting with uncertainty because this PC government refuses to act.

We've still not heard one single commitment by this PC government to address the backlog here at home immediately, and they still haven't provided a date to clear the backlog.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) tell us today when the surgery and diagnostic backlog will be cleared?

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

Madam Speaker, significant, positive progress has been made since the last diagnostic and surgical task force update in February. I encourage the member opposite to read that update.

And we're working very, very quickly, Madam Speaker, to restore services to Manitobans. The Deputy Premier's (Mr. Cullen) already talked about some of those.

I also want to list that we're now in phase 3 of recovering our health system, Madam Speaker, returning staff to their surgical sites. Over 300 individuals have returned. And I look forward to providing more information in supplementary questions.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, they continue to put false information on the record. The fact is, wait times for critical diagnostic tests are still at an unprecedented high. Same thing with surgeries.

Unless meaningful action is taken and investments are made, the backlog won't be addressed. Manitobans will keep waiting longer and longer for the surgeries that they need while the PCs leave dollars unspent and on the table.

Will the Premier stand up today and just simply tell us when the backlog will be cleared?

**Ms. Gordon:** To date, we have completed five request-for-supply arrangements, leading to 11,000 procedures being contracted; \$13.7 million

has been spent and allocated to date. More monies will be spent before the end of the fiscal year.

We're partnering—contrary to what the member for Union Station says—with Maples Surgical Centre to provide women with hundreds of gynecology surgeries, Sanford Health in North Dakota to provide spine surgeries; and I'm pleased to update the House today that seven surgeries have occurred, seven more to come and even more before the end of the fiscal year.

We're doubling the number of anesthesia clinical assistants in the province, and we're moving into our sixth request-for-supply arrangement.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** The doctors have spoken, Madam Speaker. And on this side of the House, we listen to doctors.

We don't accuse them of causing chaos. We don't question their motivations. We listen to doctors, and—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —they're telling us that the backlog has grown to nearly 170,000 Manitobans waiting for surgeries and diagnostics.

And Manitobans want action. They're tired of the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) doing absolutely nothing about it. The message was made loud and clear last night during the by-election.

Will the Premier tell us today when the backlog will be cleared?

**Ms. Gordon:** We do listen to the doctors, the doctors that told us that the week of March 21st staff will be returned to the transplant program at the Health Sciences Centre as well as to Seven Oaks General Hospital, leading to a return of transplant services at Health Sciences Centre and endoscopy at Seven Oaks.

We listen to the doctors, Madam Speaker, who said the patient—that the first patient who had spine surgery at Sanford is doing well, with complete resolution of her symptoms. She's very happy and grateful; hope to discharge her today.

Those are the comments we listen to from doctors.

### **Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act Rate Setting and Privatization Concerns**

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Madam Speaker, nothing has changed with this government and their approach to Manitoba Hydro.

Bill 36 means annual rate increases of 5 per cent. It means the real decisions on rates will be made at the Cabinet table. And it means privatization. This isn't what Manitobans want.

Will the minister step back and commit to not setting rates at the Cabinet table?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** That is a litany of falsehoods, Madam Speaker. There is nothing truthful in that statement.

Madam Speaker, it is clear what this bill does, and the NDP should be cautious—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —before trying to go back and somehow advance their ideological narrative.

\* (14:20)

Manitobans won't be fooled. They know the NDP tripled the debt, billions of dollars added. We must address that as Manitobans.

They said Manitobans wouldn't pay for the debt of Manitoba Hydro. It's clear they will. We need to stabilize Hydro while we protect rates for all Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Sala:** Madam Speaker, Manitobans know they cannot trust this government when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. They cannot trust them.

This government privatized parts of Hydro, and the bill before this House plans even more, including the retail sale of power. And, once again, they're setting the stage for large rate increases at Manitoba Hydro. They want the effective power to set rates, and not in an open and transparent manner.

Will the minister step back and commit to not setting rates at the Cabinet table?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, first, Madam Speaker, let's be clear that it's the NDP that Manitobans will not trust when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, because they told them that there were no cost overruns and they went

around the process to establish how dams were built—  
[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —and then they told them that Manitobans wouldn't pay for the cost of those dams. They have no credibility.

On the other issue—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) seems to want to speak exactly at this point in time—or, St. Johns, as well.

But in the time allotted to me, Madam Speaker, I'll say this, that we've been clear: the government is not setting rates; the PUB is setting rates when it comes to Hydro. [interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

There's heckling and then there's nattering that goes on and on and on, and I'm going to ask people to be a little bit more respectful.

I think there's—I'm hearing people heckle down their own members, which I don't think is very helpful to their own morale in their own caucuses. And so I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please. No matter what side you're on, it's important to pay attention to the questions and to the answers and show respect for the members that are here on the floor. Everybody's earned it, worked hard to get here, and let's demonstrate that we can be responsible and do our jobs the way we're supposed to do without this constant heckling and constant nattering that has really gotten out of control.

The honourable member for St. James, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Sala:** We blocked this government's bad Hydro legislation: bill 44 and bill 35 were stopped in their tracks. And if we hadn't, this debate would already be over.

Instead, the minister has recycled this legislation and called it fresh, but the impacts are just as bad: 5 per cent rate increases, privatization and rates that are effectively going to be set at the Cabinet table.

Will the minister pull back and commit to not setting rates at the Cabinet table? Yes or no?

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, no.

Let me educate the member. The PUB—  
[interjection]—let me educate the member. The PUB passed a decision just this year in respect of the latest hydro rate application. It provides for a 3.6 per cent increase to hydro. It—[interjection]

Let me school the Leader of the Opposition, if he'll be quiet long enough.

The PUB rate application also provides—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** The members seem impervious to education.

Madam Speaker, let's be clear. The PUB rate application sets a provision for a second year and then a third one. The government is not setting rates. PUB's the regulator; PUB will set the rates. This bill protects Manitobans where the NDP threatened them.

**An Honourable Member:** No one likes it.

**Madam Speaker:** No one else likes the heckling and nattering that is going on in this House, either, and I think this is a really poor example for a new member that is going to be joining all of you on the floor as a colleague.

So I'm going to ask: please, I think everybody can do better, and I'm going to ask you please to do that.

### **Planning Amendment Act Request to Repeal Bill 37**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** The PC government pushed through bad legislation last year that takes away community autonomy and creates more red tape.

Those were the concerns of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and they're still worried about bill 37 and what it will mean for the communities they represent.

The minister is still not listening and refusing to do what is needed. She needs to repeal bill 37.

Will she do so today?

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations):** I also want to acknowledge my former colleague from AMM, Ron.

In regards to the question from the member opposite, coming in as a new minister after this bill has already been passed, I did have inquiries. I took the time; I took four weeks to do my own questioning

across the province with many different stakeholders about bill 37. There was no major concerns whatsoever.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I think some eyes are pretty wide right now with our guest and our—others listening in from Association of Manitoba Municipalities, because we heard very clearly the struggles they're having when it comes to the pandemic, the additional costs and downloaded issues that they are having to deal with.

They are losing money and operating at a loss because of this government's funding cuts. More than half of those municipalities believe it could take years to financially recover from the financial hardships that have been brought on by the pandemic. And, at the same time, they are being forced by this government to lose some autonomy and some control. So, again, this minister needs to listen.

Will she simply stand up and repeal bill 37 today?

**Ms. Clarke:** I guess the member opposite wasn't listening during a briefing yesterday when we explained that the AMM, City of Winnipeg, many stakeholders, as well as our government department have been sitting in a table through bill 37, and they continue to sit to discuss it. They are all on board with this decision.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Over and over again, this government has attacked every other level of government and blamed other levels of government, just like Brian Pallister did. And now the minister has created a great deal of uncertainty and costs for communities that they cannot afford.

Bill 37 is incredibly unpopular amongst those municipalities, and it was pushed through against the united opposition of AMM and this party, our party, in the Legislature. *[interjection]*

The minister needs to listen—truly listen—not just have meetings, but listen, and repeal bill 37.

Will she do so today?

**Ms. Clarke:** It is interesting listening to the member opposite, as my colleague just explained behind me about amalgamation, when we tried desperately to get the then-opposition to listen about the hardships they were creating.

Right now, in 2022, 10 years later, I am still dealing with municipalities that are struggling from amalgamation. I'll take no members' ideas.

### **Manitoba Housing Units Repaid and Maintenance Budget**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Housing is a right, and all Manitobans should have access to safe, affordable, quality housing. Sadly, though, it seems that the PC government doesn't agree.

The minister's—the Minister of Families' (Ms. Squires) own transition binder from November says that the repair and maintenance budget for Manitoba Housing is, I quote, the lowest budget in the last six years. End quote. I'll table the document for the House.

Why does the minister keep cutting funding to maintain affordable housing units for Manitobans, especially when we have a housing crisis and there's more homeless people than ever in our province?

\* (14:30)

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Acting Minister of Families):** I'm pleased to respond to the question from—for—from the member for Point Douglas.

Our government has provided the largest budget for the Department of Families, per capita, in all of Canada. We've increased our budget year after year in support of Manitobans' most vulnerable populations.

Madam Speaker, last year, our budget was an historic increase for the Department of the Families, and the members opposite voted against it.

I want to ask if, when the budget comes forward on April 12th, will you vote for Manitobans or against them?

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

**Mrs. Smith:** —continued to grow under the—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

We just missed the first few words. Could the member please start her question again.

**Mrs. Smith:** The wait-list for social housing has continued to grow under this PC government because they keep making life less affordable.

In 2017, the wait-list was 1,699 and, as of November 2021, it is now 6,021. And I'll repeat that: 6,021 Manitobans waiting to get into housing.

But, Madam Speaker, not only can Manitobans not get into an affordable home through Manitoba Housing, when they do, tenants are dealing with water damage, bug infestations, dirty conditions in common areas, all because the budget, I quote, is the lowest in the last six years.

Why does the minister keep cutting funding to maintain affordable housing units for Manitobans when we have a housing crisis and the highest homelessness—

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

**Ms. Gordon:** Ensuring Manitoba continues to be an affordable province for families to live and work and play, our government continues to make historic investments in our budget for these families.

On April 12th, there will be more good news for these families, and I encourage members opposite to support Manitoba families by voting for the budget.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** This PC government continues to sell off and dispose of social housing units, and for what's left, they're failing to maintain. In black and white, in their own budget, it says, and I quote, the lowest budget in the last six years.

The facts speak for themselves.

Madam Speaker, it's so unfortunate that, while this PC government keeps making life less affordable, they won't even make sure that those living in Manitoba Housing have a safe and quality place to call home. Nor will they even fix up the ones that are currently boarded up; there is a lot of them.

Why does the minister keep cutting funding to maintain affordable housing units for Manitobans, especially when they have—when we have so many homeless people in Manitoba?

**Ms. Gordon:** We will take no lessons from the members opposite.

I know, within my own community, the only time I ever saw construction workers fixing up low-income housing was under our government. We can drive down many streets in this province. The only time you will recall seeing a construction team was under our government.

We will continue to ensure Manitoba remains an affordable place for vulnerable populations, low-income families to live, work, play and raise a family,

Madam Speaker. More good news to come in the upcoming budget.

### **WPS Headquarters Construction Reason for Not Calling Public Inquiry**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Justice Minister are not being straight with Manitobans when they make excuses for not calling an inquiry into a proven bribe to a \$137-million contract for the police headquarters. The fact that the NDP used excuses and dragged their feet on two of the worst scandals in Manitoba history is not legal precedent and it is not the law; it's an excuse.

The NDP delays in calling inquiries were driven by political embarrassment and people suing to avoid responsibility for catastrophic failures that hurt many while protecting a privileged few.

Why is this government making up excuses for not calling an inquiry when they have no legal ground to stand on?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** It's already been made clear there are dozens of litigants that are still in civil litigation on this matter, Madam Speaker. There is civil disclosure that is happening, though, and so a wide breadth of information is being made available to the public through the civil litigation.

It has been made clear by many, including—and I quote from the Free Press—Derek Olson, a senior litigator and former commission councillor for the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, who indicated that it is a preference and preferable that civil litigation ends before any public inquiry, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Lamont:** Madam Speaker, a preference is not precedent. Criminal and civil actions do not in any way block the capacity of a government to call an inquiry. There are instances of individuals who are awaiting criminal trial testifying at public inquiries. A publication ban was simply put in place during their testimony to avoid an undue impact on their trials.

There is no legal reason stopping this government from calling an inquiry into the 'polace' headquarters, the Crocus fiasco, or into Peter Nygård, for that matter. But there are—and there are lawsuits into the catastrophic failures in long-term-care homes in Manitoba, but that's not an obstacle to calling an inquiry.



What is the real reason that this government will not call an inquiry into the police headquarters?

**Mr. Goertzen:** There are very good reasons, Madam Speaker. They were already outlined by Derek Olson, a senior litigator, and he indicated that there can be concerns around inconsistencies or conflicting results which might influence either the civil litigation or the proceeding of an inquiry.

I'm not sure why the member opposite would want to put either in jeopardy. I don't know what it is he'd want to see—a civil litigation be put in jeopardy, or a public inquiry be put in jeopardy because of those inconsistencies. I don't know why he would want to see the process not go in the right way, Madam Speaker.

But we know that there's many different ways to disclose information that's being disclosed civilly. And, of course, the City, if they want to look into their procurement process, they could certainly do that, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary.

#### **Post-Secondary Education Supports for Ukrainian Refugees**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** International students pay extremely high prices to attend post-secondary school in Manitoba.

I'm tabling a CBC article where Brandon University states that they will waive tuition fees for international students coming from Ukraine. U of W says it's waiving application fees for students from Ukraine and is extending support to all students impacted by the war. And U of M says it's been working with the impacted students on a case-by-case basis, supporting them through extending fee deadlines, removing fee penalties and providing bursaries, emergency loans and food.

Madam Speaker, what is this government going to do to support post-secondary schools with extra funding to fulfill these initiatives?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, Manitoba continues to take action with the Ukraine situation.

Our government has taken action, including the creation of a special deputy minister steering committee and a new Ukrainian refugee response task force that are both now operational and functional, to look into the full range of provincial settlement supports

for housing, health care and mental health care, K-to-12 education, post-secondary education.

I also want to announce today, I'm pleased to share with the House that we will provide grant assistance for an additional \$150,000 to the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, which includes the Mennonite Central Committee, MEDA, Canadian Lutheran World Relief, now totalling \$800,000 to support and co-ordinate and deliver humanitarian aid as a result of the unfolding Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### **Economic Recovery and Growth French Investment in Economy**

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Madam Speaker, it has come to my attention that yesterday the Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade took part in a virtual business meeting with the embassy of 'franch' and French companies that focused on investment opportunities in Manitoba.

Can the minister share more about this meeting and how countries like France can play an important role in our economic recovery post-pandemic?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade):** I want to thank my colleague for the question.

Economic recovery and growth is a priority for our government, and France is a key partner. Last year, trade with France was over \$200 million. Yesterday, we had the opportunity to discuss the Manitoba advantages directly with French companies.

\* (14:40)

French companies do operate here in Manitoba, such as Ubisoft, who have recently announced they're investing an additional \$139 million in Manitoba, and Roquette, who recently opened a \$600-million pea processing facility here—almost 1,500 direct jobs in Manitoba.

So, Manitoba is open for business, and we look forward to continuing to build our positive relationship with France and other countries throughout the world.

#### **Education System Funding Concerns**

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** Base funding for schools this year is just 1.34 per cent. Inflation is now approaching six. Schools don't have what they need,

and they're feeling the pinch every day from this government's austerity.

Brandon had to cut 10 teaching positions, including support for speech-language, psychology and reading recovery. These are positions we need—students need, Madam Speaker, to recover from the pandemic.

Will this government, Madam Speaker, reverse course and ensure there are no cuts to Manitoba schools?

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to be able to put some factual information on the record, Madam Speaker.

It is unfortunate that my friend from Transcona—the member from Transcona—puts this information on the record and listens to—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —listens to his leader's talking points, Madam Speaker.

In fact, on this side of the House, we have increased funding to education by \$320 million, which does not include COVID and capital expenditures. That's 17.2 per cent, far more than the NDP received in votes last night at the by-election.

Madam Speaker, congratulations to Obby Khan.

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

**Mr. Altomare:** The minister can say what he wants, but the fact is, Manitobans don't believe it when it comes to education funding and what this government says it's going to do.

We are seeing de facto cuts to speech-language support, reading recovery in multiple school divisions. Madam Speaker, that's not the right approach. It's time to chart a new path.

Will the minister reverse course and promise zero cuts to Manitoba schools for the coming school year?

**Mr. Ewasko:** Madam Speaker, building on what I said in my previous answer, we have and we are—and have announced a new school in Fort Whyte as well, to just increase our 20-new-schools commitment.

And also, since the member brought up Brandon, I just would like to correct the record. Actually, in the last two years, Madam Speaker, Brandon School Division received 11.4 per cent increase over the last

two years. And, matter of fact, I had the pleasure of touring their new school, just about a month ago.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the question from my friend from Transcona.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition—*[interjection]* Order.

### Foot-Care Services

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition was signed by Sam Umpherville, Toni Baird [*phonetic*], Tamara Jones [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

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

Are there any further petitions? The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

While we're waiting, we could go to the honourable member for Elmwood.

### Louise Bridge

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

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

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

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

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its form-firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise bridge, came to a

halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

### Abortion Services

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons deserve to be safe and supported when accessing abortion services.

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to detrimental outcomes and consequences for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

(3) The provincial government's reckless health-care cuts have created inequity within the health-care system whereby access to the abortion pill, Mifegymiso, and surgical abortions are less accessible

for northern and rural individuals than individuals in southern Manitoba, as they face travel barriers to access the handful of non-urban health-care professionals who are trained to provide medical abortions.

\* (14:50)

(4) For over four years, and over the administration of three failed Health ministers, the provincial government operated under the pretense that reproductive health was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Seniors Care and shifted the responsibility to a secretariat with no policy, program or financial authority within the health-care system.

(5) For over four years, the provincial government has refused to support bill 200, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, which will ensure the safety of Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons accessing abortion services, and the staff who provide such services, by establishing buffer zones for anti-choice Manitobans around clinics.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion services for individuals, regardless of where they reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

Signed by many Manitobans.

### **Cochlear Implant Program**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

A cochlear implant is a life-changing electronic device that allows deaf people to receive and process sounds and speech, and also can partially restore hearing in people who have severe hearing loss and who do not benefit from conventional hearing aids. A processor behind the ear captures and processes sound signals which are transmitted to a receiver implanted into the skull that relays the information to the inner ear.

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 45 devices per year.

There are no upfront costs to Manitoba residents who proceed with cochlear implant surgery, as Manitoba Health covers the surgical procedure, internal implant and the first external sound processor. Newfoundland and Manitoba have the highest estimated implantation costs of all provinces.

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available. The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than in other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

In Manitoba, pediatric patients under 18 years of age are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

It is unreasonable that this technology is inaccessible to many citizens of Manitoba who must choose between hearing and deafness due to financial constraints because the costs of maintaining the equipment are prohibitive for low-income earners or those on a fixed income, such as old age pension or Employment and Income Assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide financing for upgrades to the cochlear implant covered under medicare, or provide funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program to assist with the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

Signed by Genevieve Craigie, Sandra DeBlaere, Bryce Perry and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

### **Eating Disorders Awareness Week**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

An estimated 1 million people suffer from eating disorders in Canada.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses affecting one's physical, psychological and social function and have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

The development and treatment of eating disorders are influenced by the social determinants of health, including food and income security, access to housing, health care and mental health supports.

It is important to share the diverse experiences of people with eating disorders across all ages, genders and identities, including Indigenous, Black and racialized people; queer and gender-diverse people; people with disabilities; people with chronic illness; and people with co-occurring mental health conditions or addictions.

It is necessary to increase awareness and education about the impact of those living with, or affected by, eating disorders in order to dispel dangerous stereotypes and myths about these illnesses.

Setting aside one week each year to focus attention on eating disorders will heighten public understanding, increase awareness of culturally relevant resources and supports for those impacted by eating disorders and encourage Manitobans to develop healthier relationships with their bodies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support a declaration that the first week in February of each year be known as eating disorders awareness week.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

### **Foot-Care Services**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

### **House Business**

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, on House business.

**Madam Speaker:** On House business.

**Mr. Friesen:** On March 17th, I moved the second reading motion for Bill 16, The Financial Administration Amendment Act, initiating debate.

Bill 16 requires a royal recommendation, and I am now accordingly tabling the royal recommendation from His Honour the Administrator.

\* (15:00)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has just provided the royal recommendation for tabling—the royal recommendation for Bill 16, and he has tabled that accordingly.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in camera on Monday, April 4th, 2022 at 6 p.m. for professional development purposes.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet in camera on Monday, April 4th, 2022 at 6 p.m. for professional development purposes.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Could you please call for debate on second readings this afternoon Bill 22, Bill 15, Bill 16 and Bill 23?

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider the following bills this afternoon: second reading of Bill 22, second reading of Bill 15, debate on second reading of Bill 16 and second reading of Bill 23.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 22—The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions)

**Madam Speaker:** I will therefore call second reading of Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions).

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (Mr. Piwniuk), that Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions), be now read for a second time and therefore referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Wharton:** It's my pleasure as Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks to stand today for

second reading of Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act. The bill will amend the non-essential pesticide use section of the act. Manitoba's—Manitobans' approach to cosmetic pesticides will allow Manitobans to manage usable green spaces in our communities while enhancing protections for our children and our pets.

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

This bill will allow Manitobans to use all Health Canada-approved pesticides on their lawns except in sensitive areas. The 2014 legislation restricted available federally approved pesticides to a narrow Manitoba-approved list.

Out of abundance of caution, we will continue to minimize pesticide exposure for children and pets by expanding the list of prohibited areas under this legislation. In addition to protections for schools, child-care centres and hospitals under the current legislation, the bill adds municipal playgrounds, picnic areas, dog parks and provincial parks to that list as areas where cosmetic pesticides cannot be applied.

The Province of Manitoba is committed to protecting the environment and relies on the science to inform the proper use of cosmetic pesticides. We recognize Health Canada as the foremost expert in this field.

Madam Speaker, Health Canada conducts robust reviews to strict health and safety standards and has deemed these pesticides safe when used correctly. All pesticides sold or used in Manitoba must be approved and registered by Health Canada under the Pest Control Products Act. Health Canada employs over 350 scientists, Mr. Deputy Speaker, including biologists, chemists and 'toxicologists' and that are—pardon me, that are dedicated to the evaluation of pesticides.

In registering a product, Health Canada scientists access—assess risks to human health and, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our environment. Health Canada does not register pesticides, including cosmetic pesticides, that are known to cause cancer or other illnesses. Registered products are regularly evaluated to ensure they meet current health and environmental protection standards.

Health Canada will also open a special review if new research emerges that identifies a possible change in risk level to human health and our environment. Health Canada ensures all products come with easy-to-follow directions to minimize risk and promote safe use.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, directions are informed by Health Canada's assessments and include protective measures and restrictions such as personal protective equipment, setbacks to surface water, application intervals and frequency and re-entry timelines.

We have heard from citizens and stakeholders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they want flexibility to have beautiful, useable green spaces in our communities, and they have told us that the current legislation is simply not working.

We have heard that products currently available to Manitobans are not effective at all. They must be applied multiple times to have an impact, which can be expensive for municipalities and households alike.

With this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans can make informed choices regarding the products that they wish to use. The bill gives municipalities the ability to maintain useable aesthetic green spaces in our communities. They will have the ability to use these effective products in low-risk areas like boulevards, sidewalks, right-of-ways and fairgrounds.

Municipalities are still required to apply pesticides under the pesticide use permit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, issued by the Province with the option for households to file for a buffer zone around their property. Pesticides use are also required for any application by government departments or Crown corporations and on any privately owned property to which the public normally have access to for recreation purposes, such as golf courses, fairgrounds, parks and campgrounds.

These provincial permits must have special requirements for applicants to: annually provide public notification of the proposed pesticide program, (2) respect no-spray zones request around private residential property and (3) report all pesticides use to the department. These provincial permits have special limits, terms and conditions to ensure the safe application of pesticides and minimize impact to human health and our environment.

Commercial applicators are trained, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure products are applied appropriately to protect our waterways. They must meet licensing requirements, including national pesticide training and certification standards.

By restricting pesticides use in schools, child-care centres and hospitals and strengthening protections out of an abundance of caution around municipal playgrounds, picnic areas, dog parks and provincial parks, along with commercial applicators licensing

and 'pesticides' use permit requirements—Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's so much to say—Manitobans are more protected than any other prairie province in Canada.

Other Prairie provinces have no ban on cosmetic pesticides, nor they say—nor do they identify any sensitive areas. We go even further and identify them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

With these protections in place, I am confident that this is the safe and responsible science-based approach Manitobans have told us they want.

I look forward to the debate and seek all-party support for this very important bill so that we can have quick passage through this House.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please, and I just want to encourage little groupings of members to keep the volume down, please.

### Questions

**Mr. Deputy 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.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I want to thank the minister for meeting with me last week to provide me with a briefing on this bill. And just a note that the minister did make a commitment to provide a side-by-side to me and we haven't received that yet, and that's an important piece of understanding the bill.

And can the minister explain why this bill doesn't prohibit the use in all municipal parks where children, dogs, pregnant folks might want to go?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks):** Again, I would like to thank the member for taking the time to come to our office and do the bill review and, again, understand that this bill is based on science.

\* (15:10)

It's also based on approved Health Canada products, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I was very confident after our 30-plus minute bill discussion that—and the

member is—will be on board and all members in this House will be on board to do the right thing and certainly follow Health Canada-approved pesticides throughout Manitoba.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, my question is specific: Will the pesticides be banned within the grounds of the Assiniboine zoo?

**Mr. Wharton:** I would also like to thank the member from River Heights, as well, for joining in the bill discussion as well, and certainly appreciated his comments and input as we move forward collectively in this House to pass Bill 22 into legislation this spring.

And, certainly, we know, and as I mentioned to the member from River Heights, municipalities will have their own autonomy, contrary to what the member from Concordia says, and will continue to have that autonomy to make decisions that are best for their community.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's clear that AMM wants to be at the table, wants to have input with the legislation—with regards to legislation like this.

Once again, however, we see—you know, of course, the devil is in the details. This minister is, you know, is going against the advice of the Canadian Cancer Society and many others. Of course, the application of these chemicals is what is important in making sure that cancer and other health effects are not felt.

Why is the member allowing for individuals to have so much control over the use of these chemicals?

**Mr. Wharton:** Certainly, thank the member from Concordia for that question.

As I mentioned in my opening comments in the introduction of the bill, we talk about Health Canada employees—over 350 scientists, Mr. Deputy Speaker, including biologists, chemists, 'toxicologists,' that are dedicated to the evaluation of pesticides.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly we trust that Health Canada and the scientists—over 350 scientists—do their due diligence to protect not only Manitobans, but Canadians.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The—we've all, I think, been appreciative of the wonderful care that's taken of the grounds of the Legislature, and this has occurred even when there was a ban on these herbicides and pesticides.

So I wonder if the minister would prevent—present a report explaining how the Legislature has done such

an exceptional job at a time when these were banned when he has such high concerns about the ineffectiveness of other agents than these herbicides.

**An Honourable Member:** Well, we dug up half the yard.

**Mr. Wharton:** The minister—pardon me—the member from Steinbach took the answer, but I'll certainly elaborate a little bit on that.

I'm hoping that this summer we'll have the opportunity to ensure that Health Canada-approved products are able to be put on the lawns of the Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly at this current point that's not going to happen.

But, again, we are going to rely on the scientists of Health Canada to ensure that that direction is followed as it is in every other jurisdiction west of Manitoba and east.

**Ms. Naylor:** The minister didn't actually answer the question that I asked about municipal parks, but has raised some additional concerns.

When you talk—when the minister talks about using these products on the grounds of the Legislature directly across the street from a provincially protected area where these products would not be used, the same concerns that I've raised about being used on the boulevard right in front of schools.

And it seems that the minister wants to download this responsibility to municipalities but hasn't actually, you know, explained to us how the Province is going to ensure protection under The Environment Act.

**Mr. Wharton:** Well, certainly, there's nothing about downloading here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm not sure where the member is going with downloading. I mean, we know the NDP have a history of downloading onto AMM and all the members' 137 municipalities. But, certainly, they as municipalities also have local autonomy.

As I mentioned earlier, the City of Winnipeg has their own buffer zones in place and, certainly, they will continue to move forward, and I had the opportunity to discuss that—buffer zones. I know the member from Wolseley had a particular interest in Wolseley, where there are a lot of gardens planted in the area, in their front lawns. And, certainly, folks can apply and will be able to apply for those buffer zones based on the City of Winnipeg's bylaws.



**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I'm asking the minister, given that the effects of these pesticides may well be on bird species as well as on children, whether the government has done any monitoring of bird species before the ban, during the ban to find out if there's been any impact on bird species in Manitoba.

**Mr. Wharton:** I know that Alberta and Saskatchewan, for instance, have no ban on pesticides—Health Canada-approved pesticides. They also have no buffer zones, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and no restricted areas. I call them the no-fly zones, like school grounds, playgrounds, parks, provincial parks.

So, certainly, we're going to trust the 350 scientists in Ottawa. I would suspect that the member from River Heights would also support the federal Liberals in the initiative to move forward with the best science that's available to us.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)—and if I could just make sure that the microphone's not covered. I know that was an issue. I can't see—yes, okay, terrific.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, it's a bold position for the minister of the environment to take the stand against the Canadian Cancer Society, to stand against several environmental groups who are warning about misuse of these chemicals.

You know, as I said, the devil is in the details and it's all about the application of these chemicals and how they're used, how these herbicides and pesticides are used.

So, again, I want to ask the minister: What steps or what regulations is he putting into place that will regulate the use of these chemicals by individuals in their own yards, gardens, neighbourhood settings that will then impact our communities, our children and our lakes and rivers?

**Mr. Wharton:** Again, in registering a product, Health Canada scientists assess risks to human health and the environment, which is done regularly by Health Canada.

Certainly, to the member's point, Health Canada does not register pesticides, including cosmetic pesticides that are known to cause cancer or illness, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In respect to the comments about application of Health Canada-approved pesticides, we know that licensed operators have to be licensed regularly, of course, and Manitobans, if—and, of course, when they

are able to purchase Health Canada-approved products, will have the ability—and I don't know why the member doesn't think this—to—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I have had concerns from people with expertise who were not consulted on this bill.

I wonder if the minister would provide a list of the people who were consulted and who provided input, and will the minister do *[inaudible]*?

**Mr. Wharton:** Again, certainly, the member knows, and I've mentioned it a couple of times in this question period, that Health Canada has 350 scientists that have done and continue to do their research to protect Canadians, in this case Manitobans, going forward and will continue to ensure that the health of Manitobans is priority one.

\* (15:20)

**Ms. Naylor:** It's kind of entertaining how attached this government currently is to the federal government and everything that they have to say is gospel. We'll see how that holds.

But I'm wondering what message the minister has for all the other health-care professionals that oppose the government's changes to the current legislation. What do you tell them?

**Mr. Wharton:** Certainly, appreciate the question from the member from Wolseley, and the member had mentioned that we rely on federally approved Health Canada products, and that's exactly what we do. We don't rely on ideology.

And also too, as well, we know that there are a number of City of Winnipeg councillors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have spoke out publicly as early as yesterday. I'm sure the member has had an opportunity to read the article from the CBC where Councillor Shawn Nason, Councillor Schreyer, as well, and Councillor Browaty, just to start, have supported Bill 22.

We'll continue to, and I'm looking forward to working in collaboration with the City of Winnipeg and all municipalities—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister, when I asked him for a list of people consulted, said that he'd consulted

350 Health Canada scientists, but I suspect—I suspect—that he's consulted other people.

Would he provide a list of the other people that he's consulted?

**Mr. Wharton:** One thing our government does and prides itself on, other—unlike the members opposite, including the member from River Heights, is consult with Manitobans, and that's exactly what we've done. We've heard loud and clear that the bill that was introduced by the former government, the NDP government, in 2014 was 'ideology'—ideology set to only perform to a certain amount of their support, Madam Speaker.

We know that we rely on science on this side of the House. That's exactly what we're going to continue to do. Health Canada-approved products is exactly what we're talking about today.

I wish the member from River Heights would just get on board. *[interjection]*

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

**Ms. Naylor:** It's—it is my understanding that this government did, in fact, conduct very brief consultation process in the summer of 2016—in the summer, when very few people were around or knew about the possibility. It was certainly recommended that they extend the consultation process, and, to our knowledge, that didn't happen.

What would be really helpful is if the minister could actually release the results of that consultation process and make them public. Will he do that for us to further understand the feedback on this bill?

**Mr. Wharton:** Again, what we have heard during our consultations—and again, it's consultations that we do on a regular basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is to ensure that we expanded, we call, again, I call the no-fly zones like our school grounds, campgrounds, provincial parks and playgrounds. Those are just some of the areas that Manitobans have told us about. They want to ensure they understand the science. They know that Health Canada-approved products are trusted, obviously, and certainly we will continue to take advice from Manitobans and not the member opposite.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I'm disappointed that the minister could not provide this—a single name of a single person that he consulted. I think I'll ask again: Will the minister provide a full list of the names of people who he consulted on this bill?

Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member—the honourable Minister—excuse me—of Environment, Climate and Parks.

**Mr. Wharton:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Wharton:** —and I was pleased to be joined at our announcement two weeks ago by the president of AMM, Mr. Kam Blight, who we stood shoulder to shoulder with to move forward with a bill that's important not only to municipalities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but to industry and to all Manitobans. We're looking forward to passage of this bill this spring and we're also looking forward to full support from members opposite.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The floor is open for debate.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** As I mentioned earlier, I have had a bill briefing with the minister on this. I've also had the opportunity to hear directly from the AMM on this issue as well as—*[interjection]*

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

**Ms. Naylor:** —numerous stakeholders across the province over the last week.

In—the—with this amendment to The Environment Act weed killers and pesticides that are prohibited for use on 'lawds' across Manitoba could be back on the market under this legislation, which, for many activists and for many health providers in this province, are saying this is a disappointment, and we certainly know it is a step back for climate change.

We also know the government has been contemplating changes to the pesticide bans since they came into office, and all these years they haven't released any details, any results from the public consultations that were done during that brief time that I mentioned back in that one summer.

Many Manitobans have long advocated for fewer chemicals in our water, on our land and in our air. Increased pesticide use on private and public land could result in increased runoff into water, ultimately increasing nutrient loading into the waterways.

I find it alarming, actually, that in his very first action as the minister wholly responsible for the environment and climate in Manitoba, that the minister has chosen to repeal legislation that reduced the public's exposure to synthetic chemicals. Rolling back legislation that protected our environment does not advance any kind of fight against climate change.

It also raises concerns for the health and well-being of our children, pets and folks who are pregnant or those with chemical allergies or other immunocompromised conditions.

We know that the bill prohibits the use around picnic areas, but the bill doesn't define what a picnic area is, and nor was I able to secure a solid definition of what that meant from the minister.

This bill leaves the ability for the pesticides to be used on boulevards near schools and in lots of places in our community where kids and dogs and other pets may play.

The provincial—sorry—the Progressive Conservative government should be doing everything they can to limit the use of pesticides, but instead, the Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks (Mr. Wharton) is encouraging the opposite.

And while he noted a couple of provinces that have not created progressive legislation on this issue, I will note that the majority of jurisdictions in this country have restricted the use of cosmetic pesticides. That includes Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland, and none of these jurisdiction have repealed or rolled back these laws.

Now, since the minister has chosen not to release any of the consultation notes from that brief consultation, I am going to share some information to the record of information that was provided to the government at the time of that consultation.

These notes are from 2016, and they come from an organization called—or group—a coalition, the Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba about the restricting of non-essential uses of pesticide in Manitoba. And there is a long list of members who contributed to this work. I'm not going to read all 29 organizations, but I would like to flag and highlight a couple of these.

There's a group called the Campaign for Pesticide Reduction Winnipeg. There's the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. Most notice—notably, the Canadian Cancer Society. And, honestly, I would want to know the—take a look at that

research compared to the research of the federal government. The Canadian Cancer Society supports the ban on cosmetic pesticide use.

Some of the other organizations are, of course, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Green Action Centre, the Environmental Health Association of Manitoba, Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba—and, of course, they're—have a concern about this because of the neurological impacts of these chemicals.

There's the Manitoba College of Family Physicians. These are the medical professionals I would like the minister to have had the courage to speak to and explain why he's ignoring their advice. There's the Manitoba Lung Association, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and even the Winnipeg Humane Society, whose interest is in the care of our pets and the long life of our pets.

\* (15:30)

So I want to share a bit of that information that did come to the government as part of the consultation process. This is a coalition that came together back in 2013, before the legislation changed, and they continued to meet and continued to gather data and try to speak to the government in 2016 on this issue.

Their argument is that restrictions on pesticides are required in order to protect vulnerable populations and community residents from serious health risks associated with exposure to these chemicals. According to the Ontario College of Family Physicians, those at particular risk include children, newborns and pregnant women. The range of harmful effects includes adverse reproductive, neurological and respiratory outcomes. People with chemical sensitivities and otherwise healthy adults are also at risk.

As well, the health of pets can be affected through close contact with treated lawns and green spaces. Pollinating insects can also be impacted. Runoff pesticides and their breakdown products contaminate waterways and can 'disrupt' sensitive ecological processes.

Again, at the time of providing feedback, this organization wanted to explain why they were challenging the federal authorities on this issue, and so they were speaking about the pest management regulatory agency that has claimed that these pesticides are safe.

As noted by critics such as Ontario physician Dr. Neil Arya, an appointee to the federal Pest

Management Advisory Council, the test methods on which PMRA relies are insufficient to capture the adverse health effects of long-term, low-level exposure to these chemicals alone and in combination with other environmental toxins.

And despite federal assurances, Ontario's College of Family Physicians, in a systematic review of 142 health studies concluded that this review provides evidence that non-organochlorine pesticides may cause 'deleritous'—sorry, I can't even say that word but we'll just say difficult or bad reproductive outcomes.

The most suggestive evidence is of an association between fetal growth outcomes and pesticide exposure. The studies in the systemic review show that prenatal pesticide exposure is consistently associated with measurable deficits and child neurodevelopment across a wide age range from birth to adolescence.

Taken as a whole, the results of the systematic review of pesticide exposure and child neurodevelopment suggests that children are experiencing neurodevelopmental problems throughout childhood that are associated with prenatal and childhood pesticide exposure.

Overall, there is evidence that exposure to pesticides and to organophosphate or carbonate insecticides, in particular, is associated with the development of respiratory symptoms and a spectrum of obstructive and restrictive lung diseases.

I'm sure there are members on the other side of the House with children or grandchildren who have seen some of the outcomes. You know, I grew up in a farming community in southwestern Ontario and what's really clear to me are, you know, I see this—I see some of the experiences. My own sister has a very serious neurological condition that is believed to be an outcome of the farm work that she did in her adolescence.

So, you know, I'm not coming to this as someone without both an interest and concern for agriculture, and, in this case, we're not even talking about limiting what happens in agriculture. We're simply talking about cosmetic pesticide bans.

The PMRA process, according to this group of researchers, this process falls short in many ways. It relies on industry-supplied animal 'toxology' studies, and it doesn't take sufficient account of population-based epidemiological research that assesses the real world—real-world effects of pesticide exposure on humans.

The PMRA evaluates individual active ingredients, not the mixtures found in the actual products. So, in reality, many people may be exposed to multiple pesticide products and to other synthetic chemicals that are present in the environment at the same time.

Further, the impacts of cumulative low-level exposure to pesticides over time are not adequately assessed by PMRA's system. So again, folks that this government consulted with clearly said we cannot depend on this flawed process to guarantee the safety of chemical pesticides, particularly where children's health is at stake.

So, this group wanted to respond to the claim that current restrictions on pesticides impose unacceptable additional costs on municipalities. I understand that, again, this was data from 2016 and there may have been additional data that's come forward from Manitoba municipalities. That has not been provided to us from the government.

But in—back in 2016, what this group noted was that, based on figures for weed control in the City of Winnipeg's operating budget, the year-over-year increase between when the pesticide ban started—before it started and when it came into effect—amounted to 16 cents a person: 16 cents a person to keep children safer, to ensure, you know, that there is far less exposure to damaging chemicals that could harm—*[interjection]* Yes. Whatever my colleague's saying behind me, I agree.

And our caucus recognizes—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** —that there may be costs resulting from restrictions on the use of cosmetic pesticides. I particularly under—recognize that this might have a bigger effect on smaller communities if the goal is, in fact, to maintain previous levels of weed control.

But we also do have a responsibility to consider the costs to our overall health-care system. So I have no desire to see costs increasing for municipalities, but I also do not have a desire to see costs increasing for our health-care system through, you know, extra doctors' visits, medications, hospitalizations and treatments of illnesses and developmental deficits associated with pesticide exposure.

In August of 2016, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment released their study of cosmetic pesticide restrictions across Canada. At that time, seven provinces had such laws and, at that time, Manitoba was rated as the third best in the country,

which indicates that we made a good start here in 2014 but that there was room for improvement.

So again, when consulted, this group of 29, you know, groups—health-care organizations and regular citizens in Manitoba who make up Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba, they made it really clear that Manitoba actually needed to do better, not roll back the existing pesticide ban. We note that these efforts—you know, that they were noting at the time that the efforts had positive and measurable impacts.

And according to another study by the Ontario minister of the environment, when Ontario introduced similar legislations, their urban waterways showed a significant decrease in selected pesticide concentrations just one year after that pesticide ban was introduced.

Now, I did ask the minister if there were any similar studies done in Manitoba, and I was told that, you know, the Manitoba research did not indicate the same outcomes as the Ontario research. However, I actually haven't seen any evidence of that research. I'd love to know if Manitoba was monitoring pesticides in our waterways before and after introducing this legislation.

I think it's really important for us to see some data and, as my colleague from River Heights mentioned, it's not just waterways that are the test. What about birds? What about the pollinating insects and the impacts on them?

This group, during the consultation process, also urged the province of Manitoba to start doing some public education on pesticide use. You know, maybe there wouldn't be such pushback right now if the government had taken their environmental responsibilities seriously, and done some public education on this issue.

It was recommended to the government that they educate retail staff and customers on potential adverse health effects of pesticide exposure, so that people understood the restrictions.

\* (15:40)

You know, it's kind of like any public health protections, you know? People don't push back against mask use or vaccines when they understand it as a protection and they understand the rationale and the reason behind it and they're adequately communicated with and educated. And I think the same is about pesticide use. It's not a restriction as much as it is, in fact, a public health protection, and we could do a

much—this government could do a much better job about educating people.

The other ask that at that time, the other recommendation was to support organizations that do do public education on safe alternatives, such as the Manitoba Eco-Network's Organic Lawn Care Program so that folks would have an opportunity to understand more.

Some of the other recommendations that CPBM made at the time were to simply extend the consultation period so that individuals and groups who couldn't respond over the summer had an opportunity to do so.

So, unfortunately, that didn't happen, and now I think we're going to see those folks who feel that they, you know, that their opinion wasn't—they didn't have the opportunity to offer it, are going to want to bring that forward, certainly at the committee stage.

They also asked if there could be some serious evaluation before any changes were made. They wanted to see a review that carried on over five years. And what we've seen and heard is nothing like that has taken place.

The suggestions were to monitor water quality, as I've already mentioned, and to see what kind of impact that would have had, and also to track medical and scientific studies that quantified the nature and extent of the risk of cosmetic pesticide exposure for vulnerable populations and the environment.

They also encouraged the government to proceed with education and awareness programs so that residents understand why there are restrictions on cosmetic pesticides and, as I mentioned, increase the support for education on alternative methods of lawn care.

So I really want to thank this coalition, the Cosmetic—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** —Pesticide Ban, of Manitoba because they've taken—I've had the opportunity to speak with several of these groups this week to understand more because, obviously, I wasn't in the Legislature back in 2014 when the original bill was passed, so it's been really helpful to understand some of the history on this issue and to understand how essential this still is for the people who are working on this issue at the time.

So, again, thank you to all the members of Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba for your work on

this issue and for allowing me to share some of your notes from the consultation here in the Legislature.

So, two thirds of Canadians already live in a province that has a cosmetic pesticide ban, and health groups like the Canadian Cancer Society are supporters of pesticide bans across Canada.

So we know that these experts know what the risks of cosmetic pesticides are and that they do, in fact, outweigh the benefits. We know that there are other, effective ways for dealing with weeds that are deemed unattractive, but ways to deal with these things that don't put health at risk.

And when it comes to the health of children, to people who are pregnant, to pets, our approach really should be simple. We're just asking the government not to take unnecessary risks with the health of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Many health experts do tell us—did tell the NDP that their plan was the right approach back in 2014. The provincial chief public health officer in 2013 said if pesticides are not needed, they should not be used.

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment said that children are most prone to the 'potential' health risks for the cosmetic lawn chemicals, including cancer, learning disabilities, asthma and chronic lung diseases. They also noted the toxicity to birds and fish and beneficial insects.

Dr. Debbie Pollock was quoted in April 2014 in a press release that science has shown that people exposed to pesticides are at a greater risk for cancer and neurological illness, and the Province of Manitoba should be congratulated for taking the step of banning cosmetic pesticides.

In another press release in 2014, Dr. Paul Doucet said: As a father and a doctor, this new legislation gives me peace of mind knowing that soon lawns and other high-traffic areas in which children play will be safe for our children.

In affirming our support for Manitoba's current legislation, we note that hundreds of communities across Canada have successfully adapted to restrictions on toxic pesticides and still enjoy beautiful lawns and gardens and safe play spaces that don't endanger the health of residents.

And I do not want to minimize the concerns of AMM, and I'm continuing to listen and to learn more about what those concerns are, but I want to note—it's very important that we note that many cities and towns

across Ontario, Nova Scotia, Quebec and other provinces have—feel that they can maintain acceptable levels of weed control at a reasonable cost, and they're still protecting the health of people and particularly protecting children's health.

And I really want this government to stop and think if, like—is this really the time you want to increase health-care costs; that you want to introduce legislation so that you can get rid of the dandelions on your lawn, but see health-care costs go up and up? Or maybe you're thinking about that time—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** —when you're no longer here and you want to have a nice lawn and enjoy your time sitting there when you're retired after the next election, but at the same time, you know, you might not be the ones having to worry about that increase in health-care costs. So maybe that's what you're thinking here.

What I do know from my short time in the Legislature and from the observations of this government is the PC government cannot be trusted with our health or our environment. The PC government's approach to the environment is not worth the risk to the health of Manitobans.

Actually, back before this legislation passed, the PC government at that time said that dandelions were more of a threat than pesticides. So I'll just remind you of that; that's what we're talking about here. This is about weakening public health protections that most impact children, infants and people who are pregnant.

More than four years after their campaign promise to launch a review into the current legislation surrounding herbicide use, the PC government hasn't released that study to us. And they were asked about this, actually, in April 2021 and a spokesperson at the time said that the plan to conclude this—they were planning to conclude the study in the coming months and provide more information.

No information's been provided. Simply a bill has come forward that seems to completely be put in place for economic reasons. And economics matter—of course they matter and of course they matter to municipalities, but it can't be the only thing. Our health care has to matter. Our environment has to matter as well.

Of course, we believe in science-based decision making, but we also know that there are multiple elements of science surrounding this issue, so there is what Health Canada said and there is also the science

that numerous other researchers have contributed to and doctors reference.

Overall, we just think it's important and in the best interests of Manitobans not to reopen the pesticide debate while we're working on trying to protect public health. And of all times, when people have been struggling for the last two years with serious health conditions and with COVID—we know that that's had such a detrimental impact on people with lung conditions for example, people with asthma and other kinds of lung conditions.

And yet, even while we're still struggling with this, even trying to come to terms with this as a province and the long-term impact and long COVID, the first Environment Minister-introduced bill is something that will most harm folks with lung conditions.

\* (15:50)

You know, I think since I have the opportunity to speak about this, I'm just also going to connect it a little bit to—you know, while I'm most—you know, I'm quite concerned about the health impacts, of course, I'm also concerned about the environmental impacts and the fact that adding more pesticides into our environment will contribute to—you know, to adding further products, you know, going into our lake and river system.

And so, you know, there's a number—I know that phosphorus is the most significant concern in Lake Winnipeg, but there's another—other harmful chemicals that are in pesticides on—you know, that are used on private properties for cosmetic purposes. And this runs off into sewers and into waterways and, ultimately, into Lake Winnipeg.

So it's an addition to the nutrient runoff. So, while the government is still not moving forward on addressing the North End water treatment plant—we're still waiting and waiting for some action to be taken there—they're passing legislation that has the potential to actually increase the nutrients that cause the problems in Lake Winnipeg.

You know, the North End treatment plant is the largest single-point emitter of phosphorus, and yet, still, this government has not created a solid, efficient plan to get that work done. And this is really tied up in that. This entire bill is about putting more chemicals into the water, more chemicals into the air, certainly more chemicals into the land.

And, you know, I did raise with the minister that the community I represent has very small properties. We don't, you know, have some of the luxurious properties that some other members of this House might be familiar with. But on our small properties, people often are growing food, and that—they might be growing that food right in that very small square footage at the front of their house, as food prices are going up, as it's more and more difficult for families to put a good meal on the table. If they're choosing to grow a garden and pesticides are sprayed on the boulevard literally five feet away from where they're growing their food, this is going to have an impact.

And, you know, I hear the minister saying, well, that's up to the City of Winnipeg to regulate, but at the same time, he just gave me a list of City of Winnipeg councillors that don't seem very concerned about the overall impacts of this.

And, you know what, the City of Winnipeg is not going to be paying the health-care bill for Manitobans when more and more people are ingesting these pesticides through the food that they eat, or experiencing it, you know, when their kids are playing on the lawn or their dogs are running through the lawn, and they're running into the house and carrying these products with them.

So, I still have a few more minutes left here. I think that—think I'm going to, you know, slow down, wrap up, because I have a number of colleagues who have something to say on this issue.

And I just—I guess the last thing I do want to say is that, you know, for how partisan we can be in this House on so many issues, I'm genuinely perplexed why a government, for their first piece of environmental legislation in a very long time, would bring in something that actually is harmful to the environment, and why a government struggling with health-care costs would bring in a bill that will ultimately increase health-care costs for Manitobans.

I really hope that folks on the other side of the House can reflect on the wisdom of this and do a little more work. Maybe slow this down, go back to the consultation process and start again.

Thank you.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Certainly, speaking in support of Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act (Pesticide Restrictions). This is Health Canada-approved pesticides. This is the pesticide management review agency that does these.

And I would note that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was—in his federal days—was the Secretary of State for Science, Research and Development. So I'm sure he approves of the 350 scientists that are working for the PMRA. And it's the PMRA, through Health Canada, that approves the use of these pesticides.

The testing also includes the basic groups of species, including birds and mammals. I know he was asking the minister about that, but he should know that as well from his days of Secretary of State. And this bill allows the use of pesticides that are approved by Health Canada and the PMRA on private properties and municipal right-of-ways.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities is very supportive of this bill, as is the industry. This allows municipalities to control the spread of noxious weeds, which they are legally responsible to do in their municipalities.

One of the places where noxious weeds really have ideal growing conditions is in drainage ditches, municipal drainage ditches, and that's—the cost of trying to control these noxious weeds has been very difficult for the municipalities. So it gives them the option to use these approved pesticides. They don't have to; nobody's telling municipalities or private land—homeowners that they have to use these pesticides. If they've found an alternate means of controlling weeds, then they're certainly welcome to do that.

And we've certainly come a long way in understanding and the use of pesticides as compared to many years ago. There is an awareness now of using them properly, of following the directions. Buffer zones are to be observed and private homeowners and municipalities know this and will continue to observe these.

And so the—for the government to say that private homeowners are not able to use products that are approved by another level of government on their own home is an invasion of their property rights, and they should be able to do that, provided that they follow to the extent of the legislation that's out there.

And again, I just want to re-emphasize that no person or no municipality is being forced to use these approved pesticides. They can choose to do—use other products if they feel that that is what they should do. And it's—this is a step forward for controlling, and I really want to emphasize for municipalities and noxious weeds because this has been a real concern

for them, for the agriculture industry, which is also responsible on their own property for controlling noxious weeds. And when you have—particularly drainage ditches and right-of-ways that—where these noxious weeds are growing, and the municipality really doesn't have an effective means of controlling them. This does spread—these noxious weeds spread and it's—becomes a concern for everyone and an additional cost for every—for adjacent landowners in the agricultural industry.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think this is good legislation that's been long overdue. The NDP loved to try to politicize this, but it is really what many homeowners and municipalities—they'll have the choice to use these products if they so desire, but we're not forcing them.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** You know, I just wanted to pick up, first and foremost, where my colleague from Wolseley left off. And that was, I mean, I guess expressing some bewilderment, but I guess also just appealing to, you know, to the common sense, and sort of the common good that all of us should be here to be promoting and to be working towards as legislators.

And for me, when it comes to this bill in particular, it's not difficult for me to understand what the right thing to do is. Because for me, all I have to do is think about my own family, my own kids. I've got young children, as many in the House know, and those children are still at the age where, you know, I guess you'd call it, you know, unsupervised or non—what's the word I'm looking for here—play in parks that is—

\* (16:00)

**An Honourable Member:** Unstructured.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —unstructured is still a very important part of their daily lives this summer.

I guess also, you know, in part because of the pandemic and how restricted we were on some of the structured play, it was very normal for my son—he's an early riser—for my son to wake up and to say, Dad, I'm going to the park to throw my boomerang, or I'm going to go meet up with my friends down at this playground and we're going to play. And he's at the age now where we can send him out the door, and he can go out and play.

And—I mean, I love that because I remember as a kid, I remember having that same experience, going out and the neighbourhood was yours to play in, and



to play in all the green spaces. And we have got some really great places in my neighbourhood for them to play.

But I also remember as a young kid going to those parks after they had been sprayed with herbicides and with pesticides. And all of us, probably, of my generation and older, know that smell, remember that smell, of those chemicals that had been applied to the school grounds and to the parks.

Now, maybe, you know, when I was young—I know certainly in subsequent years and when my kids, I guess, were very young—there would be signs; there would be some kind of signage. But again, I'm talking about my kids going out and experiencing these green places, these green spaces. And for them, they're not looking at the sign; they're not thinking about what that is; they just want to play and have a good time.

When the previous government took on this issue, it wasn't an easy issue to tackle because, for many, it is important that those green spaces are protected and, for some people, that means that it needs to be a lush green lawn. And certainly we understand that for sports fields and other places, that is an important part of making sure that we have a safe place to play.

But I can tell you as a parent that I felt a lot more comfortable and a lot safer knowing that those places that my kids were playing in would be protected from the use of pesticides.

So, I join with my colleague from Wolseley to say, how is it that this government—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —of all the priorities that we have in front of us, of all the things that we could be talking about—and as the member said, during a time when public health is top-of-mind for people, and not just public health, but that sense of community around public health. It's not just a decision that's made somewhere else and then applied to community. But we know and we've seen during the pandemic that it's something that all of us take ownership and responsibility in.

So, at a time when people's understanding and appreciation for that kind of public health restrictions and protections are there, why is it that this government would choose this piece of legislation to go after?

So it boggles the mind and—you know, I now—I understand that I need to go to the doorstep this summer—in the spring and summer—and I need to talk

to those constituents, my friends and neighbours in my community, and I have to talk to them about why those chemical smells might be back, why they might be now something that their kids are getting exposed to, why their grandchildren are playing in parks that may have been sprayed—or, in public spaces, I should say, that have been sprayed.

This is a step back—this is a step back.

Now, you know, I understand the pressures on the government. I do understand why they are doing this, because there are real pressures out there with regards to the use of cosmetic pesticides.

I know that they look to their friends—their idols, I guess—over in Alberta. They think the—Alberta's, you know, the land of milk and honey, and they think Jason Kenney's the best thing going. I guess he's higher in the polls than their own Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), so that could be part of the reason why they're so eager to listen to what Alberta's doing. And they see that Alberta has no restrictions at all, and they say, well, maybe that's the path forward.

Of course, they ignore the fact that British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, many other provinces in our country have actually tackled this issue as well. They're not making the easy decisions; they're making the right decisions. And instead of looking to them to see how we can improve and better this legislation—because I do agree that there are ways to improve the existing legislation to make sure that it is strengthened and it actually is enhanced—but instead of doing that, again, they're looking to the Wild West, so to speak. They're looking to Jason Kenney to lead them here, and they're going to follow right down that hole with him.

It—I understand, as well, we just came from a meeting with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. It was a fantastic meeting. We know that those municipal leaders that we were sitting around the table with are closest to the ground, so to speak; closest to their ratepayers, to their voters.

And, you know, I mean, you just need to talk to any councillor, any reeve, any mayor and ask them to give you a sense of what their average call volume is in a day to fully appreciate just how many calls and interactions they're having with their citizens on a regular basis.

You know, I understand—they are hearing from their ratepayers and so we want to listen to them. That is our job as provincial leaders, to work with those municipal councillors and Reeves and mayors. And

that's what we want to do. And what we heard from them very clearly was, they want to be partners in this as well. They want to be at the table and they understand the impact to their ratepayers.

Because it's very easy for us to say, well, you now, for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, they have concerns but they are, you know, they want to go ahead with this. Well, I would suggest that for them, they're hearing the same things from their constituents. They're hearing about the concerns about the grandchildren and the children in their neighbourhoods, who are playing in these public spaces; about the health of their citizens going forward as a community.

So they're hearing those same concerns but they're telling us, look, they want to be a partner. They want to be a partner at the table. And if there's a way that we can implement legislation that allows them to use pesticides in appropriate and mandated ways—ways that is—that are protective of those public spaces, of individuals—they want to be at the table to understand how they can do that. And so we want to work with them. We want to listen to their voices and we want to make sure that they're being represented in this process as well.

But, you know, of course it's not just us that are concerned about this—the use of these pesticides, more broadly than is being currently used. You know, we listen and we start our conversation by listening to the Canadian Cancer Society, by listening to experts in the field. And, you know, I heard over and over and over again members opposite talk about Health Canada approval, as if that's the be-all-end-all.

It isn't, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'll tell you why: because the—Health Canada, while they talk about the impact of these chemicals or these pesticides in their final form—that is, when a person would have contact with them in a reasonably controlled setting, you know, that's the standard that they're using.

What I would suggest is that members need to be very clear that we're talking about the immediate exposure to these chemicals by individuals when they're being applied. And as I said, every member in this Chamber probably, as I said, knows that smell, maybe even knows that feeling because if you come in contact with these chemicals, even just on the surface of your body, you'll get a tingling. You'll get—you'll feel it, right?

This is not—these are not innocuous chemicals. They have an effect. And what the Canadian Cancer

Society—what the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment says, what so many others say about these chemicals and these pesticides is there is a real danger.

And so, if they're just being applied in a way that's not regulated, that isn't appropriate for the use, the—you know—and to—for the minister to say, well people know how to read a label, as if that's the be-all-end-all. That's so disingenuous and I don't believe that the minister actually believes that. I don't think he actually believes that everybody uses those chemicals and these pesticides—is using them exactly as they're supposed to be applied.

So there are ways that we can strengthen this. There's ways that we can actually ensure that it's not just being given out to anybody and everybody, that anybody and everybody can use these exactly how they want, that there is some ability for us to say it can be used in certain circumstances but not in others.

\* (16:10)

You know, I—well, you know, I always talk about Lake Winnipeg. I'm a big fan of not just Grand Beach, where I spend a lot of my time, but many, many places around the lake. I feel just a certain connection to that place and, you know, the member from Transcona reminded me about Hecla Island, where we were just spending some time ice fishing and skating and—not this member of Transcona and I, but myself and my family, just to be clear, although I'd be happy to go with the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) any time.

You know, I have a real affinity for Lake Winnipeg and for that particular natural space, as do so many other people in this province. And, you know, there's a lot of people who have land that borders the lake or backs right onto the lake.

And do we want those people to go out with their pesticides and apply it in a place that it would run off directly? You know, oh, well, the weatherman says it's not going to rain so I can spray this pesticide on my property, and then, oh, there was a sudden rainstorm and that chemical's washed directly into our lakes. Nobody would say that that's a good idea.

Do we want this being used by, you know, maybe a parent who doesn't understand the impact that this can have on their family, spraying it in their backyard and then letting their kids to go out a few hours later to play, or their dog, their animals? The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) would remind me it's also

important to remember about the animals who are impacted.

You know, these are all circumstances that are not just hypotheticals, but this is how the chemicals had been used in the past when people didn't understand the impact that they have.

So when you have groups like the Canadian Cancer Society saying very clearly, these need to be regulated, these have—can have serious effects on our health. We need to listen to them and we need to understand how we can strengthen this legislation rather than repealing it and simply striking it down.

You know, I want to be clear on this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this bill is repealing—repealing—simply repealing so many of these simple and effective regulations within this act that protect our communities. And I just wanted to make sure that I put this on the record, that one of the most egregious, I would suggest, parts of the act that this repeals is section 40.5, no person shall use or cause or permit the use of a prescribed pesticide in, on or over the exterior property of a school, of a hospital or of a child-care centre.

This is the priority of this government: to repeal legislation and repeal an act that protects our hospitals, protects our schools, protects our child-care centres. I mean, I just cannot fathom why this government would take this wholesale approach to this kind of legislation. To simply wipe it out instead of saying, how can we improve it, right; how can we listen to the experts on this, how can we protect our children, how can we protect our communities. They're not doing that. In fact, they're just wiping it out and moving on as if there's no problem.

So, you know, returning to my original point that I was trying to make with regards to our partners in AMM, they know this message too. The members that we met with today all have children. They all have grandchildren. They all live in communities where people are concerned about this. They don't want to put them in harm's way either. And that's the starting point that all of us need to take.

Now, how can we work with them to make sure that we're also looking after our infrastructure, that we're making sure we appreciate a government that has cut and frozen their funding for six years, going on seven years now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They—and coming out of COVID, they are feeling the financial pressures as well. And so they're looking at ways to

make sure that they're being responsible to their rate-payers. So, you know, I get that.

And that's why I want them at the table, along with—I want the experts at the table, I want everybody at the table that's—the industry, right? We haven't even talked about the industry that applies some of these chemicals.

You know, I remember very clearly when this legislation came forward. You know, people might think that this was just an exercise of listening to, you know, environmentalists or just the Canadian Cancer Society—which, I mean, I would suggest is not a bad of a starting place—but, you know, it wasn't. It wasn't. There were many meetings that happened and many consultations that happened with industry, with the industry—that—the pesticide industry, with owners of golf courses, with many others. There—these conversations happened.

So, if those folks want to be at the table, you know, why is it that this minister won't sit down with them, won't listen to them, won't even table—you know, he did—well, I don't even know if he was aware. I'm glad that the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) reminded him of the consultation that was done, obviously, before he was minister. But I wonder if he's even looked at those documents, and the member for Wolseley has asked, let's see what they were. You know, your rushed consultation that happened in—I believe she said 2019; you know, in the middle of summer when nobody was paying attention.

You know, let's see what the consultation showed. Why won't he table those documents and let us see what the—his own consultation showed? I would say it's because the minister is singly focused and singly moving forward on simply repealing rather than rebuilding or enhancing.

You know, I just wanted—not to put a too fine of a point on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do think it's important that we recognize, you know, the health experts who are speaking out or have spoken out about this. Because we know that, already, two thirds of Canadians live in provinces that have some kind of cosmetic pesticide ban. As I said, provinces like BC, Ontario, Quebec—these are the provinces who have tackled this issue and tried to educate and tried to make sure that we're putting people first, that we're putting health of our communities first, and so it's already at something that's said.

But, as I said, it's the health groups that are forming the basis of these pieces of legislation. The

Canadian Cancer Society, who are supporters of the pesticide ban across Canada—and it was incredibly surprising that the minister stands against the Canadian Cancer Society, does not stand with them on this issue. It's very, very telling of what his priorities are.

We know there are other effective ways of dealing with these problematic weeds. There are definitely proper uses of pesticides, but in places like our Manitoba Legislative grounds, where we have—continuously have people gathering to—well, lately it's been protesting this government. But, you know, even when there's a good NDP government, people want to come down just to enjoy the grounds and enjoy the public space. And the minister was clear that he's willing to spray pesticides all over the grounds without any kind of consideration for those uses.

We've heard from the provincial chief public health officer back in 2013, who said, quote: if pesticides are not needed, they should not be used. Understanding that there are proper ways to use them and necessary ways potentially that need—pesticides need to be used, but not always, and not as a first choice—certainly not in places like our Legislative grounds.

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment says that children are most prone to the potential health risks of cosmetic lawn chemicals, and they are then exposed to cancer, to learning disabilities, asthma, chronic lung disease. And we know that pesticides can also be toxic to birds, fish and to beneficial insects—the member mentioned bees earlier.

Dr. Debbie Pollock said, quote, science has shown that people exposed to pesticides are at a greater risk for cancer and neurological illness and the Province of Manitoba should be congratulated for taking the step, end quote—that is, to ensure that pesticides were properly regulated.

Dr. Paul Doucet said, quote: As a father and a doctor this new legislation gives me peace of mind knowing that soon lawns and other high-traffic areas in which children play will be safe for our children. And that was—end quote—and that was something that he put on the record.

\* (16:20)

We know that the existing law was put in place primarily to reduce the health risks for people, for pets, for wildlife, for pollinating insects, and what we're really talking about is the non-essential usage of these chemicals. So, again, when talking with the

Association of Manitoba Municipalities, we talked about their—the impact to their infrastructure, the impact to some of their public spaces. This is something that we understand is a pressure that they certainly feel.

And, you know, the member opposite wants to talk about councillors here in Winnipeg. Well, again, when this government has been cutting and freezing funding to municipalities—you know, they're looking for any sort of escape route—

**An Honourable Member:** Their hands are tied.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

**Mr. Wiebe:** —because their pressure—the pressure's on, and as the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) points out, their hands are tied by this government and by the funding decisions of this government. So it's no wonder that they're making these decisions about cosmetic pesticides.

But, again, they understand that this isn't the first choice, and it's certainly not the first choice when we're talking about protecting schools, child-care centres and hospitals. This should be not what municipalities are forced to do, but instead municipalities, working with us, and using these chemicals and these pesticides responsible—responsibly.

So we have all the time in the world for talking to those municipality—municipal partners, for talking to industry who want to do this in a safe way as well, and we have all the time in the world for the environmentalists who are coming forward to us and saying this needs to be looked at; we need to enhance, not tear down, but enhance these regulations. And we have, you know, on this side of the House, guaranteed we have time for the doctors and the nurses and the health-care professionals in our province, unlike members opposite. And so we're listening to them.

And when you take all of those voices together and you really listen—you don't just say you met with somebody and then you didn't actually hear what they had to say—when you actually are willing to go and have consultations that are meaningful, that you actually take something out of, that you're willing to actually share that information with Manitobans—what did you learn; what did you—how did you come to this—I think there's a path forward, and I think there's a way that, honestly, we could have everybody on board with this.

But, again, is that the approach of this government? No. Has it ever been the approach of this government? No. This government continually puts their fingers in their ears, plows ahead and, ultimately, the impact is felt by individuals and communities.

And we're going to stand up and we're going to make sure that Manitobans understand just how callous and short-sighted this piece of legislation is. You know, as I said, all it does is gets rid of any kind of protections rather than enhancing and working with those community partners. We're going to do that. We're going to make sure that every step of the way we're listening to those partners, we're listening to Manitobans, and, you know, where they got it wrong, Madam Deputy Speaker—Madam Speaker, we'll get it right.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, this bill—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** This Bill 22 will reverse earlier legislation which was put in place, I believe, in 2014, which banned cosmetic pesticides, the use of cosmetic pesticides, in Manitoba.

As we consider this legislation, we as legislators need to be concerned about the potential impacts on human health, well-being. We want to optimize health. We want to prevent sickness. We want to make sure that we are not going down a track which will increase neurological issues, learning and behavioural problems, crime, et cetera.

We also are at a time when we've got to be very careful about ecosystem health, the health of ecosystems in Manitoba, the health of birds, the health of mammals, including pets, the health of insects like bees. This is very important that we preserve biodiversity, and that we are looking at the impacts of what we do on the health of ecosystems in our province.

We all remember what happened with DDT, that when DDT was used that it had major adverse effects on many bird species—from cormorants and pelicans to eagles to peregrine falcons to many different species of raptors, which are birds which are on the higher part of the food chain—because DDT and its metabolites built up and didn't break down. And so that the metabolites and DDT concentrated in the bodies of organisms as you go up the food chain, and that concentration was, in some cases, extraordinary

so that you got very high concentrations which had major impacts on birds and their reproduction.

So we need to employ the precautionary principle. We need to do this with respect, not just to individual chemicals, but we have to recognize that sometimes there are synergistic effects of more than one chemical in the environment, that there can be synergistic effects of added pesticides or herbicides based on the particular environment because environments vary.

And so that this is complex, and we need to be using and aware of what people have talked about for a long time now, the precautionary principle. Let's be very careful and not get us into a situation where we have more cancer, where we have more learning problems, where we have more behavioural problems and so on.

One of the aspects of this legislation which is of concern is the lack of due diligence in a number of areas where I would have expected it. We have very close to us the lawn in the Legislative grounds, which has been managed very well over the last several years since we had the cosmetic ban. We should have had a report on the management of the lawn here, the application of whatever chemicals were used when the standard—old standard and old chemicals, which were herbicides and pesticides, were not able to be used.

The grass, as we all know, has been well kept. The grounds are very often the site of children, sometimes coming with groups who want to protest, sometimes coming just to enjoy the Legislative grounds. So these are clearly an area where there are children playing. We should be not only using due diligence and know what's happening and have a report provided to us, but we shouldn't be adding the potential for chemical exposure which might have adverse effects on kids, including things like causing learning problems and neurological issues.

There is a lack of reports from within Manitoba related to bird populations and bird species. These are species which are well monitored in other jurisdictions, but we don't have any results of the impact on bird species, of lift putting the ban on, and we don't know whether there may be impacts of removing the ban on cosmetic pesticides, as this legislation proposes to do.

So there's a lack of direct scientific observations in Manitoba on the effects of these chemicals in the environment, on human health or on birds.

\* (16:30)

So this would have been helpful and useful. It would have been easily possible for the government to provide a report on the consultations, including who was consulted, what people said, what scientific evidence was actually presented during the course of their consultations.

These were all things which we should have had access to in looking at this legislation. There's a lot of concern, and I hear these, as others do, about municipalities and being able to get rid of weeds in drainage ditches. I think the big concern is weeds which could get into fields where farmers are growing crops, but we don't have, you know, a specific report on what has happened in the last eight years since 2014. We don't have a report which talks about effectiveness and costs in more than a vague, anecdotal kind of way. I would have expected better from this government.

I think in this context, I mean, it's interesting. As a person who likes to go for walks and likes to get outside, that it has seemed to me that, oh, 10 years ago there were far fewer songbirds and sparrows and warblers, in particular, in the Assiniboine Forest and in the forest that's between Grant and Corydon, just adjacent there, and that in the last few years there have been more songbirds present.

Is this a result of an impact of the ban on pesticides? I have no idea. Maybe it's—objective research wouldn't show the same effect, but it's these kinds of observations which we need to be concerned about and interested in and looking at because when we're looking at making a major change in the use of chemicals, in this case, pesticides in Manitoba, we should be doing careful due diligence. We should be making sure that we have observations which can be replicated.

There have been many groups who have come forward, who came forward in 2014 and who come forward again talking about the need to keep this ban on cosmetic pesticides. It's interesting that Ontario and Quebec and a number of other provinces have been able to not only bring in this ban, but keep it and operate it very successfully. There doesn't seem to have been a disaster in Ontario and Quebec as a result of removing the use of these cosmetic pesticides.

I think that we should make sure we're looking at that experience in Ontario and Quebec, and asking, you know, why Manitoba seems to have had more problems in controlling weeds than other jurisdictions, why this has been more of an issue here. We have, of course, not only, you know, other provinces

but organizations which cross many provinces involving physicians, Canadian parks association, learning disabilities, Manitoba College of Family Physicians, and Manitoba lung association, and on and on, organizations which have come out and supported this and opposed the removal of the ban and the much wider use which would result in terms of pesticides and herbicides.

We want to be, I think, particularly concerned in today's world about chemicals which can influence brain and neurological function. That we know from experience with chemicals like lead in the environment, that it can have a big effect on IQ and behavioural problems and learning problems, and has been associated with increase in crime.

Now, we're very concerned about crime. We need to be looking and assessing what may be some of the root contributing factors, and we want to make sure that we're not adding to the burden of neurological problems and behavioural problems.

I talked to a number of my pediatric physician colleagues and they observed more behavioural and learning problems in the last few years. It's not clear just why this is happening, but I think it is something which we need to be cognizant of and concerned about.

If it is a major problem and there's no other solution in rural areas and drainage ditches—this, you know, is not the same situation in the city of Winnipeg or in urban areas that it is in rural areas—why are we moving fast to get rid of the ban in urban areas?

I think that the issues are not just where children play, but the issues are broader because chemicals like this will spread. And the issues, even with the limitations which are given, the areas which are protected—parks, picnic areas and so on—that the minister is not clear as to whether people visiting the Assiniboine zoo will be in an area where cosmetic pesticides are—can be used or not. And that's clearly an area where there's large numbers of children going and playing and enjoying themselves, and we don't want to have them get into a situation where there can be health risks and health issues as a result.

One of the concerns—and I've mentioned this—is in terms of bird species. And talking about science and scientific evidence, there was a study which was published in the journal, *Science*, one of the top scientific journals. And this was about three years ago.

And this was a group of researchers from Canada and the United States looking at bird populations

across North America. And they were individuals from New York State; from Washington, DC; from Ottawa; from Maryland; from Environment and Climate Change Canada in Ottawa; from the–Wisconsin; from Colorado; from various areas all over North America.

And the interesting thing about this is that when they looked very carefully at all the data that's available over the last 50 years, that they came to the conclusion that, compared with 50 years ago, we have lost 3 billion birds in North America. That's a rather startling number, a rather large number.

And, indeed, as this article, which I'll quote—the scale of loss portrayed in the Science study is unlike anything recorded in modern natural history. This is a big effect. This is a very large loss of a—all the birds in North America.

Why has this happened? Well, we don't fully understand it, but we don't want to be contributing to further loss by adding back pesticides and herbicides which might be contributing factors. We need to be looking after the ecosystems.

\* (16:40)

It's interesting that the loss of 3 billion birds contains a particular mention of the loss of birds which are grassland birds—birds which may nest in areas which could be sprayed by people who want to protect grasslands. And that—it is also interesting that the loss—although it's done over 50 years, they were able to look with radar, because with radar you can monitor the migration of birds, particularly in the spring, and you can see on radar the—essentially, what are—look like almost clouds on radar of migrating birds.

And what they found was that, in North America, that just in the last 10 years there's been a very significant and continuing decrease of migratory birds in North America. And that includes, in some areas, decreases of, in 10 years, about up to 30 per cent. That's a startling number proportion of birds lost in a relatively short span of time. It's something that we need to be concerned about, and as we look after and are stewards of our environment and of our ecosystem, we need to make sure that we're not going to be doing things which are going to cause problems to the ecosystem.

Environmental chemicals, pesticides, causing problems for birds, there's a history of this. And we need to be very careful lest we lose a lot of bird species, and remember that, you know, many bird

species are actually very helpful to farmers in taking care of insects, et cetera.

That we should not dismiss a tremendous loss of birds and of bird species, but we should take note, we should look at the science, which I've talked about, and we should be prepared to look very carefully and be very cautious about reversing the decision that has been made to ban cosmetic pesticides.

The—overall then, if I'm to sum up, we need to worry about the precautionary principle. We need to worry about this for human health, cancer and brain health. We need to worry about this as it concerns with ecosystem health.

And I will look forward to presentations which are made at the committee, meeting presenters, and hope we have a wide variety of presenters and hope that the presenters are able to present evidence and science in their presentation so that we as legislators can be enriched in our understanding of the impacts of pesticides and come to a—the best possible decision for pesticides or not pesticide use as it applies to preventing health problems as appraised to stewardship of the ecosystems in our province.

There is a lot of work to do. This is a piece of legislation which we need to consider very carefully, and I'm looking forward to those committee meetings so that we can have that discussion and dialogue and much more evidence presented.

So thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** I want to thank my colleagues for such a warm welcome to debate on Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker, as been past practice before, whenever legislation has been amended it would have been nice to have a side-by-side comparison available, especially to new members that are—that were elected in 2019 so we can see what was struck out. Because, as we know, whenever this government brings forward amendments to bills, it's never to really improve or to make better; it's usually just to strike out.

This obsession—what I would call an unhealthy obsession—with some type of red tape reduction seems to apply to other parts of important bills like the environmental amendment act, and we can't take that lightly. The purpose, Madam Speaker, of us as legislators of government is to protect the security of people. And what better way to do that than to do that with an environment act that really does do its best to protect the security of its people.

A number of members have already mentioned the impact pesticides can have on not only humans, but also the people that we share this earth with: people, other animals, other species. I mean, we're stewards and we need to take that responsibility of stewardship seriously.

So, when we see an amendment act come forward like this that removes responsibility, then you know that causes concern, and especially for many of us. I remember quite—back eight to nine years ago when this bill was originally brought forward by the former NDP government. It showed a lot of leadership, Madam Speaker.

I remember, with my kids, I took some comfort in knowing that when they were playing soccer, when they were at fields throughout the city, throughout my particular constituency that I am certainly honoured to represent, that there was some comfort in knowing, Madam Speaker, that pesticides were not, and other harmful herbicides, were not being used on those areas.

So not only could my children play safely, but also we could bring our pets; we could safely bring our, you know, their grandparents so they could sit and enjoy that.

And what that—what The Environment Act did back in 2013 is that it ensured certain protections that need to be followed. Manitoba took a leadership role in this, Madam Speaker. Other jurisdictions in Canada looked at that act and decided that, you know what? That's a good idea. Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, BC—I can name even more areas in United States that looked at that legislation and said, forward-looking, because as—I'll even reference the member from River Heights mentioned that we don't know the impact that this will have on other important species, pollinating species: birds, bees, other pollinators—and how that can impact the areas, many of the market gardens that surround the city of Winnipeg.

And so that is—those are issues that are really important, Madam Speaker, and when Manitoba has the opportunity to take a leadership role, it has to maintain that leadership role. Bringing forward pieces of legislation like this that remove responsibility abdicates that leadership role, and that is something that has me concerned, has my constituents concerned.

Because when we're creating neighbourhoods, when we're creating communities where we can flourish, where our children can play safely, where our loved ones can come and watch them play organized

sports, there are certain guardrails that are put in by government to ensure that those are safe spaces.

And with the removal of some of those guardrails, what we're doing here is we're kind of opening it up again to uses of pesticides and herbicides that are harmful to our condition.

\* (16:50)

You know, we were meeting earlier today with AMM, and they mentioned to us that they want to be part of this dialogue that we have to improve Manitoba. I was speaking to some farmers, and they were saying we want to be judicious in our use of pesticides, fertilizers, all of these pieces that have a cost. And they want to be part of a solution, along with industry, Madam Speaker, that also—because industry and people that work with chemicals like this know that society is moving in a direction where we have to ensure the stewardship of our environment. Industry wants to be part of this. They don't want to be part of something that destroys our living environment, that destroys our beautiful province. They don't, because who wants to buy that stuff? Nobody.

So, again, it's an opportunity that's presented to us that we're—nine years ago, we took a leadership role and forced people, like the people that are responsible for the grounds here at the Manitoba Legislature. It would've—like other members have mentioned, it would've been great to have a report: what are the strategies that they used to control the weeds in this area here? What are the strategies they using to encourage a lush, beautiful environment like we have here on the grounds of the Legislature and in Memorial Park? Why can't those strategies be shared with AMM members, with the City of Winnipeg? This is what we're doing here. We're using organic fertilizers. We're collecting bird guano, adding water to it and using that as a natural fertilizer. Here's how we do it.

These are, again, opportunities for a government to take leadership role in, and we're not seeing that. We're not seeing the encouragement of alternative measures of controlling weeds. And these are the things that, again, need to be brought to the table because sometimes society needs to be challenged, Madam Speaker, challenged to do better.

How is this a challenge to do better? This isn't a challenge to do better. This is a—this is going back to what we used to do, proven in history to be detrimental not only to our condition, but to the condition of every species and animal that we share this earth



with. How is that bringing something positive to the table? How is that doing something that's going to leave Manitobans proud of their province?

It's important that we bring decision makers not only like AMM, other municipalities, groups, environmental groups that have expertise to the table so that we can craft legislation, Madam Speaker, that improves our condition. This doesn't do that. This, as a matter of fact, is regressive and does nothing to improve our condition; gets rid of a dandelion—big deal. Is that what we want to be known for in this House? No. I think everybody that's elected here wants to be known for improving the condition of our citizenry, of leaving the province a better place after we leave this Chamber.

I know a number of us have spent a number of years here and want to be proud of the work that they've done. How do you do that? You bring forward legislation that does that, that ensures stewardship, not this. This is taking us back to a time when we had to worry about—just like my colleague, the member of Concordia. He was referring to a smell after the application of herbicides and pesticides that were detrimental.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to tell you my own experience. I used to work at the Canadian National Railway. I was lucky enough during my university years to have a job at CN. And I remember when the pesticides and herbicides were applied rail side. I know the member from Radisson remembers that smell, too, because he lived across the street on Pandora; he knew when those things were spread. He knows that smell.

And, boy, did they ever get rid of the vegetation on the side of those tracks. But what—at what cost? Pollinators? Bird species?

**An Honourable Member:** Track crew.

**Mr. Altomare:** Our—the track crew? Who knows what—the cancers that were created because of that. I was a track maintainer, thank you very much for reminding me of that, the member from Flin Flon.

And I will say, as a 18-year-old at the time, I don't know what I was exposed to. They just said to me, Madam Speaker, go and spread this. Okay. Did I have the protective stuff on? Sure, I had a pair of pants and some gloves. Was that enough? I don't know.

And we can't be going back to that. We can't be going back to those times.

And that's what has us concerned on this side of the House with this legislation. It does nothing to push not only industry forward, but us forward. We want to be positive, contributing members to society. That's what bills need to do, as well. So when we make amendments to the environmental amendment act, we have to ensure that they're doing—these amendments are actually pushing us forward, Madam Speaker.

And we have a litany of concerns being expressed by not only the Canadian Cancer Society, physicians, pediatricians; even members of the AMM who want to be party because they've been kind of shut out of this process, Madam Speaker.

Because what's been going on with this government is that they're not really into consulting, ensuring that we have multiple voices at the table, so that when we do bring amendments, when amendments are brought forward here, Madam Speaker, that they're amendments that actually improve our condition in this province. And I don't know that we're getting that with this particular—these particular amendments.

It's certainly a concern here, and one that I want to challenge this government to take it—when we're get to committee stage, that they're willing to hear amendments that will make this better. That they're willing to listen to experts, to everyday people that are concerned about what's in here; or what's not in here, actually, Madam Speaker, what's been removed.

Because those are what has us really concerned on this side of the House. Because government has this sacred responsibility, Madam Speaker, and that is to improve the—our condition. And what we—and that side said before—what we have here is a piece of legislation that doesn't do that.

I said earlier it would have been nice to have a side-by-side comparison, especially for us that are new in the House. That's been past practice before, where you can actually look at legislation and see how it's been changed. No, we can't do that. We have to get in there and muck around ourselves. It would have been good to have a little bit of that so that we can make an informed decision.

And as I said earlier, industry wants to be a part of this. Industry doesn't want to exist in a vacuum. They want to be also coming forward with some of their unique solutions. And so, when we talk about ensuring that we're—we've consulted with people that are concerned with this amendment act, the environmental amendment act, we want to ensure that we also include industry in all of our conversations.

I also want to say that, just anecdotally, noticeably, even though we have an amendment act before that restricted the use of herbicides and pesticides, Madam Speaker, we still saw a noticeable drop in pollinators in this provinces. A lot of market gardeners will tell you that.

And that's not just by accident. 'Tho-ese' drops have occurred because of an increased use of herbicides and pesticides. It's affected the environment. Now, we don't exactly know how much it's affected the environment, but we need to do research to see what has caused this. Because now we're getting to the

point where we're actually importing pollinators into Manitoba in order to ensure our market gardeners can actually grow and have their products available to us at—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, this—the honourable member will have 15 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

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