

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

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

Vol. LXXVII No. 40 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 12, 2023

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James, Hon.	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>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): World War I began in 1914 and was a brutal and bloody four-year battle that left an indelible mark on the entire world.

Early in the war, Vimy Ridge, a region in France that provided commanding views of the Allied lines, was controlled by the Germans. This positioned the Germans to successfully defend three separate Allied attacks, which tragically resulted in the loss of over 150,000 soldiers.

With both the British and French having failed to capture the ridge, a plan was devised to send in Canadian Corps. The Canadians knew, if they were to have any hope against the German defences and artillery, that hope lay in careful planning, persistent practice and skillful execution.

Then, April the 9th, 1917, 15,000 Canadian soldiers, facing deplorable conditions and relentless shellfire, advanced towards the ridge, claiming victory on April the 12th in an attack now carved in history as the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

As we mark the 106th anniversary of this battle, we must remember that victory did not come without considerable consequences and loss, as almost 11,000 Canadians were injured or killed in action while many others carry battle scars with them.

Therefore, I rise in the House today to recognize these Canadian heroes for their incredible bravery, their immense sacrifice and their unwavering resolve to defend our country and protect our democracy.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our veterans and current members of the military who have joined us in the gallery today. And we'll be including their names in Hansard. I thank each of them for their dedication and devotion to duty, their pledge to place their service before themselves, and their deep desire to uphold the country's rich military history and legacy of service.

As freely and fairly elected members of this Legislative Assembly, I ask that we each take a moment to reflect on what they have given to us, and that we use this gift of freedom to become leaders who will strive to uphold the ideals of democracy our veterans fought to preserve and so many defended for us.

I thank all of them, past and present, for their service and I ask everyone to please join me with a round of applause to show our appreciation and our gratitude.

Thank you very much.

Canadian Veterans Manitoba and Supporters: Sven Leppick; Royal Canadian Legion: Master Warrant Officer Brian Rodgers; Joint Veterans Association of Manitoba: Donna Hartie; Portuguese Veterans Association: Pedro Correia, Carlos Oliveira, Albino Felizardo, Alcides de Almeida, Francisco Dario Coelho, Francisco Jose Coelho, Jose Manuel Raposo, Fatima R. Sousa; Canadian Military Intelligence Association: Robert Nash; Royal Canadian Military Institute of Manitoba: Lois Mallet, Arlene Van Ruitan; United Nations Peacekeepers Association, Winnipeg Chapter: Robert Pigueau, Len Barnsley;

Canadian Army Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry: Detachment Commander Joint Task Force (West), Domestic Operations, Detachment Manitoba, Major Nate Malazdrewicz; Canadian Army 3rd Canadian Division, 38 Canadian Brigade Group, The Service Battalion (Senate): Major Ervin Gerbrandt; Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders: Lieutenant Colonel Jon Baker, Rob Tisdale, Hugh O'Donnell; Camerons of Canada Association: David Gibson; Royal Winnipeg Rifles: Major Brian Orton, Master Warrant Officer Robert Falcon Ouellette and the Royal Winnipeg Rifles Drum Band; The Royal Winnipeg Rifles Regimental Senate: Gail Apser; The Fort Garry Horse: Lieutenant Colonel David Stones; ANAVETS: Linda O'Brien, Rosie Towers

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I'm going to do something a little bit out of sync from normal, but I think this would be the appropriate time to draw your attention to the members in the public gallery.

And I would like to indicate who they are: The Canadian army Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; the Canadian Army 3rd Canadian Division, 38 Canadian Brigade Group; the Canadian Military Intelligence Association; the royal Canadian military institute of Manitoba; and the United Nations peacekeepers association—Winnipeg chapter; and multiple veteran organizations.

So, we are honoured to have you here. On behalf of everybody, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Mr. Isleifson: Madam Speaker, I would like to seek leave if we could just observe a moment of silence for those who fought and did not make it.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

Churchill Bulldogs

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We're joined today by the Churchill Bulldogs, a hockey team from Churchill High School in the great constituency of Fort Rouge.

Now, the Bulldogs have, after only a couple years in existence, already risen to the heights of division 1 in the Manitoba Women's High School Hockey League. Now, one of the most dramatic moments came on March 14th, when the Bulldogs saved themselves

from elimination in the D1 championship by winning a tough game by a score of 5-3.

Along the way, many players distinguished themselves, including Selene Wozney, who was nominated for top defensive player and MVP; Sydney Stibbard for rookie of the year; Lexus Remillard for top goalie. And I'm happy to report that, last night, the coaches were named coaching staff of the year.

Now, they succeeded with the odds stacked against them. This team played most of the season with a short bench, often only having 11 skaters, going up against teams with much larger rosters. That's good cardio.

They succeeded. And even though they ended up finishing in second in that championship series, it's amazing to see the skills and the teamwork that they've put together.

Perhaps one of the biggest bright spots for the Bulldogs is that many of the players are in grades 9 and 10. So, not only did they compete against grade 11 and 12s on the other teams, many of the core group is going to be able to return next year to run it back.

Now, since these players have already seen the top of the mountain in their first couple years of high school, I think we can all expect them to be a force to be reckoned with for many years to come.

High school hockey is about more than athletic excellence, it's also about giving young people in Manitoba the chance to experience ups and downs in a respectful environment so they can be ready for the thrills and challenges life will throw their way. It's also about cultivating a love for the game so young people can embrace sport for life.

So, I want to thank the Churchill Bulldogs hockey team for making us so proud and to wish them all the best in wherever their athletic journeys take them next, whether it's playing at post-secondary, coaching or maybe even next year's division 1 finals.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition?

Mr. Kinew: Yes, I just want to mention that I've got the roster of the Churchill Bulldogs as well as the coaches and management that I'm including in the permanent record of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

Churchill Bulldogs Hockey Team—Players: Rhyann Beardy, Devyn Brown, Bella Carriere, Karsen Craven, Kadence Cress, Lindsey Hamilton, Isabella Huculak, Eva Manhard, Milla Manhard, Lexus Remillard, Faith Spence, Sydney Stibbard, Selene Wozney. Coaches: Taylor Gaulke, Keli Marnoch, Matt Varnes. Manager: Susan Chodirker

International Day of Pink

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the International Day of Pink, April 12th, 2023. The International Day of Pink is a worldwide antibullying and anti-homophobia event observed annually on the second Wednesday in April.

At the beginning of the school year, the École Van Belleghem parent council decided to support a student-designed shirt for Pink Shirt Day and International Day of Pink. Students in grades 4 to 8 were eligible to submit a design based on several criteria, including that the design must represent community and kindness. The school's gay-straight alliance group was asked to choose the design and to decide where the proceeds from the sale of the T-shirts would be donated. From the over 50 submissions, the group chose the kind-is-key design by Kaylee Stewart-Waldie, which I am wearing today. Proceeds are being donated to the Rainbow Resource Centre.

Madam Speaker, International Day of Pink seeks to create a more inclusive and diverse world. This day encourages people to stand up against bullying and aims to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community by encouraging everyone to wear a pink shirt.

Sitting in the gallery are Kaylee Stewart-Waldie, her mother, Sheri Stewart, and her grandparents, Ken and Lorraine Stewart. Also in the gallery is Donald Sorin, her teacher from École Van Belleghem, and Ashley Smith, director of advocacy at Rainbow Resource Centre.

Please join me in congratulating Kaylee for her creativity and T-shirt design, but more importantly, to thank her entire family, teacher and school community, as well as the Rainbow Resource Centre, for showing their support and solidarity against bullying and discrimination in all of its forms.

Thank you.

Skills Competition—Frontier Collegiate Participants

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Today, I stand to recognize some outstanding students from Frontier Collegiate in Cranberry Portage, Manitoba, along

with their instructors, who have helped them achieve their goals. This week, they are in Winnipeg to compete in the Manitoba skills competition.

With us today in the House are: Raymond James, who aspires to be a carpenter, start his own business and is focused on obtaining his Red Seal certification; Doyle Hutchinson, a graduate of Frontier Collegiate who plans to pursue a Red Seal in automotive technology and possibly earn a Red Seal in heavy duty mechanics as well; Jolisse Hart Brightnose, who is set to graduate this year—her goal is to become a Red Seal hairdresser and help others feel good about themselves; Dillon Dysart, another graduate, who returned to hairstyling program to solidify her knowledge of the craft after the pandemic. Dillon aspires to become a Red Seal hairdresser.

Last and certainly not least, Simon Hutchinson, who could not join us today. Simon will be competing in a new job search category at the Manitoba skills competition over Zoom and is currently enrolled in the automotive technology program.

These certification programs are an asset to the youth of northern communities, and these students are a proof of that. I was—like to also especially recognize the presence of instructors Nolan Jacobson, Sheldon Yaremchuk, Glennis Valladares, who have accompanied their students here for the Manitoba skills competition.

Raymond, Doyle, Jolisse, Dillon and Simon, I celebrate your dedication to your goals and wish you the best of luck in your respective competitions tomorrow, and I ask all my colleagues to join us in welcoming them to the Manitoba Legislature.

Maurice Chaput Arena

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Today, I stand to recognize the Maurice Chaput Arena fundraising committee and the town of Ste. Anne.

The Maurice Chaput Arena was one of the finalists for the Kraft Hockeyville 2023, and although they did not make it—or, take home the grand prize, their efforts were truly inspiring. The town of Ste. Anne, in a matter of weeks, rallied together with the guidance of the fundraising committee, and remarkable things were done.

There were signs in every window, both stationary and moving windows, jerseys on every back. There were local makers creating the most gorgeous cookies, memorabilia, stickers and signs. We had our youngest community members spending all their time creating

videos and signs. We also had our most experienced community members dressed up in hockey gear creating the most memorable videos. They reached out to every possible news outlet and radio station to have some airtime.

On the days that voting were—for the finalist opened, the entire town turned orange and black to represent the Ste. Anne Aces hockey team.

Local businesses and organizers opened their doors for all to enjoy and were happy to provide things for everyone to come take part in. There were musicians and snacks, crafts and face painting and games for the kids. There were live broadcasts from radio stations and many shout-outs from people across Canada.

The community spirit I witnessed and was so thankful to be part of was something truly 'astounding.' The entire town of Ste. Anne rallied together and truly did everything possible they could do to win.

Kraft Hockeyville may be over, but the fundraising efforts for the Maurice Chaput Arena have not. The fundraising committee has not stopped the momentum and are already planning for more events for the Ste. Anne arena.

I would like to thank the fundraising committee—Sarah Normandeau, Erin Muzylak [*phonetic*], Chantal Proulx, Riesha Pattyn—and all the others who helped.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Allied Health Professionals Collective Bargaining Contract

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): People in Manitoba want to see our health-care system repaired from years of cuts under this PC government. Manitobans know that Brian Pallister caused a lot of damage, and that this Premier was his Health minister.

And one policy that's continued from Mr. Pallister's time right through to this current Premier's time in office is the lack of a contract for the Manitoba allied health-care professionals.

Now, what that means is that paramedics working in rural Manitoba have not had a contract for five years; it means lab techs, respiratory therapists have not had a contract for five years and, consequently, their wages have been frozen.

This, at a time of a health-care staffing crisis, when we need to do everything we can to retain health-care workers at the bedside.

The question for the Premier is: Why has she continued Brian Pallister's policy of freezing wages for allied health professionals?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, it's difficult to know where to begin with the litany of false accusations once again put on the record in this Chamber by the Leader of the Opposition.

But I will inform Manitobans with the facts, Madam Speaker. The fact of the matter is: We have a \$668-million increase to the health-care budget alone this year. That's a 9.2 per cent increase; that's an increase, not a decrease. Up, not down.

But what I will say, Madam Speaker, is I want to thank all of those allied health-care workers for the incredible work that they have been doing day in and day out to help Manitobans who are suffering from illnesses and Manitobans—in Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition knows that this is part of a negotiation that is taking place right now. It would be inappropriate to interfere in those negotiations.

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

Mr. Kinew: This is not an issue that cropped up overnight. It's been five years that this government has frozen the wages of paramedics working in rural Manitoba, lab techs, respiratory therapists and many other health-care professionals that we should be doing everything we can to keep working on the front lines of our health-care system here in Manitoba.

And yet, for five years this government has refused to sign a contract with them. For five years, they've kept their wages frozen. After half a decade of this policy, we can only conclude that it is the expressed intent of this government to disrespect these health-care workers.

* (13:50)

So, during this health-care crisis, when Manitobans want to see investment in health care and not more PC cuts, the question the Premier needs to answer is: Why the disrespect for allied health-care professionals?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, what would be disrespectful would be to somehow interfere in the collective bargaining process in the province of Manitoba.

We have too much respect for those workers—the allied health-care workers—for the incredible work that they do, Madam Speaker, and we look forward to seeing an outcome sooner rather than later.

Of course, we want this to be resolved as well, Madam Speaker, but it would be inappropriate to interfere in the collective bargaining process.

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

Mr. Kinew: U of M teachers, IBEW electricians, the list goes on and on, nurses included. These are groups whose negotiations have been interfered with by the PCs.

Now, all of a sudden they want to cite non-interference as a guiding principle for this anti-labour, anti-worker government.

But here's the thing, Madam Speaker, this government has had five years to negotiate a deal with these allied health-care professionals. The impact today is that Manitobans living in rural communities are waiting longer for paramedic services because those wages have been frozen.

Many communities are seeing health centres close because of frozen wages.

How does the Premier explain to the people of Manitoba that she has frozen the wages for our front-line health-care heroes for half a decade?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is so desperate to get re-elected, he will say and do anything on the floor of this Chamber.

But, Madam Speaker, what's important to—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —Manitobans is that they hear the facts. The fact of the matter is, the Leader of the Opposition and all of those members opposite know that we have invested more in health care this year. In fact, a—\$668 million more this year alone.

When members opposite had the chance—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —to stand up in favour of health care and more money for health care in the province of Manitoba, what did they do? They voted against it.

We will take no lessons from the members opposite.

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

Implementation of Project Nova Impact on Autopac Rates

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): There is a crisis at Manitoba Public Insurance right now, and it goes right to the top.

It goes to the mismanagement of this PC government, and it's costing you money. Autopac rates were supposed to go down by 10 per cent this year, but instead, because the PCs are not good with provincial finances or with management, we are seeing an increase.

Everyone's Autopac payments went up—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —on April 1 of this year because of their mismanagement of Project Nova.

Again, Manitobans want to see tech modernization, but not like this, not in a way that is going to cost them more money.

So, will the Premier please tell the House, will Project Nova's increased costs cost Manitobans more on their car insurance next year?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, the Leader of the Opposition seems to want to interfere in the Public Utilities Board process, Madam Speaker.

He believes that he knows better than the Public Utilities Board how to deal with the rates at Manitoba Public Insurance and all of our Crown corporations, Madam Speaker. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'll say that that would be inappropriate to interfere in the Public Utilities Board process, Madam Speaker. We respect the process. We will allow that process to move forward.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, this Premier's own minister just sent a directive to MPI interfering with their application at the Public Utilities Board.

They told MPI that they couldn't submit a general rate application this year. So, I don't know what you call it, if it's the Premier who's unaware what her minister is doing, or if she's in here trying to—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—mislead the people of Manitoba. But the one thing we can all agree on is this: your car insurance—your car insurance payments are going up this year and it's because of their mismanagement. So, we know that car insurance payments are going up this year.

But will the Premier tell the House whether her mismanagement of Project Nova will cost you more next year as well?

Mrs. Stefanson: We, on this side of the House, believe in a strong Public Utilities Board that sets the rates for Manitoba Public Insurance and other Crown corporations, Madam Speaker.

We respect that process. In fact, we respect it so much, Madam Speaker, that we put \$2 million towards the Public Utilities Board to strengthen that independent process. And what did the Leader of the Opposition do, and every single member across the way? They voted against it.

Once again, Madam Speaker, we will take no lessons from the members opposite.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the PC's mismanagement is costing Manitobans more money this year.

There were fewer people driving during the pandemic. As a result, MPI rates should've gone down this year. But because there was mismanagement over Project Nova—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—because the PCs failed to oversee what was happening right underneath their noses, now your car insurance payments are going up, when they should have been—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Now, we believe that the people of Manitoba deserve a straight answer on this question. The Premier is clearly dodging this question, so I will ask it for a third time and let's see if she dodges it a third time, as well.

Are Autopac payments—are the car insurance payments of people in Manitoba going to go up next year, the same way that they've gone up this year?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to dodge the facts.

Don't let the facts get in the way of telling the truth, Madam Speaker. The Public Utilities Board—we invested more than \$2 million to strengthen the Public Utilities Board. We believe in that independent process.

Also, Madam Speaker, there were two sets of rebate cheques that were given to Manitobans—to Manitoba auto drivers, in the way of those rebate cheques. *[interjection]*

Well, no one's as perfect as the person from St. Johns. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: The Leader of the Opposition should know that the Public Utilities Board—we have been strengthening the Public Utilities Board. Each and every member opposite voted against that.

They don't want a strong Public Utilities Board. We do, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

HIV Infection Rate Prevention and Treatment

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Under this PC government the number of HIV and sexually transmitted blood-borne infections in Manitoba are skyrocketing.

We've recently learned that there are already 74 new HIV cases this year. That puts us on track to have 325 new HIV cases in 2023, Madam Speaker; even higher than the 280 new HIV cases in 2022.

This is an incredibly alarming trend and it cannot be allowed to continue. Yet, rather than doing literally anything, the PCs would rather ignore the issue altogether.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain why she has failed to take any actions to address the skyrocketing rates of HIV in our province?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Our government takes this disease very, very seriously, and we are actively working with public health to improve the prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS.

That is why I was pleased, as Health Minister, to add coverage for pre-exposure 'prophylactic', which we refer to as PrEP to the provincial Pharmacare formulary.

* (14:00)

The member for Union Station says that this is doing nothing, Madam Speaker. Many would disagree. The drug helps prevent the contraction of HIV from both sexual contact and through injection drug use.

We also invested \$2.3 million over three years to support the development and implementation of an Indigenous-led S-T-B-B-U testing and contact tracing strategy.

Actions, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the increase in new HIV cases in Manitoba is a public health crisis, yet the PCs have done nothing to address it.

People with HIV are not being connected to the treatment that they need.

On the other hand, community organizations like Sunshine House's Mobile Overdose Prevention Site are stepping up and showing what can be done. They've tested 200 people in just 12 weeks, connecting people to HIV treatment, a rapid pathway to treatment, faster than the WRHA.

But now, the PCs are trying to stop their life-saving efforts with Bill 33.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) do the right thing and commit to stop trying to hamper the life-saving efforts of organizations like Sunshine House?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Bill 33 is putting the safety of Manitobans and the community members first: safety for individuals who are seeking addiction support services, ensuring that there are medical staff available to help them if something goes wrong and connecting them to pathways within the community to ensure their recovery.

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

MLA Asagwara: In just a matter of years, under this PC government, under this Premier, we have been set back decades from where we should be in terms of HIV in Manitoba. We know the PC government's approach is not working; it is failing. It is making things worse.

And rather than help, the PCs are using Bill 33 to try and shut down community organizations that are doing vital work across our province.

That just does not make any sense, Madam Speaker. Preventing and treating HIV infections saves money and it saves lives.

Will the Premier admit that her approach has failed and commit to taking real action on HIV today?

Ms. Gordon: Real action is what members on this side of the House has done, unlike what they did for 17 years, which was nothing, Madam Speaker.

We are also investing \$632,000 over the next two years—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —to ensure we have more nurses and lab assistants to aid in clinical HIV/AIDS services. We've extended coverage for HIV post-exposure treatment, enhanced coverage for HIV treatment for those also experiencing financial or administrative burdens, Madam Speaker.

We are taking action; we'll continue to work with public health. Again, it's the opposite of what members opposite did for 17 years.

Institutional Safety Officers Timeline for Placement

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, it's been four years since the bill authorizing institutional safety officers was passed in this House.

Institutional safety officers were supposed to increase safety and security at health-care facilities and 'renew' demands on police services.

However, currently, there are still zero institutional safety officers at our health-care facilities. While the PCs continue to twiddle their thumbs, health-care workers continue to wait for that increased security.

Can the minister explain why he has once again broken his promise to our health-care workers?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member seems to be unencumbered by the truth today, Madam Speaker.

Institutional safety officers—the program was developed, it was instituted and there's a class graduating, actually, I think last week, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

An encouragement to members to be careful with the language, using such words as unencumbered by the truth is getting very, very close to crossing the line. So, a caution to members.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, it's nurses who are telling the truth when they say that, at Health Sciences Centre, they are concerned about their safety. They're saying that they don't feel safe even when they're just walking to their—to and from their cars.

They want the PCs to finally follow through on their four-year-old promise to establish these institutional safety officers and get them into our health-care facilities. Institutional safety officers could help increase the facility security and, most importantly, protect our nurses and make sure everybody reaches their destination safely.

It's time for the PCs to listen and start acting for our health-care workers.

Can the minister explain why he has failed to establish even a single institutional safety officer at our health-care facilities?

Mr. Goertzen: The government committed to creating an institutional safety officer program, one that never existed before under the former government. It created that program. It developed training standards with the support of others to ensure those standards were appropriate.

A class was graduated last week. I believe that the University of Manitoba has hired a number of them and I'm sure the health-care system might be interested in that as well.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, nurses are interested in it, Madam Speaker, and they're not interested in more of these PC promises with no action. The nurses are sounding the alarm at HSC, saying they don't even feel safe at their jobs. They want the PCs to just finally follow through on this promise to establish these safety officers at the health-care facilities that they work at.

MNU president, Darlene Jackson, said, quote, it feels like the Province is not taking this seriously.

On this side of the House, we believe that everyone should have a safe workplace, especially our health-care heroes that we all count on.

Can the minister explain why he is not prioritizing safety of our health-care workers?

Mr. Goertzen: I'll try to explain it to the member again. The institutional safety officer program was created and individuals are being graduated.

We also created the community safety officer program, and now we're expanding that program to ensure that those individuals can have greater powers. We've created integrated task force with the Winnipeg Police Service, with the RCMP.

We've created all of those things. We're supporting all of those things. I suppose if the NDP were ever to get back into government, they would do what they promised to do and defund all of it, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Emergency Room Closures Impact on Health-Care System

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, Madam Speaker, this past week marks a sad, sad anniversary for Manitoba's health-care system. It was six years ago that this PC government, under failed Brian Pallister and all of these PC MLAs, including the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), announced that they were closing ERs at Concordia, Seven Oaks and Victoria.

The chaos that the PCs created with their cuts and their closures is well documented. It's led to deadly consequences for Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

So, does the Premier think that closing these three ERs helped or hurt the health-care system?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): All of this from the previous administration that closed 20 rural emergency departments—permanently closed them, Madam Speaker.

But our government is investing in health care. Budget 2023, historic \$8-billion investment; \$668 million more to strengthen health care for Manitobans, Madam Speaker. And more money for the diagnostic and surgical recovery backlog, \$130 million; \$120 million to the Pharmacare program.

What did members opposite do? They voted against it, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Fontaine: When the Premier was asked in Estimates if she thought that these ER closures were a good decision, she said, and I quote, there were some

improvements that came from their PC cuts under Brian Pallister.

* (14:10)

Again, these are the cuts that she supported and celebrated and particularly as the Health minister and one of the failed Health ministers at the time.

Yet we know, Madam Speaker, that doctors, nurses and other health professionals warned, at the very beginning, PCs that this plan was, and I quote: doomed to fail.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) acknowledge the impact of this ill-conceived decision by the PCs to close these ERs has pushed our public health-care system into crisis?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, the member opposite would do well to remember their record of 20 permanent closures of rural ER departments.

But here are the facts from question period, April 28th, 2014: then failed Health minister Erin Selby said: in the Virden ER there were two doctors that have left to go to another jurisdiction within Manitoba. It means we cannot keep that ER open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We just don't have the staff there right now to do it.

Another failed NDP Health minister, Sharon Blady, question period, June 16th, 2015: We recognize that physician recruitment and retention to rural hospitals isn't just an issue here in Manitoba; it's an issue across the country.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Fontaine: Six years ago Brian Pallister, with the support of this Premier and every single PC MLA, started their plan to close ERs and undermine our public health-care system. And Manitobans are paying the price to this very day, Madam Speaker.

Every day patients and families have horror stories about their lack of access to health care and the supports that they need. And all they get from the Premier and all of her failed Health ministers are more excuses and blaming everybody under the sun.

Doctors and nurses are forced to go to the press before they get any type of action from this government, and even that, at best, is really lacklustre.

When will the Premier admit that the PC's so-called plan for health care was an abject failure and

when will she get up in the House and apologize to Manitobans?

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Gordon: More on their record: The closures of the 20 rural emergency departments affected over 100 communities. We're still digging out from the dark days of the NDP, Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: Here are some examples: In Southern Health: Emerson, Altona—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —was closed; Pembina, Manitou, Boundary Trails, was closed; McGregor, Portage la Prairie, was closed; Gladstone, Neepawa—closed. Closed, closed, closed. That is the record of their administration, Madam Speaker.

We are still rolling back the dark days of the NDP.

RRC Polytech and Assiniboine Community College Possibility of Collective Strike Action

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): It's clear, Madam Speaker, the PCs don't respect workers in Manitoba's colleges. They have attacked and disrespected them for years while making cuts year after year.

And just last week, at Red River College Polytechnic and Assiniboine Community College, their staff were forced to consider striking. And years of disrespect by the PC government caused it.

It's clear the PCs have made a bad situation and now they're making it even worse.

Can the minister explain clearly today why her government is treating staff at Manitoba's colleges so poorly?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): And I do want to thank all of the staff who do work at our Manitoba post-secondary institutions, including our colleges, for the hard work they're doing and for the response to our labour market needs.

Madam Speaker, there is a process known as collective bargaining. It is between the employer and the employees. That is respected; it is protected rights for both parties to negotiate in good faith with the students' best interests in mind. And that is exactly what the staff and the employers did, and I commend them for that process.

We will not be interfering in that process, unlike what the NDP have always done.

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

Mr. Moses: The reality is, is that thanks to years of interference and disrespect by both Brian Pallister and this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), staff at RRC Polytech and ACC have been forced to consider strike action.

And staff at these institutions do essential work to train the future workers in our economy, but they have been disrespected and ignored for years by this government, and workers are being forced to consider a strike.

So, can the minister simply tell the House why she is failing staff at RRC Polytechnic and ACC?

Mrs. Guillemard: Voting for strike action has been a right of employees for years now, even under the NDP. That is not a process that we're going to interfere with. That is a choice between the employers and the employees as they negotiate.

Members opposite are so eager to get involved in this process. I suggest the member opposite has the option to resign his seat, apply for a job within one of these institutions and offer to sit at the negotiation table.

But debating it on the floor is not the right way to do this. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

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

Mr. Moses: After years of disrespect and interference by this PC government, the staff at RRC Polytech and ACC are considering a strike.

Instead of uplifting essential staff who do critical work in Manitoba, the PCs have refused to come to the table. Their wages are not competitive. It makes life more difficult for staff, and they're being forced to seek work elsewhere.

We've already seen two strikes at the University of Manitoba, that was forced because of the actions of this PC government.

Now, will the minister simply take some action, learn from her government's failures and fund post-secondary adequately; and will she do so today?

Mrs. Guillemard: I know that the members opposite, including the member who asked the question, don't

like to listen. And they certainly don't like to hear that we actually have a very good relationship with our post-secondary institutes and the leadership.

And I would encourage the member opposite to really reread some of these protected rights within employers and employees, and maybe learn a little bit about the negotiation process. We encourage both parties to continue the negotiations, keeping the students' best interest in mind.

I encourage the member opposite to also advocate for the students' best interest.

Thank you.

Wasagamack First Nation Airport Request for Construction

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): The residents of Wasagamack First Nation have been promised an airport for 50 years, and this month is the 25th anniversary of a tragic helicopter crash that took the lives of the pilot, Jacques Nollette, and two elders, Flora Harper and Bernadette Harper.

Now, Wasagamack has 2,500 residents; it's the only community in the province with over 700 residents not to have an airport and the costs to the community are colossal: millions of dollars a year for helicopters, just to get to another airport nearby to fly to safety.

One member of the community told me this morning he's been in many meetings where this airport was promised, and he'd like to see it before he dies. He deserves that, and so does his community. They're in the gallery today with Chief Harper.

Will the government help build and fund the Wasagamack airport, and if not, why not?

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I just want to welcome Chief Harper here. I know we've had a number of conversations, Madam Speaker, about Wasadmack *[phonetic]* airport opportunities.

And, Madam Speaker, I'm not quite sure if the member from St. Boniface knew that we've made some major announcements, and about \$80 million just in airports alone in the North. We're also looking at 400—almost at \$500 million for the—infrastructure in the North.

And we'll continue having conversations with the—with this Wasagamack First Nation to make sure that we look at opportunities in the North, Madam Speaker.

* (14:20)

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

Mr. Lamont: Manitoba governments will let Hydro build dams and companies build mines on First Nations but they don't have any problems—and they don't have any problems taking resources and money out of First Nations, but they won't give back.

First Nations are all Manitobans too, and this provincial government gets plenty of federal funding for every person on reserve that they don't pass along. It's long past due time we did. I heard from residents this morning that the evacuation of Wasagamack during a 2017 forest fire was total chaos.

The benefits of this airport are crystal clear. Better medical care will save lives while reducing millions in extra transportation, lower food costs, costs for everything, even access to critical minerals. It's shovel-ready because they've been waiting to build it for 50 years.

Why isn't this a top priority for this government?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, this is a great opportunity for the member from St. Boniface to come to the table to ask his Prime Minister that Liberals in the government right now to come to the table.

I actually met with Patty Hajdu, and I had a list of—many list—Cindy Woodhouse was actually at the table, Madam Speaker, about Wasagamack First Nation.

So, I'd tell the member right there to go talk to his Prime Minister.

Small Day Cab and Semi Truck Operators Request for Meeting With Minister

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Owner and operators of small day-cab trucks and semi-trucks play a critical role in our economy.

A number of my constituents came to see me at McDonald's and expressed concern and frustration as the Transportation Operations divisions have been causing serious and ongoing problems, which is ultimately forcing some truck drivers to leave the industry.

Will the minister responsible agree to meet with representatives who are truck drivers themselves to discuss the issue?

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I want to thank the member for the question.

Madam Speaker, quite often we meet with Manitoba Trucking Association, and all the time we actually have conversations that—what we can do better when it comes to our transportation, our highways. Our—the Trucking Association has come to many of our—basically, announcements about Highway 75, all of the infrastructure that—they're backing us when it comes to over \$400 billion of infrastructure spending just in the next five years.

And we'll continue investing and making sure that the safety for truck drivers, make sure that we recruit more truck drivers for this province and continue doing that economically.

It's important for this province, Madam Speaker.

Retinal Specialist Pilot Project Dauphin and Parkland Area

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Many of the constituents and neighbours in the Parkland region previously had to travel over three hours to Winnipeg to access retinal specialists. These trips created unnecessarily financial burdens and added additional stress for patients and families in need of care.

Our government heard from these patients about their concerns, and we implemented the first-ever retinal specialist project for Dauphin and the Parkland region.

Can the minister elaborate on this project and our government's investments to bring retinal specialists to the Dauphin and Parkland region?

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

Madam Speaker, this pilot project will bring retinal specialists to Dauphin once a month to provide care in the community and the surrounding region. On April 3rd, I was pleased to see Dr. Josh Manusow and his team off to Dauphin, where they were able to successfully see 40 patients.

The project will gradually increase to serve 80 to 100 patients each visit and will treat a wide variety of eye conditions, including age-related macular degeneration, hereditary diseases, diabetic retinopathy, retinal detachment, eye cancers and patients who have experienced severe eye trauma.

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to providing care closer to home, and we are proud to be implementing projects such as this.

Aquatic Facility for Thompson Increase in Construction Costs

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): It has been more than four years since the Norplex Pool in Thompson was permanently shut down.

Recent cost estimates for a new pool in Flin Flon come back with construction inflation that have increased by more than 89 per cent, which doesn't bode well for the project in Thompson.

Will this government step up to the plate with an increased share in funding so we can see this project get built for northern Manitobans?

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I'm proud to be part of a government that has made significant investments in infrastructure in this project. Hundreds of millions of dollars in this year's budget alone, not to mention the hundreds of millions that have already been delivered and over a billion forecasted over the coming years to be done each and every year. We are going to be making significant investments in infrastructure.

Now, I invite the member, if he wants to discuss a particular project with my department, he's more than welcome to do that. I look forward to having a conversation with him.

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

Mr. Redhead: Obviously, that answer didn't have nothing to do with the situation in Thompson and the construction of a new pool.

We know that costs have gone up over the years, and when Thompson had put this request forward, it was within reason. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Redhead: The costs have gone up. Inflation has happened, and this government's commitments haven't even come to—close to what Thompson needs to see this project be built.

Will they step up for northern Manitobans and commit to fully funding the aquatic centre in Thompson?

Mr. Teitsma: As I mentioned in my first response, I'm happy to sit down with the member and to look in more detail at this particular project.

I'm pleased at the significant, \$4.9-million commitment our Province has already made. This adds—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —to an—a long list of significant infrastructure investments. My neighbouring seat partner here has talked about how his department is making significant investments in the North in Infrastructure, and the same thing is happening here in my department.

I look forward to sitting down with the member and having a further conversation. Certainly, construction inflation is something that's been impacting our province, but we are—

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: (2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captured—captioned the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —regional library is published in a 2008 document titled heritage buildings in the RM De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

(4) The JRL and Red River Valley School—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order.

I just—there's so much noise in here right now, I'm sure Hansard's having a difficult time hearing the member that is trying to read a petition, so I'm going to ask members as they're departing to please keep it down.

Mr. Altomare: (4) The JRL and Red River Valley School Division have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students that are bused in from the neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleeferfield [*phonetic*], are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

* (14:30)

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that the JRL provides the student population of École Héritage School, as well as the communities of the Village de St-Pierre-Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that a memorandum of understanding between the Red River Valley School Division and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this potential building and its status in the community; and

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by Paule Pélouquin, Julien Gauthier and Raymond Maynard, as well as many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read, they are deemed to be received by the House.

Foot-Care Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Madam Speaker, this petition has been signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

Ekosi.

Louise Bridge

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of

the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

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

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

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, the 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 Louise bridge to be placed just east of the current bridge, not to the west of the current bridge, not to the east, as originally proposed.

(10) The City expropriated—expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn Avenue from Watt Street to the 111-year-old bridge is complete; and

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Community Living disABILITY Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Currently, people with specific or non-specific disabilities, or a combination of disabilities such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory or language processing disorders and/or non-verbal learning disabilities, will be denied access to services under the Province of Manitoba's community living and disability services, CLDS, if their IQ is above 80.

People with these or other borderline cognitive functioning issues also have extremely low adaptive skills and are not able to live independently without supports.

Recently, it's become widely recognized that access to CLDS should not be based solely on IQ, which is only a measure of a person's ability to answer questions verbally or in writing in relation to mathematics, science or material which is read.

Very often, persons with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of those disabilities have specific needs related to their executive function for support when they're adults or are transitioning to adulthood, which are not necessarily connected to their IQ.

Executive function is the learned ability to do the normal activities of life, including being organized, being able to plan and to carry out plans and adapt to changing conditions.

Those who have major defects in executive function have a learning disability requiring assistance under CLDS to be able to make a contribution to society and be self-sustaining.

Provision of CLDS services to individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of these disabilities or executive function 'disabil', would free them from being dependent on Employment and Income Assistance and have the potential to make an important change in the person's life.

* (14:40)

Newfoundland and Labrador have now recognized that access to services should be based on the nature of the disability and the person's needs, rather than on IQ.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to change the requirements for accessing community living and disability services so that said requirements are based on the needs of individuals with specific, or non-specific disabilities, including executive function or a combination of disabilities rather than solely on the basis of their IQ.

Signed by Kalda [*phonetic*] Attiyat, Nate King, Diana Redman and many, many others.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call, for second reading debates this afternoon, bills number 27, 18 and 25.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second readings of bills 27, 18 and 25 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 27—The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will start by calling second reading of Bill 27, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) that Bill 27, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill will establish a reverse onus on the burden of proof of consent in civil court—so, distinguishing it from criminal court—proceedings regarding non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

The Intimate Image Protection Act came into force on January 15th of 2016, so I acknowledge that there are other governments that have been involved in this. That's why I think it's a common concern of all members of the House.

However, the changes here would now require there to be an individual who is bringing the civil case—would not longer have to bear the burden of proof that they didn't provide permission for the intimate

image to be distributed. It would be the requirement of the individual who distributed the intimate image to show that they had the permission to distribute the image. So that is the reverse onus.

The act currently requires the government to make supports available to assist people who have had or believe that they are about to have an intimate image distributed without their consent—that's with the amendments.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In addition to establishing a new requirement for government to assist people who have had an intimate image distributed without their consent, the statute created the tort of non-consensual distribution of an intimate image. This provision allows a person, whose intimate image is distributed without consent, to sue the person who distributed the image.

Currently, as I already indicated, the plaintiff, who is the person whose image is distributed, is required to prove that the distributor did not have consent to distribute the image. This bill, as noted, reverses that onus, so that the person who distributed the image must now prove that they had consent of the individual whose picture—whose image was distributed.

This amendment to the legislation will increase access to civil remedies for plaintiffs whose intimate images have been shared without their consent. It will also bring Manitoba into alignment with other jurisdictions who've created a reverse onus for torts or civil proceedings like this.

The—under Manitoba's Privacy Act, in a lawsuit involving a tort or violation of privacy, the defendant carries the burden of proof to show that the person consented, where they raised it as a defence. Additionally, legislation that addresses the non-consensual distribution of intimate images in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, PEI, and in Newfoundland and Labrador, feature a reverse onus condition.

So, as indicated, there are other provinces that have already gone down this road. The bill may strengthen social deterrents to participate in such an offence. Placing the onus on defendants to show consent in the distribution was recommended by the uniform Law Reform Commission in a January 2021 report.

In addition to supporting priorities identified in the framework to address gender-based violence, the amendment would support access to justice, a key priority of the government and this department within

the Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy, and is a principle of a democratic society.

The Canadian centre of child protection, sometimes referred to as C3P, which is the agency designated under The Intimate Image Protection Act to provide supports to victims of non-consensual distribution of intimate images, supports this amendment.

Just as a closing comment, because I know there'll be questions as part of the question-and-answer period at second reading, I want to thank the Canadian Centre for Child Protection for the work that they do, not just in this particular area of the law, but in the number of different aspects and areas.

And I know in speaking with them over the last few years, they've seen more predatory behaviour online. Partially, I think, because of the fact that many people were not able to often leave their homes or their computers, for much of the world over a two-year period, and that created more individuals online and created more opportunity for individuals to be victimized online. So they've seen a significant increase, along with other organizations, like the Joy Smith Foundation, who works to eradicate human trafficking, both in Manitoba and around the world, have indicated that they've seen an increase in the predatory behaviour of those who would perpetrate human trafficking in our province and beyond.

And so, we know that the challenge continues to grow. We know that there is more work to do. We've announced additional resources when it comes to things like human trafficking and predatory behaviour on children, including working with the Toba Centre to integrate officers into the Toba Centre and ensure that there's a province-wide response and standard for helping children who've been victimized, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But this particular change might seem like a small change to some, but reversing of the onus is important. Because individuals who have their intimate image distributed without their permission often face a lifetime of consequences trying to ensure that that image is taken down off the Internet. It's a very, very difficult task and can be very, very challenging.

So, this is not something that will put an end, sadly, to this particular issue. But it certainly sends a signal, and it will help victims so that they don't feel revictimized when they're having to reach a standard of proof that should rightly be borne upon the individual who is distributing the intimate images.

So, with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I don't think it's a partisan issue. I acknowledge that the

originating bill came forward under a previous government, so I'm sure that all members of this House will find this worth supporting and give it speedy passage.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. I have to admit, I missed part of his 'introductory' comments, and so I just wanted to maybe ask a question he's already answered, and that is, who was consulted—who did his department and himself consult when crafting this bill?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I only partly addressed that and I can provide, I'm sure, the member a full list of those who were consulted.

But, certainly, one of the key groups that was consulted was the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, who was named specifically in the bill with some responsibilities for providing support for those individuals who are victimized by this particular action. So, it has the support of C3P, the child centre for protection, and I know that there are many other like-minded agencies who support it as well.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Can the minister confirm whether the provisions of this bill will be retroactive and to include cases that are currently ongoing?

Mr. Goertzen: I can confirm at second reading on that question. But, in the normal course of proceedings, bills are not normally retroactive to cases that have already been adjudicated or that have begun prior to legislation changing; but I'll confirm at second reading.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the minister tell the House what other measures are being taken to support victims of non-consensual intimate image distribution?

* (14:50)

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I thank the member for the question. So, as I mentioned, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection itself provides and is required to provide support under this bill.

Of course, there's a number of other areas where individuals who found themselves to be a victim of this crime can find support, not the least of which would be the Victim Services branch of Manitoba Justice, where we have workers who specifically support individuals through the court and the criminal justice system, counselling referrals, and other information on financial assistance that might be available through the program.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Does the government plan to add some of these pieces to health curriculum—pieces in our high school health curriculums, or thought about doing some of that?

It's—obviously, this is very important and I did do a quick scan on my phone to see if it was there and I didn't see it, so I don't know if there's any plans between his department and Department of Ed to communicate on this.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll try to stay in my lane and not veer too much into the Department of Education. I'm sure the minister and others would be happy for me not to do that.

But I know that there is often special groups and organizations that will enter schools, Joy Smith Foundation being one, Canadian Centre for Child Protection being another, who will often go into schools and provide educational perspectives.

Whether or not this particular change would form part of a curriculum is something I can certainly raise with my friend in the—the Minister of Education. There's no question that providing information on the harms of this particular action is important, and I thank the member for Transcona for raising that idea.

Mr. Wiebe: Maybe the minister can just talk more broadly about communication plans in order to educate victims of non-consensual intimate image distribution and how is it that the legal recourse that's now available to them might be communicated to them in a broader public sense.

Mr. Goertzen: It's a good question in that it's sometimes, of course, difficult to reach individuals who maybe have been a victim of this particular action because they may not be self-disclosing that that's been happening.

It's not, maybe, like a lot of criminal situations where it's easy to identify the victim and then the process sort of flows along from the identification of the victim. Because it requires individuals to come forward and bring forward a civil case, it does require there to be information provided, and it is provided through organizations like C3P and others.

But I take the member's point. He's probably suggesting that there might be better ways or more ways to ensure that people know that this recourse is available to them, and I take that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Seeing none, the time for questions has expired—or is over.

Debate

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Appreciate the opportunity to put just a few words on the record with regards to Bill 27.

I do want to start by commending the minister for bringing this forward. I do believe that this is an important change to an act that, while exists in Canada, in Manitoba specifically is certainly something that we can improve on and we can strengthen and I do believe that this particular amendment helps to strengthen this protection for folks.

We know that everyone has a right to not have their intimate images distributed without their consent. The effects of non-consensual intimate image distribution can be absolutely devastating and life-altering. And, in fact, we know in some extreme cases it has, unfortunately, caused some people to take their own lives.

It's not lost on me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that today is Pink Shirt Day, the—or pink—Day of Pink, that specifically talks about bullying and talks about supports for those in the LGBTQ community as well. And we know that these issues impact those folks more acutely than other communities. And we know that bullying, especially cyberbullying, is a reality for kids these days that they need to contend with.

The sharing of non-consensual intimate images is a big part of that bullying culture. And so, any time

we can talk about ways to support the victims and to talk about ways to stamp out bullying is an important step in the right direction and as, again, especially on a day like this.

We do believe that, as I said, this bill takes a step in the right direction and builds, as the minister rightly indicated, on a bill that was brought forward in 2015 under an NDP government. And at that time, it was sort of an emerging issue, a concern that we were hearing from our constituents and we were hearing across this province.

But it was, in fact, we were the leaders in Canada in bringing forward that kind of legislation. And we know, subsequently, that I think every province has some sort of form of legislation like this, but this really takes it to the next level and it really protects those victims, puts the onus—takes the onus off of the victims and puts it on those who have perpetrated this, and it does really impact folks in a real way.

We know that social media, as I said, has amplified and—it's a big part of our lives in every way—has amplified this problem and has really brought it to the forefront for many young people and people in general, really. In 2018, in fact, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection reported more than 1,300 Manitobans had accessed their online resources for help in the last year.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is Winnipeg-based, national charity designated by the Manitoba government to help people of all ages who are affected by non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

And we know that they do incredible work to offer that help with removal and the destruction of intimate images from social media and other locations, in addition to providing information on the civil and 'criminal' options and opportunities available to people who have been victimized by non-consensual intimate image sharing. This is a great resource for anyone who is a victim of this crime, and I encourage anyone who needs that help to reach out to that organization to get that help and to get that support that they need.

I believe that this is a bill that we can move through the House fairly quickly. I do expect that there may be some public input at committee. I look forward to hearing from folks. Again, understanding the impacts on those front-line organizations who will be tasked with continuing to support people. You know, we want to make sure that the Canadian Centre for Child Protection is getting the right kind of support

and funding so that they can do the work that they do. So, I do expect that there may be folks who want to bring that experience to committee. I invite them to do that. I think that'll be a big part of the process.

And ultimately, as I said, we want to see this bill move forward, we want to see this passed by the Legislature unanimously and we want to continue to protect victims in every way that we can as legislators, and we're committed to doing that.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm glad to be able to rise and speak to Bill 27 and I want to thank the minister for bringing this important piece of legislation forward.

The issues of intimate images being shared and cyberbullying has continued to grow all throughout the world and it causes many to think about just the pros and cons that come with technology and social media, and the real importance of that awareness and education on how these platforms and uses of technology could best be used and should be used, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know that every February, as many MLAs do, we go into the schools and we have the opportunity to read with students. And I know every single year, it is becoming more and more apparent of how young some of these students are who have cellphones, for example; who have social media accounts.

And who—I would argue, back when I was in grade 2, we didn't have cellphones, but now, a lot of the grade 2s, for example, they do have cellphones and they're talking about the images that are being shared online. And some of the things that are being expressed—and these are, in my case, for I Love to Read Month—but within the teachers—or by the teachers and within classrooms are the content that is actually being spread through social media. And again, this is in grade 2, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so, we see it trickling further and further down and younger and younger children having access to it.

* (15:00)

And, again, that's why it's so important that we're having these conversations and really spreading that awareness and, again, education. And I think we all have a responsibility to do that, whether as politicians, those who have children. It's very important conversations that we are to be having with the younger generations.

I actually reflect back about 10, 15 years ago, I had the opportunity to be working for the Senate of Canada. And one of the first committees that I sat on was a committee about cyberbullying. And, again, it sort of—it just shows you how this is an ongoing issue even back then. And I remember parents coming and speaking in the committee rooms, and they would elaborate on these stories that often in these cases their children had experienced in school due to cyberbullying. And that was 10, 15 years ago. And it's ongoing. And we know, in fact, it's actually getting worse.

And I think, too, like, this is really telling. This is how we know that issues such as cyberbullying and the distribution of intimate images—it's not just a provincial issue. It is worldwide. It is a federal issue. It is a provincial issue. I'm going to make the argument it is a municipal issue. And I believe that all three levels of government could be working better together to actually address this issue across the board, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm very glad to see more awareness being brought forward on the issue. I notice more and more of those Cybertip advertisements out and about as I drive throughout Winnipeg. And I know in the last six months, there's been a 100 per cent increase in reports concerning intimate images, and a recent survey of adults between ages 18 to 54 found that one in 10 ex-partners have threatened to expose intimate photos of their exes online. And these threats were actually carried out 60 per cent of the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The harm of having an intimate image shared widely can have extreme impacts on an individual's mental health, along with other impacts that can follow throughout a person's lifetime, and this can be extremely damaging.

Establishing a reverse onus on the defendant to carry the burden of proof to show that they received consent is important and this ensures that the victim does not have to be revictimized, or in some cases retraumatized, by minimizing their needs to establish the burden of proof that they provided consent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very happy that the minister brought forward this legislation. I'm looking forward to seeing it move further in committee and have people from the public come and speak to it as well. And I'm glad that we're—we have the opportunity to debate it today on International Day of Pink.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to put on a couple of quick words in respect of Bill 27, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act. I think that the minister responsible has heard that, on this side of the House, we're going to be supporting this bill and let it pass second reading today.

I do want to just take a couple of moments—I think that this is—or, I know that this is one issue that every single member in this Chamber would be in agreement of and would work together to support strengthening legislation to protect victims of non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

I know that we are all—I would imagine that all of us are aware of the occurrence of this that happens. And I would suggest that everybody in the Chamber would know that some of the most vulnerable in our community, in our province and certainly in the country—across the country—face this.

In respect of children, children are often targeted and they are groomed. They are preyed upon and they are targeted by individuals that, for their own grotesque sexual gratification, you know, have children—convince children to send them images and then will distribute those images. I think there is no greater, grotesque example of taking advantage of children than that.

And, you know, I remember once having a meeting at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection many, many years back. And there was a woman there who had her images distributed on the Internet, and she shared very courageously and openly what that did to her. And those images were there for many years. Many years those images of her, when she was a child, were online.

And, you know, of course I knew about it and had been, you know, researching and lobbying against that. But certainly when you hear it first-hand, the damage—the emotional, mental and spiritual damage—that that does to an individual, it is quite heart-wrenching. And I always remember her; I will always, always remember her for sharing her story with us, for those of us that were in that meeting, and how difficult that was for her to do.

And then, certainly, I think that, you know, we know there are some pretty well-known cases of young girls targeted—again, targeted and preyed upon by individuals—sick individuals—who ended up taking their own lives, and that is devastating.

I often think about the parents of those young girls—still, to this day, I think about the parents of those young girls and, you know, what—you know, the

journey that they found themselves in because of—and again, I have no qualms about using this language—but, because of these sick individuals. And, you know, I think about those families knowing—you know, as a mother myself—that they weren't aware or able to protect their little ones. And you know, all of us—and, as parents in this Chamber, I would imagine or I would submit that that is our No. 1, you know, priority, to protect our children.

And so, you know, with those few, few words on the record, I do just want to say that, you know, I'm glad that the minister brought this forward and, you know, has now put the onus on those that perpetrate, in respect of ensuring that there was consent to do so. I think that that's a good amendment to strengthen this legislation.

And, you know, my hope is that we can continue in this Legislative Assembly to work towards strengthening legislation in all of its forms to ensure that we protect the most vulnerable and that we stamp out, really, this grotesque thing that we see that grows exponentially as the days and months and years go forward.

So with those short words on the record, we will be supporting second reading of Bill 27.

Miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay—

An Honourable Member: One more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, no problem.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): As my colleagues have 'previously'—previously mentioned, we will be supporting this bill. It's an important amendment, one that certainly is in keeping with the times. We're seeing very much technology that is getting more and more sophisticated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and because of that, it is often used by those that are the youngest in our societies.

It's not lost on many of us here in this Chamber today that today is the day of pink, a day against bullying. And essentially what this is is a protection for kids, for families, for communities, and it's an important one.

I want to stress the importance of the roles that schools can play in this, and not just public schools, but all schools, and that it's an important piece that I think can be explored further.

Especially now, with the advent of very sophisticated pieces of technology like ChatGPT, that is able

to now provide and create term papers that are difficult to discern, and very much something that is, you know, concerning but has to be worked with, because that's the reality of our day-to-day lives now.

* (15:10)

How do we deal with technology that is sometimes really outpacing our ability to learn its capabilities? And so, the best place for that—and I just—hopefully won't be nimble in the future—that we use schools to provide that education and provide that foundation.

And with those few words, I'll end my comments.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. The question before the House is second reading of bill 6—sorry, 27, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 18—The Legislative Security Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader—[*interjection*]—it's been moved, thank you, by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Goertzen: These are always difficult issues when one speaks about security on the Legislative grounds, because there's lots of competing interests, I know.

We all start with the premise that, as elected representatives in a democratic society, that we value the right to peaceful protest. And this, as a government building, the Manitoba Legislature is often the site of protests. They don't always have to do with government, in particular, or even the provincial government, or even a Canadian government. Sometimes individuals will come to these grounds to demonstrate

about something that is happening on another continent or a different part of the world that really isn't specific to what happens in this Assembly. But it's a common place for people to come and express concerns about a variety of different things that are happening either in Manitoba, Canada, North America or other places of the world.

And that is fair and that's acceptable, and we should all value the ability for individuals to come to these grounds and to express their concerns and their views—whether we share those views or not—here at the Legislative grounds. That is an important part of a democratic society, and each of us as elected officials into this House are stewards of that and are, in essence, defenders of that democratic right and that democratic ability.

But, we also have other conflicting obligations. We have obligations to ensure the safety of those who come to this building for a variety of different reasons. Often when this issue is discussed—and I've been in the Assembly now almost 20 years—the discussion used to happen at what's called LAMC, The Legislative Assembly Management Commission, and those discussions happen in camera; they're not for public discourse.

But they're—they are discussions that happen between MLAs, often about the operation of the Assembly. They involve the Speaker, who, of course, is responsible for security of the Assembly itself, the committee rooms, and has other responsibilities when it comes to security. It requires the co-ordination of Manitoba Justice, who has responsibility for those legislative security officers, who we all know and appreciate, who do great work here in the building and on the grounds of the Assembly and the Precinct at large.

So the focus is often around elected officials and security as it relates to us as elected officials, but we forget that we're not the majority of individuals who are here in this building. There are staff who are, of course, working in here each and every day, both for elected officials and just as part of the Legislative Assembly at large or in general.

We have many visitors who come to this building, because they have meetings in the building and they're meeting with elected officials or they're meeting with others. There are sometimes receptions in this building. We hand out medals in this building. The Order of Manitoba is in this building. We've welcomed dignitaries from around the world, including royalty in the very place that you're sitting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have come to this building. We have school tours.

I welcomed some students from the Steinbach Regional Secondary school just this morning and the member—the Leader of the Opposition welcomed some students from Churchill High, I believe, this—just before question period. So, we welcome all sorts of people.

And they also come here with an expectation of security, with an expectation that their time here will be safe. So, we have that responsibility as well. So we—as elected members of the Assembly, we balance these responsibilities between ensuring that those who are regularly here are safe, but that those—or, those who are visiting are safe, but then also those who want to come and protest and make a statement, or assemble for some other reason, that they have the right to do that, but that they're also safe, because they also come with an expectation of being able to bring their views and concerns, whatever they are, in a safe way. So, all of those things are balanced.

The government brought forward the Legislative Assembly security act some time ago that set up a structure, so was in co-ordination and in consultation with those entities that I mentioned—the Speaker's office, Manitoba Justice and others—in terms of how security would be managed on the Precinct.

This is a relatively small but important amendment to that larger bill that we've seen now in operation for about a year—or, almost a year, here, in Manitoba. Maybe a little bit more than a year, actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This amendment would include what we commonly refer to as Memorial Park—a portion of Memorial Park—across the street. So, there are, sort of, two sections. There's the—I'll call it a rectangular section of Memorial Park—and then, just a little bit north of that, there's a triangular section of Memorial Park. This refers to the rectangular portion of Memorial Park.

And all it essentially would do—it would still remain a provincial park, and sometimes there's confusion about that. That is a provincial park across the street, and so conservation officers and Manitoba Conservation has responsibility for the maintenance and the upkeep and the security of that park.

But often, of course, what's happening in relation to security is tied in to what's happening on the Assembly grounds, and that, you know, if there is a concern about security across the street at Memorial Park, it's often specifically because of this building and what it represents to many individuals.

So, the amendment to the larger legislative security amendment—or, the bill—would ensure that the individuals who are responsible for security here at the Manitoba Legislature and on the Precinct would also have responsibility—shared responsibility—across the street at Memorial Park as well.

So, it really just ensures that there's symmetry, that there's co-ordination and that those who are providing security for visitors and for dignitaries and for schoolchildren and for protestors here on the grounds of the Legislature also have a right to provide that same security at that portion of Memorial Park that I described.

It doesn't alter the pith and substance, as we often say, of the main part of the act, of the bill, which we've already debated and passed in this Legislature in the past. It simply extends that provision across the street to that portion of Memorial Park.

Now, some might ask the question, and I'll conclude on this: Well, why not, then, include that other small portion, that triangular portion, of the park that's just beyond the rectangular portion of Memorial Park?

In consultation with Legislative Counsel and those who advise us on these things, their advice was that, you know, looking at past legislative—or, court rulings and other sort of matters that inform on this, that you can really only extend these powers to the things that are seen and deemed to be necessary and where there's a close connection, and it was felt that that was a little bit further than would meet that particular bar in that particular test.

So, we took that advice. We accepted that advice. And we're extending the provisions of the Legislative Security Act to only that portion of Memorial Park, as I've already described.

I look forward to the questions the members may have on this.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

* (15:20)

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Can the minister talk about the consultation process, specifically with the Winnipeg Police Service, and maybe give us some details about those discussions? Was this something that the police were asking—Winnipeg police were asking for, and what sorts of input did they have into the bill?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): There's often consultation with the Winnipeg Police Service as it relates to security in this particular area, but because the responsibility for security largely rests with the Legislature or with the Manitoba Justice and those security officials that we employ or, in cases like conservation officers across the street, that's where the primary responsibility lies.

Now, there are sometimes situations where we require more support, and that would include the Winnipeg Police Service. And at that point, we ask Winnipeg Police Service to assist members who know some of those situations, and then the WPS comes and assists if it seems to be beyond the capacity that we might here—might have here at the Legislature. But that's the extent of the consultation.

Mr. Wiebe: So, I think I understand operationally how this would be deployed. What I'm asking about is in development of this bill, was there a consultation with the Winnipeg Police Service before the bill was introduced in the House? Did they have any input in actually, you know, designing the bill or rolling it out here? What sorts of input have they had up to this point, not once the bill has passed and once it's in law?

Mr. Goertzen: There's ongoing consultation, and often after incidents have happened on these grounds that involve the WPS, or don't involve the WPS, there's debriefings and different discussions about what we can learn from those different areas and instances. We take responsibility for this bill because we are responsible for the security at the Manitoba Legislative Precinct and now, by extension, Memorial Park.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): So, I wanted to ask: The minister has mentioned that it would be the conservation officers first who would be in charge of security; then, if needed, the Winnipeg Police Service would get involved.

I wanted to know who and how does that determination get made if a situation requires to—the involvement of the Winnipeg Police Service?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm sorry if I misdescribed that to the member.

The first order of security here at the Legislature is the responsibility of those legislative security officers, who the member will know well, and they are responsible for security foremost.

At times, conservation officers have been called in to assist where there are—more individuals were needed and because Memorial Park is the responsibility of conservation officers. And then, at other times, when there seemed to be more of a heightened need for assistance, Winnipeg Police Service has been called in.

Mr. Moses: I thank the minister for the clarity. So, then, I'll just have to repeat my question in that regard: When and how does that determination get made to involve the Winnipeg Police Service if an issue arises? How does the Leg. security make that determination and who, ultimately, makes that call?

Mr. Goertzen: There would be discussions, obviously, between Manitoba Justice and those who are involved with legislative security and the Winnipeg Police Service to determine whether or not if a particular situation was deemed to be a security risk here at the Assembly, whether additional support was needed and whether the Winnipeg Police Service could provide that additional support.

It's—it actually doesn't happen that often. It may have had more heightened attention in recent years, but thankfully the vast, vast majority of situations that are dealt with here are peaceful.

Mr. Moses: So, security, I think, is really important. We want to ensure people who come to work in this building are safe—MLAs, visitors to this space are safe—but many Manitobans defining what safe spaces are, are different. And so some Manitobans, you know, might see a police officer and feel safe; some Manitobans see a police officer and might not feel safe.

And so I submit to the minister maybe he can define what he means, how Leg. security for this new area in Memorial Park will actually make Manitobans safe who come from a variety of backgrounds?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I actually take the member's point quite seriously. And, actually, we've had a few discussions about this in a different context. And I think that his points that he made to me privately were

points that I hadn't, you know, always properly understood, maybe, or maybe hadn't been made aware of. So I appreciated that and I've taken some of that back.

And I think it goes to some of the broader discussion we're having regarding policing and police training and standards. It's one of the reasons we engaged with Devon Clunis, a former Winnipeg chief of police, to bring forward training and standards that specifically have consultations with communities who've otherwise felt not well engaged with law enforcement or have felt threatened sometimes by law enforcement.

So, that's part of the engagement we're having on the policing side, and that engagement, I think, informs what happens at the Legislature as well.

Mr. Moses: Thanks, I genuinely appreciate that answer.

And just to follow up on that, since the minister had mentioned additional training for Winnipeg Police Service, I wondered if Leg. security would also be allowed to take that training so that they have some of that experience that would benefit their roles and they're able to provide added security for a diverse group of Manitobans who want to enjoy the Manitoba Legislative grounds safely.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, it's a good point.

And so, the work that Devon Clunis is doing is ensuring that there's sort of a base level and consistent training for law enforcement; not just police, but the variety of different, sort of, law enforcement officials that we have in the province of Manitoba. I think once that training is—or, once his work is complete and they've developed that, absolutely, I think that our Leg. security individuals could be a part of that and benefit from that type of training, as well.

So I take the member's point and the previous points he made to me privately very seriously.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other questions?

Seeing no questions, we will move on to debate.

Debate

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I want to begin by thanking all of the Leg. security, all of our peace officers that serve in this building, all those who come to work every day to make sure that this is a safe place, not just for us as legislators, because I would put that probably second in the list of most important things that need to be done in terms of safety in this building;

No. 1 is to protect the public and to make sure that they feel welcomed and that they feel safe in this building.

And, you know, we often welcome in, you know, students, classes come on field trips here, all kinds of different people, vulnerable people many times, who come to this place, who want their voices heard and seek that from us as legislators, and we want to make them feel welcome in this place.

So, that is very much the role and the duty of our Protective Services in this building, and they do that job very, very well. So I just want to put on the record how appreciative we are of their work and thank them for everything that they do.

You know, it is a different world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that elected officials like ourselves find ourselves in now. You know, the level of decorum and respect that may have existed in the past doesn't always apply in the same ways that it used to.

And we've seen that play out in a number of different ways, in terms of safety and security of members and, again, of the staff and of the public that comes into this building.

A case in point, not necessarily with regard to this building, but I know that there was an incident at one of our colleagues' offices—well, I guess that would've been last year—where a member of the public who had a concern was aggravated; was, you know, worked up—if I can use that language—came into one of our MLA offices.

Now, believe it or not, that does happen quite often that somebody is upset or really just, you know, is—really needs to speak to one of us as an MLA. And that's part of our job is to make sure that we're listening to folks and that we're respecting their frustrations.

But that's not what happened in this case. In fact, what happened was the person came into the office, realized that the member wasn't there and decided to then take out his frustration and anger on the staff that was there, to make threats and to be threatening in terms of violence.

That was just one example, and that was just one example that sort of got some news or was spread on social media. But I know in talking to other members of the House, they've had similar experiences. This is the way of—as I said, the way of the world now for many of us.

* (15:30)

And again, we as legislators, we—part of the jobs is making sure that we're putting ourselves out there, we're listening to all different kinds of voices. But when the expectation of safety is compromised, that's where it becomes a real issue. And again, more importantly, when it's our staff or when it's members of the public who come into this building who are put at risk, that's where things go over, or step over, a line that I think we need to be very cognizant of.

This bill, of course, stems from the fact that—wasn't too long ago where this building, the grounds of this Legislature, were essentially cut off to the public, or cut off even to us as legislators; where there was a convoy that came through, obviously affected many places in our country, but happened right here in our province on this lawn in front of our Legislature.

And we take very seriously the right of every Manitoban to demonstrate and to gather to express concerns that they have. That is a respected right that we understand and that we will always protect.

But what happened in front of the Legislature was much beyond that. The pandemic restrictions set some people on a path that led them to violence, that led them to talk about hate and to talk about—and to display symbols of hate and, ultimately, to put people's lives in danger.

Just here in the—on our Legislative grounds, a man was accused of hitting four people in the crowd with his SUV. Three had minor injuries, didn't need medical attention; the others were treated in hospital and released. They actually had to chase down the driver, who left and wasn't caught until about 40 minutes later, after he had escaped the precinct here. And he was charged with a number of offences, including four counts of assault with a weapon, failing to stop at the scene of an accident and dangerous operation of a vehicle causing bodily harm.

Likewise, not too long ago in 2001, we had a truck that was driven up through the safety pylons at—on the front steps of the Legislature and came up those steps and had to be dealt with by Winnipeg police. Police came and swarmed this building, and I think all of us remember how that played out and, you know, it was a man who exited the vehicle, he was agitated and needed to be restrained and taken in and restrict—and arrested.

These are just a couple of the examples of the violence that came to this building, and it really, I think, shook a lot of us.

You know, in Manitoba, we see ourselves as reasonable. Again, there's been many times I've come to this place before I was elected and since, we've seen demonstrations in front of the Legislature. We welcome that in the sense of participating in the democratic process. That is kind of part of the way of this province and the democracy that we cherish. But when it turns violent, that's where we need to draw the line.

Now, I would suggest that legislation like this is long overdue in the sense that we need to protect the people in this building—as I said, the public. But I believe that there's probably been a bit of debate and a bit of back-and-forth within the Conservative—the PC caucus here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And that's probably why we're only seeing this legislation now, and we're not seeing the—something that actually enhances security, makes the building more welcoming and supports those who provide those security services for us, but in fact, simply makes, you know, what some might argue is administrative change. You know, changing the fact that Memorial Park is considered a provincial park and the question of jurisdiction comes into play.

But we know why this would be something that this PC caucus may not be interested in bringing forward, because we know that certain members of that caucus were sympathizers with the convoy folks.

We know for a fact that the MLA for Borderland, for example, went down to the blockade that was erected at Emerson that restricted international trade and impacted our economy, impacted people's free movement in between here and the United States. He went down there; he said he visited with friends and family. He said—I think he brought them coffee and offered them support.

And, you know, this isn't just allegations coming from us, this was on his Twitter. This ended up resulting in him getting kicked out of his duties in his caucus.

Now, I would mention he's back in; apparently, he's right back in the inner circle, but at that time, this was something that people said no, this isn't right, we're not standing with people who blockade and use violence to get across their political points, that's not something we believe in.

Likewise, the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot, right, was a sympathizer of these anti-restriction convoy folks, as well. He was, you know, all about not conforming with those health orders that had been put forward to protect us all. He said, no, I'm not going to

do it, and, in fact, what did that do? It led to him being kicked out of Cabinet.

And now he's—I think he's the caucus chair of the PC caucus, right? He's directing the whole show over there. So he's the one that's, you know, maybe saying to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), don't bring this forward, or water it down, or don't go after my friends in these convoy folks, because ultimately, I agree with them; I, you know, I sympathize with those anti-vaxxers and, you know, I don't think we should do anything.

This was a serious concern for most Manitobans, but members of the PC caucus said we stand with those people. Well, that's not what most Manitobans want, and now what we've seen, and the result of those—sort of this wishy-washy, you know, not willing to actually make—to stand up against those convoy folks, but wanting to make some changes.

What they've done is, this PC government has gone the opposite way. They've said, well, now we're going to just put up barricades and not let anybody into this building; make this feel like a police state where, you know, you have to show your face before you even drive onto the property. You have to show your ID, you got to get scanned, you have to be walked through a metal detector, you know, all things that help protect us, but are done in a way that it keeps the public fearful or worried about coming into this building.

This is the people's building, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This building should be filled with the public at every opportunity that we can possibly get them in here, and we're not seeing that in the same way we did before because of these measures that have been taken.

So, I think there's a lot that needs to be done to make our building more welcoming while also protecting those people who choose to come here and choose to participate in the democratic process, as I said. I don't believe that the PCs are the right ones to do this kind of work, and so I see that, you know, this bill, while we'll support it, only is a half measure, right; it's just a—one step where they could have really brought forward legislation that helps protect us in this building, helps protect the public and also makes it a welcoming place.

So, with those few words, I do hope this is something that we hear more at committee stage. We, once again, hear from the public, that's an important part of this process, and, you know, and I think it's important.

Maybe he'll do it at committee, maybe he'll do it at third reading, the minister needs to put on the record that he doesn't stand with the anti-vax and the convoy-supporting members of his caucus, that there is a serious undertaking here to make this place more safe and that he won't support those kinds of actions in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm pleased to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 18 and I'll take a few minutes just to outline my concerns.

I think, overall, we want to be supportive of this bill to protect Memorial Park as part of the Legislative Precinct.

But I also want to just touch on—to begin, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the fact that we are very grateful for all the people in our province who keep us safe. We're very grateful to all the people who work day in and day out to provide security and safety for our communities. We want to thank them. We want to know—make sure they know that their work is valued, and we recognize the efforts they put in that we all appreciate and may not express as often as we get a chance to.

And I want to say to the people who come to this building—here specifically, in the Manitoba Legislature, ought to feel safe. The MLAs around—in this Chamber who are here today, the people who work in staff in a multitude of faculties in this building, deserve to come to work and feel safe every single day. And the people who come here to visit and to tour, and to be a part of our democracy in Manitoba deserve to feel safe in what is Manitoba's building, a building for all of us to collectively share.

* (15:40)

And so, will legislative security play an important role in that, and it's important to recognize that, and important that all of us have an opportunity to share this building and this space, and feel safe doing so. I know that there are many threats these days, and I know that politicians often appear to be, you know, the target of many of these threats. I know colleagues on this side of the House, unfortunately, have been the target of some of these threats. I know that MLAs and politicians on—other side of the House have been targets of threats, as well.

And, obviously, that's something that we never want to see or hear happen. And it's important to recognize that while these threats are happening, there are proactive steps we can take to make sure that we keep

people who are working safe in everything that they do, and we need to address these threats, but address them in a way that is going to be constructive. And address them in a proactive way, in a positive way, that not only keeps us or the people who are the target or victim of these threats safe, and have them be put at peace of mind, but also—that know that we're proactively looking to mitigate these issues in the future, so that they're less likely to happen.

In many cases, that means that we need to lower the temperature on some of these issues; listen to people a little bit more often, and find ways to bring people together to have conversations so that we can better understand each other's point of view and, hopefully, mitigate a lot of these issues moving forward.

Now, the issue that I brought up to the minister during my question is the one that I do want to speak about for a few minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is how the minister defines security and defines safety.

Now, with this bill, he is moving the grounds and the portion of area around Memorial Park to legislative precinct, making sure that the legislative security will be in charge of the area instead of the Winnipeg Police Service. And I say that—I ask whether—what the minister defines as safety and security, because it's important to know that Manitobans who come from a variety of backgrounds and cultural histories and experiences, might not always share the same definition of safety.

There are many people in the province who, if they walk into a park or a building and they see a police officer—a law-enforcement officer, perhaps because of their, you know, their past traumas or experiences with law enforcement, and—they might see that person and not feel safe, initially. They might feel a bit apprehensive. They might feel a little bit more on guard. They might feel like, you know, that they might be a little bit more targeted by that person than other citizens.

And I think that many people, you know, who come from Black backgrounds, Indigenous backgrounds or other people of colour, they might—some people might feel a little less at ease when they see a person in law enforcement, especially someone who might be carrying a—you know, a firearm.

And so, while many other Manitobans might see that person and say, oh yes, this person's going to make sure that I'm safe, that I'm safe in this space, that

everything that's going on right now is going to be safe and secure, and that I can move about with ease and go about enjoying my experience; other Manitobans might be a little bit apprehensive, a little bit more on guard.

And so, I ask the minister these questions of around how he defines and talks about safety and security because I want to know: Is his plan with this to ensure that there are legislative officers surrounding Memorial Park all the time? You know, many Manitobans might not feel that welcome in that space, in going to the park, if there are officers, perhaps. Some Manitobans might not feel safe in that regard.

It's about having a dialogue, and having a consultation with Manitobans to understand how the use of Memorial Park and the security of Memorial Park will match so that Manitobans have access to their space and will feel welcome in that space but also know that they're safe and secure there.

We also know that—and we can—you—speak from past experience where there have been protests and there have been people occupying spaces in and around the Legislative grounds, where there have been, unfortunately, images and displays of hate symbols. We've seen, over the past couple years, racist symbols on display, xenophobic imagery, anti-Semitic, perhaps even Confederate flags or Nazi symbols on display as part of occupations that took place along the Leg. grounds.

And I'm deeply saddened and hurt by those images being on display, but the reality is that that happened. And the legislative security has to respond to that, not just to respond to those protestors, but to ensure that other Manitobans who are also—try to occupy what is, as I said, off the top, the people's building here in Manitoba and the people's grounds, that those other people feel safe.

And so, I ask and I hope the minister takes those concerns seriously, that if there are these imageries, if there is hate speech or racism on display, xenophobia, anti-Semitic imagery, Confederate flags or Nazism, if those things are happening as part of any protest or event, it's important for Manitobans to feel safe that they know that security are going to handle those actions and make sure that other Manitobans can still have access—safe and secure access—to the Legislative grounds and the Legislative Building.

So, I want to put those thoughts and ideas in the minister's mind, so that he is aware that the issue of dealing with legislative security and the security around

the Legislative grounds has to be taken in consultation—serious consultation—with Manitobans from a diverse background, that we actually have representation on the ideas of what it means to be safe and secure, that we listen to community voices when it comes to conversations around when do we involve the Winnipeg Police Service in events that happen on Memorial Park and when do we just simply talk to people to de-escalate conflict?

Now, these are really important issues that, at the end of the day, sadly it's often, you know, people—the most marginalized Manitobans who are impacted by these decisions. And so, we want the people who are making the decisions or their—groups who are making these decisions to truly be representative of community and understand community by listening to them, working with them in consultation.

And so I'll leave my comments on Bill 18 there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And simply put, we're looking forward to this bill moving forward, we're looking forward to hearing public consultation on this building, public coming forward and speaking about the Leg. grounds and how it can be made safe and secure from a community standpoint. And we're looking forward to the government listening, actually listening to those voices and making positive steps forward.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 18, The Legislative Security Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Bill 25—The Workers Compensation
Amendment Act
(Wildfire Firefighters)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As previously announced, we will now move on to Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters).

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters), be now read a second time and be referred to the

Committee of the Whole—oh, sorry, committee of this House.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister, sorry, I didn't hear the seconder.

An Honourable Member: Finance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Finance.

* (15:50)

It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters), 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 contents of this resolution, recommends it to the House and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Reyes: I'm pleased to rise again to provide comments on Bill 25.

This bill includes wildfire firefighters within the presumptive cancer and heart injury provisions of The Workers Compensation Act. Currently, these provisions only apply to urban firefighters and Office of the Fire Commissioner personnel. Wildfire firefighters are currently not included within the presumptive cancer and heart injury provisions of the act.

Right now, in order for the presumption to apply, a firefighter must have been regularly exposed to the hazards of a fire scene other than a forest fire. The proposed amendments will remove this exception and will add the definition of wildfire firefighter to the presumptive provisions of the act in order to ensure the risks associated with the role of wildfire firefighter are equally recognized.

We value the efforts of our wildfire firefighters and acknowledge their role has become increasingly critical. The number and size of wildfires are increasing, wildfire seasons are going longer and wildfire firefighters are often called upon more often to assist other jurisdictions in their firefighting efforts.

With these changes, Manitoba continues to serve as a model for other jurisdictions. This legislation aligns us with our counterparts in British Columbia and some other jurisdictions around the world that have moved to include wildfire firefighters within workers compensation presumptive cancer provisions.

Going forward, wildfire firefighters who submit workplace injury and illness claims to the Workers Compensation Board relating to the cancers and heart injuries prescribed under the act will benefit from the same streamlined adjudicative process available to other types of firefighters. The bill puts all firefighters on equal footing.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions. There are some questions, that's good. Okay.

The honourable member, forgive me—*[interjection]*—for Notre Dame.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I'd just like to ask the minister who was consulted when writing this bill?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Can she repeat the question again? I didn't hear. Sorry.

MLA Marcelino: Who was consulted when writing this bill?

Mr. Reyes: I believe she asked me the question who was consulted with respect to Bill 25.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we consulted with the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg and the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union, MGEU.

The MFL had asked the government of Manitoba to consider removing the exclusion for wildfire firefighters and consider the hazards of wildfires on a similar scale as those presented in urban firefighting.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Can the minister share with the House the number of claims as a result of heart injuries or specific cancers that were made by firefighters last year?

Mr. Reyes: What I can say is that the Workers Compensation Board anticipates minimal implications

as a result of these amendments. Claims from wildfire firefighters are already accepted without the presumptive provision. Further, there have been very few claims from wildfire firefighters related to cancers.

But we wanted to ensure fairness and inclusivity with regards to those who are fighting fires; this includes wildfire firefighters. This will allow for a more streamlined and less erroneous adjudication process.

MLA Marcelino: Just like to ask this minister why the PC government is recognizing wildland firefighters at this point. Was there a reason that this inclusion or amendment didn't come sooner?

Mr. Reyes: With the number and size of wildfires increasing, wildfire seasons are growing longer and Manitoba's wildfire firefighters are being called to assist other jurisdictions in their firefighting efforts. We have seen the—that other jurisdictions have begun to include wildfire firefighters in 'presumpting' cancer legislation; in 2019, British Columbia amended its workers compensation legislation to allow wildfire firefighters to benefit from its firefighter presumption.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I wonder if the minister can provide us with a list of occupations that are categorized as wildfire firefighters.

Mr. Reyes: I can get back to that member after second reading.

MLA Marcelino: I'd just like to ask if there could be more done to reduce the risk of cancer, such as increasing funding to municipalities to purchase better protective—personal protective equipment to keep our firefighters safe.

Mr. Reyes: Well, what I can tell the member is that this firefighter presumption, the firefighter presumption, simplifies the adjudication of Workers Compensation claims made by firefighters who contract certain cancers or sustain heart injuries. It makes it easier to establish that work caused their illness or injury. The presumption was originally developed to address the hazards associated with burning buildings and synthetic materials. Initially, it only applied to full-time urban firefighters, with part-time urban firefighters and the Office of the Fire Commissioner personnel being included in 2005 and 2011, respectively, but that's why we want to include wildfire firefighters in this amendment.

MLA Marcelino: I'm wondering if the minister could let the House know how many units or how many

wildland firefighters and staff are currently employed with the Manitoba Wildfire Service.

Mr. Reyes: What I can tell the member is that this is seasonal employment under the Manitoba government general employees' union, so the number always changes depending on the number of wildfires that we have in the province.

What I can also say, on the record, is that I want to thank Manitobans who actually go to other jurisdictions and those wildfire firefighters who come to our jurisdiction to help with these wildfires.

MLA Marcelino: I'm just wondering if the minister could maybe speak a little bit about the number of crews that we have as part of the initial attack crews, and maybe our possible numbers for this season, coming in to find out how many emergency firefighters there are—that's the type 2 firefighters—that would be hired for this season.

Mr. Reyes: With 'respart'—with respect to the number of crews, again, it's all dependent on the situation, as these wildfires are unpredictable. But we do—I know the department does prepare, and I could give her a more definitive response by getting that information.

MLA Marcelino: I'm wondering if the minister could please elaborate a little bit about presumptive coverage as it relates to cardiovascular disease and mortality.

Mr. Reyes: For the resumption to apply, the worker must have been regularly exposed to the hazards of a fire scene, then hazards of a forest fire; they also must have been employed as a firefighter for a specific period of time.

In the case of the heart-injury presumption, when a worker is a firefighter or a OFC personnel and suffers a heart injury within 24 hours after attendance at an emergency response, the heart injury is presumed to have been caused by work unless the contrary is proven.

MLA Marcelino: I'm just wondering if our departments—government departments—carry any statistics regarding overtime hours, total number of hours and average number of years served by our Wildfire Service members.

* (16:00)

I just want to have an idea about the kind of shift work and hours that are served, and how long our seasons are going now compared to the past. We know

that wildland firefighter smoke exposure really increases the risk of lung cancer and cardiovascular disease, and this really—this amount of disease, it directly correlates the number of overtime hours worked and the length of our seasons.

So, I'm just wondering—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Reyes: What I can tell the member is what—this act differs from the existing 'lessislation' because it does not include wildfire fighters within the scope of presumptive cancer, heart injury provisions of the act. The amendment will remove the—some limitation to better recognize the hazards of wildfires on their health, to include wildfire firefighters within the presumption, provisions and definition of wildfire fighters is established. A condition for regular exposure to the hazard of a fire scene, other than the hazards of a forest fire, is amended to remove the limitation for forest fires.

Mr. Bushie: Yes, I wonder if the minister could—can confirm, or—that this also covers emergency firefighters, or EFFs, that are not necessarily seasonal employees, but just called on a per-need basis.

Mr. Reyes: In the regular claims process, the Workers Compensation Board determines whether or not a worker is entitled to compensation based upon the information provided by the worker, the employer, health-care professionals and witnesses. Presumptive legislation assumes that a worker's injury or illness was caused by the job without requiring the WCB to establish this.

In this case, where a worker is or has been a firefighter or Office of the Fire Commissioner personnel regularly exposed to the hazard of a fire scene suffers from any of the identified cancers, the disease is presumed to be an occupational disease, the dominant cause of which is employment as a firefighter, unless contrary is—and is proven.

Mr. Bushie: Yes, I wonder if the minister can then confirm, then, that this is also accessible to not only initial tac, but fire rangers 1, 2, 3, 4 and also district fire rangers, as well.

Mr. Reyes: Wildfire firefighters will have similar eligibility required to those already established to full- and part-time firefighters and Office of the Fire Commissioner personnel.

The minimum periods of employment and non-smoking firefighters and OFC personnel regulation sets a minimum period of cumulative employment for

each type of cancer that is included in presumptive legislation, as well as minimum periods of non-smoking.

Wildfire firefighters generally operate between May to October each year when wildfires frequently occur, which means it may take these workers longer to accumulate the cumulative employment necessary.

Mr. Bushie: I'm wondering if the minister can confirm, then, that—does this bill, then, take effect as of the day, or is there also retroactive symptoms that a wildfire fighter may have had for, you know, the past number of years, and does that person, then—eligible for compensation under this act when it takes effect?

Mr. Reyes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, minimum eligibility requirements—minimum eligibility periods are established for each type cancer covered by the act within the 'horse' eligibility period begin—being five years of cumulative service.

The amendments will make it easier to demonstrate causation in case of where wildfire fighters are diagnosed with certain cancers or sustain certain heart injuries. The will—the bill will put all firefighters on equal footing in terms of establishing causations and they sustain one or more of the cancers or heart injuries 'suisped' in the presumption.

Once brought into force, the bill will ensure wildfire fighters benefit from the same presumption as other firefighters.

Mr. Bushie: That still really didn't clarify or answer the question, whether or not that takes effect from this day forward and then the—kind of the clock sets on a wildfire firefighter's eligibility, if you want to use that word, to be able to qualify for workers' compensation.

What if, prior to this bill taking effect, there is somebody who's had the effects prior to this, maybe it'd be a year, two years or more than that? Are they then eligible for workers' compensation under this program?

Mr. Reyes: And I want to thank the member for the question there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Based on this category, it's not retroactive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Seeing none, we will move on to debate.

Debate

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

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Before beginning my comments regarding this bill, I would

just like to express my deepest condolences to the family of Tyler Riley Manych of The Pas, Manitoba, who, on July 11th last year was injured in an ATV accident during a training exercise.

He was a part of the Manitoba Wildfire Service community and, again our deepest condolences go out to his mother, Candy, his family, his friends, the rest of the Manitoba Wildfire Service community and The Pas fire department, of which Tyler was a member.

You really get a sense of how dangerous wildland firefighting is when you hear that, not only do folks doing this type of work need this type of presumptive coverage for different types of carcinogens and cardiovascular disease and mortality, but also just even in the simple—or what should be a simpler task of training. Even in training these types of dangers are inherent in this type of work here.

So, I'd just like to again express my condolences to the family of Mr. Manych.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the worker compensations act—Workers Compensation Act to extend its presumptions to wildfire firefighters, and Bill 25 will ensure that wildland firefighters are treated equal to other firefighters in Manitoba under The Workers Compensation Act.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Again, I'd have to say that wildland firefighting is inherently dangerous work. This work is primarily performed in forest and in range environments and steep terrain, where surfaces may be extremely uneven, rocky, covered with vegetation and in smoky conditions.

Temperatures vary from above 100 degrees Fahrenheit to below freezing. Risks include smoke inhalation, fire entrapment, insect bites and stings, exposure to excessive machinery noise and falling and rolling materials. This work is also very physically demanding. Duties can involve rigorous fieldwork requiring above-average physical performance, endurance and superior conditioning.

This work requires prolonged standing, walking over uneven ground and recurring bending, reaching, lifting and carrying of items weighing over 50 pounds, and shared lifting and carrying of heavier items—thank you—and similar strenuous activities requiring at least average agility and dexterity.

I don't know if I would be able to do this work, but I know that my colleague, the MLA for

Keewatinook, did undertake this very challenging and dangerous work in his younger days.

Locations throughout this province where the Manitoba Wildfire Service community serves includes Paint Lake, Cross Lake, Norway House, Island Lake, Wekusko, Cold Lake, The Pas, Swan River, Grand Rapids, Hodgson, Gypsumville, Bissett, Pine Falls, Lac du Bonnet, Rennie, Hadashville, Marchand, Piney among other locations.

And, apparently the seasonal department positions run from April to September, and their responsibilities include control of burning activities within the designated burning permit area, as well as within provincial parks, the co-ordination of provincial wildfire prevention and mitigation messaging.

And they are the lead provincial agency for wildfire suppression operations and value protection efforts in all unorganized territory, Crown lands and provincial parks not covered by local protection agreements.

They are deployed to protect provincial assets, including provincial air tankers, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft in provincial initial attack crews. They provide support to municipalities and other local authorities based on the availability of resources.

When wildland firefighters, and all firefighters, suffer from certain types of primary cancers or heart injuries, this firefighter presumption allows them to establish that their cancer or injury is work-related. Currently, this presumption does not apply to wildland firefighters.

Bill 25 proposes that illnesses and injuries presumed to be caused by firefighting will be covered by The Workers Compensation Act and will now include those who battle wildfires.

* (16:10)

Terms from The Workers Compensation Act, like full-time firefighter or a part-time firefighter, will be substituted with full-time, part-time or wildfire firefighter. The term wildfire firefighter refers to a worker employed to suppress or extinguish wildfires who is not a full-time firefighter, a part-time firefighter or a member of the FC personnel.

Under the current act, if firefighters or the Office of the Fire Commissioner personnel are diagnosed with one of 19 designated cancers or suffer a heart injury within 24 hours of responding to an emergency, the act presumes this to be a work-related illness or injury. I would like a little bit more clarification as this

process goes on regarding other types of cardiovascular disease or mortality, whether or not that is going to be included with the workers compensation presumptive coverage.

There is more research in recent years that have showed that not only are carcinogens a part of the health-related risks that wildland firefighters and other firefighters have to endure, but also cardiovascular disease and mortality. Specifically with the smoke inhalation, with particulate matter, the very, very small—really millionths of a meter—micrometers. But these particulate matter, they enter—can enter our wildland firefighters' lungs and have those types of negative outcomes in health.

Over time, as science has progressed and technology has advanced, we have learned more about the greater risk our firefighters take on each and every day. Wildfire firefighters are not left out of this risk, as wildfires have increased at a rate of 3 per cent over the last two decades. In fact, the number of wildfires have been predicted to rise by 50 per cent by 2100 as a result of climate change.

Yet, wildfire firefighters are not included in the current Workers Compensation Act. Wildland firefighters deserve to be compensated commensurate to the risk that they are exposed to for the safety of citizens. They work amidst dangerous gases and fumes and particulate matter that have the potential to cause long-term harm to their health.

Again, cancer is the leading cause of fatalities among firefighters in Canada, but I do believe more research recently has been done to show that even cardiovascular disease and morbidity is related to these health hazards that firefighters in Canada are experiencing. Currently, it's estimated that 50 firefighters out of 100,000 die of cancer each year. That's 50 too many, and I know that all members of the House would agree to that.

Firefighters have up to six times greater exposures to carcinogens than the rest of the population. Carcinogens such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, diesel engine exhaust, ethylbenzene, solar radiation, formaldehyde and polychlorinated biphenyls.

Wildland firefighters are also exposed to heavy muscle work, extreme temperatures, sympathetic nervous system activation, and are at similar risk as regular firefighters of suffering from heart injury. Therefore, they should receive the same treatment.

I just wanted to highlight two recent studies that are specifically concerning wildland firefighters. The first is one that's coming out from the BIO5 Institute in the University of Arizona Cancer Center. The study is entitled Wildland Fire Fighters: Exposure Assessment, Carcinogen Effects and Risk Management. And the second study that just specifically deals with wildland firefighters is called Wildland Firefighter Smoke Exposure and Risk of Lung Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease Mortality. And that's by authors Joseph W. Domitrovich and Kathleen M. Navarro.

This last study that I referenced, they were able to really get a sense that there are increased risks of lung cancer, and it could range from 8 per cent to 43 per cent; and cardiovascular disease, and that could range from 16 per cent to 30 per cent mortality. And that range was in direct proportion to the amounts of years served and the amount of hours that were worked by these wild-land firefighters.

So, again, earlier in our questions to the minister, I was trying to ascertain if our departments are carrying those types of numbers about overtime hours and length of time for the seasonal work, because we are seeing that there are direct risks for cardiovascular disease, mortality and lung cancer, and it just, really, relates to the time and length of work.

While advancements have been made to The Workers Compensation Act throughout the years, many women have also found that the cancers they were being diagnosed with were not recognized and it actually forced them to fight for coverage while they were ill.

But we all know that fires that wildland firefighters fight don't know gender; it affects whomever is exposed to the toxic smoke. Again, the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) was referencing also emergency firefighters and we're also hoping that these folks are also included in the presumptive coverage even though they aren't, you know, considered the seasonal full-time employee with Manitoba Wildfire Service.

We're hoping to grow this list of presumptive coverage, and while protecting women currently in the field, expanding coverage to wild-land firefighting could make firefighting a more appealing career to enter into for women, because they'll know that they do have those kinds of safety concerns covered in case they will need to be recognized and compensated.

Those are all my comments at this point regarding this bill. I am doing a little bit more research regarding the current safety protections and the numbers of crews that we have hired. And I'm waiting to hear from these members of these unions to see what their concerns are, and I'd be happy to raise what new concerns are being raised to the minister and to the House once I get that information at our next opportunity at third reading.

Thank you for the time.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and just put a few words on the record.

This legislation is very much direct and straightforward and I'm glad it's being brought forward. Just in recent history, Manitoba has had some of the worst wildfires. Last year, for example, over 2,000 evacuees fled Mathias Colomb Cree Nation after wildfires forced people from their homes. This fire alone was approximately 23,000 hectares in size. And it's noted that many additional firefighter resources, like water bombers and firefighters themselves, including some from Ontario, were sent to help and work.

Madam Speaker, this shows the role that our firefighters play and just how grateful we should be for them, as well as for our Red Cross volunteers.

We know that wildfire firefighters work with less supports than urban firefighters and can often be under-resourced, and while this bill helps fill in gaps that exist for many rural wildfire firefighters, and we are very happy to support it, I want to encourage the government to take it even a step further by considering more work-related issues to assist our first responders.

For example, currently, The Workers Compensation Act covers post-traumatic stress disorder as a work-related occupational disease. Injuries related to mental health and excessive stress is a huge issue that many firefighters, including wildlife firefighters, face, which is why it should be examined further.

Mental health supports are often difficult to access, especially for firefighters in rural areas. These can be significant medical expenses that should not have to be a burden for any of our first responders or anyone, quite frankly, Madam Speaker.

I'm tabling an article where the Manitoba Federation of Labour says mental health injuries sustained while working should be covered by workers' compensation. Manitoba Federation of

Labour represents about 125,000 members, and is calling on this government to make changes so the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba includes more mental health coverage.

Madam Speaker, these are just a couple of extra ideas that I'm hoping will also be brought into legislation as a way to continually monitor and reassess workplace injuries to protect our front-line workers like firefighters and first responders.

But for the sake of Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, wildlife firefighters, we are happy to support it.

Thank you.

* (16:20)

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Just wanted to share a few comments about the Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters)—wildfire fighters. Just more so from some experience as my constituency is largely, geographically the largest one in Manitoba, which is covered by a lot of forest and dry timber and uninhabited areas. So when I asked the minister earlier about the coverages and who would be covered under this piece of legislation, it kind of hit near and dear to not only my home community but my constituency as a whole.

And the question I asked earlier about emergency firefighters, or EFFs, as they're more commonly known, to see if that coverage applies to them, because time and time again they are called on, on a regular basis. And we have, over these past number of years, we've been starting to call it unusual amount of fire activity, but it's now becoming the norm. And I know the government has a real issue with recruitment and retention for conservation in that area, so they rely a lot upon emergency firefighters.

So I wanted to ensure and, hopefully, if it's not clarified in this piece of legislation, there may be amendments or when it comes to committee and whatever else in theory, that it may be addressed, but that emergency firefighters and fire rangers, two, three, four district fire rangers, two and three are also covered in this. And it doesn't—this piece of legislation does not narrow it down and really super define the definition of wildfire firefighters to where it doesn't really apply to the people that need it the most, to the people that are on the front lines.

Because we talk about the front lines, and wildfire firefighters in Manitoba are absolutely the front lines,

but that's also contingent, also, on emergency firefighters.

And I think a lot of my colleagues, in particular the North, the members from The Pas-Kameesak, Thompson and Flin Flon, will also attest to the fact that emergency firefighters from our communities are called upon on a regular basis. But whether or not they get categorized as a full-time employee or whether they meet the threshold to be able to qualify for a potential Workers Compensation claim, I would just like to see that clarified so that, in fact, that does cover that, because they do so much more than that.

I, myself, back in my significantly younger days, I will say, was also an EFF emergency firefighter, and it was almost a rite of passage for us in our communities to be able to take that on, at the time, having to work 16 to 18 hours a day just to try and make \$100 worth of pay. So you put in your 10 days and you're lucky if you got \$1,000. But at the same time, that work was very demanding.

So there was a number of different things, and I know this piece of legislation refers to cancers and toxins and things like that, but there's also a number of other issues that emergency firefighters and fire rangers and initial attack crews are subject to. For example, I don't think anybody in here could really imagine walking over a burning rock in plus 45° while the sun's beating down, while there's a fire raging behind you. So, that temperature gets to be a lot hotter than that. So, what's the long-lasting and long-term effects of that, and does that fit into this piece of legislation?

So when the minister spoke about there not being any kind of retroactive function to this, that is quite concerning because we're talking about this today, we're talking about this being an issue and a priority today, but it was also an issue and a priority yesterday.

So I do ask the minister if he would consider also incorporating that and having a window of time going back into a retroactive phase to be able to do that because there is going to be, when this legislation comes forward and comes into effect, if it does come into effect, there will be other firefighters that come out and say, what about me? What about something that happened to me? I put in my 20, 25, 30 years into the civil service, into this government, to protect this—communities, entire communities, from wildfire, but where's my appreciation now that I'm sick in the hospital?

So there should be some kind of retroactive component to this piece of legislation also. And I hope that the minister is open to that in some kind of amendment phase because those firefighters need to see our appreciation.

So, the definition of wildfire firefighters needs to be clarified. And I did ask the question, and the minister said he would undertake being able to provide a list, so I look forward to seeing that list to see if that, in fact, it is all inclusive, because firefighters do so much more than just actually fight fires.

We're going to be—and I know for a fact in the next little while, here, we're going to be counting on those same firefighters to be sandbagging in our communities, to be sandbagging around Manitoba, because they've been called to do a number of different things.

As the minister alluded to, sometimes this occupation starts already potentially in April, potentially in May. We're not really talking about fire—a prime fire season in the—in those months, but they are at work; so, there is exposures for them in that work. So, we do need to be able to compensate and make this all-inclusive to everything that would be affected in that way.

So, Mr.—oh, Madam Speaker, I just, for my few moments on the record, I did want to ask clarification and show our appreciation for those firefighters because they do so much more, so let's make this piece of legislation actually all-inclusive and let's really define exactly what this means, and that you don't have a firefighter trying to go to the workers compensation, or come to the government, and say well, what about me? And have to exhaust all their resources, their expenses, just to be treated fairly.

So, we ask that that is, in fact, covered here, and it is important that this piece of legislation encompasses all that we do, because we have to really show appreciation. We've had a number of different fire seasons over the last number of years where we've counted on these individuals to be able to do that and protect our communities and be able to get out there and say, this is what the—because who do you look to?

Who do you look to when this fire situation happens? You look to the individuals that are in the wildfire fire service. And they've protected northern Manitobans for generations.

I talked about my own experience being able to do that as emergency firefighter, but my father was also an initial-attack firefighter. So, they were exposed to all kinds of dangers and all kinds of toxins, if you will; more than just what's exposed on the job site,

out on a forest fire. There's a number of different avenues that come in there too, because we also see them—like I said—sandbagging, they're also at the landfills in rural areas of Manitoba, too. So there is various exposures that they're exposed to.

So, we should make this an effective system where they can apply for easily, not make it more difficult—and I understand this piece of legislation is a start, but it is not all-inclusive. And I would like to see it actually incorporate and include all of the fire service, whether it be initial attack, or whether it be fire rangers, or whether it be district fire rangers, whether it be EFFs. Or, fact of the matter, whether that be somebody who's sitting in the conservation district office because they still have those exposures as well. So let's make this incorporate of all of the employees and all of the staff.

And that also, in itself, goes a long way to recruitment and retention, to know that this government has your back when I go out to work. This government has the health and safety at front of mind when I go out to work.

So, that's the priority that we have and that's the priority that all Manitobans should have, and both sides of this Chamber should be able to come to an agreement, and I think we do, on exactly what this legislation is meant to do. But let's ensure that it encompasses everybody, and it's all-inclusive of all our firefighters, no matter where they are in the service.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this motion?

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 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters).

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, can you canvass members to see if it's the will of the House 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 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

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