

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

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

Vol. LXXVI No. 6 - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 30, 2021

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, 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	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	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Fort Whyte	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

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 the intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Court of Appeal Amendment and Provincial Court Amendment Act

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Central Services, that Bill 8, The Court of Appeal Amendment and Provincial Court Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today and introduce for a first reading this bill, the Court of Appeal and Provincial Court amendment act.

This bill will add to the types of matters that can be heard in the Court of Appeal of Manitoba. The bill will also amend the appointment process for judges of the Provincial Court of Manitoba so that the committee will provide an evaluation and summary for each candidate for judicial appointment.

Further, the bill will require that candidates for appointment to the Provincial Court undertake to participate in continuing education in sex assault law and social context, and the Provincial Court can establish training programs on these subjects, and it also includes provisions for the annual reports of the court.

The bill will help advance the goals of Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet, improve the process for judges and increase public confidence in the justice system.

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

Bill 207—The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), that Bill 207, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm proud to introduce Bill 207 in an attempt to bring greater 'inclusivity'—'clusivity' and autonomy to the community.

Bill 207 would promote safer and more inclusive communities by directing monies raised by criminal forfeiture to non-profit community organizations that promote addiction treatments, mental health, harm-reduction services, housing, community patrol and safety and restorative justice.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 205—The Filipino Heritage Month Act

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Lagimodière.

The member is muted. Cannot hear. Is the headset plugged in?

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): There. How about that?

Madam Speaker: We can hear you now.

Mr. Smith: Okay, there we go.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member from Brandon East, that Bill 205, The Filipino Heritage Month Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Smith: It is an honour for me to introduce this bill that recognizes the good work of the Filipino community here in Manitoba and the contributions they've made to our province, and I encourage all members to support this.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): It's my pleasure to rise today in the Assembly to table the fidelity bonds crime insurance report.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Dr. Amanda Malboeuf

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honour a remarkable woman who lives in my constituency of Riel.

Dr. Amanda Malboeuf, a doctor of veterinarian medicine, was recently nominated for an Empower Women 20/21 Award for her exemplary commitment to her community and to the animals that she serves.

Dr. Malboeuf works hard as a veterinarian to advocate for all the pets that come through the doors at Winrose Animal Hospital. She has dedicated many hours outside work taking additional courses to ensure that she can provide the highest quality of veterinarian medicine. Her love of animals has also led her to give so much more of her time, including donating surgical hours to provide low cost for the Winnipeg Animal Services, the Winnipeg Humane Society and the K9 Advocates.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Malboeuf has extended her clinic hours to keep up with the increased demand to ensure that all animals that needed to be seen could be seen.

Dr. Malboeuf is of Métis descent and is a proud advocate for her heritage. She is a shining example for

all Indigenous people and has led the truth and reconciliation learning opportunities at the animal hospital and is a role model for many veterinarians at the beginning of their careers.

Dr. Malboeuf is a remarkable individual who outside of the workplace is a dedicated wife and mother to two children.

I ask all my colleagues to help me honour and recognize Dr. Malboeuf for her—the contributions she has made to our great city and province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (13:40)

Eating Disorder Treatment Services

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Last month, our NDP caucus met for a round table discussion with advocates working with Manitobans struggling from eating disorders. Two days before, the PC government announced a marginal expansion of the eating disorder program at the Women's Health Clinic.

However, the reports we heard that morning made it clear that the government's efforts thus far fail to address the magnitude of this issue in Manitoba. Far more needs to be done to help those struggling from eating disorders, especially when it comes to children and youth.

Now, the average wait time for youth to receive treatment for an eating disorder is over a year. This is dangerous and unacceptable. All eating disorders are treatable, and the earlier the intervention, the more treatable the illness. The consequences of long wait times lead to long-term damage to body or brain development, or even death. Long wait times mean the services children and adolescents require are far more intense than if they receive treatment early on.

According to Dr. Margo Lane, the director of pediatric programs at HSC, the main challenge they face is the lack of public funding to adequately staff treatment. At the moment, Dr. Lane says her clinic is barely able to provide a crisis response, let alone do any type of prevention, early intervention or much-needed research.

She also stated that other similar-sized Canadian cities typically have 10 times the staff and resources. For instance, her colleagues at the Ottawa hospital have 10 psychologists on staff, whereas at our Children's Hospital there is only one part-time

psychologist funded to help youth struggling from eating disorders.

On behalf of young people and their families struggling with eating disorders, I call on this government to stop their health-care cuts and properly fund the prevention, treatment and research needed to address eating disorders in Manitoba—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Wayne Balcaen

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): July 12th, 1882: it's an important date in the world of policing, at least in the local level here in Brandon. Under the leadership of Chief Constable Archibald McMillan, this was the date that the Brandon police force was first introduced to the citizens of Brandon with Constable Donald Campbell and Constable John Keays handling the duties. Unfortunately, the police chief himself passed away shortly after accidentally shooting himself when his rifle fell from placing in a case at Smith's *[phonetic]* hardware store.

Police in Brandon has changed over the years and so too has the role of the chief. I have personally had the pleasure of working with some great folks and making some good friends who held this role, including Chief Brian Scott in 1989, Chief Dick Scott in 1995, Chief Richard Bruce in 2001, Chief Keith Atkinson in 2007 and Chief Ian Grant from 2013 to 2017.

Madam Speaker, milestones are indeed meant to be celebrated, and today I want to celebrate Brandon's 19th police chief, Wayne Balcaen, on his 30-plus years in law enforcement in Brandon.

Chief Balcaen is a long-time resident of Brandon who joined the police force as a constable on October 1st, 1990. In 2003, he was promoted and spent the next two and a half years as a sergeant, until his outstanding leadership abilities and work performance saw him promoted once again. And then he would spend the next nine years as a staff sergeant. Once again, however, his continued efforts and hard work saw him being promoted to the position of inspector in 2015.

In January 2016, Wayne Balcaen climbed the ladder of success within the Brandon Police Service when he assumed the role of deputy chief, until his most current promotion to his current role as Brandon's 19th police chief, on October 30th, 2017.

Madam Speaker, Chief Balcaen has shown an amazing dedication to our community, a commitment to his role and has achieved a distinguished career totally within the Brandon Police Service. He is only the fourth police chief who has made the Brandon Police Service his home—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to continue and conclude his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Isleifson: He is only the fourth police chief who has made the Brandon Police Service his home for his entire career.

I want to ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking Chief Balcaen for his service and to help me congratulate him on an amazing 30-plus years in law enforcement.

Thank you.

Louise Bridge Replacement

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): A few weeks ago, city planners finalized the Louise Bridge replacement site. The 110-year-old, functionally obsolete bridge, built the same year as the gunfight at the O.K. Corral, continues to serve as a vital link between northeast Winnipeg and Transcona to the downtown and is long overdue for replacement, as time is running out on the basic structure.

City planners are recommending a three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain and enhance the link for all of northeast Winnipeg and Transcona. The City has also initiated its expropriation process by sending letters to affected property owners at the beginning of October 2021. City planners clearly appreciate the need to act quickly.

And by building it as soon as possible, the old bridge can stay open during construction, a key element to the entire project.

This coming spring 2022, the City will be making final decisions on the overall master plan and the eastern corridor project. They'll have to deal with the Louise Bridge replacement issue immediately for reasons obvious to anyone who crosses the bridge.

The City needs financial help to get the new Louise Bridge built, and the new PC leader should be taking the initiative and contacting the City, offering its financial share to this vital project in northeast Winnipeg and Transcona—to Transcona residents.

The new PC leader needs to do this as soon as possible so we can keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

Early Learning and Child Care

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I rise today to talk about the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: —early-learning and child-care community of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: I have been in communication with several child-care centres and quite a few parents who have children attending or are on wait-list to attend ELCCs in Tyndall Park.

Child care can be a barrier that many people face, and this has been amplified during the pandemic. People are struggling to find child-care spots, child care that is affordable and ways to manage going back to work or just to maintain their jobs.

In addition to this, we as politicians are also hearing from child-care facilities about the reduction in enrolment in programs and hours of operation; closing cohorts; asking families to drop off or pick up their children earlier; finding staffing for screeners to check for symptoms at the schools; and staffing to answer the phone and meet parents at the school entrances.

Madam Speaker, public child care should be accessible for everyone.

The federal government initiated agreements with most provinces to allow families to access public child care for \$10 a day. This was an addition to their 2020 fall economic update where they provided Manitoba with \$19.2 million to support recruitment and retention for our ELCCs.

I believe this provincial government needs to step up.

We know this provincial government underspent their designated funds for the pandemic support staffing benefit in 2020-2021 by \$9.2 million. I table this information now. And while the minister responsible says that more child-care spaces are coming, the question of who will be staffing these spaces are ringing louder.

Madam Speaker, my hope is that the provincial government will work directly with ELCC centres and understand the importance of increasing wages and

expand the eligibility for the pandemic support staffing benefit.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member—leader of—oh boy—the honourable First Minister—my day's not going well. My day's not going well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Prairie Mountain Health Nurse Vacancy Rate

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Manitobans need more health care at the bedside, not less. I think most of us agree with that, other than the PCs, but there are huge nursing vacancies in Prairie Mountain Health. There's a 25 per cent vacancy rate for licensed practical nurses; 21 per cent vacancy rate for registered nurses. We've proven all this over the past week.

The former Health minister, we now show with documents we are releasing publicly, ordered \$2.8 million in cuts at Prairie Mountain. Now this proves that the vacant positions at Prairie Mountain Health didn't happen by accident. They happened because of the government's orders.

Why did the former minister of Health order \$2.8 million in health-care cuts to the front lines of Prairie Mountain Health?

* (13:50)

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite is wrong.

This year, Prairie Mountain Health—regional health authority received \$12 million in additional COVID-19 funding. It is my understanding that they are forecasted to receive an additional \$14.6 million. We are making record investments, in the history of this province, in health care, Madam Speaker. We will continue to do so to protect Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: No. The documents we are showing prove that almost \$3 million was cut from the bedside in communities like Brandon, Dauphin, Grandview, Roblin—and that's this year, cuts this year, 2021. That's why there's a 25 per cent vacancy rate for LPNs and a 21 per cent vacancy rate for RNs.

Now, the former Health minister, in the documents, ordered PMH to, quote, hold vacant positions

open in order to hit these \$2.8 million in cuts that they targeted.

Now, patients and families deserve to know why there are fewer nurses at the bedside, and so we are showing them. We know that these cuts are wrong and they should be reversed.

Will the former Health minister immediately withdraw her order to cut nursing positions in Prairie Mountain Health today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the member opposite is wrong again, Madam Speaker.

This year, the Prairie Mountain regional health authority received an additional—that's more, not less—\$12 million in COVID financing, and it's my understanding that there will be an additional \$14.6 million. Again, that is more, Madam Speaker, not less.

We are making more investments in the Prairie Mountain regional health authority, not less, like the member opposite seems to say.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, these are the same sort of denials we used to hear all the time from Brian Pallister, and we know how well that worked out.

And, of course, even though the PCs under this new leader claim that there are no cuts, we know that there are, and that's why we brought the documents that prove in black and white—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —that nearly \$3 million was cut from Prairie Mountain Health. And, of course, this is the decision of the current PC leader, not Brian Pallister's decision, though it looks an awful lot like Mr. Pallister's decisions.

So, we know that these cut funds are forcing nursing positions to remain unfilled. That is impacting patients. That's, in—impacting communities right across the Westman. It's wrong.

Will the new PC leader take a stand and reverse the cuts that she made as Health minister?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, what is wrong, Madam Speaker, is that this is the same old tactics of the Leader of the Opposition: playing fast and loose, once again, with the facts.

Let's look at what the facts are: Prairie Mountain Health regional health authority is receiving

\$12 million more in COVID funding, Madam Speaker. It is also my understanding that they are forecasted—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —to receive an additional \$14.6 million in 2021 and '22.

Again, those are more investments in our health-care system in the Prairie Mountain regional health authority, not less. The member opposite is wrong.

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

Vaccine Policy at the Legislature Requirement for Cabinet Ministers

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I want to share a quote from the former clerk of the Executive Council. That would be the clerk that all of these PC Cabinet ministers served alongside for many years.

Now, this former clerk said, and I quote, strident anti-vaxxers in Cabinet can bring an insidious bearing to decision-making. End quote. He clearly made the call for all Cabinet ministers of government to be vaccinated. It's a simple requirement.

This is a decision for the new leader of the PC party to make.

Will the new PC leader require every member of her Cabinet to be vaccinated right now?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, there are no anti-vaxxers in our caucus, and I will say that we certainly don't make Cabinet decisions based on what members of the—opposite want to put out in their Twitter.

What I will say, Madam Speaker—and I have said before—is that we are moving towards having this building that we are in to be—to require people to be fully vaccinated to enter the building. It does take time to get that into place, with different government departments involved. I know that that work is taking place and by December 16th—or December 15th, I believe, every single person who comes into this building will have to be fully vaccinated.

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

Request to Remove Minister From Cabinet

Mr. Kinew: Yes, this same former clerk of the Executive Council—who this PC leader served

alongside for years—now, this former clerk felt compelled to write, and I quote, allowing anti-vaxxers to sit at the Cabinet table presents a clear conflict of interest when it comes to acting in the public good against COVID-19. End quote.

So I ask you, Madam Speaker, why would the former clerk pose this question—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —immediately after leaving the Pallister-Stefanson governments? Well, we know that the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot won't say whether he is vaccinated. We all know what that means.

This is a failure of leadership. The new PC leader needs to take action.

Will the new PC leader kick this MLA out of Cabinet today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I don't make decisions on Cabinet based on what I read in the Winnipeg Free Press, nor do I make decisions on Cabinet based on what members opposite want to tweet out.

What I will say is that we are making decisions; we've made a decision to ensure that by December 15th that all people who enter this building will have to be fully vaccinated. We have mandatory Cabinet that takes place in this building, Madam Speaker, so we will ensure—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —that all of those individuals who enter this building are fully vaccinated. They will have to show that.

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

Mr. Kinew: Attacking the Winnipeg Free Press, just like Brian Pallister.

I'll tell you what the PC leader should be making Cabinet decisions based on, Madam Speaker. That's the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —best interests of the health of Manitobans.

Now, making sure that people at the highest leadership positions in government are acting responsibly is very important and it should support public health. There should be a clear message from this new PC leader that they do not tolerate anti-vaxxers in

Cabinet or the spreading of misinformation. Everyone in Cabinet should be publicly prepared to say so.

Now, Cabinet solidarity should mean that the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot should leave, given what the government says about Manitobans and vaccinations.

So the question remains for the new PC leader: Will she show leadership? Will she immediately remove the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot from Cabinet today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the member opposite talks about acting responsibly. I don't think it's acting responsibly to make Cabinet decisions based on what you read in the media, Madam Speaker. So we don't make our decisions that way.

I guess that's the way the Leader of the Opposition wants to make his—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —decisions, Madam Speaker. You know, maybe that's why the NDP is in the opposition.

Surgical Backlog Timeline to Clear

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): In 2018, Kim Riddell was diagnosed with severe stenosis in her spine, a condition which, over time, compresses the spinal cord. She was supposed to get surgery 18 months later, and just when Kim thought her day had finally arrived, the Pallister-Stefanson governments consolidated the spine surgery program and bumped Kim's surgery to at least April 2021, a consolidation the PC leader said got some pretty good results.

She's now been on a wait-list for more than three years, living in pain and agony each and every day, forcing her to leave her career. I wouldn't call that pretty good results, Madam Speaker.

Kim needs to know when she's going to be able to get her surgery.

Will this government set a date for when the surgery backlog will be cleared?

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

I'm unable to speak directly to the case that she—that they are referring to, but I welcome the member to share that information with my department and we will look into it.

After preparing for the fourth wave of COVID, Madam Speaker, our most important priority as a government is to ensure Manitobans have access to the care they need in terms of surgeries and diagnostics, and we will follow through on our commitment to ensure that that happens.

* (14:00)

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

MLA Asagwara: The longer Kim goes without surgery, the greater the chance that surgery won't even be able to help her. Even with all the thoughts and prayers in the world, each day that goes by means less chance of a full recovery and more chance of being permanently disabled.

And Kim is not alone in this. There are 136,000 Manitobans that could suffer long-term consequences as a result of delaying the care they need. As Kim explained: I'm looking for action on these backlogs before more of us become permanently disabled or die while waiting. And I'll table that letter.

Manitobans like Kim need action and accountability on eliminating the backlog, not broken funding promises and prayers.

Will the minister commit to a date for when the surgical backlog will be cleared?

Ms. Gordon: In Budget 2021 our government committed \$50 million to address the surgical and diagnostic backlog. I am pleased to share that I've met several times now with the task force team and chair, and we will be naming that task force and team very shortly.

And we've also finished our fifth request for supply arrangement. We'll be sharing the results of those proposals at the same time, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Asagwara: The PC leader and the Minister of Health had ample time before each and every wave of this pandemic, and instead of preparing by staffing up, they let that wave crash into Manitoba and cancelled slate after slate of surgeries. And instead of investing in addressing the surgical backlog like British Columbia did, they sat on the cash while Manitobans like Kim suffered in pain.

Now, one of Kim's fears is that without publicly reporting on all of the backlog, this minister and PC leader will attempt to focus solely on reducing the

backlogs for the procedures that are currently reported on publicly like hip, knee and cataract surgeries, not all surgeries like Kim's.

Will the minister begin publicly reporting immediately on the backlog of all surgeries and all diagnostic tests?

Ms. Gordon: This morning, when I was at an event with the member for Union Station, they were wearing a halo and angel wings. I see that the member lost it on the way into the Chamber today.

Our government has just finished our fifth request for supply arrangement—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —and has received service proposals to date—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —and this is factual information.

Madam Speaker, \$13.7 million has been spent and allocated on 8,300 procedures, contracted \$8.1 million for the first four RFSAs, \$5.6 million in service delivery organizations on procedures such as hips, knees, cataracts and more.

U of M Faculty Association Labour Dispute Collective Bargaining and Wage Mandate

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, we are now going into the fifth week of the UMFA strike due to this government's ongoing interference. Despite the government's attempt to paint itself in a different shade of blue than Brian Pallister, the strike has actually gone on for even longer when than Pallister was the premier.

Now, let's be clear: this strike is the direct result of this government's unconstitutional salary mandate—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —and students know this. They showed up to ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) this last night, to withdraw the mandate.

Now, I'll ask the minister today: Will he withdraw the salary mandate today and allow UMFA to negotiate in good faith with their employer? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, the report of the independent mediator is abundantly clear on the real reasons for the continuing of the strike. It's time to put students and families first. For their sake, we again call on both sides to go and accept the recommendations of the mediator and go to binding arbitration.

It's unfortunate, and I urge the member from St. Vital, his NDP multiple teammates, different parties and former staffers to please stand up for students. Help end the strike. Stop politically interfering. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The honourable member for St. Vital, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, the Pallister government set salary mandates on the University of Manitoba administration that caused the 2016 strike. The U of M administration was threatened by funding cuts if it didn't adhere to the government's mandates.

Now, the Stefanson government is using that same trick, the same, failed strategy—only worse. This PC government's imposed wage mandates on public bodies such as the University of Manitoba and the universities across the province are causing disruption on education.

Will the minister do the right thing and withdraw the salary mandates immediately? Yes or no?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to, I think, thank the member for the question because it gives me an opportunity to stand up and speak to the fact that the mediator has put on the table to recommend to the University of Manitoba and UMFA to go to binding arbitration.

Basically, Madam Speaker, the University of Manitoba has accepted that recommendation, is waiting for UMFA to go. And that would immediately end the strike.

I, again, urge the member from St. Vital and his NDP staff and teammates to please stop politically interfering.

Today, Madam Speaker, I table documents showing the fact that the member for St. Vital and his teammates do not stand up for students, they stand up just for their union friends.

End the strike. Stand up for students like we are on—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* And the Speaker is standing.

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

Mr. Moses: Students and professors are frustrated. They want to get back to class, but this government refuses to listen and withdraw their wage mandates.

Students showed up at the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Fielding) budget meeting last night to try and finally get them to listen, but he refused to hear them out and actually walked out of the meeting.

Students want this government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —to get out of the way, remove their—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —mandate so they can get back to class, finish their education and start their careers.

Again I ask: Will the minister listen to students, do the right thing, withdraw the wage mandates today?

Madam Speaker: Heckling from both sides of the House at the same time kind of defeats some of the purpose of what we're trying to accomplish here.

Mr. Ewasko: To me, Madam Speaker, the menu—the member from St. Vital is asking for binding arbitration. The mediator has put forward the fact that the U of M and UMFA are too far apart, so to end the strike earlier—five weeks early—they called on the recommendation to go to binding arbitration.

This would save not only the unions but also the fact that it would save the students time and get them back into the classrooms, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we're doing what the NDP didn't do. Back in the Brandon University strikes, they interfered—they politically interfered. We've got evidence that they continue to politically interfere through the process. Get the students back to class, Madam Speaker. End—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Menstrual Product Availability Request to Supply Schools

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, we know that the pandemic has intensified a lot of the issues, and Manitoban students are facing more barriers than ever to quality education.

* (14:10)

As government, members opposite should be doing everything possible to ensure that kids are able to attend school regularly. Students should not have to miss school because they can't afford sanitary products. Providing menstrual products in all Manitoba schools would remove one significant barrier and would keep students in classrooms more consistently.

Will the minister invest in Manitoban students by making menstrual products available in all schools today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): I appreciate the member's question.

Today, I just want to give a quick update on the COVID that she referenced in her question. Some good news coming out of schools: week over week, we're down 12 per cent in terms of the number of cases in schools.

So, the good work of our staff and our students and administrators—things are heading in the right direction as—and far as COVID, and I look forward to responding to her second question.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, this is at least the eighth time this year that members of our caucus have brought forward this important issue.

The responses we received from the members opposite have been lacking in accountability as they continue to put the responsibility on the school to prioritize this important issue, all the while cutting funding and removing support from schools.

Ontario was willing and able to make this important step. Why won't Manitoba?

Will the minister invest in Manitoba students by making menstrual products available in all schools today?

Mr. Cullen: Well, the member opposite is factually incorrect. We've increased K-to-12 funding 1.58 per cent this year—over \$20 million extra funding going into K-to-12 education.

I will advise the member that we actually had a meeting this morning. A couple of my fellow Cabinet colleagues—we've done some review in terms of what other—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —in terms of what other jurisdictions are doing, and we're going to plan to take this issue, move it forward.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, this is actually an incredibly simple issue. Inequities in health care impact the abilities of students to show up to class.

Providing Manitoban students with access to free menstrual products would be one important step towards addressing the inequities that impact educational outcomes for so many students.

Will the minister do what's right and provide free menstrual products for all Manitoban students? Yes, or no?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if the member opposite is aware that school divisions already are supplying those particular products to many students across Manitoba.

We're just looking at it—how we can make that a more comprehensive and effective program across Manitoba. We're looking what other jurisdictions are doing—nice to see Ontario and see the private sector come in to support what's going on in Ontario. That may be an option for Manitoba.

We've got all of the options on the table, and we will have solutions.

Provincial Budget Forum French Language Services

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madame la Présidente, un principe fondamental de notre Province est l'offre active pour les services en français—

Translation

Madam Speaker, active offer of French languages is a fundamental tenet of our Province—

Madam Speaker: The member—we may have a technical problem. Can the table please stop the clock.

Can the member perhaps start his question again?

Mr. Sala: Merci, Madame la Présidente. Un principe—
[interjection]

Translation

Thank you, Madam Speaker. A tenet—

Madam Speaker: Sorry, we—can the table please stop the clock again.

Has the member changed any settings on his computer, and did something with his translation button?

Mr. Sala: No. Don't know of a translation button.

Madam Speaker: Can the member try it again, then.

Mr. Sala: Madame la Présidente, un principe—

Translation

Madam Speaker, a tenet—

Madam Speaker: Sorry. Order, please. Can the table please stop the clock.

We are just going to check with Translation Services here to see what is happening.

For the information of the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), his mic cuts out and then we are hearing in here the translation over the speakers, so we're trying to discern what's happening.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I'm going to take this opportunity. We have a special guest that has joined us in the Speaker's Gallery, and I would like introduce her to you. We have Ms. Apoorva Srivastava, who's the consul general of India in Canada, and we—welcome, here, to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Order, please. We're going to try this one more time. There seems to be some connectivity problem somewhere and we're not sure—related to the translation component of this. But we'll see if we've been able to fix anything.

So, the honourable member for St. James.

Mr. Sala: Okay, on va essayer encore.

Madame la Présidente, un principe fondamental de notre Province est l'offre active pour les services en français en Manitoba. Hier soir, le ministre des Finances a convoqué un forum au sujet du prochain budget provincial, mais quand un citoyen s'est présenté pour offrir ses commentaires au ministre,

la seule réponse qu'il a eu c'est : Je ne parle pas le français.

Cette réponse est clairement décevante.

Est-ce que les forums budgétaires sont bilingues? Oui ou non?

Translation

Okay, let's try again.

Madam Speaker, one of the fundamental tenets of our Province is the active offer of French services in Manitoba. Last night, the Finance Minister gathered a forum regarding the next provincial budget, but when a citizen offered their comments to the minister, the only answer they got was: I don't speak French.

This answer is clearly disappointing.

Are budget forums bilingual? Yes or no?

* (14:20)

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs): Merci beaucoup, Madame la Présidente, pour la question. Nous savons qu'il est toujours possible d'améliorer notre prestation de services en français, et nous travaillons fort pour mettre en place des procédures pour mieux soutenir la communauté francophone.

Translation

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the question. We know that it is always possible to improve our French services offer and we are working hard at putting together procedures to better support the Francophone community.

English

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that there is active offer throughout the province of Manitoba, and, in fact, last year active offer training increased by 72 per cent compared to the previous year.

Madam Speaker, we know that there's more work to do and we are committed to getting that work done.

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

Mr. Sala: Madame la Présidente, le principe de l'offre active c'est clair : il faut que le français soit offert d'une manière active et directe. Il faut que les services soient offerts de façon à ce que les citoyens puissent s'en servir sans difficultés ou obstacles.

Un forum budgétaire pour déterminer les priorités de la Province pour son budget est très important.

Est-ce que tous les forums budgétaires de la Province vont respecter le principe de l'offre active?

Translation

Madam Speaker, the principle of active offer is clear: French has to be offered in an active and direct manner. Services have to be offered in a manner in which citizens can use them without difficulties nor barriers.

A budget forum determining the Province's priorities for the budget is very important.

Will all provincial budget forums respect the principle of active offer?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): It was pleasure to be at our first budget forum yesterday.

Last year, our government consulted with over 51,000 Manitobans. We heard from people like the Manitoba Restaurant Association. We heard from the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. We heard from the Trucking Association, housing organizations, the Manitoba Federation of Labour. We also heard from the Real Estate Board.

These are important initiatives whether in French or English. What we want to do is make sure that the priorities of Manitoba are incorporated in the budget, and that's why we do this.

We're not going to perform a sham budget process like the NDP used to do. It's going to consult Manitobans and get the real priorities from Manitobans.

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

Mr. Sala: Madame la Présidente, hier c'était une échec.

Translation

Madam Speaker, yesterday was a failure.

English

And I'll translate for the Minister of Finance: yesterday was a failure.

La Province devrait faire mieux. Elle devrait faire en sorte que les manitobains et manitobaines puissent s'exprimer en français quand on discute des priorités d'un budget provincial. Ce n'est pas acceptable de dire, simplement, qu'on ne parle pas le français ici.

On s'attend à ce que l'offre active soit respectée.

Je demande encore : est-ce que tous les forums budgétaires de la Province vont respecter le principe de l'offre active? Oui ou non?

Translation

The Province should do better. It should make sure that Manitobans be able to speak French when provincial budget priorities are being discussed. It is unacceptable to just say that we do not speak French here.

We expect the active offer to be respected.

I will ask again: Will all budget forums held by the Province respect the principle of active offer? Yes or no?

Mr. Fielding: Madam Speaker, we're extremely pleased with our budget process. I can tell you that we take these things seriously, not like the NDP. In fact, we made—with 51,000 people consulted last year, in terms of the budget consultation, changed to have more capacity for vaccines, supports for businesses, reduced taxes.

Whether that be in French or English, we want to make sure we answer the question. I answer questions in English.

We're not going to make the same mistakes as members like the member from Fort Garry, who under—if you look what Dr. Wiens had said about the way they consulted—let me just review what Dr. Wiens said—met the—at Winnipeg School Division. He said that the board—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —consulted—that the board will not consult, consider, reconsider any opinions other than their own—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —have a penchant for playing political games with each other, schools and parents.

We're not going to play political games. We're going to make sure that priorities are supported by all—

Madam Speaker: Member's—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Surgical Backlog Request to Address

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has sought to explain away nursing shortages and tens of thousands of backlogged surgeries and procedures in Manitoba by saying things are bad everywhere, when Manitoba is clearly an outlier.

In January 2020, echoing the Manitoba Nurses' Union, we warned that there was no surge capacity before the pandemic. We warned this government to get ready for the first, second, third and fourth waves. And this document obtained through FIPPA shows that, starting in November last year, every ICU in Winnipeg was over capacity for nine months, even between waves. For eight straight months St. Boniface ICU was over 150 per cent capacity, sometimes hitting 250 per cent, which crushed our ability to provide surgeries.

Beds need nurses.

In BC, they started planning for surgical backlogs after the first wave.

Why is Manitoba so far behind?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): Indeed, this is a pan-Canadian issue. In fact, it is an issue around the globe, Madam Speaker, and the Leader of the Liberal Party, such as it is, can deny it if he wants to, but, in fact, this is something that every jurisdiction is challenged with.

In fact, in Manitoba we were challenged with it before the pandemic as a result of the leadership of the NDP. But this is a government led by our Health minister, who has brought in a number of different initiatives not only to train nurses but to ensure that ICU capacity was increased—*[interjection]*—and that there were more nurses increased.

Now, I know he's eager to yell from his seat. Perhaps he could also yell from his seat and speak to the leader in Ottawa, the Leader of the Liberal Party, in terms of getting a meeting to talk about health care, which every premier in Canada has been begging for without a response from Justin Trudeau, Madam Speaker.

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

Health-Care Workers Burnout as Workplace Injury

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, since well before the pandemic, nurses have been quitting because of the brutal way this government has managed its cuts, freezes and closures to health. I've received letter after letter, plea after plea, from nurses who quit because of their own mental and physical health, because they fear hurting or killing a patient because they're too tired or burned out to do their job properly, during and before the pandemic.

I—it's really great that the government finds this funny. This government created a health-care system that traumatizes the people who work in it. Our health-care system will keep chewing up nurses and spitting them out broken, and that is no way to care for the people who care for us. Unless we fix that, we are not going to be able to keep nurses or clear the surgery backlog.

Will the Premier support Manitoba Liberals—our call to cover burnout as a workplace injury?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): Madam Speaker, throughout the pandemic, health-care workers—whether they're health-care aides, whether they are nurses, whether they are doctors—have been under tremendous stress. And this government and all Manitobans recognize that, and we appreciate the incredible work—*[interjection]* Yelling from the other side isn't going to help.

We appreciate the incredible work that has been done during the pandemic. We know that there were stresses before the pandemic, and we know that that has been exasperated across Canada and around the world. This is a government that negotiated—or ensured that there was negotiation for a contract for nurses, Madam Speaker. We're glad to see that there was a free and fair negotiation and now a respectable wage. That's a demonstration of the fact that we support nurses and others in the health-care field. We'll continue to do that.

I hope the member opposite will show that support by ensuring that the federal government comes to the table with all the provinces to negotiate a fair agreement for funding for all Manitobans and Canadians.

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

Provincial Nominee Program Family Reunification

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): When the NDP were in government, they completely destroyed the Provincial Nominee Program here in Manitoba. We had wait-lists going back over five years, Madam Speaker. Then the PC Conservatives get into government, and they completely fail to address the importance of family reunification, and they go ahead and they add a head tax on applicants being accepted into Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, my constituents continue to share with me the difficulties that family members overseas are having when applying to Manitoba.

And in addition to this, we also have a responsibility to do our part as Canada accepts 40,000 refugees from Afghanistan.

What is the minister doing to ensure family reunification is part of the Provincial Nominee Program?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I appreciate the question coming from my friend and colleague from Tyndall Park.

And as she knows, that we have had many conversations in regards to the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. I would like to give credit where credit is due, Madam Speaker. In the '90s, of course, brought forward by a then-PC government and one of my former colleagues, Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson, who was the creator of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

We have worked hard and—building on partnerships, not only with the new immigrants coming to Manitoba, Madam Speaker, but also with the federal minister, on seeing how we're going to continue working in partnership, making sure that new immigrants come to Manitoba are supported.

And on the Afghan—Afghanistan—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Economic Stimulus Government Initiatives

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): Madam Speaker, Manitoba businesses have faced significant challenges for the past 18 months while dealing with a global pandemic. Our government has introduced

many programs that have helped small-scale businesses in Manitoba to stay open and keep Manitobans employed.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Jobs share some highlights about the government's recent business supports for Manitoba businesses?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Economic Development and Jobs): I'd like to thank the member from Lagimodière for the question.

* (14:30)

Our government has invested more than \$470 million to support businesses and non-profits in their economic recovery and to protect jobs during times of uncertainty. That is why we have introduced many innovative programs, such as the Digital Manitoba Initiative, that'll provide \$15 million to support digital business transformation and help business access new markets through digital platforms. We have committed \$50 million to support the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce to administer the long-term recovery fund.

Madam Speaker, our government will continue to engage with our business community and Manitobans as we focus on kick-starting the Manitoba economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Truck and Delivery Drivers Access to Washroom Facilities

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Access to washrooms is something most people in Manitoba take for granted, but is currently not granted for thousands of workers in this province, including delivery drivers, truck drivers and other important couriers.

These folks got us through challenging times during the pandemic, and yet they don't have reliable access to essential facilities like washrooms.

Will the minister commit to ensuring drivers can access washrooms wherever they need it?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): Certainly, we know, Madam Speaker, that our truck drivers do incredible work all the time, and in these times when there has been disruptions when it comes to the supply chain, that's particularly important.

I know many of us have a connection with the trucking industry. My father was a truck driver for many years, Madam Speaker, so I understand very clearly how important it is that truck drivers have the

services that they need, and I know that our government recognizes the important work that they do.

So wherever there are ways that we can ensure to make that industry easier, make the life of a truck driver better, we're active and engaged in ensuring that happens, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Sandhu: Madam Speaker, Ontario recently introduced legislation that would require businesses to allow delivery drivers to use their washrooms when stopping to make a pickup or a delivery. This is an important step toward ensuring that these essential workers can—able to access washrooms when they need it and it is—recognize that important work they do.

Will the minister bring forward similar legislation that ensures all Manitoba workers can treat—treated with respect and dignity?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, I would like to thank the member for that question, and he's absolutely right. Being on our highways is an important part of our economy. We know that 80 per cent of what's produced in Manitoba is exported, and a lot of that is done by our truck drivers.

We have met with the Manitoba Trucking Association. We are going to deal with this issue. We know it's important and we hopefully will have all members onside and vote for the budget that will help to fund us moving forward on this issue.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—[interjection] Order. Order.

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

Mr. Sandhu: Delivery drivers, truck drivers and couriers got us through some of the most challenging times of the pandemic, and yet they were not treated with respect and dignity. Some businesses put up signs that say, I quote, no truckers past this point; or, I quote, staff only.

But the delivery drivers and trucks—truckers are invaluable parts of our many—parts of many teams as the people who bring the product directly to the folks who need them.

Will the minister commit to ensuring that Manitoba delivery drivers and truck drivers have access to washrooms when they need it?

Mr. Schuler: The member is absolutely correct. We owe those individuals that do all the deliveries for our products, our goods and services across this province and across this country. They have earned our respect and they've done a fantastic job.

We understand there are some businesses that still refuse to allow truck drivers to use the washrooms, and when those are brought to our attention, we deal with those. If there are specific cases, I would ask the member to please bring them to the attention of the department. We want to continue to support those who bring the food and the services to our cities and our communities. And we'll continue to show them the respect they deserve.

Thank you to all of those men and women who are involved in that part of our economy.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Louise Bridge

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it 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 has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: (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 open—kept open for local traffic.

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

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new 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 that it can complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona. The upcoming provincial budget will provide the timely opportunity to budget and announce provincial participation in the building of the new Louise bridge.

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 is signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

Road Closures

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) Manitoba Infrastructure has undertaken the closure of all farm access roads along the North Perimeter Highway, forcing rural residents to drive up to six miles out of their way to leave or return to their property.

(2) The provincial government's own consultations showed that closing the access of some of these roads, including Sturgeon Road, was an emerging concern to residents and business owners, yet the North Perimeter plan does nothing to address this issue.

(3) Residents and business owners were assured that their concerns about these access closures, including safety issues cited by engineers, would be taken into account and that access at Sturgeon Road would be maintained. However, weeks later, the median was nonetheless torn up, leaving local residents and businesses scrambling.

(4) Closing all access to the Perimeter puts more people in danger, as it emboldens speeders and forces farmers to take large equipment into heavy traffic, putting road users at risk.

(5) Local traffic, commuter traffic, school buses, emergency vehicles and commercial traffic, including 200 gravel trucks per day from the Lilyfield Quarry, will be—will all be expected to merge and travel out of their way in order to access the Perimeter, causing increased traffic and longer response times to emergencies.

* (14:40)

(6) Small businesses located along the Perimeter and Sturgeon Road are expected to lose business, as customers will give up on finding ways into their premises.

(7) Residents, business owners and those who use these roads have been left behind by the provincial government's refusal to listen to their concerns that closures will only result in worsened safety and major inconveniences for users of the North Perimeter.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to leave residents access to the Perimeter Highway at least

every two miles along its length, especially at intersections such as Sturgeon Road, which are vital to local businesses; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Finance—of Infrastructure to listen to the needs and the opinions of local residents and business owners who took the time to complete the Perimeter safety survey while working with engineers and technicians to complete—to ensure their concerns are addressed.

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

National Drug Plan

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Canada's public and private drug plans leave many patients with little or no coverage, resulting in one out of 10 patients not taking their prescribed medication because of affordability.

(2) It is estimated that Pharmacare would save Canadians between \$4 billion and \$11 billion per year.

(3) There have been repeated calls to include prescription drugs in Canada's universal health-care system, including a National Forum on Health; commission of the future of health care in Canada; several national organizations, including Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Medical Association, Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to encourage the federal government to amend the Canada Health Act by adding prescription medicines prescribed by a licensed practitioner to the definition of covered services in accordance with an established formulary; and

(2) To urge the—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux:—provincial government to develop, jointly with the federal government, a universal, single-payer, evidence-based, sustainable public drug plan that contains purchasing power to secure best available pricing, a list of essential medicines addressing priority health needs and the ability to

expand to a comprehensive permanent plan that would promote the health and well-being of all Canadians.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road No. 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Madam Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

Cochlear Implant Program

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): 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—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

We're having a great difficulty hearing the member. I'm wondering if he has his headset there and could please put it on.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay, is that better?

Madam Speaker: Oh, that's much better. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Shall I start again?

Madam Speaker: Yes, please.

Mr. Gerrard: 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 program-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. Assisted 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.

This petition is signed by Harry Dyck, Tessa Masi, Brock Peters and many, many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

If not, orders of the day, government business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I have a leave request relating to two bills, in consultation with the Opposition House Leader and the leader of the—or House leader of the Liberal Party.

Could you please canvass the House for leave to expedite consideration of Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, as follows:

(1) At 4:30 p.m. today, the Speaker shall interrupt debate on the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne to allow the Government House Leader to call second reading of Bill 6;

(2) The House will not see the clock today until Bill 6 has been referred to committee;

(3) Bill 6 shall be referred to a standing committee tomorrow night, Wednesday, December 1st, 2021;

(4) Bill 6 shall be eligible for concurrence and third reading on Thursday, December 2nd, 2021, despite the fact that it will also be reported to the House on that same day.

* (14:50)

I'll let you put that to the House first, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to expedite consideration of Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, as follows:

(1) At 4:30 p.m. today, the Speaker shall interrupt debate on the address in reply to Speech from the Throne to allow the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) to call second reading of Bill 6.

(2) The House will not see a clock today until Bill 6 has been referred to committee.

(3) Bill 6 shall be referred to a standing committee tomorrow night, Wednesday, December 1st, 2021.

(4) Bill 6 shall be eligible for concurrence and third reading on Thursday, December 2nd, 2021, despite the fact that it will also be reported to the House on that day.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the House.

Will you please canvass the House for leave to allow Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act, to be listed on the Order Paper for concurrence and third reading on Thursday, December 2nd, 2021, despite the fact it will be reported to the House tomorrow, Wednesday, December 1st, 2021.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act, to be listed on the Order Paper for concurrence and third reading on Thursday, December 2nd, 2021, despite the fact that

it will be reported to the House tomorrow, Wednesday, December 1st, 2021?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please resume debate on the Throne Speech.

THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: The House will now resume debate on the motion of the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows, who has 15 minutes remaining—16 minutes remaining.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I would like to continue my comments in response to the Throne Speech that I started yesterday.

I was talking about the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), congratulating her to be the first woman Premier and feelings of Manitobans that they have started feeling that we actually needed a stronger woman premier, who could stand up for Manitobans.

This Throne Speech was an opportunity for the new Premier to show that she has got leadership skills, but, unfortunately, she missed this opportunity. With what the PCs performed so far under Pallister-Stefanson governments, followed by this Throne Speech, we can see when we enter this building every day to attend this session that UMFA members, they're upset. We know that university students are upset. Nurses in Manitoba are upset. Doctors are upset. Schoolteachers are upset. Parents are upset. Ranchers are upset—I've been talking to so many ranchers in the past. Environmental stewards are upset. International students are upset. Seniors are upset. Small-business owners are upset. Minimum-wage workers are upset. Consumers are upset. And union workers are upset.

There could be some people who might not be upset with the performance of PC government, and those could be millionaires, owners of the mansions, multinational big corporations and so on.

It's about the priorities that the current government has, and Manitobans know that what are their priorities. We are in a time when we have a new Premier, we have new session, we have new start, we have new Throne Speech, but same old, same old approach.

This leadership race and the change of the Premier—people look at it as an effort to rebrand this PC caucus and PC government. But, actually, nothing changed with the change of the Premier. It's like the same person being in the chair in a new dress.

When we look at the content of the Throne Speech, we see that 80 per cent of the commitments in this Throne Speech are a repeat of the Pallister government's old commitments—nothing new: nothing significant for the health-care system, nothing significant for making life more affordable, nothing significant for classroom supports for students, nothing significant for care for seniors and vulnerable people in Manitoba and nothing significant for the climate crisis.

I would like to discuss a few points as follows.

Let's talk about the Crown land leaseholders, small ranchers and commercial fishers first. I've been talking to them recently, and I am told that they see many of their neighbours getting out of business. The next generation, young boys and girls, they're opting to leave the land and go for survival jobs away from those towns. And that's due to the policies that have been implemented by the PC government since 2016 without any proper consultation with the people on the land.

They tell me that this government has refused to listen to them. I'm regularly hearing from these groups. They're annoyed, they're frustrated, disappointed and feel ignored by this government since they assumed office in 2016.

This Throne Speech doesn't offer any hope for the ranchers, fishers and family farms. The Throne Speech doesn't mention a single word about how this government is going to support financially broken Crown land ranchers. It doesn't show a mention of young farmers and strategies to encourage them to get into farming and be stewards of land in the future.

I'm told, and I have read media stories, that this government does listen. This government does listen to a few people who are their friends—who are their friends—who angle together with them and their ministers and are just a phone call away. That's a hotline, Madam Speaker. And from this Chamber I can assure the ranchers and commercial fishers that I would keep raising their voice at all possible platforms.

This Throne Speech does not talk about filling the vacancies in the Agriculture Department. This Throne Speech doesn't talk about rural connectivity and how

the public extension system would be strengthened in Manitoba. It does not talk about staffing levels and the vacancy rate.

And I know a few people in the Department of Agriculture and MASC who I can't name. They have decided to go on early retirement due to the wrong choices that this government made by cutting the budget and staffing levels in various units of the department.

We are going through a pandemic, and we all know how this government handled the pandemic: horrible.

* (15:00)

Premier Pallister left in the middle of the pandemic, simply ran away. He failed badly as a leader. He damaged the health-care system. And this PC government let Manitobans suffer and die in personal-care homes and during transfer to other provinces. That's shameful; that's painful.

After all that, did the PCs learn from this loss? No, they didn't. Outbreaks are still happening. PCs failed to take action against for-profit PCH management, refused to call the military for support. That's why an independent inquiry is required to know the details of failures during handling of the pandemic by this PC government.

Our new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is a failed previous Health minister, and we know that.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

She failed to stand up for Manitobans. She failed to face the press during tough situations; instead, pushed the health-care leaders to address the media when it was tough—a tough situation. Even apart from the pandemic, when we think about the backlog in surgeries, life-saving surgeries, the wait-list is in the hundreds of thousands. To be specific, 136,000 Manitobans are waiting on these surgeries.

This government has closed emergency rooms in various parts of the province. They have closed CancerCare. They failed to ensure proper staffing in hospitals. They failed to address the nurses' demands for their contract. And they are failing to retain doctors and nurses in this province.

Let's take a look on what her priorities are, actually. It's clear by now that her preference and priorities are her political goals. Her priorities are to put profit first and putting people at the last. She always stood together with Mr. Pallister when he

made wrong choices against Manitobans, common Manitobans. She stood against Crown land leaseholders by raising lease rates and revision of the regulations in 2019, after the election results. And she stood with Brian Pallister in all damaging legislations, including bills 64, 35, bills 16, 57 and 40.

And all of a sudden, when the leadership race was announced, everything flipped. The legislations that this PC caucus stood for, spent time of our government servants, spent millions of dollars supporting and promoting their legislations. They flipped everything because the priorities changed.

The priority was for this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) to be Leader of the PC Party of Manitoba, and many of us are aware about the media reports alleging unfair practices in signing up membership race. There are accusations by people getting their membership slips they never signed up for or paid for. This is shameful—just getting a surprise in your mailbox that you are a member of the PC Party. You never opted for it. You never paid for it. You never requested for it. How did that happen is a mystery.

About bill 64, thousands of Manitobans opposed bill 64, and this government spent millions of dollars in drafting that legislation, promoting that legislation. And when the situation changed after the leadership race, all those PC caucus members who were standing strong with bill 64 and its contents, they started saying that bill 64 is to be repealed. And they repealed it along with other four legislations.

That's how the priorities change. And this government did not respect the resources and time of this Chamber that was consumed, wasted in this whole exercise. This is just one example.

And now when the new Premier is in the big chair, now they have started indicating and talking about a K-to-12 review. And they have started indicating that they could bring a similar—a legislation similar to bill 64 again. They have starting sending those vibes to the people.

When we talk about post-secondary education, before I go further, I want to appreciate my colleague, the critic for secondary education, the member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses), for standing strong with University of Manitoba Faculty Association and the university students and supporting their demands.

What the PCs did? They cut funding to the universities. They refused to withdraw the salary mandate to help UMFA negotiate with their employer

freely. They refused to respect and retain intellect at universities and colleges in Manitoba.

When we talk about Manitoba Hydro, the Throne Speech doesn't even mention Manitoba Hydro in it. And we know that how important this organization is. So this is the government that cannot even stand with their own caucus members and their own legislation they they bragged about, that they drafted, that they introduced. How can they stand for Manitobans?

I cannot, and I won't, support this Throne Speech. So I would wait—I would vote against it.

Thank you so much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Pleased to be speaking in response to the Throne Speech today. It's a pleasure to, you know, to be speaking at this time and have this opportunity today. I know we've all—not only the residents of St. Vital, but also the people across the province have gone out—through a difficult past couple of years. All the challenges that we've all faced together throughout the pandemic, the various waves; whether it's ourselves who've unfortunately been sick, our loved ones, people we know—friends and family members who maybe have gotten sick or one way or the other been affected—I just want to share that through myself and my family our 'half-felt' thoughts are going out to those people.

And, importantly, it's important to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that us as government, us as people who are elected officials—whether in opposition or in government—play a special and unique role in our communities as—role as leaders, role as role models, and I'm honoured to be that person in my community of St. Vital. And it's our responsibility as role models to actively show that leadership, show those who are looking for guidance how they can make their community better.

And so, with that said, I'm encouraging all folks who are eligible to get the vaccine to help us control the spread of the coronavirus. That includes those who have been recently made eligible: children ages five to 11.

* (15:10)

I encourage all folks, parents and children who are watching this to make your appointment if you haven't already. Go get vaccinated to make our community safe, and those who aren't sure, find out from your doctor or provincial health authorities, who have clear and accurate information about the vaccine, the safety and how we can all, as community members,

protect ourselves, protect our families, protect our neighbourhoods as best as possible from the virus that is in our communities.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll move on to speaking directly—on to the Throne Speech. And the ramifications of the pandemic is that things have been challenging for a lot of folks over the last few years. Some folks are struggling to make ends meet. Some folks are struggling with our broken health-care system as a result of this government and their choices. And after dealing with that pandemic for so long—almost two years—this Stefanson government is simply not up to the challenge that we're facing right now. They seem to be falling into the trap of repeating the same mistakes of Brian Pallister.

Now, we're in the fourth wave of the pandemic, and while we had months and months and months to prepare ourselves, we find ourselves in a place—again, limited capacity in our ICUs, patients again being transported out of—around the province. We don't want to go down that path of patients being transported out of the province again. And, again, we're in the same spot where long-term-care facilities are suffering from outbreaks with very unfortunate consequences.

We expect, we hope, we deserve, as Manitobans, a government that will actually work for us, but this Throne Speech has showed us that, sadly, we don't have that. This government, this Stefanson government, is simply a repeat of the Brian Pallister government—that they are bringing no real changes, that they have failed to learn the lessons of mistake and are simply repeating the broken policies that we've seen time and time again from this PC caucus.

We had hoped—we had hoped—that the change in leadership would bring in a change in government, a government that would listen to people. But, sadly, we haven't seen that yet. Sadly, Manitobans are often the ones to suffer the worst consequences of this.

Now, we're seeing that one of the biggest issues that I believe was left out of the Throne Speech, that was left out of this government's agenda, that obviously is a low priority for this government because it wasn't addressed in the Throne Speech, is the ongoing strike that we're now in the fifth week of between the faculty and the University of Manitoba.

And we know the reality of that strike is that students—that our students here in Manitoba are the most heavily impacted, their classes being delayed and cancelled, their education on hold. These students

want to get back to class to get themselves educated, to graduate, to start their careers and to be the ones who are going to be the next drivers and leaders in our economy, the next drivers and leaders in health care, in education, in technology and industry, in manufacturing, in transportation, in aerospace. But they can't do that right now when this government has been consistently and ongoing interference into the negotiations between the faculty, the administration at the University of Manitoba.

The reality is that that wage mandate that the government has imposed onto the university is an interference. It is preventing a fair negotiation, and that's the reality. That's the facts. That's why the strike is now, sadly, in its fifth week—record-breaking fifth week.

And despite what we hear from the other side, despite the failed denials and despite their obvious attempts to confuse and mislead about the ongoing process of negotiations, we know that, ultimately, what Manitobans deserve, what students deserve, what faculty deserve, is a fair negotiation in that process. And that can't happen with this government's constant interference in the form of wage mandates.

And so, this is another example of how the Stefanson government is just like, sadly, like the Pallister government. And where their new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) had an opportunity to change, she's failed to do so.

Now, when we look specifically at the strike and when we look at—specifically at some of the challenges that those post-secondary students have faced, that was failed to even be mentioned in the Throne Speech, we are—and I feel for those students because they must be sad and disheartened that this government has nothing to offer them.

The PC government, unfortunately, has made problems worse at the University of Manitoba through 'impoging' this wage restriction on bargaining. This is clearly unfair, it's clearly been proven to be illegal, and it stood in the way of free and fair negotiations.

Now, we know that we need that wage mandate to be lifted, that imposed mandate to be removed, and we need, finally, with this government, this PC government, even though they've been unwilling to do so, to commit to respecting the autonomy of our post-secondary institutions in Manitoba.

So now we know the background to this. We know that students have been on strike. We know that

there was a strike brought in by the Pallister government in 2016 that was—that this strike has now surpassed in terms of length. We know this. So, again, we've been calling for this government to do the right thing, to get out of the way, remove the wage mandate, allow a free and fair negotiation so that faculty can get back to work and all students can get back to learning and moving our province forward.

Another aspect that was sorely missing from the Throne Speech is the government's lack of attention paid to the health crisis that is suffered—that is suffering by many citizens who are not citizens in our province, many residents who are not citizens in our province; and, specifically, we look at permanent residents, temporary foreign workers, international students.

We've all learned over the past several months about how important barrier-free, well-funded public health care would be in our province. And, simply, it's something that we believe as Canadians is a basic human right, a fundamental responsibility that we have to provide in Canada.

But, unfortunately, since 2018, this PC government has denied international students equitable access to public health care by forcing them to purpose increasingly expensive private insurance coverage, and that includes the time during the pandemic.

We know it's clear that we must ensure everyone, everyone in Manitoba, has access to health care and to protect health and safety of all who live in this province, and that first step is by immediately restoring public health coverage for all international students.

And so I urge the Health Minister, Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), Minister of Advanced Education, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Goertzen) to look seriously at how they can increase access to health care for international students because it is literally life-saving. We know international students delay and postpone health care because they don't have coverage, because they're worried about not getting covered through private insurers.

And so I urge this government to take that issue seriously because it affects lives. It affects the lives of people who are here in Manitoba studying and who we want, and we hope, will one day call Manitoba home permanently.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move on with my comments on the Throne Speech and conclude

with a few more remarks simply about the disappointment that this Throne Speech fails to address all of the important needs that have been highlighted throughout the pandemic.

* (15:20)

Many parents know about the needs—and growing needs—of child care that was failed to be mentioned and brought forward a substantial plan to increase that in this Throne Speech.

We know about the failure and the struggles in our education system—failures by this government to properly address through this Throne Speech. Quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at past legislation—bill 64—what this government has tried to do with our education system knowing that those ideas are not only inappropriate, unwanted, outdated, they're simply bad for our children in the classroom.

And did this new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), when she had an opportunity to lay out a new plan for our education system, did she take that opportunity? No. She failed again to do so, and as a consequence, children in our province, sadly, don't have that improved education system that we are all calling for and we have been advocating for on this side of the House.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks, again, by saying that what we're saying is this: the opportunity that the new Premier had to set a new tone, to make a new path for our province, she chose, with the support of her whole Cabinet and her whole caucus, to not turn the page, to not change the channel, to stay on the same page as Brian Pallister and repeat, sadly—sadly—repeat the same mistakes of the past.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Throne Speech.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I guess I would be remiss if I didn't congratulate this month's Premier. I look forward to potentially congratulating next month's premier.

You know, we've had three premiers so far this year. Why not one more? And yet, they're all the same. They may change from a suit jacket to a dress, but they're still the same. Everything that they have done since they got elected in 2016 continues today—continues today. They have not changed.

This new Throne Speech that the latest Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) says is great hope and it's going to change channels and do all this wonderful stuff—well, it doesn't. There's nothing in here to inspire

Manitobans to believe that there's a new thought process in this government.

We look at what they've done, and we know that health care in this province was destroyed primarily by the first Health minister who later became the interim premier. He was the one that specifically designed the failed cuts that saw nothing but cost savings for the government. Meanwhile, people in Manitoba long before the pandemic came to realize how bad their plan was. They came to realize that, already before the pandemic, health care in Manitoba was in trouble.

We can talk very specifically about health care in the North that this government, at best, ignores and, at worst, cuts every chance they get. And they stand up and say, oh, no, we're not cutting. We're going to spend more money. Of course, they may budget some more money, but they don't spend it. I don't know whether any of the members opposite watch the local news, but, apparently, one of the things that's caught some city reporters' attention of late is the complete devastation of health care in Lynn Lake, the complete devastation of health care in Leaf Rapids, the near complete devastation of health care in Snow Lake, the complete removal of health-care services in the community of Flin Flon.

Each and every one of those communities has suffered, thanks to this government, and continues to suffer when we see nurse vacancy rates in some of those communities at 80 per cent—80 per cent—vacancy rate, when we see the community of Leaf Rapids had to shut down their entire health facility because one agency nurse phoned in sick. And there was no contingency plan, there was no nurses, because they're all agency nurses; they all come in from somewhere else. They're not a part of the community.

Imagine deciding to shut down a hospital in Winnipeg because one nurse phones in sick. We're not quite there yet, but give this bunch long enough and we probably will be.

The mayor of Lynn Lake has been very vocal of late on what's happening to health care in his community. He sees the number of vacancies. He sees that those former health-care professionals, be they nurses, be they health-care aides, are no longer part of his community because it's not just about the devastation of people that are sick and needing care, it's actually about the destruction of northern communities. Every time you take one of those good-paying jobs out of a community in the North, it's one less person paying

taxes, it's one less person volunteering their time, it's one less family that has their kids in local sports, it's one less family that has their children in school.

And it—the cuts just then keep rolling along because, well, now we need to cut education spending; well, now we need to cut infrastructure spending; well, now we need to cut, cut cut. And that's the entire mandate that started under Brian Pallister, continued under the member from Steinbach and continues under the current incumbent in the chair. And I'm sure that if the other one fighting to be the premier gets in, we'll see exactly the same thing. It'll be more cuts. You know, it's like playing Whac-a-Mole, trying to figure out who's in the chair because it changes so often. Three different premiers in a year—or four different Health ministers in the course of five years. And they just keep shuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic and yet the ship is sinking worse than ever, and they do nothing.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to not be negative. I'd like to stand up and say, wow, what an amazing Throne Speech this is; it really sets a new tone for the Province of Manitoba. I'd like to do that, but alas, I cannot, because this Throne Speech is just a rehash of tired, broken ideas that didn't work and will not work. There's nothing new, there's nothing exciting, there's nothing to help Manitobans in this Throne Speech—absolutely nothing.

Let's talk about what could have been. You know, they could have actually sat down with labour and said, you know what, not only are we going to scrap bill 28 because it was wrong right from the start, but we're going to sit down with labour and actually negotiate free and true collective bargaining. But are they doing that? Well, ask UMFA. Clearly, the answer is no.

The only reason they negotiated with nurses—*[interjection]*—I see the member from Steinbach wants to talk about the nurse negotiation—the only reason they caved in and negotiated was because of a—what was it, 95 per cent strike mandate? They knew they were in trouble. They knew they couldn't keep forcing 'nurkers'—nurses to go to work without a collective agreement. They held out and held out and finally were brought to their knees by health-care nurses who they stand up every day and say, oh, thanks for your service, while we won't give you a decent rate of pay.

* (15:30)

We look at nurses in the North. Why don't we have nurses in the North? Well, as we just found out

the other day, they've mandated more cuts to northern health-care budgets. They've mandated that positions have to remain empty so that they can save money, I guess so that they can pay all their increased number of Cabinet ministers their salary bonuses that they gave themselves initially.

You know, when they first got elected, this government said, we're going to cut the number of departments, we're going to cut the number of ministers to save money, but all of a sudden, look at that. They're right back up where they were—well, other than the Health Ministry, where they split it into two and had two Health ministers. Now they've got one minister looking after supposedly two departments.

Well, here's a news flash for the folks across the way—whether it's one or two, they're not looking after the Health Department. Not only aren't they looking after, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I listened to the current Minister of Health—

An Honourable Member: He's the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Lindsey: He is the Deputy Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Not the acting deputy; have some respect.

Mr. Lindsey: Everybody else over there is acting—I get mixed up sometimes.

So, you know, I listen to the current Health Minister answer questions, both in the Estimates process and in question period and say, well, if it's a local matter, I'm not going to answer it in the House, but send me a letter and we'll talk about it.

How many months should a person wait to get an answer from a minister in this government? How many months—how many ministers, never mind months? I'm still waiting for an answer from the previous minister of Health, who's now the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), never mind the current Minister of Health who won't answer a question, who won't answer a question that affects people in the North every day of the week.

People in northern Manitoba know that, having to fly to Winnipeg for health care because there's none left in the North, but they only get to fly three days a week. They don't fly down for an appointment and fly home the same day. Does the government pay them anything extra? Did the government respond to any requests to help compensate for hotels, meals, taxis when people had to stay—at one point in time during the pandemic, people in Flin Flon had to stay

in Winnipeg for five days: five days in a hotel, five days of meals in a restaurant.

Do people in Winnipeg have to spend hundreds and hundreds of dollars to go and see a doctor? I don't think so. And yet, not one person on that side of the House will even respond to those kind of questions about help—people have not equal access to health care because we know that's not going to happen with this bunch, but some kind of equitable access to health care.

Will they even answer those questions? No, they will not. And yet they say, well, just ask, you know. Send us a letter, we'll answer. Well, that is, quite frankly, not true. You know, I don't really expect much different because it really doesn't seem to matter which minister we talk about.

I had a call in to then-acting premier, the member from Steinbach, and the answer was, well, he's on the road, he can't call you today. I said, okay, well, tomorrow's fine, I only want five minutes of his time.

Did I get a call? No, I did not. So I emailed him—so I emailed him. [*interjection*] The minister likes to beak off now instead of answering at the time.

And there's two things that were asked. One of them was about covering cystic fibrosis drugs, and I will commend the minister, the government, for approving it. They were the last at the table but, hey, they got there. They got there, finally.

But what about the other question that was asked? What about the other question that was asked that he never answered? He never replied. Sent emails to ask the second question, never got an answer. Asked the current Premier for an answer, no, not so much—well, I shouldn't say we never get an answer; we get auto-replies, and I guess they think that's good enough for people in the North.

Well, I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not good enough for people in the North, and people in the North, quite frankly, have had enough of this government. You know, I think that people really, really need to understand how important voting is, because they didn't vote for this kind of devastation that we've seen in this province, but that's what they got.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on for a lot longer with what's wrong, not just with this Throne Speech, but what's wrong with this government, and, you know, I'd like to, but I know there's others on this side who want to stand up and also share

their views on what's wrong with this Throne Speech, what's wrong with this government.

And at the end of the day, will we be voting in favour of this? Of course not. There's nothing to vote in favour of. It's nonsense; it's a waste; it's a waste of paper.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today in the House to speak to the Speech from the Throne.

I'd like to congratulate Premier Stefanson on her being elected as PC Party leader and the first female Premier in our *[inaudible]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Sandhu: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Remind the individual, if member—if he can refer to members in this House—either their positions or their constituency name.

Mr. Sandhu: And I'd also like to congratulate my Indigenous colleagues who have worked so hard since 2017 and finally it's paid off with the land acknowledgement in the House yesterday.

I listened to the speech with a great interest to see what is in there for The Maples. But I'm disappointed. There's not much that is there for the people from The Maples. I was thinking there might be something to the Chief Peguis Trail extension. No, there was no mention of that. Is that on even the government's agenda? I don't think so. Or how to protect seniors at Maples Personal Care Home—there's nothing, no. Or more Dynacare locations in The Maples—you know, our seniors are waiting in the cold to get their bloodwork done. Or health care for our international students—there's no mention of that. No mention of upgrading to Maples Community Centre—you may have said, you probably cannot say; this is a City of Winnipeg responsibility. This is also the responsibility of the provincial government, federal government and the City of Winnipeg.

I don't see anything in the speech either, like, we are waiting for nine months to get a marriage certificate, or somebody's waiting for a birth certificate, so there's 30 per cent vacancy in that one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, times are still tough for Manitobans: no mention of portability. Rising cost of living—there's nothing. People are struggling today to make ends meet. After dealing with this pandemic together for almost two years now, Manitobans are

seeing the First Minister is just another bad repeat of Brian Pallister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the fourth wave of the pandemic, while there were months to prepare, we find ourselves in the same place—limited ICU capacity. You guys cut—Seven Oaks ER was closed and ICU beds were cut. They nowhere replaced those ones.

* (15:40)

Vacancies in critical care, emergency and surgery units have grown despite the PC government's repeated promise they are hiring more nurses to fill these spaces. Fired 500 nurses, and for the next four years maybe hiring 400, and they're still short 100.

Patients are being transported across the province to make space in the health-care facilities. You might have heard this in this news: Ruth Sampson has been known to—has no other home in her 100 years of life than in Stonewall, Manitoba until last week, when she was transferred, against her wishes, to a hospital in the community of Morden, two hours away.

Instead of providing solutions to eliminating surgical backlog, our health ministers are providing thoughts and prayers. Over 136,000 Manitobans are waiting for their surgeries. The minister should have been listening to the experts. There should have been a plan in place for a long time. This wait-list is not related to the pandemic; it was before even the pandemic.

Long-term-care homes suffering deadly outbreaks: the First Minister has no plan to protect our vulnerable Manitobans. She is saying no mandatory vaccines for care-home staff. Given all the terrible outcomes we have seen in the personal-care homes, including the fourth wave, we need to do everything possible to protect seniors and those living in the long-term care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans accept and deserve a government that will fix problems instead of making them worse. Manitoba deserves a government that will work to protect them from public health emergencies like COVID-19 and provide them meaningful support while we navigate this challenging time together.

The Pallister PCs did a lot of damage to our province, from health care, to education, to raising the cost of living. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the First Minister had a chance to prove she's different. But she's not;

she's clear nothing has changed. Premier Stefanson is just like another Brian Pallister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just like Pallister, the First Minister is starting her time in office with a strike at the University of Manitoba. Just like Pallister, she refused to take responsibility for her failure as a Health minister when she—when 57 of the sickest patients were sent out of province with a statement like should have, would have, could have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Premier Stefanson's Throne Speech offers nothing new to Manitobans who are waiting for answers on how we will—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

I just want to remind the member also not to use the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson)—it has to either be the First Minister or the Premier themselves, not Premier with their last name.

Mr. Sandhu: In fact, over 80 per cent of the commitment in the Premier's Throne Speech appeared to be repeated from the Pallister administration.

The First Minister is offering nothing new; instead, she's recycling ideas from the failed premier. Nothing has changed at the decision-making table. It's the same people; the same ministers are sitting and making their decisions.

The First Minister's Throne Speech contained the same broken promises used by Pallister. She doesn't have a plan to listen to the nurses, to listen to the—to get the surgeries done, to help outbreaks in the schools and long-term-care homes or to make life more affordable.

Her Speech from the Throne failed Manitobans. She failed to adequately address the issues that Manitobans care about: fixing our health-care system, making life more affordable, making sure students have the supports they need to—in the classrooms, caring for the vulnerable Manitobans of our society, the climate crisis and apologizing for the comments made by her predecessor, Brian Pallister, regarding residential schools and colonialism.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's often said that those who fail to learn from the history will end up repeating it. And it seems that First Minister hasn't learned. This is why it is so important that the Premier call an independent inquiry into the PC government's pandemic response to get recommendations to the—help build our health-care system capacity and make positive lasting changes to improve the lives of Manitobans.

However, instead of calling an independent inquiry into the pandemic response, the Premier's only saying she will investigate the leak of her Throne Speech. Instead of worrying about Manitobans and their needs, she is busy focusing on her own internal political problems. Manitoba except—and deserve a government that has a plan to address the ongoing systemic issues within our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether it's this—whether it's the climate crisis or another contentious matter, we deserve to be better prepared for the next emergency. We have to do this—we have to do what is necessary to build a better Manitoba. The NDP caucus is ready to get to work. We are ready to make a honest look at our pandemic response and commit to implementing the recommendations from the inquiries so we can build a better future for all of us.

My friends, 2023 is coming soon.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Well, thank you—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm very pleased to make a few comments to the Speech from the Throne this year. Although I don't really see much of a change here compared to—this government to the previous government, other than they—I'm told that the Blue Bombers actually had a winning record under the previous premier, and since the new Premier became the premier, it's been all downhill. Two losses and we're just days away from a nail-biter at the stadium there. So, hopefully, she can turn this all around by this weekend.

But, seriously, the Throne Speech is really not a very exciting document. I understand that the government is in deep, deep trouble here and they are doing what they can, trying to do what they can to turn it around with no real guarantees that this is actually going to work. And I know the members look at past history, as we all do, and we all remember, I guess, René Lévesque in his second term after five years, like, went right to the end of his term and actually pulled out a victory. Howard Pawley, after the French language debates, you know, basically ran a very focused, non-exciting year and a half, two years, and actually pulled off a victory against Gary Filmon.

But, you know, there's lots of other examples that haven't worked out so well. I take a look at Brian Mulroney and his—after his second term, eighty—was

it '84 to '88—from '88 to '93, he went the full five years and realized he couldn't win again. So they had a leadership, and Kim Campbell won it, and she was Prime Minister for maybe four months. And at the end of all of this the Conservatives had, like, two seats—two seats left in the entire country.

So, you know, it's basically hard to predict exactly how this is going to turn out for them. They could go anywhere from a surprising win to two seats left in the whole House here, right. That's your range that you're looking at here.

* (15:50)

Now, you know, this government, originally, when it started off some—seems like a long time now, but six years ago, tried to implement the Peachey report and rationalize some of the health programs, and one of the things they did was announce that they were going to cut the ER, the emergency room, at Concordia.

Now, let's just take a minute to go back to that, because they were planning—their plan was to shut down that emergency ward completely and with no plans to put anything in there. And then, after a few months, they decided to put a clinic in there.

That didn't go over very well, so, at the end of the day, you know, after a big campaign in the area, they backed off just, you know, months before an election. They backed off and they made it into an urgent care, and I did talk to some nurses there at the time who really felt that urgent care was not a bad solution.

But, at the end of the day, the public in northeast Winnipeg, the voters up in northeast Winnipeg, remember what this government tried to do and they remember what they actually did do, which was downsize the emergency room to an urgent care. And I think the voters are going to remember that in this election, and certainly we're going to be out there, you know, letting them know about that.

They made changes to the CancerCare at the hospital as well, recently. They've made major changes sending people to Dynacare now, where you cannot have your blood samples taken at your doctor's office anymore; you have to go to a Dynacare location.

The governments, you know, end up dying in many ways because of too many self-inflicted wounds. And, you know, taken a little bit at a time, you start adding these things up, and it becomes very big.

Also, right now, they have—are engaged in another battle with the university professors, the UMFA people, for the—now the second strike since they've been government in the last five and a half, six years. And I can tell you, you know, I've been out on the picket line with the workers. I was at the McDermot street entrance. I was at the University of Manitoba, and I hearken back to, I think it was 1974, when we had the very first strike at U of M history, and I supported the food service workers in their strike at that time. Fact, I was on the very same spot. It was—took—brought back memories. But, once again, the government is embroiled in a battle right now that I don't think it's going to win at the end of the day.

Let's look back for a moment to their treatment of the COVID-19 issues. You know, in the very beginning, I don't know whether, you know, that I watch more TV than some of the members opposite, but I know that on CNN there was coverage from the time COVID-19 hit the shores of the United States, and it was very clear from the beginning that this disease was killing older people in the care homes in the United States. It was an issue with the cruise ships in the United States. So it was no, like, mystery that we should be looking at protecting our seniors in the seniors homes.

So the government had lots of time. We had a first wave where many people died in Ontario and Quebec in the homes. And Manitoba politicians—I guess the government, I guess, didn't recognize that we had seniors homes here, right, that over the years we have now put people into—increasingly into seniors homes—large buildings and shared accommodation in, I think, Parkview Place. So looking back on it, it's no surprise that there were the number of deaths there were at Maples, at Parkview Place. And the government did not anticipate this.

Another issue that they should have anticipated was the vaccination of the workforce. You know, they did the right thing in the sense that, in the beginning of the vaccinations, the premier of the day held back enough doses to cover the 10,000 residents in those homes, when other provinces like Quebec and what-not were doing what England was doing; they were trying to put first doses into as many arms as possible, not worrying about whether a second dose was even going to show up. But Manitoba held back its doses and it gave the 10,000 seniors their dose.

But at the end of the day, what they did not do was vaccinate the workers in those homes, and it's just outright common sense here that they should have

done that. And then they wonder why COVID spread the way it did in those homes and COVID was being brought in by workers working there, by, I guess, family members, too. But they were so slow to react and they should have moved much, much quicker in that whole area at the time and they wouldn't have perhaps seen the number of people dying that did in this pandemic at this point.

So, you know, there's a lot of mistakes this government has made and, you know, they're going to be held accountable for it in the next election.

And now I note that, you know, we have a new variant that is the topic of conversation now, it's running 24-7 on all the news channels: the 'omicron' variant. And the jury's still out as to how serious this variant is going to be. There's some suggestion that it's very highly transmissible, that we're—all of us are going to get it at some point but it won't have a lot of power to make a lot of people really sick.

And, therefore, there's an argument to be made that vaccinations are really important here, because there's a pretty good—like, at least in South Africa, anyway, there's been—two doctors have been reporting their patient load in the last few weeks. And one of them, and she was on TV again last night—but they reported that about—in the last two weeks, there was a huge amount of people coming in: younger people, people that were having headaches and they were basically feeling very tired and sore but that was the extent of it—that they were not really serious type of symptoms that were going to kill people.

On the other hand, there was another doctor from Soweto and he was dealing in an area where most of the patients coming into his facility were unvaxxed and he was reporting a much more serious experience.

But President Biden, you know, some months ago suggested—and I'm sure others have, too—that the vaccination rates would be—that the whole world, 8 billion people in the world would be vaccinated by the end of 2022. And the fact of the matter is, at this point, we are already at, like, 54 per cent.

But there's a kind of a feeling out there that somehow, you know, North America's heavily vaxxed and European Union's heavily vaxxed and the rest of the world isn't, and that the Pfizer and Moderna messenger RNA combinations are really the only show in town. And I can tell you that that is not true at all.

Worldwide, we have 4 billion—a little over 4 billion people—54 per cent of the entire population

of the world is currently vaxxed. And, you know, you would probably be thinking that the vaccinations are Moderna and Pfizer. Well, they're not.

*(16:00)

We're not the only show in town—in the world. The Chinese have three vaccines, and probably of the 4 billion people that are vaccinated at this point, I'm just guessing, but I'm thinking half of them have the Chinese vaccine. The Chinese are vaccinating roughly 50 countries. The Russians, with their Sputnik V vaccine, they have signed up another 50 countries. So we—we're not, like, leaders, here.

And then I've heard comments from, you know, medical people right here in Manitoba saying, oh, you know, the Chinese vaccines are not that good. Well, yes, they're not messenger RNA. They're on the old—they're old-style vaccines. There's four or five different, you know, platforms that these are—vaccines are on.

But the reality is—there's a report out today, actually, that the Sinovac, the Chinese vaccines, are, at the end of the day, going to be proven more effective—and there's reasons for that, you can google them if you like—but more effective than even the messenger RNA against this new Omicron variant that is coming out.

Another surprise to me—and, by the way, this chart changes all the time. I used to keep track of it a little more closely than now, but in the world we have got, you know, 98 per cent vaccinated in the United Arab Emirates. Singapore's around 93. But a surprise to me was Cuba's at 90 per cent.

And that's a huge change, and I did some googling on that and found out that Cuba actually has its own vaccines. And you would think that that would be a big uphill climb for them, but given the country has actually had a cancer vaccine—first in the world, I believe—for lung cancer for about five, six, seven years right now, and that the messenger RNA vaccines, Moderna and Pfizer—they are quickly moving on cancer vaccines themselves.

I mean, Moderna did a trial about three or four years ago now. And their first cancer vaccine showed a huge shrinking of the cancer tumours that it was being applied to. The—what happened, of course, was that they all grew back after about six months or whatever. So there's some—a little bit more work to be done there, but there's a lot of hope that messenger RNA technology is going to be very useful in

developing cancer vaccines and there's—Moderna's doing another trial right now, actually.

So we may be hearing some good news in that field coming up, but Cuba, their vaccine basis is one that I hadn't run into before, but it's called a protein vaccine, and there's two or three of them. And they have done—they're at 90 per cent right now. Portugal's at 89 per cent.

But, you know, we 'intendy' say, well, you know, we have to vaccinate the Third World. That's all well and good to say that. It has to get done. But the people that—there's two issues. One is the supply of the vaccines, and in the early days—in the first year—we didn't have enough supply, but we had willing people taking it. So you had, say, 50 per cent of the people, you know, fighting for those shots and we didn't have enough vaccines.

Well, now that's not the case. We now have adequate supplies. Even in South Africa, in the last number of days, they've got supplies there but they don't have people willing, you know, to use them. So that's our problem now.

And you can only go so far, I guess, promising—giving out \$100 incentives and other—you know, allowing people into restaurants if they get vaccinated. I mean, you know, I guess you can do that, but at a certain point, it gets harder and harder and harder. We're hitting 90 per cent right now on first doses in Manitoba here and in Canada, if you except out the people that can't be vaccinated right now—the children.

And I don't know how we're going to get higher than we're at right now. Like, we're really scratching forward here, and we've hit—we've pretty much hit a wall, and unless you're going to actually have mandates and force people to get vaccinated, which we've suggested for the nursing homes, I mean, good grief, here we are like a year and a—two years into this already, and we're having to ask you people to look at mandates for vulnerable people in seniors homes when you have had the negative experience that you've got, and you're not willing to do it.

So the—lots of these things are just, like, obvious things that should be done, and I can appreciate the internal politics here where your party is split over vaccines or not—to vaccinate or not to vaccinate—and you don't want to be losing your—half your party to an up-and-coming different option, right? You may have all of those things too.

One other thing I wanted to point out, too, is this—these Cuban vaccines, they're kind of—they're very interesting, the protein vaccines. They are actually giving the vaccines to children two years old and up. You notice that here in Canada, we are now looking at just beginning to vaccinate the five-year-old group and up. There's, like, 125,000 in that group that could possibly be done and drive our numbers up on a total basis. But the Cubans are actually vaccinating—and like I said, they're at 90 per cent right now, first dose—they're vaccinating two years and up. So there's some, you know, merit in looking at different other options here.

But our messenger RNA technology is all based on the stock market. We are—got the most expensive product out there. And I'm very happy about that. I'm thrilled with what we've done. But our product is expensive, and it's only being given out in the richer countries. But don't lose sight of the fact that we're not the only players here, that the Chinese are major players, and they seem to have a very good product right now, given this new variant that's out there. And we look forward—I am very positive that we're going to solve this problem. Within the next year I would think that that is going to happen, maybe sooner than that.

So I want to thank you very much. I think I'm almost run out of time here.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's a real pleasure to be able to rise here today and to speak to this particular Throne Speech, which comes at a time, I think, that is a very important time in not just the province but, of course, around the world. It's a time when we're still dealing with, you know, what might be called now, I guess, the fourth wave or in some places called an extension of the third wave or a fifth wave.

And, again, it just depends on how it's categorized in different places. But it's a time where the COVID-19 virus and the variants that have come from it are wreaking havoc still around the world.

And I just want to start by saying that because, you know, we're hearing still on a day-to-day basis in my office—I know in the offices of my colleagues—every single day we're hearing from folks who are feeling the burden of this virus. They're—you know, they're expressing to us their concerns around mental health. They're talking to us about burnout. They're talking to us about their physical health or even their financial well-being and their ability to make ends meet. It's a tough, tough time right now for Manitobans. And it's an incredibly important time, I

believe, therefore, to be talking about the things that are most important to Manitobans.

So we've had a chance over the last—well, it's actually been, I guess, since the summer where we started to get out there and really knock on doors again in my communities. And, you know, I got to say, it's been incredibly helpful for me. I have always found it helpful to go out and talk to people face to face at their doorstep, but particularly now where people don't—maybe they don't expect somebody to be knocking at their door and they're sometimes taken a little bit aback by somebody being there.

* (16:10)

But the conversations that I have had have been very, very thoughtful and informative in a way that I think I've maybe never even experienced in all the years that I've been elected, because people are anxious. They're—as I said, they're concerned; they're hurting right now and they want somebody to talk to. They want somebody to be able to listen to their concerns, and I like to believe that I'm able, then, to bring those concerns forward here in the Legislature. I know that's what our team is doing every single day when we get up here in the Legislature.

But it is a time where, you know, at the same time that Manitobans are struggling, are dealing with some of the most difficult situations they've never—maybe ever dealt with in their lives, we have a government that—you know, with the opportunity to bring forward a Throne Speech that speaks to those concerns and speaks to those issues.

And instead of doing that, they've turned completely inwards. They've completely stopped listening to those people that I've been talking to on the doorsteps and they've completely turned inwards, and they've made this into a crass political game.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And I say that because we have a party who has an opportunity, had a minister of Health who was Health minister during the third wave, some of the worst outcomes anywhere, Madam Deputy Speaker—or Madam Speaker.

And given that opportunity to do something at that time, did nothing, completely failed the people of Manitoba; but even worse, is now given an opportunity to be the Premier, to make a difference and to bring forward something different to this Legislature, but does not, fails again, fails again the people of Manitoba and brings forward a document that is—

essentially rehashes and doesn't speak to the real concerns that Manitobans are expressing to us.

So I'm going to spend some time, of course, to talk about that, but before I do, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to focus in on, you know, just what we've seen over the last—I guess it's been six months since the minister of Health ceased to be the minister of Health and then put in her bid to become Premier.

We had a premier who, for now, five years, I guess, has been driving this province into the ground, you know, and has been widely scolded for it by the people of Manitoba. You know, this is not just a partisan, one side of the Legislature versus the other. The number of people across the board that have come forward, that's told our premier, you are doing things the wrong way—I'm talking about Brian Pallister now, Madam Speaker—told Brian Pallister, you know, you are—have been given a challenge, a once-in-a-lifetime, once-in-100-year challenge to—whatever you thought you were doing before, you need to stop that right now and you need to focus on the things that are important.

In this case, with the pandemic, it's health care. How could you not see this coming? The pandemic hits; whatever your budget said that year, well, that's out the window, and you need to start focusing on helping people, protecting people and making sure that those who do that work on the front lines are protected.

Of course, the premier didn't do that. He didn't do that. And who stood by his side at every step of the way? It was the deputy premier at the time, the then-Health minister who's now the current Premier, who stood by, side by side with him and said, no, no, no, everything's fine—you know, the old Iraqi communications, the minister there said, oh no, no, don't look behind us, everything's fine. We're with this guy a hundred per cent.

So that was back in last spring, that was spring. And given the responsibility of Health minister during the third wave, failed over and over again to protect Manitobans and stood with the premier—then-premier.

So what happens then? Here comes the summer. And, you know, I mean, you know, there was a bit of a pool going, I think. You know, it's not—wasn't much of a surprise that the former premier had a timeline; he wanted to get to Costa Rica. I don't know if the flights were booked, but he had it all planned out.

The pandemic certainly threw a wrench in it. We threw a wrench in it, Madam Speaker, because we

stood up and we held back their bad legislation. We actually went to the wall for that, and we actually held back bills that ended up getting thrown out by this government.

So, you know, he—we—there was a couple of bumps along the way, but he had that timeline stuck in his mind; he had to get out of here. And who was helping him out the door? Well, of course, the Health minister. Was she worrying about the work she should be doing as Health minister? No, she was worried about her own political future. She was working behind the scenes, talking to all of her caucus members, making sure, hey, you better stand behind me. It's our turn now. It's back to the '90s, and you've got to be with me on this one. So she lines all that up and she gets that set.

Well, you know, good on her. I guess it worked out just the way she planned it, or at least it has so far. I guess we'll see what happens in the courts.

But this was her first priority leading into the summer and through those summer months: premier gets out the door; all of a sudden the failed Health minister is ready to go and ready to be in his place.

You know, it is the kind of crass political gamesmanship and backroom stuff that people look at us and say, you know, that's a—that's the kind of politics I don't like. And they see it every single day on the opposite side. Even today they are not focused on the people of Manitoba, and its proof is in this document: they are not with the people of Manitoba, they're not addressing those concerns. Given the opportunity, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) decided it was more important to secure her own leadership than to actually help anybody.

So, again, I mean, you know, I—at least on that crass political level, kudos to the Premier. She's got the seat now. Good for her.

Now it's time to get down to business. Now it's time to really make a difference, and if you're going to do that, you have an opportunity. You have a Throne Speech, and what do you do? You bring back 16 of the 19 promises from the previous government. It's a rehash. It's a complete rehash. It's the same old, same old again from this government.

Now, we have said right from the beginning, look, there are things that we can learn. And I hear this on the doorstep, Madam Speaker. People tell me. They say, look, how can we learn from what happened in the personal-care homes? How can we learn about

how our health-care system was decimated, particularly in northeast Winnipeg? I thank the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for listing off just a handful. I don't think he had enough time in his 20 minutes to get everything that was cut in northeast Winnipeg.

But we saw what the effects were. This isn't theoretical. This isn't in some paper. This isn't in some academic's mind. This is happening to real people. Now our health-care system is beyond the breaking point, and we're not given anything in this Throne Speech other than rehashes of past announcements and more platitudes, you know.

And I just—I mean, I would say that for the people of rural Manitoba, if there's any bright, you know, light in the—all of this, at least this government is saying, oh, wait a minute. We, you know, we know we screwed up in Winnipeg with the reorganization and I guess we're going to have to figure out how not to screw up quite as bad when we do rural health. But we know that they've done that to the North, and they continue to send out their mandate letters cutting health care in the regions.

So it's the same old, same old, Madam Speaker. And this government continues to fail time and time again. We have said, look, you can take it out of our hands. It doesn't have to be a political exercise, but we need to learn lessons from the pandemic. We need to learn lessons, get honest answers to the questions of how the people of Manitoba were failed.

And, again, you can take this out of our hands. It doesn't have to be a bunch of politicians sitting around in a room. Let's get experts. Let's get respected Manitobans. Let's make it an all-party process, a process that everybody can agree on, and let's get those answers, because you shouldn't be afraid of what those answers should be. You should be afraid of not stepping up to meet the challenge of how to rectify those mistakes.

So we, you know, we called on—it was a bit of a different strategy, I've got to say, a bit of a different take on the Throne Speech when we came out and said, yes, we—you know, the Throne Speech is one piece, but we need to learn lessons before we even get to the substance of the Throne Speech. So, we've asked the government, step up, you know, and learn those lessons and then we can move forward; then we can start taking an honest look.

But this government, of course, fails to listen to anything that Manitobans are telling them right now. As I said, you know, when I go door to door, what am

I hearing from folks? I'm hearing a lot of worry about their finances, about affordability. Manitobans are telling me they're worried about work. A lot of nurses, doctors, health-care aides are telling me they're burnt out. So, there's a lot of economic anxiety right now, and this government completely fails them. It should've been—I mean, we just figured it was going to be top line of the budget, you know, a PC government, you know, pandering to the—you know, their base, you could say, Madam Speaker.

* (16:20)

You know, let's talk about economic issues, right? This should be a clear winner. And yet the Throne Speech basically doesn't even acknowledge the affordability crisis that's going on, not just in this province but elsewhere, but particularly in this province where we have tools that the government can employ to actually make a difference day to day, whether it be hydro bills or MPI. We have those tools. And yet this government doesn't mention it, they don't bring it up. It's not top line in the budget. It's nowhere to be found, in the same way that Brandon was nowhere to be found in this budget.

I mean, it's the kind of thing that you just—every single Throne Speech, you expect that kind of attention to detail that we just did not see, once again, in this Throne Speech. *[interjection]* You know, I think this—I mean the level of debate is really getting—I mean, you know, I'm not going to repeat the heckles that are happening here, but I mean it's really, it's—I know things went really, really badly for the Finance Minister yesterday, and I know it was a really tough room for him and his budget consultations, but, you know, anyway, we'll move on from there, Madam Speaker.

You know, what we're saying is that there is an opportunity—there is an opportunity—to enhance and increase health care. So, what are we talking about? In northeast Winnipeg, we saw the effects when the ICU beds were lost, when the ER was closed. We saw the direct effect on people's health care in our community.

We've now seen wait times across our province at historic highs. You know, we've heard reports of wait times above 10 hours. We've heard the stories about people in hallways. This is the kind of thing that Manitobans thought we left in the '90s, and here we go again. We're back in the same sort of pressures on our health-care systems and then the outcomes that Manitobans have seen before.

We know that CancerCare—again, mentioned by other members in northeast Winnipeg, my colleague from Transcona made sure that he mentioned this—CancerCare services at regional hospitals, including Concordia Hospital, taken away; more pressures put on those patients. Again, the beginning of a pandemic, the chance to enhance our health-care system, and instead they take away from it.

We saw diagnostic testing taken away. We saw the IV clinic taken away. It's one hit after another in a part of the city and a part of the province that's growing, that needs investment, that really hurts. And it hurt—when it hurts that region, it hurts the entire system. So we've seen that over and over again.

We're going to continue to fight for that, Madam Speaker. I think there is still an opportunity, again, if we can actually go back and look—take an honest look at what happened during the pandemic and learn some real lessons, I think that might be a launching point to actually make some changes and make some—make a difference.

But, you know, again, we don't have a government that's even entertaining that thought. They're so focused on their own internal politics and their own internal fights. That's the kind of bad politics that I think turns a lot of people off.

We're going to continue to listen to people, we're going to continue to listen to them on the affordability issues, we're going to continue to listen to them when it comes to investments across our province. It has been a totally missed opportunity to rebuild as many places have—we just saw in the United States \$1-trillion infrastructure bill passed. I'm not suggesting that, you know, we could do anything close to that, but what we could do is take an honest look about how to reinvest in our infrastructure, the kind of thing, again, that gets bipartisan support, support across the board.

You know, we're all in favour of actual, real dollars going to good projects in Manitoba. But, of course, this is not a priority of this government. We think that there is a real opportunity right now and that's something we're going to continue to talk about we go forward.

I would be remiss as well, Madam Speaker, if I didn't mention that we just had the annual AMM convention, a great opportunity to actually be in person. There's, you know, a few more of these kind of in-person events that are coming that we could actually

get together with people and meet with them in the kind of way that Zoom doesn't really allow you to do.

So we did that, we sat down with some folks from AMM, heard their concerns first-hand. And, once again, what did they tell us. They told us we have a government that's pulling power into the minister's office, to the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) table, rather than actually listening to municipalities, partnering with them in a real way. Because that's the way we're going to get things done in this province, is if we partner with our local governments and actually get things done.

The North End wastewater treatment plant is, in particular, an issue that we heard about, and we continue to hear about from the City. You know, ideology is getting in the way of getting this deal done. Again, it's not a partisan issue. I don't think you're going to win an election on doing this project. You're going to just, you know, sort of get all support and everybody behind you to say it's about time, because we know it's so important to the health of Lake Winnipeg and for the future of this city.

So, there are so many ways that we could be working together. You could have a positive, forward-looking document, something that actually brings something new to the table and actually gets Manitobans going, oh, well maybe—you know, I wrote those guys off, but maybe I'll take another look.

Did they take that opportunity? No, Madam Speaker.

What they did is they brought forward the same old, same old. They want to change the channel. They want to say oh, okay, that guy was completely different, you know. They constantly—you know, look, there's a lot of mess to be cleaned up from the previous government. But the government that's in place now is the same government. How would anybody trust these folks to be the ones to clean up the mess of the former premier? It's—I think it's beyond the pale.

And it's—most Manitobans see right through this. I trust Manitobans to be a lot smarter than they give them credit for. We're going to trust Manitobans to stand with us, to continue to see the good work that we're doing as an official opposition, to stand with us as we work to make a better Manitoba.

And hey, well, 2023 is coming up pretty quick—

An Honourable Member: Not soon enough.

Mr. Wiebe: —not soon enough, I think I hear from our side of the House. We're ready to go. We want to see

this election. Let's have the people of Manitoba decide. Who's going to clean up the mess that this government left? Is it going to be the same people that sat in that government, stood by Brian Pallister every single day, or is it going to be a new voice and a new group of people who stand with Manitobans and fight for them every single day?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): It's my pleasure to respond to the Speech from the Throne today. We've got ourselves a new Premier, and for the first time in Manitoba history it is a she, and that's something that we should be celebrating and something we should be very excited about.

And I'm happy to finally hear, I think, today, I certainly heard a few members of the opposition acknowledge that. That, indeed, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) isn't just the member for Tuxedo, she's not just the PC leader; she's the Premier.

And that's important for us all to acknowledge and to show respect for that, and I want to commend, especially, the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux). She knows she has a special place in my heart as my favourite member of the opposition, and she's certainly recognized that in her opening few minutes of her response to the Speech from the Throne. So that's what I think I want to start with.

I actually have a solemn note that I'd like to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Teitsma: —if I could have the attention of members opposite, too. And some of you might know that I have a constituency assistant, Belinda Squance, and she's pretty popular on Twitter, more popular than even I am, and she's had a cat for the last 5 years that's been on Instagram and on Twitter a fair bit. And, sadly, her cat, Gareth, passed away the other day, and it's—it hit her pretty hard. And so I just wanted to give my condolences publicly to her, and I know that many of my colleagues here on all sides of the House would do the same. And to express to her our best wishes for her, especially in this Christmas season.

I know we're not American, but I think it's a time for thanksgiving, so I do want to take a few times—a few moments here to thank you, Madam Speaker, for your leadership in this House; to thank the clerks for their hard work, the pages and all the other staff, the folks from Hansard, those people who provide security. I think of the leadership that we see of these men standing at the end of our Chamber.

I am just ever so grateful for the opportunity to speak here, and I thank you for all of that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

* (16:30)

Well, when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) will have 18 minutes remaining.

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, I will now interrupt the Throne Speech debate and call second reading of Bill 6.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 6—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So I will recognize the honourable Minister of Finance to do second reading on Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Her Honour Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: Has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message was tabled.

Mr. Fielding: I'm pleased to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 6, a very important bill before the Legislature. Everyone across Manitoba, our firefighters—everyone—you know, every day across Manitoba, our firefighters put themselves at risk for the benefit and protection of our communities and residents, literally saving lives at great risk to their own persons, to their own abilities.

When responding to emergencies firefighters are at serious risks which can be fatal, but there is also the added risk of occupational diseases, Madam Speaker, which manifest for accommodated services or accumulated years of exposure to 'carcigenin'—having a hard time speaking today—on the job despite the efforts to prevent and mitigate risks.

Manitoba was a very early adopter to presumptive legislation for cancers affecting firefighters. When the Workers Compensation Board was omitted in 2002—and added—add five presumptive cancers for firefighters with a unanimous support, I believe, in the House here, which is a very good thing. It's good when we all can come together to support some important legislation. The presumptive cancer under The Workers Compensation Acts means that the cancer is presumed to be occupational disease unless the contrary is proven.

Since 2002, the list of presumptive cancers under the act has expanded and the coverage was extended to voluntary—or, volunteer and part-time firefighters and at-risk fire commission—fire commissioner personnel. But some Canadian jurisdictions have since recognized a number of other cancers, including ovarian, penile cancers, cervical cancers, and adding thyroid and pancreatic cancers to their list of presumptive cancers for fighter fighters, Madam Speaker.

Through the bill, I'm proposing to amend the worker compensation act to expand Manitoba's list of presumptive cancers to include the following: ovarian cancer, 'cervialclane' cancer, thyroid cancer, pancreatic cancer and penile cancer. By adding these cancers we will ensure that adequate protections, Madam Speaker, are in place for both our male and female firefighters and at-risk fire 'commisionnel'—commissioner personnel and that Manitoba addresses the broad, broad array of presumptive cancers in Canada.

Madam Speaker, we're very proud to stand—as I know everyone in the House is—to stand with firefighters. We know that firefighters are such an important aspect of our life. We know that firefighters have sacrificed their lives not just in the last 10 years here with a number of firefighters, but when there is an emergency situation happening, if there's fires or some sort of critical case that does happen, you know, the rest of us are clearly moving outside of the room and moving outside of the building to get to safety, and firefighters are running the opposite way to protect Manitobans in so many different ways.

So, very proud of this legislation, Madam Speaker, to introduce this on second reading.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following

sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): On this presumptive coverage, I understand that it covers volunteer firefighters, and does it also cover industrial firefighters?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): It covers all firefighters that would be impacted, whether you're working—the majority of these firefighters, of course, are working in municipalities. Some are working for the Province, in terms of the Fire Commissioner's office.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, my recollection is that when we first introduced this legislation to have presumptive—or cancer being presumptively due to the occupation, that it was based on science which showed that the relative risk was two or greater in firefighters, compared with the general population.

I ask the minister, is this the case that the firefighters have a substantially increased relative risk of these five cancers, compared with the general population?

Mr. Fielding: It is important to recognize, obviously, if you're a firefighter, you're running into fires. You're exposed, obviously, to more different elements all the time as firefighters, so it's important to provide coverage. What I would recognize, the fact that in some areas—three provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario—include cervical cancer and ovarian cancer already. Ontario is the only province that currently—to ensure that we have coverage for penile cancer. I believe the territory of the Yukon has introduced some legislation but we want to make sure we're consistent. We want to make sure that firefighters—they're there to protect us—are very much supported similar to other provinces. So we're happy with this legislation.

Mr. Lindsey: And, certainly, I want to recognize the importance of covering this for firefighters, but I wonder, has the minister given any thought to other workplaces where workers are exposed to similar carcinogenic chemicals and different things in their normal workplace. Has the minister given any consideration to presumptive coverage for some of those workers as well?

Mr. Fielding: And this legislation specifically deals with firefighters in terms of the inherent risk that they go through. There is also other personnel, as I talked about with the Fire Commissioner's office. Volunteer firefighters, of course, are covered off with this, too. So we're always looking to make sure that Manitobans, specifically when you're in environments, are covered in so many different ways, but this legislation clearly just deals with firefighters.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, was—is there a question there?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, my question for the minister is this: There are other occupations where there is a much higher relative risk of certain diseases that may be cancer, may be other conditions, and I wonder if the government has done a survey of other occupations so that all occupations are treated fairly where there is a significant increase in risk of getting cancer or another condition.

Mr. Fielding: And, you know, again this legislation is focused towards firefighters. We know that the inherent risks that they have when they go into fires and put them out and protect Manitobans. We do, as an ongoing basis, obviously look at different areas where we can cover. So we're always open to addressing those types of issues as they come before us but this legislation, specifically, is to deal with firefighters, fire, you know, commissioner's office—those people that are obviously inherited through some of the risks.

We also want to make sure that we're not falling behind from what other provinces are providing the presumptive coverage. Obviously, this is already covered in some respects but the presumptive piece is important element and we want to make sure we're consistent with other provinces.

Mr. Lindsey: I appreciate the minister's answers where this specific legislation is very specific to firefighters.

Does the minister believe that perhaps maybe more could be done upfront by municipalities, cities, to reduce the risk or exposure levels to firefighters: increase funding for personal protective equipment, things like changes to a building code that make mandatory sprinklers in more buildings, changes to a building code that would change construction materials that produce a lot of these chemicals when they burn? Does the minister believe that more could be done there?

* (16:40)

Mr. Fielding: And, I guess, to deal with the funding issue, just as I'm the Minister of Finance, we obviously did have commitments with the federal government in partnership agreements. There was \$106 million flowed to City, municipalities, more related on the COVID front. That was money they could spend in any way possible.

Yes, we would love to work with municipalities to make sure that people are protected in so many different ways, so if there's areas we can work 'collaborately' with municipalities to make sure that firefighters are protected in a more, you know, important way, we think that is important.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), is there a question there?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, there certainly is, Madam Speaker, and my question is, in fact, a follow-up from the last one, but it deals in terms of prevention, and one of the things that the Province clearly has responsibility for is to mandate standard safety practices. There are a number of safety practices that have been recommended to decrease the risk of cancers in firefighters and includes not only PPE, but various other measures, and I wonder if the minister is looking at such standardized measures to reduce the incidence of cancer in firefighters.

Mr. Fielding: We're always open to looking at good ideas to protect firefighters. I can tell you, globally, in terms of safety, I'm on a committee with all the labour ministers for mobility, making sure that safety—this isn't necessarily related to cancer, but it's related to the same sort of equipment for, maybe if you're on a construction site, for instance, these types of things are areas that you'd like to make sure that there's consistency in there across the province. A little bit off-topic on this, but, no, we're absolutely interested in safety, anything we can do to make sure that emergency workers and other people that would be impacted would be there. We're always interested in reviewing those types of things, and so if there's some initiatives that the member would like us to look at, we certainly would look at them.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have any more questions?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I do. I have one more question.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: This is to the minister: Earlier today, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) talked

about the considerably higher incidence of burnout among nurses, particularly in current conditions, and he asked whether the government was doing anything in terms of considering the possibility of having a presumptive condition with—related to nurses and burnout.

I wonder if this is something that the minister is looking at, giving what appears to be a relatively significantly higher rate of burnout currently among nurses than in other professions.

Mr. Fielding: And we're always interested in different partnerships with nurses to make sure they're there. We've obviously recently signed an agreement, a long-term funding agreement, with the nurses, we think was really important. We did that at the bargaining table. That is something specifically, probably, that the MMU would be dealing with with the Minister of Health, but I would certainly be involved and interested in hearing any thoughts that they may have and other groups that would be a part of this that could give some recommendations on it. I'd love to hear from those that would be impacted by this.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If not, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I don't have a whole lot of comments. I mean, this bill makes sense. The initial presumptive coverage made sense when it was introduced once upon a time, and as we learn more about chemicals and interactions and the ill health that they cause we look forward to potentially seeing this presumptive coverage expand further in the future.

I did ask the minister if he had any thoughts towards expanding this particular type of legislation for presumptive coverage to other workers. I know, for example, workplace that I came out of, a lot of workers were exposed to different chemicals.

Looking particularly at underground miners, the incidence of cancer there is higher than the general public because of exposure to diesel fuel. Long-term confined space, things like silica exposure, again, are carcinogenic, asbestos exposure, all those things.

I hope that the minister will look at this piece of legislation as being a step towards recognizing some of those other workplaces.

It's unfortunate that when this government was first elected, one of the things they wanted to do—and

I believe they did do—was change the automatic adoption of the ACGIH TLV recommendations which provided a certain measure of protection for workers because the science went into studying what effects various chemicals would have on workers. And that science, for the most part, was irrefutable; there was enough advance notification that changes were being looked at. There was enough advance notification that changes were going to be implemented by the ACGIH group.

By delaying those automatic implementations—we don't necessarily have the wherewithal in this province to do those kind of in-depth studies that they looked at with that group to make those threshold limit values for chemicals. So I really want to encourage the minister to look at other industrial applications for presumptive coverage.

I would be remiss by not thanking Alex Forrest and the United Fire Fighters for advocating so strongly for their members. I appreciate the fact that they put a lot of time and effort into proving their case so that this government would accept the expanded presumptive coverage for firefighters. It's good that this has taken place.

I guess that one of the things that I'd be concerned with, particularly with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) being in charge of Workers Compensation, is, obviously, there will be some increased costs involved with accepting this. We've seen a government that really wanted to cut the amount that employers paid in their assessments for WCB, which really has affected workers who've gotten hurt and injured on the job.

So I want to make sure that the minister understands that while we need this kind of coverage—very specifically, we need to make sure that it doesn't negatively impact other workplace injuries coverage. So I just hope that the minister understands that that we can't take from this pocket to give to that pocket, that there needs to be sufficient finances in the Workers Compensation to cover all injuries in the workplace.

I think it's good that this step looks at cancers not just in what was traditionally seen as a male-dominated industry, but there's more women involved in firefighting and recognizing that these chemicals don't recognize gender. These hazards are not gender-specific; there are some diseases that become gender-specific, but the hazard is there for all firefighters. So

I think it's a good step that they've expanded that coverage to recognize some of that.

One of the questions I did ask the minister very briefly was about looking at things like building codes. If we can change some of the construction materials that are used in structures, then we can reduce the hazard, which is always better than compensation. If we don't expose workers, then they don't suffer the outcomes of those exposures.

So I'd really encourage us to sit down and seriously—and I recognize that a lot of that stuff comes from the National Building Code. But with the minister's input in these group settings that he speaks about with other ministers, it's an opportunity to really look at what we can do in some of those applications. Certainly, a lot of the more man-made products that go into building produce more chemical hazards, particularly when they burn, which increases the exposure rate for firefighters. So, hopefully, we can see some proactive changes there.

I really just want to conclude my remarks on this particular piece of legislation. Lots of times in this House we see acrimonious debate, and then that's not the case here. I think we're all in agreement that this is a positive step forward. It's a good thing. It's time to recognize these hazards and really recognize the people that are exposed to these hazards and the serious outcomes.

* (16:50)

So, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I think we'll be voting in favour of this particular piece of legislation. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to share a few words with my colleagues in the Chamber on this bill.

First of all, Manitoba Liberal MLAs will be supporting this legislation. We recognize that firefighters take incredible risks on behalf of all of us: saving us from fires, preventing fires and working very hard for the benefit of all of us. So we are pleased that the legislation is coming forward and we are very ready to support this legislation which would provide for a presumptive clause that with thyroid cancers, pancreatic cancers, ovarian cancers, cervical cancers and penile cancers that these would be due to the occupation of firefighting when these cancers occur in firefighters—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), on a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, I note the clock is not on and I'm wondering if this is the unlimited time or if there's just an administrative error. And if the clock is meant to be running, then that's fine. Just always concerned if that member could have unlimited time.

Madam Speaker: Well, I guess the member doesn't have a point of order, but he does have a point. There was a glitch and I believe the glitch has been fixed.

* * *

Mr. Gerrard: The honourable member who brought the point of forward need not have worried. I'm going to just take a few minutes and not going to try to extend the time. So—but—and anyway, I'm glad that that issue is corrected.

Yes, firefighters do a lot for all of us and keeping us safe. And now, in Winnipeg, firefighters have joined with paramedics and helping with health issues as well. So, first of all, a big thank you to firefighters in Manitoba, whether they are in Winnipeg or anywhere else in the province, and I'm very pleased that all firefighters are covered.

And I'm particularly pleased that the coverage—or, the presumptive nature of the coverage—is extended to cancers in women, or, cancers which are present in women and which firefighters are at higher risk for. So I think this an important step forward and that in today's world, it's really important that we're having measures which are fair for all and, in this case, all firefighters.

The second thing I would like to comment on is the fact that there are a number of other diseases where—which occur much more commonly in certain professions. They're not necessarily cancers. I spoke and mentioned, for example, burnout in nurses. And I think it's important that we do a survey of other conditions where the relative risk in a specific profession is much higher than in the general public and that we should be looking at ways in which we can include other occupations where they have very high relative risks of certain conditions in the approach to presumptive coverage.

And, hopefully, the government will have a look at this; you know, we we will certainly have a look at this within the Liberal Party and see where this is relevant, where it is important and where there are occupations which have much higher risks of certain conditions. And we're ready and willing to engage with people in other professions and to look very seriously at this matter. I think it's important that this be done on an evidence and scientific basis so that we don't have things taken forward in a frivolous way. But it is really important that we be fair not just to firefighters but to other professions where there are significant risks from their occupation and that we should acknowledge these and take these into account.

And, lastly, I would like to just mention a few things about prevention, which is clearly important in the measures that I have seen. I'll give you an example. This is from an article by Heather Buren, who cross-trained as a firefighter paramedic early in her career and has first-hand experience.

And she talks about tips to reduce exposure at the fire station: store turnouts in closed lockers and gear bags; keep doors closed between the apparatus floor and living areas; wipe down the vehicle cab interior every day; don't sweep the apparatus floor, vacuum with a certified HEPA shop vac and mop; and use your station's vehicle exhaust system.

She talks and provides five tips to reduce exposure in the fire ground: use SCBA from the initial attack through the completion of overhaul; use wet wipes to clean hands, neck, jaw and face after fire operations; do a gross decontamination of PPE and place in a sealed bag in an outside compartment of your vehicle if possible; shower immediately on returning to your station and thoroughly clean all PPE including helmet and SCBA.

So this is some ideas, and I hope to be able to explore when we have a committee meeting with Mr. Forrest what prevention measures are being taken and where there are things that the province can do better in this area.

So with those few comments, we look forward to this measure going to the committee stage and look forward to it passing expeditiously so that firefighters will be protected as optimally as they possibly can be.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak on debate?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

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

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I want to thank the—all the members of the House for their co-operation on moving this through second reading.

As previously agreed to by the House, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet tomorrow, Wednesday, December 1st, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider

the following: Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet tomorrow, Wednesday, December 1st, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

* * *

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

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

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Provincial Budget Forum	
		Sala	169
		Squires	170
		Fielding	171
Bill 8—The Court of Appeal Amendment and Provincial Court Amendment Act		Surgical Backlog	
Friesen	161	Lamont	172
Bill 207—The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act		Goertzen	172
Fontaine	161	Health-Care Workers	
Bill 205—The Filipino Heritage Month Act		Lamont	172
A. Smith	161	Goertzen	172
Tabling of Reports		Provincial Nominee Program	
Fielding	162	Lamoureux	173
		Ewasko	173
Members' Statements		Economic Stimulus	
Dr. Amanda Malboeuf		A. Smith	173
Squires	162	Reyes	173
Eating Disorder Treatment Services		Truck and Delivery Drivers	
Marcelino	162	Sandhu	173
Wayne Balcaen		Goertzen	173
Isleifson	163	Schuler	174
Louise Bridge Replacement		Petitions	
Maloway	163	Louise Bridge	
Early Learning and Child Care		Maloway	174
Lamoureux	164	Road Closures	
Oral Questions		Wiebe	175
Prairie Mountain Health		National Drug Plan	
Kinew	164	Lamoureux	176
Stefanson	164	Provincial Road 224	
Vaccine Policy at the Legislature		Lathlin	176
Kinew	165	Cochlear Implant Program	
Stefanson	165	Gerrard	176
Surgical Backlog		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Asagwara	166	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Gordon	166	Throne Speech	
U of M Faculty Association Labour Dispute		(Fifth Day of Debate)	
Moses	167	Brar	178
Ewasko	168	Moses	180
Menstrual Product Availability		Lindsey	182
Marcelino	169	Sandhu	185
Cullen	169	Maloway	186
		Wiebe	189
		Teitsma	193

Second Readings

Bill 6–The Workers Compensation Amendment

Act

Fielding 194

Questions

Lindsey 195

Fielding 195

Gerrard 195

Debate

Lindsey 196

Gerrard 197

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

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