

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

| 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, May 17, 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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 40—The Combative Sports Amendment Act

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the minister of economic investment, development and trade, that Bill 40, The Combative Sports Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, seconded by the honourable Minister for Economic Development, Investment and Trade, that Bill 40, The Combative Sports Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Khan: Madam Speaker, this bill amends The Combative Sports Act in order to authorize the Manitoba Combative Sports Commission to regulate and sanction both professional and amateur combative sports, facilitating uniform safety standards across the combative sport landscape and allowing for a wider range of amateur combative sport competitions to 'plake'—to take place in Manitoba safely.

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to fostering a culture of safety and accessibility across Manitoba sports sectors. This bill enables athletes, officials, coaches and others involved in the combative sport community to pursue their athletic objectives while fostering an environment that prioritizes the well-being and, most importantly, safety, of all those who participate in combative sports.

Madam Speaker, this bill furthers our government's commitment to safe and equitable access to sports for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Committee reports? [*interjection*]

Oh, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: And I'm going to have to take this time to introduce some guests that we have in the gallery because they are soon going to be leaving the gallery.

So, seated in the public gallery, from Garden Valley Collegiate, we have 45 grade—oh, I don't have the—what grades they are—under the direction of Cherise Bergen. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Jewish Heritage Month

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Shalom, Madam Speaker. I rise today to recognize and celebrate the month of May as Jewish Heritage Month in Manitoba.

In the last session of this House, our government passed The Jewish Heritage Month Act, which states: In each year, the month of May is to be known throughout Manitoba as Jewish Heritage Month. This act honours and recognizes the incredible contribution of the Jewish community in our province and aligns with the Jewish Heritage Month in Canada.

For over two centuries, Jewish people have contributed to the development of our province. The 1881 census indicates Manitoba's Jewish population was approximately 100 people. It was the Russian pogroms of 1881 and 1882 that brought some 340 Jewish immigrants to Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, through various waves of settlement and immigration, a strong and vibrant Jewish community has emerged across Canada, which, as of the 2021 census, is nearly 400,000 people strong, the fourth largest Jewish community in the world. Manitoba is currently home to nearly 3 per cent of Canada's total Jewish population, and the Manitoba Jewish community is a strong and vital contributor to the cultural landscape of Manitoba.

One of the many important Jewish cultural institutions in Manitoba is the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, a cornerstone of the Asper Jewish Community Campus, located right here in Winnipeg. The purpose of this vibrant centre is to interpret and disseminate information on the history and culture of Jewish people in western Canada and to develop awareness of the history, moral and ethical implications of the Holocaust and other human rights violations.

We commend this important work and that of all other cultural organizations like the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg who share Jewish heritage, culture and traditions with all Manitobans.

We must also take this time to reflect on the rise of hate crimes across Manitoba and Canada as a whole. Anti-Semitism and all forms of hate crimes have no place in Manitoba. We condemn them and we must all work together to ensure a safety—community for all.

The engagement of Jewish Manitobans through arts, sports, business, medical, educational, trades, politics, public service, volunteerism makes our province a better place to live.

Madam Speaker, this May, I would encourage all Manitobans—residents to take the time to learn and acknowledge Jewish peoples and the histories in Manitoba and beyond. The Jewish community is one

of vital, varied and diverse communities who have and will continue to contribute to make stronger—to make a stronger, more diverse and welcoming Manitoba for all. Together, we are stronger.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. And shalom to all my Jewish friends in the gallery today for coming out for Jewish Heritage Month.

Thank you so much.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): May is Jewish Heritage Month, a time to celebrate and recognize Jewish culture, faith, history and the immense contributions Jewish communities have made to the social, political and economic fabric of Manitoba.

Jewish people first came to Manitoba in the late 1800s, and now the Jewish community in Manitoba has grown to more than 11,000. Being born and raised in the North End, I'm very proud to have many friends who are of Jewish ancestry.

Jewish communities have a rich history in Manitoba, including involvement in the labour movement of the early 20th century and helping to organize the Winnipeg General Strike.

* (13:40)

Today, they are more—there are many well-organized Jewish institutions and businesses in Manitoba, including the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, the Jewish foundation of Winnipeg and so many more.

While we celebrate the history and contributions of Jewish people this month, it is important to recognize that Jewish people—or Jewish communities around the world continue to face a frightening rise of anti-Semitism, hate and discrimination.

Sadly, we know that Canada is not immune to this form of hatred. Anti-Semitism in Canada has reached record levels in the past few years. It is unacceptable that our collective—and it—it's unacceptable, and it is our collective responsibility to denounce and combat this form of hatred whenever and wherever it occurs.

I encourage all Canadians to take this opportunity to reflect and learn more about the incredible role Jewish Canadians have played and continue to play in our society. Let us continue to educate ourselves and the next generation on the importance of building a safer, more diverse and inclusive society for all.

Miigwech for all of the tremendous contributions that you have made to make Manitoba a great province.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, Jewish Heritage Month, May, is a time to recognize the extraordinary contributions of Jewish people to our province. On this occasion, I will highlight the contribution of Jewish physicians.

By 2019, when Eva Wiseman's book, *Healing Lives: a Century of Manitoba Jewish Physicians*, was published, there were already more than 400 Jewish physicians. The book is full of their amazing stories and contributions, from the work of Harry Medovy, pediatrician-in-chief at the Children's Hospital of Winnipeg from 1954 to 1970, to Arnold Naimark, who was dean of medicine from 1971 to 1981, and who was instrumental, together with Lyonel Israels, in my coming to Winnipeg.

I want to highlight one individual with whom I worked closely. In 1973, Dr. Arnold Greenberg discovered natural killer cells, a group of white blood cells which have a natural ability to destroy cancer cells and cells infected with a virus. He followed this up with studies of the enzymes which are found in the small granules inside the natural killer cells and which do the actual work. This research was followed by studies of the process by which cells die. All of these findings have had a large impact on the knowledge of how the human body defends itself against cancer and viruses.

Sadly, Arnold Greenberg passed away in 2001, but his legacy, along with that of many other Jewish physicians, lives on.

During my time at what was then the Manitoba Cancer Foundation, at the Children's Hospital and in doing research at the Manitoba Institute of Cell Biology, I worked closely with and learned from many outstanding Jewish physicians, including, among many others, Sara Israels, Allan Becker, Brent Schacter, Cheryl Rockman-Greenberg and Harvey Chochinov.

Considering the fact that there was, for a period in the history of the Manitoba medical school, a severe prejudice and discrimination against those who were Jewish, the achievements of Jewish physicians in Manitoba is all the more remarkable.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

Oh—the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Khan).

Mr. Khan: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I ask for leave to include the name of the Jewish community that is here today to witness Jewish Heritage Month from ministerial statements. If I can add that into Hansard, please.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the names into Hansard? [*Agreed*]

Ruth Ashrafi, Stephanie Cezar, Abby Flackman, Jason Gisser, Adriana Glikman, Michael Goldberg, Elaine Goldstine, Sharon Graham, Mark Kantor, Linda Levesque, Adam Levy, Evelyn Orlovitz, Kliel Rose, Anton Yakovenko, Gustavo Zentner

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I rise to recognize that today is International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

This day was created in 2004 as a global campaign aimed at raising awareness about the ongoing discrimination, violence and marginalization faced by those who identify as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender-diverse and all those with diverse sexual orientations and sex characteristics.

This is the 19th annual celebration of International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. This day is celebrated in over 130 countries, uniting millions of people. It feels especially important right now to mark this day and unite in our collective efforts to promote a safe, inclusive and stigma-free society for all, and we recognize that these rights are increasingly under threat.

Here in Manitoba, we celebrate our diverse communities and we celebrate with all persons who are fighting for a world where people live free from violence and discrimination. We take time today to recognize and celebrate the hard-won advances for the

2SLGBTQQA+ communities, and commit to continuing in that pursuit.

This year's May 17th theme is Together Always: United in Diversity. We recognize the power of solidarity, community and allyship across different identities, movements and borders. We stand in solidarity with the 2SLGBTQQA+ community and helping everyone ensure that everyone is entitled to equal respect, protection and fulfillment of their fundamental human rights.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Love is love.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): The international day against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia is a day for reflecting on the progress made and the challenges that remain in ensuring equity and inclusion for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. We must stand united in our commitment to fight discrimination and foster a society where everyone can live authentically and without fear.

Today serves as a powerful reminder that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia continue to persist, harming individuals and communities. In Manitoba, the 2SLGBTQ community has fought hard for human rights. We have laws protecting individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and we have a strong network of community groups actively dedicated to advocacy and education.

There is still much work to be done, Madam Speaker; 2SLGBTQ individuals continue to face systemic barriers, and many continue to experience violence and harassment. Just this past week in Manitoba we've seen attempts to ban books that have 2SLGBTQ content, and a targeted attack on a local school, stealing their Pride flag and a collection of inclusive books.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the PC government need to unequivocally speak out against book banning, and condemn the attack on Riverbend Community School. To not do so is to fail to support the 2SLGBTQ+ community, not only in Manitoba, but in society as a whole. Today we must present a united front and recommit ourselves to building a Manitoba that champions equity, justice and respect for all.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Lamont: I am honoured to speak in support of international day against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

There is currently a massive and co-ordinated political effort across the globe to roll back decades of hard-won progress and freedoms, democratic rights, legal rights and to deny human beings their basic rights that we have come to take for granted in a liberal democracy.

Right here in Manitoba, a Pride flag and 2SLGBTQ book collection were stolen from a supposed safe space: a school in our own province. Again, here in Manitoba, teachers, librarians and even students are being attacked for having age-appropriate books that describe human reality in their classrooms.

And we've seen this happen before, over and over. This is a moral panic that is being weaponized by politicians who either fan the flames of dehumanization or stand by as it happens.

Every person deserves to live a life free from fear, shame and discrimination, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Because when we talk about discrimination and phobias, or hate and bigotry, what we're really talking about is dehumanization. And dehumanization is extremely dangerous, because when we start treating a fellow living, breathing human being as less than, it makes terrible things possible.

* (13:50)

We support 2SLGBTQ rights, women's rights and Indigenous rights, because they are human rights; conscious rights—conscience rights and freedom of speech, because we're all human beings and as such, we're all entitled to the dignity and freedom and respect we should have for one another, especially on days today where rights are being attacked while awareness is being raised.

Freedom of speech is still fundamentally supposed to be about attacking ideas, not people.

School boards still have to operate in a framework of human rights and the respect for every individual as a human being—students and staff, whatever their religion, gender—and it is our job to uphold and protect individual freedoms against the tyranny of the majority.

Transgender youth are five times more likely—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

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

Mr. Lamont: Transgender youth are five times more likely to think about or attempt suicide than their peers. They are often the targets of physical attacks. These are facts. We need to make it sure that students make it out of grade 12 alive.

When it comes to human rights and representation, we've all been here before, and the 2SLGBT community needs all of our support. This isn't a time for partisan politics, because someone's identity is not politics; it's their truth and their lives.

The question is not what someone's gender is or what community they belong to. The question is whether we, as legislators and as fellow Manitobans, will have the courage to set aside our differences and have the integrity to accept them for what they are, as—human beings—stand with them and protect them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Just for the information of members in the gallery, there is to be no participation from the gallery in terms of applauding the workings of the floor here.

So, I would ask members to please not applaud.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Portage la Prairie Constituency Acknowledgements

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): As this is likely my last opportunity to do a private member's statement in this House, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents for the honour of representing them for the last 12 years.

One of the first things you learn as an MLA is that you are, first and foremost, public servants, and a big part of your job is listening and helping people with their problems. And I do believe this is one of the parts of the job I will miss the most.

Many things have changed in Portage la Prairie during my time. Services for constituents have expanded. We have a new assisted living facility completed and another one in planning. Several early years and child-care facilities have been built or expanded. There's a new hospital under construction. We have a RAAM clinic and we have improved and restored the recreation facilities at Delta and St. Ambroise that were destroyed in the 2011 flood.

On the business side, we had Roquette come to town, which has put Portage and Manitoba on the world map

in terms of agricultural processing. Simplot fry plant doubled in size. McCain has modernized its plant. We have locally grown pea processor called NutriPea. Richardson Pioneer oat processing facility continues to grow and expand and is one of the biggest in the world. Southport Aerospathe *[phonetic]* growth has continued—they train rotary wind pilots there and are bidding on fixed-wings; and the vegetable industry continues to grow and expand in the Portage area—and I like to say, right from asparagus to zucchini, A to Z.

Infrastructure changes include sewer and water upgrades, and more is planned. We're completing rebuilding of the west end of the city, Saskatchewan Avenue in process, and it'll look dramatically different when we're done. Replacement of the damaged overpass that we're all so familiar with is well on way at the west end of Portage la Prairie.

I'd like to thank you, Madam Speaker, and all the staff here in the Legislature for their patience. And to all my MLA colleagues, on both sides of the House: it has been an honour serving with you.

Glenelm Neighbourhood Association

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): There are many community groups active in the Elmwood area.

One highly active community association in the Elmwood area is the Glenelm Neighborhood Association. This association is a 100 per cent volunteer-run organization that takes an active role in the community in a wide variety of areas. Notably, they participate as a sponsor at Elmwood's winter fun at Clara Hughes park. For example, they organize pumpkin drops with the Green Action Centre and Compost Winnipeg; they do spring cleanups, organize snow sculpture events and have a community newsletter.

On May 12th, they hosted a town hall on climate change and invited their elected representatives to join in the discussion on the path to NetZero by 2050, and the City of Winnipeg's CEIR report, standing for Community Energy Investment Roadmap. Included in the town hall discussions were presentations from Trees Winnipeg, the International Institute of Sustainable Development and Bike Winnipeg.

As an elected representative, I was able to take the opportunity to talk about my right-to-repair private member's bills which are currently before the Legislature. Each bill has a significant environmental and sustainability dimension. Canada produces 750,000 tons of electronic waste annually and right to repair will be a giant step forward in reducing this waste.

Right to repair means that products produced by manufacturers like Apple, Samsung and John Deere will be designed and manufactured to last longer and be repairable for 10 years as now is the case in Europe and soon to be in the United States. Your washer and dryer, for example, would be designed and made to last at least 10 years and not be tossed into landfills.

Linden Christian School Performance

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, this past weekend, I was happy to say my constituency of Fort Whyte was bustling with excitement.

Friday evening, I had the pleasure of watching the amazing and talented students from Linden Christian School perform Disney's Beauty and the Beast with my 10-year-old son. We were blown away by the unbelievable acting, costumes, live orchestra and sets put on by the students.

It was clear by the packed house that this was the place to be on Friday night in Fort Whyte. They sold 2,175 tickets, which is the largest—or, the highest ticket sales to date for a play put on by Linden Christian. There were countless hours of production put in by the students, teachers, volunteers and parents.

For a moment, I even forgot I was at a school and thought I was at Broadway; it was such an amazing, epic performance.

Friday night's excitement continued right into Saturday, where the entire Whyte Ridge community neighborhood was out for the annual community garage sale. That has been a long-standing community event, but was on short hiatus due to COVID-19, but it came back bigger and stronger than ever.

The community garage sale not only allowed people to sell and trade pre-loved items, it gave neighbours an opportunity to converse and build community. It was great to walk around and see so many friendly faces. I was even able to add to my Star Wars-Star Trek collection by purchasing some rare collectibles.

For my constituents in Linden Woods, mark your calendars: Saturday, June 3rd is your community garage sale.

Madam Speaker, I ask for everyone to come out to Fort Whyte and attend the amazing garage sale on June 3rd; it's a great time to build community, get out and about and see everyone. And you might find some rare gems in Linden Woods.

I also ask, Madam Speaker, for leave to include the names of the entire crew, students and teachers who were involved in the amazing performance on Linden Christian School Beauty and the Beast. Get your tickets early for next year; it's going to be another sold-out show.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Osa Aigbedo, Kayla Bailey, Erika Barenz, Christabel Bergen, Meredith Buhler, Arianna Byfield, Daunte Byfield, Avi Cook, Natalie Dixon, Layla Du Toit, Gracie Fast, Lincoln Fast, Sarah Fast, Daniel Frimpong, Mabel Harrington, Lauren Hartley, Joyce Ibrahim, Georgia Johnson, Kieran Johnson, Pauline Johnson, Sierra Kramer, Tacia Krystik, Elizabeth Lyubashenko, Callum MacBeath, Abbey McDowell-Steinburg, Krista Mo, Connor Morris, Atiksh Mutalik, Leah Nachtigall, Roan Neufeld, Zoë Neufeld, Blessing Olafusi, Lauren Pasveer, Zara Pollendine, Kallie Poppleton, Xiaowei Quan, Ariel Recksiedler, Grace Santschi, Thea Schau, Abigail Schroeder, Samara Simpson, Mirah Siwik, Anna Slyker, Everly Stokes, Landen Stokes, Ethan Wiebe, Bethany Wiens, Elizabeth Wiens

Pinays Manitoba Inc.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Founded in 2016, Pinays Manitoba Inc. stands as a testament to the strength of Filipino women in Manitoba.

The term Pinays is a Filipino expression that refers to Filipino women and identity for those living abroad. As a registered community organization, Pinays Manitoba is unwavering in its commitment to empowering Filipino women in Manitoba through education, advocacy and providing scholarships to graduating high school students.

With a clear mission to address unique challenges faced by Filipino women, Pinays Manitoba actively works towards developing role models for our diverse community, most specially for the next generation of Filipino women. Their vision is to recognize the remarkable contributions made by Filipino women of all ages across our province, and aims to both celebrate these women as catalysts for positive change. As Pinays Manitoba celebrates its seven-year anniversary, the organization continues to evolve and respond to the needs of the community.

* (14:00)

As their flagship program, the annual Pinays Manitoba Trailblazers Recognition Awards has showcased remarkable achievements of its recipients over the past seven years. These Filipino women exemplify the spirit of Pinays Manitoba, making positive and

impactful contributions to the community and inspiring change in people's lives. By showcasing these stories, Pinays Manitoba fosters an environment where young Pinays can look up to trailblazers and be inspired to make a positive impact on the community as well.

Pinays Manitoba Inc. embraces the power and potential of Filipino women, and as they continue to grow and make a positive difference, their impact resonates far beyond the borders of Manitoba.

And on a personal note, Madam Speaker, I am truly blessed to work alongside with these women leaders. I am truly blessed, because I have had the good fortune of knowing many of these leaders for most of my life, and it is my deep honour to be able to lift them up here today for the remarkable work that they're doing for our community.

And I would like my colleagues to please join me in welcoming members of Pinays Manitoba who have joined us in the gallery, including: Winnie Navarro, Emmie Joaquin, Connie DeVilla, Josie Concepcion, Rey-Ar Reyes, Lucille Nolasco-Garrido and Araceli Ancheta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Collège Béliveau Ringette Teams

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I rise in the House today to recognize Collège Béliveau's high school and junior high ringette teams, located in the Windsor Park neighborhood of the Southdale constituency.

Coaches Chantal Freynet-Hawthorn, Shannon Baxter, Tara Gilkes and Kristin Farkas led the teams to an exciting double victory where both teams secured gold medals at the 2023 River East Ringette Association tournament.

The high school team's final game had teammates and spectators at the edge of their seats. They were neck and neck against the opposing team, going all the way into a tiebreaking shootout. Before the tournament, the team even welcomed some hockey players to bolster their numbers, showing them the ropes and working together to achieve great results.

As for the junior high team, this is their first ever gold medal, and I am certain it won't be their last. The team was joined by players from École Van Belleghem, École Guyot and Shamrock School. It was wonderful to see a united team from the community play together so well and have fun doing it.

Thank you so much to the coaches, parents, families and the school communities for supporting the players throughout the season. I wish every player the very best during the off-season and the best of luck on future tryouts. I look forward to seeing both teams back on the ice next year.

Bravo, Barracudas.

Please join me in congratulating the 2023 Collège Béliveau Barracudas high school and junior high ringette teams on their gold medal wins.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: There are some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

We have members from the Manitoban combat community here today, who are the guests of the honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage.

And also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today from the Legislative Assembly Visitor Tour Program, the 2023 summer tour guides: Nicholas Litardi, Leia Patterson and Marit Stokke, who are accompanied by Claire Normandeau and Emily Gray.

And on behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care System Nurse Staffing Levels

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): For seven years, the PCs have cut our health-care system. The proof of this fact is right there in the numbers.

Since they took office in 2016, there are 300 fewer nurses working at the bedside in Winnipeg. Of course, there have been reductions to the number of nurses in other health regions as well.

And we see the impact right there at the bedside. It's patients who are suffering because of this Premier's cuts to our health-care system. The situation is rightfully called a crisis.

How does the Premier explain that she cut 300 nurses from the bedside in Winnipeg?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Again, the Leader of the Opposition continues down the lane of false accusations.

The fact of the matter is that we've had a 22 per cent increase in investments in our health-care system since we took office in 2016, a 9.2 per cent increase over last year—\$668 million more into our health-care system.

That is more, not less. And we are continuing, through our \$200-million health human resources action plan, to make investments into 2,000 more health-care professionals; we're already over 900 of those, more than—almost 260 nurses alone.

That's making significant progress. We recognize there's more work to be done, and we'll continue to do that.

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

Mr. Kinew: Here's a fact, and it's the fact that the Premier has acknowledged since we brought the numbers forward: there were 8,000 nurses working at the bedside when Brian Pallister was first elected; now, there are 7,700.

That means that under Brian Pallister and this Stefanson government, they cut 300 nurses from the bedside here in Winnipeg, and it's patients who are dealing with the results.

Manitobans are paying more and getting less with the PCs because all they do is invest in the upper echelons of the health-care bureaucracy. It's time to reinvest in the front lines.

How does the Premier explain that she's cut 300 nurses from the bedside in Winnipeg?

Mrs. Stefanson: We will continue to make record investments in our health-care system, and this budget alone had more than \$2 billion more than the NDP ever expended in health care when they were in office. We'll continue to make those investments in our health-care system.

As I mentioned earlier, we are making progress through our health human resources action plan. We recognize there's a challenge with human resources; it's nothing unique to Manitoba. Right across our country, other provinces are having challenges as well.

There is something that we have gone through between 2016 and now, Madam Speaker. It's called a worldwide pandemic. That created significant challenges within our health-care system.

We'll continue to work with our front-line services to give them the supports that they need, in way of recruitment, retention and training.

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

Mr. Kinew: The challenge with health human resources in Manitoba is that this Premier keeps cutting the number of nurses working at the bedside. There are 300 fewer.

And here's the interesting thing: those cuts began years before the pandemic. They started cutting the number of nurses in 2016. They've cut it again in 2017. It's continued each and every year; we've proved this conclusively.

So, again, it's an election year. They want to show up and make a few announcements, issue a few press releases. Everyone in Manitoba knows that health care is in a state of crisis, and the cuts that they have made are at the very least partly responsible.

So, given that these are the facts, how does the Premier explain her rationale for cutting 300 nursing jobs—people who were caring for patients at the bedside in Winnipeg?

Mrs. Stefanson: We know that there's challenges within health care in the province of Manitoba, but also right across the country and in other countries around the world as a result of the worldwide pandemic.

But that's why we are taking positive action moving forward with a \$200-million investment in a health human resources action plan that has resulted in more than 900 more health-care professionals working in our front lines, including 259 more nurses.

We recognize there's more work to be done; we'll continue to make sure that we make progress in this area.

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

Manitoba Public Insurance—Project Nova McKinsey Consultants—Contractual Obligations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): The PCs have caused a crisis at Manitoba Public Insurance. Under the Stefanson government, things have really gone off the rails, and it's Manitobans who are paying more as a result.

New internal documents show just how bad things are. Now, the PCs hired Justin Trudeau's favourite consulting firm, McKinsey, to try and fix the problem that they themselves created when Project Nova went \$200 million.

* (14:10)

The PCs decided to pay McKinsey \$12 million, but new internal emails state that McKinsey is, quote,

not providing industry best practices, end quote, and that MPI is documenting, and I quote here, facts of the misses against the contract.

I'll table the documents that prove the case.

Why is the Premier paying \$12 million to a company that is missing contractual obligations and that is not providing industry best practices?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, Manitobans should know that we have taken action on—in this area for MPI.

We have made a directive to the board to ensure that there is a competitive process when it comes to procurement of goods and services at MPI. There's been a number of other directives that have taken place to ensure that we're moving in the right direction. And we've also asked for an external organizational review to take place as well.

So, we are taking action, Madam Speaker, unlike what the Leader of the Opposition claims.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, I just want to help explain to Manitobans and to the Cabinet ministers on the PC side who are being left in the dark here.

This is about a contract that is open right now and that the PCs are pushing to have signed off on so that McKinsey can get paid. However, this email chain that I'm sharing with the public today shows that there are very serious concerns about the lack of work that McKinsey has done to earn that \$12 million.

Again, the quotes there say that there has not been work delivered in consistent—being consistent with the terms of the contract, and that McKinsey is failing to abide by industry best practices.

Again, the government brought in McKinsey to try and fix the mess that they created when Project Nova went \$200 million over budget, and now they're pushing for McKinsey to get paid even though there are serious concerns about the work.

How does the Premier rationalize this?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, as I stated in my previous answer, we have taken action. We have provided the board with a directive to ensure that there is a competitive process when it comes to procurement of goods and services within MPI.

I will also note and thank Dr. Sullivan, who was a previous board chair, and welcome in Ward Keith,

who is our new board chair. We look forward to working closely with him moving forward.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, Madam Speaker, the Premier acknowledges the chaos at Manitoba Public Insurance; the board chair resigned, Project Nova is \$200 million over budget.

And now the PCs are overseeing a situation where there's a push going on for McKinsey to be paid, even though serious concerns are being raised about their work—namely, that they are not following insurance industry best practices and that they're failing to meet the terms of their contract.

This is an issue that's costing Manitobans money. You were supposed to get a reduction in your Autopac payments this year. Instead, because of PC mismanagement, you're facing a rate increase. Their chaos is costing you more.

The question remaining for the PC Premier to answer: Is she going to sign off on McKinsey getting paid in the face of these serious concerns about the quality and lack of work getting done at MPI?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should know that when the NDP was in power for 17 years, they did absolutely nothing to upgrade the information technology at Manitoba Public Insurance. So, again, we continue to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government.

But, Madam Speaker, I will also just say that I welcome Ward Keith to the role as—of board chair. We know that he has past experience of more than three decades to Manitoba Public Insurance. We welcome his, you—his knowledge and expertise in these areas and we look forward to working closely with him.

Manitoba Public Insurance—Project Nova McKinsey Consultants—Contractual Obligations

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Details continue to emerge about how this PC government's reckless mismanagement of MPI and how it's affecting Manitobans' rate that they're paying on their Autopac.

We've been raising this issue about this crisis at MPI in the House for months, but the Premier has refused to take action.

Now we've learned that the private consulting firm McKinsey is not meeting their obligations under

a \$12-million contract awarded by this PC government. I'll table the emails from MPI once again, for the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) benefit.

Accountability starts at the top, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier explain why she is paying \$12 million to a company that is not living up to the terms of its contract?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Acting Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Certainly we won't take any lessons on working with Crown corporations from the NDP, Madam Speaker. We know the mess that they left behind after 17 years of doing absolutely nothing.

We know that MPI staff were working on spreadsheets—manual spreadsheets—for years, and asked for upgrades and technology, Madam Speaker. We're bringing them out of the 1970s.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, let's review the events of just the past week for the minister, Madam Speaker.

We raised this in the House, that the PCs' hand-picked MPI CEO got not one, but two raises, and racked up \$88,000 in travel expenses. Then the MPI board chair quit, the one who signed off on all of those decisions.

And now, we're finding out that the PCs are paying an outside consultant, McKinsey, \$12 million for work that's not meeting the terms of their contract and is not providing best practices. The PC government has clearly lost control of the situation at MPI.

Why is the Premier paying millions to a company that is not meeting their terms of their contract, and will she call a meeting of the MPI committee today?

Mr. Wharton: I know one meeting that should've been called—and it was called by the opposition back in the 2000s, Madam Speaker—and that was a meeting to find out why the NDP government at the time were spending over \$4 billion over budget on Bipole III and Keeyask.

We know that the NDP mismanage all of the Crown corporations, including Manitoba Hydro and MPI. *[interjection]* The member from Fort Rouge continues to heckle me; he knows it's true. Maybe should get up and admit it.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve to know why they're not getting value for their money. Project Nova costs have ballooned \$200 million over budget at the same time that the PCs' hand-picked CEO received two raises and racked up \$88,000 in travel costs.

And now the Premier is paying an additional \$12 million to a company that isn't even meeting its contractual obligations. Manitobans deserve to know why this PC government's mismanagement is pushing their Autopac rates higher and higher every year. MPI is in crisis, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier just take some accountability and call an MPI committee meeting today, so that Manitobans can finally get some answers?

Mr. Wharton: Again, I'll remind the member, over the year '21-22, over \$180 million in rebates were provided to Manitoba ratepayers, Madam Speaker, by MPI.

We know that during a very tough time in Manitoba and across the world, Madam Speaker, that rebate was very welcome. We will continue to work with Manitoba Public Insurance—and again, let the PUB determine the rates going forward.

Madam Speaker, we have taken action and provided a ministerial directive to control tendered and untendered contracts, and also ordered an organizational review: nothing that the NDP would do. We guarantee you they would never even work towards a review going forward. *[interjection]*

Thank goodness the member from Fort Rouge can't get up.

Security of Staff at Health Sciences Centre Request to Use Institutional Safety Officers

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, everyone knows the PCs have failed to support health-care workers in Manitoba. They've mandated them to work overtime while short-staffed, and they've cut their funding.

* (14:20)

And they've failed to take action to keep them safe at their workplaces. Health Sciences Centre nurses and employees are speaking out, because they're worried about their safety at work. We know the PCs have the tools to help these nurses and staff be safer at HSC. They could follow through on their promise, just as one example, to hire institutional safety officers.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) commit to doing so today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, Manitobans have been forced to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about health care in the province of Manitoba these last few months; and I must say, what a disappointment.

He wants to take an ideological approach over the care of patients. He wants to cease funding to hundreds of agency nurses. He wants to cancel tens of thousands of surgeries, leaving Manitobans in pain and suffering.

Can the member for Union Station explain how Manitoban patients benefit from this ideological approach of their leader?

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the Health Minister will soon enough be the one asking questions.

But right now, HSC employees are speaking out. They say they don't feel safe at work and they don't feel safe walking to and from—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —their cars. The Manitoba Nurses Union says they receive complaints daily and that morale is low due to reports of vehicle break-ins and fears of being attacked.

These are really serious concerns, Madam Speaker, yet the PCs have not made this a priority.

Will the Premier prioritize safety at HSC and finally follow through on her government's commitments—their own promise—and hire institutional safety officers?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, last August, at a public Talk Tuesdays interview, a nurse from ARNM questioned the fantastical ideas brought forward by the member for Union Station: Where are you going to get the money to fund all of your ideas? Where is the money to make it happen?

Do you want to know what their response was, Madam Speaker? What the NDP plan for health care is? The money is there; we have all the money we need, said the member for Union Station.

They have no clue, Madam Speaker, and no plan. Shame on them.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, nurse morale at HSC has reached new lows thanks to the safety issues that these nurses are reporting on a daily basis.

This is a direct quote, Madam Speaker: I feel unsafe all the time. This has been the worst year I have ever experienced at HSC. End quote. This is from a nurse with 22 years of experience at HSC.

The PCs could take real, concrete actions to improve safety at HSC by following through on their own promise to hire institutional safety officers. Yet they failed to hire even a single ISO, making it very clear that this isn't a safety—the safety of these nurses isn't a priority for them.

Will this Premier and this Health Minister finally do the right thing and prioritize the safety of nurses and staff at Health Sciences Centre?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, unlike members opposite, we have a plan. We don't rely on magic wands.

We don't believe that status quo is enough and we are continuing to make historical investments in health care: 9.2 per cent increase in the Health budget to \$8 billion since the member for Union Station made the statement I earlier placed on the record. That is the highest budget increase in the history of the province and the largest single investment—\$2 billion more, Madam Speaker, than members 'opposite'—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —ever did.

Manitobans who know who to trust, Madam Speaker.

Recent Anti-LGBTQ2S/Anti-Inclusive Events Request for Government to Condemn

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Today is the international day against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

And just this past week, here in Manitoba, we have seen attempts to ban books with 2SLGBTQ+ content, as well as a targeted attack on an elementary school stealing their Pride flag and a collection of inclusive books.

Anti-2SLGBTQ+ rhetoric is dangerous and this whole House should present a united front in condemning it. But we are still waiting for the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) to do so.

The Premier keeps telling us how she supports the 2SLGBTQ+ community, so will she stand up today and condemn these recent events?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): And the member's question in regards to the books and the flag, Madam Speaker, myself and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning is definitely in touch with the Seven Oaks School Division and we're monitoring the situation.

The incidents of the school division have been reported to the police and an investigation is ongoing.

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

Ms. Naylor: It's clear that the government isn't all on the same page when it comes to protecting human rights.

Yesterday, the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage said that there is no book ban in this province, but the Premier said it is up to schools, and today we hear that the Minister of Education is monitoring the situation. So, lots of different thoughts and ideas on that side of the House. *[interjection]*

And lots of heckling. I'm just going to say that this government loves to speak on the topic of LGBTQ rights, but they sure don't want it to go on and on. They don't want it to take up any more of their time today or be accountable for it.

Madam Speaker, hard-won human rights must not be—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear when I say this: We, and everyone on this side of the House, condemn acts of violence and hate towards anyone in Manitoba, including the 2SLGBTQI community in Manitoba. We condemn all hate crimes. I want to be very clear on that.

Now—now you know where I and we stand.

Can the Leader of the Opposition stand up and say the same thing? Oh, no, wait; he can't, because I will quote, and I will table: Is going to wrestling class because jujitsu wasn't gay enough? We have a saying in jujitsu, and I quote: it's only gay if you make eye contact. My bro is convinced, do you like the '90s, is a gay pick-up line.

Will the Leader of the Opposition stand up and apologize for his homophobic hate comments today in this House?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Naylor: I am so grateful to live in a country where people can learn and grow and develop new ideas over time, but I—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor: —also want to live in a province where the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I'm going to call members to order.

Ms. Naylor: I appreciate that people's views can change and grow over time, and I celebrate that. But I want to see a government of this province who can take a clear stance and take action.

Madam Speaker, \$600 of inclusive books were stolen from a classroom, along with the school's Pride flag and pole, and a homophobic letter was left. This was a clear, deliberate and targeted attack. It's 2023 and we're still having to stand up to talk about banning books.

We want urgent action. We want a premier that can say no to homophobia.

Will the Premier commit today to taking—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): My arrogance is a virtue; it keeps me controversial. That is a lyric from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), and nowhere was that sentiment more on display yesterday than when he got up in the House and said, when we're talking about human rights, where we are today is the same place that we've always been.

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker, that is an atrocious statement from a man who started his career, who launched his career, on misogynistic and homophobic attacks.

Will the member of opposite retract his statement yesterday and recognize that where he was yesterday is not where he ought to be today?

Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin Delay in Outlet Channel Construction

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): The PCs keep trying to ignore the channels project and instead just hope that it doesn't flood again, and Manitobans know they have failed.

They have failed to even start construction, despite promising in 2016 to build it within one term. And here we are now at the end of their second term, and communities continue to wait for this essential flood protection.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain: Why has she failed to even start construction on the channels project? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): If the member would only go to his coalition government when it comes to Singh and Trudeau, to tell them that we need this channel approved, because we're waiting now for environmental study that's being done right now, Madam Speaker.

And we are actually ready to do construction any day now, but we're just waiting for this member to go talk to his colleague at the—in Ottawa, to make sure that he passes this licensing, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Bushie: In 2016, the PCs promised to build a channels project within one term. That didn't happen.

They blame their failure on ongoing consultations, yet just last year, they admitted they had—and I fill—fallen short in our responsibilities, end quote, to properly consult with Indigenous communities. And now, months later, here we are still no progress whatsoever on the channels project.

Can the Premier explain: Why has she failed to start construction on a channels project despite having two terms and seven years?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, again, I said in Estimates that we're waiting for the federal government to do the actual approval of this channel.

The thing is, Madam Speaker, when the NDP were in government in 2011, they made the emergency channel that actually was what—environmental disaster.

We're here to make sure that we consult with our First Nation communities, making sure that the project is got—be—going forward on this and making sure that we have opportunities for First Nations to participate in the contracts when it comes to the channels.

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

Mr. Bushie: It's clear the PCs' approach to the channels project is to deflect, blame and avoid accountability.

They've misled Manitobans by blaming delays on consultation with Indigenous communities—which, I might add, a Manitoba judge ruled they failed to do. They blame the federal government; it's all blame, blame and deflect from this PC government, yet Manitobans know this failure is the PCs' and the PCs' alone.

Can the Premier explain: Why has she failed to make the Lake St. Martin-Lake Manitoba channel project a priority in her two terms and seven years?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not quite sure what the member from Keewatinook has going on here.

When it comes to us consulting with First Nations, they actually interfere with First Nations and say how this project isn't right. And then when—then the thing is, and then they say, well, this project is so important when it comes to protection of the First Nation communities.

Madam Speaker, we're actually consulting with First Nations communities. We're actually saying that this is so important to Manitobans, for all Manitobans, when it comes to First Nations, to 'everywuddy' that's in the Interlake.

And we're going to be doing this job, and we're going to get it done. He can go to his leader of the NDP government—NDP leader, and talk to—about him getting this licence approved, Madam Speaker.

Book Bans and Accusations Against Public Servants Request for Government to Condemn

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We should all be able to agree that the tactics around book banning in Brandon a week ago were completely unacceptable.

Teachers and librarians are facing flat-out lies that could be life- and career-ruining. Unwarranted accusations of being complicit with horrific crimes and being publicly shamed by people, who are absolutely careless and reckless and have no regard for the truth or who gets hurt.

I'll tell you the hypocrisy at the heart of this: the same materials that are considered corrupting or even criminal in a school library suddenly become harmless when they're read aloud at a school board meeting by the person accusing them.

There are basic rights school boards don't get to take away.

Why won't the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) make that clear today?

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I want to reiterate to everyone that there is no book banning happening in Manitoba. This government is not support of book ban; we are against book banning.

And we stand in condemning any sort of acts of hatred or violence towards any community, including the 2SLGBTQAI+ community.

I'll also let the member from St. Boniface know that under the Manitoba libraries public act, library boards are the authority for governance and procedures of public libraries.

We don't set that policy here, Madam Speaker. We heard from Manitobans that Manitobans want local autonomy. That's what we heard loud and clear, so they can locally control their books in their libraries, and that's what we stand for.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Lamont: The government has been dancing around this by saying there is no book ban, when there's another meeting planned to have one.

There's a very big reason we need to guard against this, because this is all about crushing communities out of existence, and Manitoba and Canada have a very dark history of extreme movements. And that history may have been forgotten or buried, but this is an assault on local democracy and freedom of speech, and this is an old playbook because this is how religious extremists conspired to crush French Catholic schools in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, by claiming children weren't safe.

It was a lie then; it's a lie now. This is not going to stop unless we make it absolutely clear that tactics like those used by the book banners—telling monstrous lies about people who are completely innocent—that it's not acceptable.

Why won't the Premier do that?

Mr. Khan: I'm glad I could stand up again, and just further reiterate what the message we've been saying: there is no book ban in Manitoba.

There may be a secret meeting behind a building, under a staircase to talk about book banning. We are not supporting a book ban. We are not—there is no book ban in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, public libraries are for everyone. We do not approve, endorse, restrict or deny access to any public library material. I'm not sure how many more times I can say it, how much more clearer I can say it, but I'll try it once again: There is no book ban in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Violent Crime Rates in Manitoba Request for Plan to Address

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Last night, an individual in Tyndall Park was robbed and left with numerous injuries. This is one of many public safety issues happening in Manitoba.

In fact, according to the most recent statistical report by the Winnipeg Police Service, a violent crime happens every 13.4 hours.

Madam Speaker, the provincial government has a responsibility towards public safety, and to date it is clear that this government hasn't done enough, as violent crime continues across the province.

What concrete steps is this government taking to address violent crime rates, and what advice do they have for families who have been affected by such crime under their watch?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): This government continues to invest in police and police resources.

Madam Speaker, \$54 million in crime strategy in Budget 2023; more than \$3 million for the integrated violent offender apprehension unit; \$4.1 million for 10 new prosecutors for gang violence and organized crime; over \$2 million for the chronic missing persons unit; over \$2 million for the child abuse investigation unit.

This side of the House will continue to invest in policing, unlike the NDP, that want to defund it.

Surgical Capacity and Specialist Recruitment Government Update

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): While the NDP continues to politicize health care in Manitoba, our government is focused on patients and increasing surgical capacity within our health-care system.

That is why our government launched a Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force, and over the last two years, has invested over a quarter of a billion dollars to help Manitobans get much-needed scans, diagnostics and surgical procedures.

Because of these investments, Boundary Trails was able to complete 639 hip and knee replacement surgeries, 139 more than planned.

Can the minister detail for us these additional surgical progress and recruitment efforts?

* (14:40)

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for Rossmere for the question. As Manitoba's head of surgery, Dr. Ed Buchel said this week: we're above 2019 numbers. That's no small feat. We're recruiting and retaining net positive numbers of surgical specialists. Our numbers are going up. Surgeons are coming to our province in spite of significant recruitment in BC, Alberta and Ontario.

We're net positive year over year in terms of our recruitment. We are recruiting cardiac surgeons, thoracic surgeons and we're being successful at doing these. And, Madam Speaker, high-end specialties are getting more people to come to Manitoba, because we're developing an environment that is enticing for them.

Thank you.

RRC Polytech and Assiniboine Community College Possibility of Collective Strike Action

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, the PC government continues to fail workers at Manitoba's colleges and universities.

They've cut their budgets. They've failed to give them a fair deal. They've already caused not one but two strikes at the University of Manitoba, and now staff at Red River College Polytechnic and Assiniboine Community College are being forced to consider striking.

Can the minister explain why she has failed to support Manitoba's post-secondary institutions and its workers?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I think I'll start with putting some facts on the record, which I know confused members of the opposite-opposition.

This year, we will be investing over \$820 million in post-secondary education. Every post-secondary

institute received an increase in funding in this year's budget alone.

The member opposite does not have his facts straight, but I'm happy to clarify for him on the record.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, one thing that we're clear about on this side of the House is that Manitoba's colleges and universities—their workers deserve respect. For seven years, the PCs have not learned that, and they quite frankly do the opposite.

They've continually disrespected colleges by cutting their budgets—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —and refusing to give their workers a fair deal. They've backtracked on programs, forcing Assiniboine Community College to pick up a \$300,000 tab for nursing diploma program. And a result of all this, the staff at Red River College Polytechnic and ACC are beginning to consider strike action.

Now, can the minister explain for us today why she is failing the workers of colleges and failing to let them bargain fairly?

Mrs. Guillemard: I know that the member opposite and I have had this discussion in the Chamber before. The employers and the employees right now are in the process of the collective bargaining negotiations. That happens between the employer and the employee.

Now, the member opposite might be confused about this process. I'm happy to sit down with him if he wants to discuss further so he can understand it. We are not the employers, Madam Speaker. That is between the post-secondary institutes and the employees, and they are actively engaging in those negotiations with the students' best interests in mind.

I don't know if the member opposite has the students' best interests in mind, but I hope he gets there at some point. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Moses: It's simple, Madam Speaker: colleges and their workers want and deserve respect. They're not getting it from this government.

They do critical work of training the future workers in our province—the workers our province needs—and

they play an important role in communities across Manitoba. Yet, the PCs refuse to recognize this and disrespect them since they came in to office, forcing staff at RRC Polytechnic and ACC to consider strike action.

Just this week, in addition to all that, we learned that the PC government broke another promise and is leaving ACC with a \$300,000 bill.

And so, I'll ask the minister again: Can the minister explain why she was refusing to respect the workers at colleges in Manitoba and allowing them to bargain fairly?

Mrs. Guillemard: Previously when the member rose and asked questions again about the collective bargaining process, I suggested if he wanted to be involved, the Chamber is not the appropriate place to become involved.

He can resign his seat; he can apply for a position as an employer or an employee at a post-secondary institute. Clearly he has not followed that advice.

Madam Speaker, I will table today the application form so that if he wants to be an employer or an employee and be involved in negotiations, he's free to do so.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Louise Bridge

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

The background 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 deteriorated extensively, becoming functionally obsolete, subject to more frequent unplanned repairs, and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg, City, has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the

new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

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

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

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its survey confirmed that residents wanted the 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, 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 the new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise Bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as was originally proposed.

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

(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, and

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

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Health-Care Coverage

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care: migrant workers with permits of less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

* (14:50)

(2) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(3) Without adequate health-care coverage, if they are ill, many of the uninsured will avoid seeking health care due to fear of being charged for the care, and some will fear possible detention and deportation if their immigration status is reported to the authorities.

(4) According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care to undocumented irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(5) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

(6) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba, regardless of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependent children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign

to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to inform all health-care institutions and providers of expanded coverage for those without health insurance and the details on how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

(4) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to create and enforce strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with training to protect the safety of residents with precarious immigration status and ensure they can access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This has been signed by Eric Johnson, Hannah Belec and Patrick McConahy [*phonetic*], and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I should have indicated that in accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Derek Johnson (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, for government business this afternoon, can you please call the following bills for third reading debate: bills 25, 36, 29, 21, and 22.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider concurrence and third readings of bills 25, 36, 29, 21, 22.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

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

Madam Speaker: I will therefore start by calling concurrence and third reading of Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters).

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate (Mr. Klein), that Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, wildfire fighters; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (pompiers affectés aux incendies échappés), reported from the standing committee of Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, seconded by the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate, that Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters), reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Reyes: I'm pleased to rise again to provide comments on Bill 25. I'll be brief, as many of the points were mentioned during second reading and at committee.

This bill will include 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.

Currently, 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 a 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.

I want to thank the important role that front-line workers play, including wildfire firefighters. We value their efforts and acknowledge their role has become increasingly critical.

And, just recently, a group of Manitoba firefighters arrived to support the wildfire fight in Alberta. Manitoba is proud to lend its support and resources to our neighbours in Alberta during this unprecedented start to their fire season.

As we see in other provinces and in Manitoba, whether it is due to climate change or a changing environment, the number and size of wildfires are increasing. Wildfire seasons are going longer, and wildfire firefighters are more often being called upon to assist other jurisdictions in their firefighting efforts.

I also want to thank Kevin Rebeck of the Manitoba Federation of Labour and Kyle Ross of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union for their full support on this bill.

I know that with these legislative changes, Manitoba will be a leader for other jurisdictions. This legislation aligns us with our counterparts in British

Columbia and some other jurisdictions around the world that has 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. As a result, the bill puts all firefighters on equal footing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Before I begin my remarks on this bill, I just wanted to use this opportunity to raise some concerns that were recently brought forward to me by members of the Manitoba Wildfire Service. They were relayed to me by Andy Regier, a research officer with the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union.

Some of the members of the Wildfire Service have raised issues such as the lack of pay equality with other workers in similar agencies across Canada. This is a concern that we would like the minister to address.

Also, issues including staff retention and recruitment have also— affecting our whole province and the whole country, but it's particularly of acute concern for members of our Manitoba Wildfire Service.

In addition, another concern that was recently raised to me was an aging water bomber fleet that desperately needs replacing. Again, I'd like to raise this issue here in the House.

And last, some—more compensation and accommodations for the long hours and terrible conditions, which is the everyday norm that many of our Manitoba wildfire service members are experiencing.

This is what they would like to convey here as part of our debate here, as we have this opportunity to discuss their working conditions due to this bill that the minister has brought forward.

The purpose of Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, wildfire fighters—the purpose is to amend The Workers Compensation Act and to extend its presumptions to wildfire firefighters. Bill 25 will ensure that wildfire firefighters are treated equal to other firefighters in Manitoba under The Workers Compensation Act.

And I do remember that it was around this time last year that we did expand The Workers Compensation Act

to include a list of more carcinogens and different types of cancers to be included as part of the presumptive coverage for WCB for firefighters here that work in construction and buildings.

At this time, I'd also just really put my heart out there for the families and also to the many members of the wildfire services in Alberta and in the neighbouring provinces, as 30,000 people and counting are being displaced currently due to wildfires that are ravaging parts of Alberta. We know that Alberta is currently in a state of emergency. Firefighters are currently responding to 100 active wildfire fighters—wildfires, rather.

* (15:00)

And, you know, we're proud of—that we do have one group from the Manitoba Wildfire Service, a group of eight members of the Wildfire Service that have arrived at the base in Lac la Biche in Alberta. This eight personnel are—and including with some of our tankers, are doing their best to also assist in the fire mitigation efforts there in that province and are—I know every single member here in the Legislature and all our fellow Manitobans are there because we know that this is extremely dangerous work, it's very, very important work, and we're very grateful for the sacrifice and the skill that these members are putting forward in order to fight these fires and protect people, livelihood, property and more across Alberta.

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

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Bill 25 proposes that illnesses and injuries presumed to be caused by firefighting and covered by The Workers Compensation Act will now include those who battle wildfires. Terms from The Workers Compensation Act like full-time firefighter or a part-time firefighter will be substituted with full-time, part-time or wildlife firefighter.

The term wildfire firefighter refers to a worker employed to suppress or extinguish wildfires and who is not a full-time firefighter, a part-time firefighter or a member of OFC personnel. Under the current act, if firefighters or 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 that this to be—that this would be a work-related illness or injury: that's

from Fire Fighting in Canada, in an article dated March 18, 2023.

Through the inclusion of the definition of wildfire fighter to the firefighter presumption, compensation will apply equally now to all firefighters. 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 has been predicted to rise by 50 per cent by 2100 as a result of climate change, and that's from the UN Environment Programme.

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

Now, cancer is the leading cause of fatalities among firefighters in Canada. It's estimated that about 50 firefighters out of 100,000 die of cancer each year, and that's 50 too many. Firefighters have up to six times greater exposures to carcinogens than the rest of the population, and these carcinogens include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, diesel engine exhaust, ethylbenzene, solar radiation, formaldehyde and polychlorinated biphenyls.

Wildfire 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.

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

But fires that wildfire firefighters fight don't know gender. It affects whomever is exposed to the toxic smoke, and that is why it is so important to grow the list of presumptive coverage. While protecting women currently in the field, expanding coverage to wildfire firefighting could make firefighting a more appealing career to enter into for folks, knowing that if one day they become diagnosed or, sadly, succumb to cancer, they would be rightfully recognized and compensated.

The Manitoba NDP has always supported legislation which ensures the welfare of all firefighters and workers in Manitoba. We have a history of supporting Manitoba's hard-working firefighters through The Workers Compensation Act.

In 2002, Manitoba became the first jurisdiction in Canada, under an NDP government, to enact presumptive workers compensation coverage for cancers among firefighters, meaning that firefighters with these cancers would not have to prove the illness is caused by their work. Since that time, the presumption has been expanded to include many types of cancer, as well as heart conditions.

And while we were in government, the NDP launched a comprehensive review of The Workers Compensation Act to ensure that it was continually meeting the needs of both workers and employers in Manitoba's changing workplaces. And, of course, as more science and evidence develops, we will have to continually be updating WCB presumptive coverage.

We passed legislation that supports firefighters, paramedics, nurses and other front-line workers suffering from PTSD and, in 2016, our groundbreaking changes to The Workers Compensation Act made PTSD coverage accessible to all workers under the act. This was first-in-Canada legislation, and it provided the avenue for all workers who have experienced traumatic events in the workplace to access the support that they need to heal and to get back to work.

We also updated the workplace safety and health amendment act to include workplace harassment, to ensure that employers have the training to stop harassment and provide support to the victim.

In 2011, we made it mandatory for employers in the specific risk industry sectors with an elevated risk of potential violence to implement violence-prevention policies. And these sectors include health care, security, police, corrections, crisis counselling and intervention, financial, pharmacy, education, public transit and taxicab services.

In conclusion, the Manitoba NDP—we're here committed to the safety of all workers in our province and, therefore, to—all the presumptions that apply to firefighters under The Workers Compensation Act should include wildfire firefighters as well.

Our wild land firefighters face hazards every single day. They're facing hazards as we speak. As we're here meeting in the Legislature today, they're facing those hazards. And Bill 25 shows that we recognize these hazards and that we are committed to

all firefighters' long-term health as they continually work to keep our province safe and, in this current case, also to keep Alberta safe.

And while this current bill is a positive step that we are supporting and it's a positive step forward in providing protection to wildfire firefighters and their loved ones if they fall ill, it is important that more continues to be done, including funding research into developing better protective gear for first responders—responders, so that no one falls victim to cancer.

It's—this is an important day for wildfire firefighters across Manitoba, and I am proud to see all of us come together to pass this very important bill.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise this afternoon and just put a few words on record with respect to Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the bill itself is fairly straightforward, and I do see it as a—being a positive step going forward, but it's just starting to scratch the surface.

Before we—getting into further details of what we could be doing here in the province of Manitoba, I do want to express that I really appreciate the departmental staff for taking the time to meet with us for this legislation.

I know, for myself, it helped build a much stronger understanding of what our wildfire firefighters do here in the province of Manitoba just as far as their role goes as well as what they're exposed to. And I'm just exceptionally grateful for the work they do in protecting us here in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (15:10)

Manitoba has some incredibly bad wildfires, and—just last year, as an example, over 2,000 evacuees fled Mathias Colomb Cree Nation after people were forced to leave their homes. And this fire in particular was approximately 23,000 hectares in size, and it's been noted that many additional firefighters were actually called in for help.

And want to thank those firefighters, as well, for coming in to help in our province of Manitoba. It's one of the great things about Canada: we pull together when we need to and we do everything we can to protect each other in all situations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also recognize that a lot is happening in Canada right now with respect to smoke

and wildfires and we're all watching it. I know I've seen many of my colleagues, too—there's the app right now on our phones that actually shows the smoke coming over the provinces and I think it's something we need to be very attentive to. And I want to stand strong with our wildfire firefighters as they prepare and they start—they continue to work to protect us.

Again, this piece of legislation is a step toward providing more supports, but there's so much more we can be doing. We can be talking about better pay equality for wildfire firefighters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we can be talking about better mental health supports. This is an issue they have also brought forward to many of the MLAs here in the House.

And I always like to use this as an opportunity to bring up the importance of regulating psychotherapy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we were to regulate psychotherapy here in the province of Manitoba, it would make it more accessible to those who are wanting to use different forms of talk therapy, for example.

It would ensure that it is affordable and that we have the therapists on site to be able to work with those who would like to access therapy, and it would also ensure that those who are practising therapy are properly trained to do so. It's extremely important that those, when they are meeting with someone in relation to mental health, that they are properly trained to do so.

And currently, in Manitoba, it's not regulated. So, that's something that our Province could work towards that would have a positive effect in helping our firefighters, as well, and people of all trades, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Again, we're paying very close attention to the fires and smoke as of right now, and ultimately my hope is that this legislation is just the starting point, as I know all of us here in the House are very grateful for our firefighters, and there's much more we can be doing.

Thank you.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, for the chance to say a few words on Bill 25, the wildfires—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters).

I do want to say one thing, though, kind of, to start off with. The definition of wildfire firefighter is, and I think this legislation goes to show that a firefighter is a firefighter. And whether it be the wildfire firefighter or somebody in an urban centre here in the city of Winnipeg, or in a town or a building or what have you.

But it's—the impacts felt by the danger that a firefighter places themselves in should be across the board. And I think this legislation goes to do—to address that to a certain degree, but there is still some—you know, it was mentioned by the member from Tyndall Park that it kind of scratches the surface a little bit, and there is still more to be done. But it is a step in the right direction.

Each and every day during the summer, and in particular, today, if you, in the evening or in the morning, if the sun is out, you're going to look up and you're going to see that it's orange. You know, the sun is glowing orange because of the smoke. Because of the smoke in this case, from Alberta, but in most cases, in other cases, it's from right here in the province of Manitoba.

And you hear time and time again, references to the air quality. You know, the air quality for an urban centre or a town that may or may not be close to a fire situation, but the air quality affects people, in that wherever they may be, whether it be in the city of Winnipeg or whether it be in northern Manitoba, southern Manitoba, but that air quality affects them at maybe hundreds of miles away.

So, just imagine that being a couple hundred feet away or 10 feet away, or being right in the midst of that. So, that's the reality for a—and I'm—I may not reference in my words here today the term wildfire firefighter, because to me, it's just a firefighter.

And if—I shouldn't say just, but it's a firefighter. And for my area, where I'm from, where I grew up, I was an emergency firefighter or an EFF back in my teenage days, younger days when you were called upon in your community to go out and help.

But we also had a number of members from our communities that were on initial attacks: fire rangers and what have you, who were on the front lines. And we talked time and time again about front-line workers, whether it be health care, education, but this is also a front-line occupation, and it absolutely has an impact on that.

And I'll be quite honest here. Back in, you know, 20, 30 years ago, burning community garbage dumps was also kind of a normal thing. And I know the, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yourself, you can probably attest to the fact that that was almost a normal practice for a lot of communities back in the day, to be able to do that. And some of them called upon the firefighters to do that, whether it be initial attack or whether it be

conservation-based, to do that on behalf of the community.

But, again, that exposure that they were open to, nobody thought about it at the time. Nobody thought about what those impacts would be about burning, let's say, the garbage dump, or burning, you know, in the forest, it's just a matter of, you know, here, put a mask on or cover your mouth and you'll be fine, not knowing that you're, in fact, breathing in contaminants that could eventually lead to you dying, let alone all the health care—all health issues you may have going forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it—when I first seen the legislation, it is something that resonated with myself, resonated in my community, resonated in a lot of northern Manitobans, in the fact that they may or may not have had loved ones that were in the fire service or forestry service, and they succumbed to cancer of some type, whether it be immediately after their time of work finished or later on in life. And maybe the questionnaire got asked, well, were a smoker, you know, did you smoke, or looks—looking for other reasons as to why you may have come into contact and developed cancer.

But the reality is it could absolutely play back to this kind of occupation that they choose to do. And in some cases it was an occupation they loved; they loved to be able to do that. They loved to be able to, because in most times, in most cases, including today and the people of Alberta, there are heroes out there that are putting their lives on the line in the forestry service in defence of their community and defence of their province, in defence of their country, to be able to kind of battle that fire, that may threaten a community, threaten somebody's lives, threaten somebody's home.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that comes around full circle, then, to—and, again, going back to not categorizing this as a wildfire firefighter and trying to put that on the same kind of level as a firefighter here in, whether it be in the city of Winnipeg or a town site, but to be able to now have those same kind of benefits as a forest fire firefighter would have to somebody else in an urban setting.

So, I know Bill 25 goes to address that, and it goes to address the need to recognize that kind of danger that a forest fire firefighter has. But at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it needs to do a little bit more too. It needs to also go back and—I think there was some conversations about whether or not there was,

being able to look back at potentially retroactive situations that may have come about.

And I know this is kind of a legislation that, going forward, will make the changes, but what about retroactive too? What about somebody who's going to have developed something, a workplace hazard from a fire fight—from a forest fire firefighting and now that's something that developed a year ago? Do they fit into this legislation? Do they have the coverage of this legislation?

And those are some of the questions that were asked, and I'm sure the minister had heard those kinds of conversations, you know, how do we make this better? And, again, this is a start, and I'm hoping that, you know, over time, this gets to be developed to say, okay, you know, we need to also include, you know, this component and what have you. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's imperative that the people, the families and the communities that are impacted by this also have that say, are also consulted on this issue.

And you need to get out to conservation bases, and I'm sure members opposite have known people that have worked for conservation in some capacity and have a connection to forest fires here in Manitoba because sometimes that's just how we are in Manitoba. With the vast forests and the lush forests that we have, you know, we can't help but be affected by a fire situation. So, get out and talk to those folks and talk to those families, talk to those communities and see exactly what that impact is.

And, as I mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had the—and I'll say this as a privilege, because that was an exciting time in your life. You know, you got to get out there and be the FF and jump in a helicopter and be some of the first people on the ground.

But, at the same time, there was a lot of no thought to safety in those times: it's let's just do what it takes to protect our community, to protect what we need to do. But in hindsight, if you looked at that now and somebody goes out there and, well, where's all your PPE? Where's all your precautions?

* (15:20)

And now, you have a firefighter going out there with potentially, you know, tens of pounds of equipment on, just to be safe. And back then, there was a lot that didn't do that, and didn't do that, not because it wasn't something that was a priority, it was just something that wasn't available.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those same firefighters today are a little different. A lot of the same characteristics are still there. They will do what it takes to protect the community, and I'm sure in Alberta that's happening right now, where there's hundreds and hundreds of emergency firefighters that are out there doing their job.

But then, again, that also begs the question, in here—in Manitoba, when the reference is to seasonal employees, fire rangers, EFFs, initial attack officers, does that also then categorize an emergency firefighter?

So, an emergency firefighter is somebody who may or may not be in the service, who—he may not even have—he or she may not have another job, or they're just in the community saying, you know what, we need some people. We need some people to get out there. Do you have experience? Yes. Okay, let's go.

So, are those people then covered under this legislation if they are out there putting their lives at risk, and their lives are in danger? Maybe not in that moment, but if there was an exposure at whatever they're doing on behalf of the Province or behalf of conservation, and later on that exposure comes to say, hey, you know, you developed whatever it may be because of something you did in the summer of 2023. But here you are in 2027, not realizing that there's a connection there.

So, we really need to, kind of, strengthen this legislation in that regard as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that nobody falls through the cracks, so that a clear definition of a seasonal employee, of a wildfire firefighter, of a firefighter is clearly defined so it encompasses everybody, because there is a lot of danger there.

And we've had it time and time again here in Manitoba, especially in northern Manitoba, you've seen communities that have been just completely shut off because of the fire situation. And in that regard, people that are living in those communities are doing whatever it takes. They may not have any experience. Because I've been there with 14-year-old teenagers and children that are out there doing what they need to do, and that's how they get that experience.

And sometimes you get out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you see a main camp or a fire camp that's kind of put up on an emergency basis to handle a project—fire, and there's dozens and dozens of crews out there of four or five people, and some of them range in age from 14 to 60, 70 years old, because of that vast experience.

But in this situation, then, they need to know that they're out there, not only doing what—because we can't just take them for granted; we can't just take—you're going to do what it takes no matter what.

No, we have—they have to know and we have to assure them that they're, in fact, looked after. And Bill 25, I'm hoping, clarifies some of those situations where, in fact, an emergency firefighter then is covered under this.

You know, and I'm sure the minister—there's going to be categories of whether it would be an initial attack, fire rangers, seasonal, and there's various categories that employees will fall into, but also about emergency firefighters and the categorization of the word emergency firefighters in that title, to ensure that everybody is covered in there; whether you're out there working for an hour, or whether you're out there working for a week, or a month straight.

Because that's also happened time and time again in, at least in my experience, as well, knowing that emergency firefighters in our communities have been out there for 10-day stretches at a time, walking over an old burn in, you know, plus-40 conditions. And the expectation is you're just going to keep on doing it.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they need to know that they're looked after. They need to know that they're looked after in whatever may arise from them in that moment, but also again, as I mentioned, later on in life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the—in those situations then, this piece of legislation can't always put the onus on the individual. This piece of legislation also just, kind of, be able to take care of the individual as well, where an individual doesn't have to come and prove, you know what, I got sick on the job; I got sick in May of 2023. I'm sorry that was two years ago. You know, you can't prove anything, you can't do anything, so, I'm sorry, we're not going to be able to help you.

There should be some kind of mechanism in place where people that are exposed to a fire situation, whether it be a wildfire firefighter situation, or expire situate, or a grass fire behind you, that they have a mechanism and a method in place where they can say, hey, this looks after me. This is over my situation, so there is no situations that fall through the cracks.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, getting back to talking about front-line savers of our community, that's truly—and there is, and you can—and I'm sure the members on this side, members opposite, in their lives have known somebody that they would even call heroes—or

groups of people that they would call heroes, that have saved their communities, because of this fire situation. And I think just in my constituency alone, right, there's a vast number of people and individuals that have saved their communities when hydro lines have gone down, when the fire is literally yards away from their community, yards away from their homes. So, they're out there being able to do what it takes.

My own community in particular, we've been evacuated a few times in my lifetime. And I remember, there's one lake there, and I'm going to—it doesn't really have a name, but I know the community always called it Screw Lake. And that lake saved our community because of emergency firefighters who went into that situation, went into that pond and ran their hoses—3 o'clock in the morning, pitch dark, all you could see is the glow from the fire. But, again, they were out there.

And what did they have for PPE? They may have had steel-toed boots, but most likely just runners and the shirts on their backs. No hard hats, no masks, no ventilation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those individuals also need to be looked at in this legislation as well, so when those situations happen—because it is going to happen; there is going to be situations, and maybe it's happening in Alberta right now—there will be situations where there is no time, or at least the individuals will feel there's no time, to wait for proper ventilation, proper PPE. If I wait, my home is going to burn. If I wait, my town is going to burn. So, they're going to do whatever it takes. But legislation should be able to cover that in the situations.

It's not recommended by any means that anybody do that, but we know, as individuals and as Manitobans, Manitobans are going to step up and do what it takes in a time of emergency to save their homes, their families, their communities. And we need to appreciate that. Whether it be strengthening Bill 25 so the workers compensation actually covers everybody—not just somebody who fits in a certain category of an employee or a staff member, or a whatever it fit in a various department in government, they need to be able to cover everybody who encompasses a fire situation, everybody who wants to do what it takes and step up to help in a situation.

Because that is—like I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that is going to happen numerous times. It's already happened; it's going to happen in the future. You can count on the fact that there is going to be individuals

that are going to step up to save their communities from fire situations.

So, those individuals, in this legislation, also need to be considered, also need to be covered in this as well, and not kind of pushed aside on a technicality of the fact that you didn't fit into this—various categories that this piece of legislation defined as an emergency firefighter or a wildfire firefighter, or a firefighter in general.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what I ask of this legislation, that it is a start, but it is something, kind of, to build on. It is a building block that we do to actually protect firefighters.

And, again, I'm not going to sit here and specify and differentiate between wildfire firefighter and a firefighter, because I know in the minister's comments also, he also maybe just subconsciously does not make that differentiation either, because a firefighter is a firefighter in all the situations. And I know that's what this legislation is hoping to accomplish, so there is no two-tiered system; there is just one kind of, this is what you are as a firefighter, and this is the protections we have.

So, I do think this legislation is a great start, but it is something we can build on. And, again, I'd like to say this now because—if I don't get that—this opportunity later on in this Chamber—to be able to say thank you to the people of Alberta that are stepping up in your fire situation, and thank you to Manitobans that—in the course of this summer, with climate change happening, our fire situation is dire and desperate, and we must need—we will have the need for firefighters and emergency firefighters, so I thank you for your future efforts.

Miigwech.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Is there any further debate on this bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, wildfire fighter—firefighters.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 36—The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): We will now move on to Bill 36, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act.

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care (Mr. Johnston), that Bill 36, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées, reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Reyes: I'm pleased to rise to provide comments on Bill 36. This is an important and timely bill that will expand government's statutory toolbox to foster and enforce more extradited labour mobility and fair registration.

It addresses highly skilled labour shortages and competitive pressures in self-regulated registered professions.

This bill aims to reduce or remove barriers faced by labour mobility applicants to our province by ensuring that they are treated fairly and their applications processed in a timely manner.

The bill also requires regulated professions to comply with statutory regulations with respect to English or French language proficiency testing requirements.

Changes to the bill requirement will help to reduce red tape and the financial burden for internationally educated applicants.

These amendments empower the minister to issue compliance orders, to regulate professions not compliant with labour mobility legislation.

This bill, modelled after similar approaches in other jurisdictions, further supports fairness legislation's requirement for self-regulated professions to ensure transparency, objectivity, impartiality and fairness in their registration processes.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act: the purpose of this bill is to amend The Fair Registration and Practices in Regulated Professions Act and its time limits are established in which a regulated profession must respond to an

application for registration from an individual who has a similar registration from—in another Canadian jurisdiction.

A regulated profession may apply to the minister for an extension of a time limit, and regulated professions are also required to comply with any regulations respecting English or French language proficiency testing requirements for domestic and internationally educated individuals.

Under this bill, compliance orders may now be made under this act if a regulated profession fails to comply with a domestic trade agreement.

For people who follow closely these types of bills, or just the topic of barriers to accreditation, this is a very interesting bill, I thought. It is—we are supporting this bill, and it will, you know, take another step forward today. But this is an interesting bill for me because it shows that the Province is trying to wrangle a little bit with regulators and that there is a significant problem right now with what is going on with what I think are 'unfairer'—unfair barriers to accreditation.

If you take a look at the provisions of this bill, especially about the need for me compliance orders, taking a look at the fact that it's discussing, you know, the registration needs for individuals from other Canadian jurisdictions to be able to come here as well. You will see, if you look closely, that what is actually happening here in Manitoba is very serious. Folks from other countries that are looking to get registered here, let's say as engineers, nurses and doctors, and I'm going to mostly focus my comments today on our health professionals because we're currently experiencing quite a serious shortage of health professionals here in Manitoba.

What a careful observer, and certainly, for those families that are experiencing this on a daily basis, know that over the last 10 years, I would say, here in the province of Manitoba, we have been experiencing very, very serious blockages for these folks that are trying to get their accreditation here in Manitoba. With this bill, you could see that the government is playing catch-up.

They are, after the fact, trying to address this exodus of people who are getting regulated—getting registered in other jurisdictions other than Manitoba, and then they are going to be coming here to Manitoba once they've already been registered successfully in other jurisdictions.

So, the second provision here: Time limits are established in which a regulated profession must respond

to an application for registration from an individual who has a similar registration in another Canadian jurisdiction.

You know, there was a case that happened last summer. The Health Minister brings up this case a lot. But there was, I think, four internationally educated nurses who, you know, they were desperately trying to get their accreditation here in Manitoba. They were not able to, over a course of the few years that they were trying, due to unfair barriers or accreditation that we specifically have here in Manitoba.

They were then—they had to then leave the province in order to try to get that registration, and they were very successful in doing so, in almost all the different provinces. One was in Nova Scotia; one was in Ontario; one was in Alberta; and one even had to learn French and do it in Quebec. And then, because their families were here in Manitoba, they were able to come back here to—they were trying to come back here to Manitoba to get registered here, but one of the regulators would not allow them to do so.

And so, this bill would actually assist in that type of scenario, which, I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite some efforts on the part of this government, it's continuing to happen. So let me to try to say this clearly. It is a little bit of a complicated topic, but people are not getting registered here; they are getting registered as nursing professionals in other jurisdictions. Once they do that successfully, then they will come back here to Manitoba, and this legislation that we're debating is going to help them do that.

So, my question is, why is it that we are not trying to fix what's happening here in Manitoba in the very first place? So, this legislation is going to fix the part where people can now easier—can now easily come back to Manitoba once they've already successfully been registered in their professions, I'm going to say as nurses, and then come back to Manitoba. But why aren't we trying to actively address what is happening here in Manitoba in the very first place?

Why do we still have to wait for many, many years until the—until those professionals can come back, when we so desperately need those professionals here, in Winnipeg, in rural health facilities, in northern facilities, in our remote facilities? We desperately need those health professionals here in Manitoba, yet they are experiencing extremely frustrating situations. They have to be separated from their families for a very long time before they can come back to Manitoba, and this legislation will actually help with that.

So, yes, it's great that we have this legislation now, that it's going to be going forward soon. Those nurses that I was speaking about wouldn't have had to, you know, put up their own money, pay for lawyers, do some kind of legal challenge to the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba and—before they could get, like, their labour mobility rights acknowledged and then be able to come and practise here in Manitoba.

* (15:40)

So, this legislation would prevent, you know—would negate from that happening now.

But, again, why are we not fixing the situation here? Why do these professionals have to go elsewhere to get registered first?

So, if you take a look at the notes—sorry, not the notes, but, like, the data provided by the Fairness Commissioner of Manitoba, from the Office of the Fairness Commissioner, they took a look at registration data—successful registration data—from 2011 to 2021, I believe. And we could see that during that time, 60 per cent of applicants that tried to get into nursing here in Manitoba actually failed to do so. So, more than half failed to do so.

And I can tell you anecdotally—I don't have the hard data, and I'm not sure if this government does either if they're asking these kinds of questions, because it wasn't included in this—in the data set provided by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner—but I can tell you anecdotally, from my many, many meetings with many community members that were experiencing this problem that those people, those 60 per cent that failed—let me put that in air quotes—that failed the registration process here in Manitoba went on to successfully get their registration as nurses in other jurisdictions. Some of them fought hard to try to come back, but most of them had to stay where they were. Some of them went to the United States.

So, those are pretty bad statistics, I think, for the province. Why is it that we are not working on this problem hard enough? Why are these people able to get registered in other provinces and then not here? Not when we desperately need these people here, and especially in our rural, remote and northern communities.

I just want to, maybe, first explain how I came to know about this problem that this bill is trying to rectify. I think I was just—was reached out to by a constituent. You know, they just were very frustrated with the fact that she could practise as a nurse in Kenora, Ontario, but when she would come here, she could not

practise as a nurse here and she was working as a health-care aide in one of our personal-care homes here in Winnipeg.

She was very frustrated because she had a daughter, a baby, who was, like, maybe seven or eight months old, and so her husband would have to, you know, take the baby—because the baby was still breastfeeding—and the baby and the dad would go all the way to Kenora and, you know, spend time with mom there, where she was a registered nurse.

But then, you know, when they would want to try to come back and spend time here in Winnipeg, she wouldn't be able to practise as a nurse. She would only be able to work as a health-care aide in a personal-care-home facility.

And I was just—how does that work? I don't understand. And, you know, the more that I delved into it—I tried to get meetings with CRNM, the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba. That's when I started reaching out to, you know, this very, very intelligent, sophisticated internationally educated nurses advocacy group that has really evolved here in Manitoba due to the need to really understand what's going on and then fight for the certain changes that we need here in Manitoba.

So, just a little bit of background. You know, Manitoba has been—you know, we've been needing nurses from the Philippines, specifically. The Office of the Fairness Commissioner reports will show that many of the registrants—over 2,000 of them over the past 10 years or so—have been from the Philippines. It is our biggest source country for health-care workers at this time and has been for a long time.

So, since the 1950s—the very, very first Filipino woman that we know of, that our local historians have actually been able to identify, was a nurse that was recruited from the Philippines in the early 1950s.

And I actually know about this because of the work of the Pinays MB Inc. that were here this afternoon. They had actually researched this and they were able to identify this Filipina nurse as the first person that we knew that actually came here to Manitoba. And the Pinays, they honoured her as a trailblazer, and she—and they actually did this post-humously, because she had passed away just, like, within that year, right before this honour and so her family was there.

So, in Manitoba, we've been doing this since the 1950s. The international recruitment trip that our minister took on, this has been happening fairly regularly.

I think the last one was under Tim Sale, who was the minister of Health at the time.

My own aunt was able to come to Manitoba. She was a practising nurse, I believe in Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia, at the time, and she came here under that rural recruitment initiative by Minister Tim Sale, Health Minister Tim Sale, at the time. It was specifically for rural nurses that they were trying to do that.

And my own aunt, Marissa, she was supported through that rural recruitment and was able to do her testing. At that time, most of that stuff was actually paid for by the Province. And she was able to successfully move and practise in Vita, Manitoba, with her family, for several years.

So, that was an exam—another more recent example of these recruitment initiatives that have been happening for Manitobans for a long time. As early as—about 2015, the year 2015, we were receiving immigrants here in Manitoba, about 500 or so a year, that had self-identified as having a nursing background.

So, that was in 2015. By the last amount of statistics that we had, that last data set, which I believe is in 2021, we are now down to less than 40 immigrants coming to Manitoba that self-identify as having nursing backgrounds.

So, about 500—less than 500, it was like 400-something—less than 500 in 2015 and now we are down to less than 40 in our last data set, which was 2021. That is an incredibly stark decline of immigrants to Manitoba with a nursing background.

And I am telling this House now, the reason is because we are now known in this province as a very, very inhospitable place for folks who have nursing backgrounds to get registered. There is a social media movement that says anywhere but Manitoba for these people that actually want to become registered nurses here in Manitoba.

This is extremely serious. That's why, over the last two years, I've been talking about this topic, you know, for a really long time. That's—it's one of the main topics that I have to talk about because I know how serious it is.

I want to shift a little bit to international medical graduates because I know that this is also a very, very important part of our health human resource strategy needs here in Manitoba. And because of the work that I've been doing with internationally educated nurses, international medical graduates have now also reached

out to me and to our caucus to try to have a relationship together, to try to—really try to understand what's going on with international medical graduates and the types of barriers that they face.

Because here's the thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are over 36 professions that get regulated here in Manitoba, and each of them are very different. Each profession has very, very different needs and it actually will take a really long time for me, somebody like me, to try to understand what all those needs are, what those processes are and what the—some of the resulting barriers also are.

So, I was really very honoured that this group of international medical graduates and advocates reached out to me to try to have a relationship with me so that we can work on this problem together in a really constructive way.

And I am always hopeful to be able to work with the government on this because this is a very serious issue, not having enough health human resources in our province, and it affects us across the entire province. No matter what the political stripe, this is something that we really, really need to do together as legislators and folks in the department as well.

* (15:50)

So, I just wanted to share a couple stories from some of these international medical graduates to kind of explain what they go through, because I don't think we really talk about them too much here in this Legislature. I've been mostly focusing on the work advocates from internationally educated nurses.

I met an international medical graduate at a recent party this past January. I believe the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux) was there with me; so was her dad; the mayor of Winnipeg—he was newly elected at the time—we were all there.

And it was like an anniversary celebration for folks going through teaching accreditation—foreign teaching accreditation and registration—here in Manitoba. The group is called Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers Inc. I won't say his name, although he has given me permission to tell a little bit of his story.

But his wife, you know, went through that whole teacher accreditation process, and that's why we were there at this party. But he was a doctor in the Philippines. Specifically, he was a community health doctor. He specialized in rural areas and he also has an epidemiology background.

So, this is all about community health and the different types of approaches that you would need to, you know, have, especially in a rural setting in a developing country like the Philippines. This was his—this is his specialty. He and his wife and his children have now been here for several years, and when he first got here, it was just, you know, very, very bewildering.

Like, what is the process to get into medical school here? There was no set-up for this. There was no, like, steps. There was no Manitoba Start orientation that other immigrants have to go through. There was no, you know, very clear-cut, defined path for somebody of his background, you know, as an international medical graduate to now, you know, what do I do now? What tests do I actually have to take? How much is this going to cost?

So, he just went into, you know, survival jobs. That's what we call it here in—at least, for some folks in the immigrant community, that's what we call that—those types of jobs: this is a survival job. So, until now, he's currently working as a direct-support professional; so, somebody who works with communities with different disabilities, and he's been doing that.

He—you know, over these past several years, has barely made minimum wage. It's been extremely dispiriting for him and for his entire family. He has pretty much given up. The two of us were standing there at this, you know, very, very lively party. We've stepped out, and I had never heard of this issue, actually, and he kind of tried to explain what he was going through.

And we were both very, very moved. We were both in tears. I could see the frustration in his eyes. I could see the hopelessness he had. And because I knew what we were going through, in terms of the internationally educated nurses, I didn't really know what we're up against here, with international medical graduates. But I did make a commitment to him that I would do my best to try to find out more about this topic and see what we could do in the Legislature to try to address it.

The second person that I met—because after this meeting, he gathered together many international medical graduates of all different ethnicities and we met for the first time. And they proceeded to try to educate me on what the process currently is as they understand it, from international medical graduate to actually then getting into an international medical graduate residency training spot here at the University of Manitoba, and then you can go from there.

And then they went over, you know, all these different acronyms, all these different tests, all the different requirements. And then they went over all the different barriers that they're—experienced. And that's how I was able to understand, okay, so this is where we're at. And then they were able to give me some suggestions for where we need to be.

Now, I have reached out to the government. I have told them that there are a group of advocates who would like to meet with them, and we just so far haven't really heard anything back. And that's disappointing, because this is a very serious issue. This is affecting, again, the entire province.

We have shortages of doctors, we have 400 shortage of doctors at this current time, and that shortage—according to Doctors Manitoba and also research by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce—shows that that number is actually going to get bigger because of the numbers of retirements, the numbers of people—number of physicians who have reported that they are going to be decreasing their hours that they're going to be offering and just folks that are going to be moving out of province due to myriad of reasons, right?

So again, this is something that we really, really need to work on.

And, you know, I guess, this one international medical graduate, after we met in a large group, he offered to drive me home. And so, we were sitting in his vehicle in front of my house, and I guess he wasn't feeling, like, comfortable to share his story in front of so many other, you know, international medical graduates, advocacy group or whatever. And he proceeded to tell me his story. Again, he gave me permission to share it with the Legislature today, but I'm going to be withholding his name.

So, this doctor, he's an ophthalmologist—so, he's an eye specialist—and he's also a surgeon. And when he was in the Philippines, he worked at St. Luke's hospital, which is probably the most prestigious hospital in the Philippines. He—the week that he was leaving Manila, he was actually performing surgeries on Canadians who worked for the Canadian embassy.

And then he told me: at the airport, as he was about to leave, he had to—you know, it was just so much happening at the airport; he and his family are going to be immigrating to Manitoba. Lots of emotions. But he had to take some time alone at the airport to just talk to himself. And he had to say to himself, remember, you're not a doctor anymore. Once you get

on that plane, you're not a doctor anymore. You're not a doctor, you're not a doctor, you're not a doctor anymore.

And then he then proceeded to go to Manitoba. Again, the challenges and barriers that I've been trying to explain here in the Legislature—whether they're financial barriers, the lack of an orientation process for Manitoba Start, the lack of mentorships available for international medical graduates, the lack of residency training spots specifically for international medical graduates—all these things that these advocates were telling me, he proceeded to also encounter all these very same barriers.

And it's now into year seven since they were—since they have moved to Manitoba. He is nowhere near being a doctor; he is currently working at a call centre.

Because of the work of these international medical graduates, this individual is now inspired to try again. So this—these past few months, he is now trying to do his very, very first steps for testing. Again, this is a very, very expensive path that is being taken by these people, and they feel very, very alone. They feel very unsupported.

There is an employment grant that they can apply for from the Province. It used to be \$15,000; the Pallister government reduced it to \$9,000 now, but you can only access that grant after you've paid for your tests and everything first, and after you've already passed everything. So, it's something you can get afterwards, but for most people it's not very accessible, this grant.

We are looking for something a little bit more along the lines of a student loan kind of program for international medical graduates, internationally educated engineers, internationally educated nurses. The current grant system is quite unaccessible.

There is, however, a program that the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) funds to SEED Winnipeg; it is to get a private loan through—SEED Winnipeg will help you do this—but the numbers that access this are very small, and once that amount is, you know, finished, then nobody else can apply.

* (16:00)

So, we have the beginnings of a possible way to remedy the financial barriers for this, but it is not nearly anywhere near where we need to be in terms of an organized, you know, public awareness level of

how to surpass certain financial barriers to professional accreditation.

Getting back to the story of this ophthalmologist and surgeon at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, I just said to myself, as an elected official here in the Manitoba Legislature, what kind of immigration system do we have here? What kind of, you know, accreditation system do we have here?

How bad is it that we have an individual, instead of saying, this is going to be my plan when I get here; this is the steps that I'm going to take when I get here and having those supports in place to then be able to support Manitobans—instead of that, this individual has to do this self-talk where he has to say, you're not a doctor anymore; you are not a doctor anymore; you are not a doctor anymore.

This is not the type of Manitoba—this is not the type of immigration system that we need to have here. We need to do better. We need to do way better. This is an issue that's been going on for generations. This is an issue that has actually gotten worse over the last 10 years, and at this point, I do not see any understanding of the extent of this problem from the government. We have a bill in front of us today, Bill 36. Again, we're happy to support this bill, but it is addressing, you know, a symptom of a problem, and it is not addressing the root causes of the problem.

I went to Russell, Manitoba. I visited Shoal Lake, the town of Shoal Lake and Neepawa. And when we were in Russell, Manitoba, the residents there, who have this Ukrainian refugee committee, they were very, very eager to talk to me about the fact that they lost five Ukrainian refugees and their families. These were doctors: two urologists, one pediatrician and two MDs. They lost them from Russell to Nova Scotia because they have a—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm very happy to be able to rise this afternoon and just put a few more words on record about Bill 36, the fair registration and practices in regulated professions amendment act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've spoken about this legislation quite a bit throughout second reading, as well, as at the departmental briefing, which was very helpful.

And I know following the briefing, my colleague who just spoke from Notre Dame, her and I had a wonderful conversation about the legislation, which I

really appreciated and helped me even further understand how this legislation is, in fact, just starting to scratch the surface on what actually needs to happen in the province of Manitoba with respect to immigration and improving how those who are ready and capable and wanting to work. And I make reference to the health-care field because it—we're in such dire need right now.

We have many trained people here in Manitoba, in health-care fields, who are working, or were working, in other provinces, even, here in Canada, but they're not allowed to be working here in Manitoba. And I see that this legislation is a step towards—or an attempt, at least, towards helping those who want to work here in Manitoba, new immigrants who are coming to Manitoba, even people who are choosing to move from different provinces to come here, but there's a lot more we can be doing to ensure that those who are properly trained and who want to work can better contribute to our economy in the ways that they want to and deserve to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, just a couple of weeks ago, actually had a health-care forum in my constituency in Tyndall Park, and we must have talked about health-care retention and health-care recruitment for at least 25, 30 per cent of the time. It is a very hot topic here in Manitoba, and we know that it's a hot topic because a lot of Manitobans are facing it right now, and that's why the debates of it continue on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, again, I'm sure it's why this legislation is being brought forward, but there's so much deeper we could actually go.

In Ontario, for example, changes were introduced to allow for Canadian health-care workers who are already registered or licensed in another Canadian jurisdiction to begin practising in Ontario. Nothing is preventing our Province from doing similarly.

In British Columbia, we know that the BC government, they announced bursaries for internationally educated nurses just last year. And since funding was announced, 5,000 people in BC have expressed interest in nursing in BC.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, it's—the timeliness is very, very important. I think that this legislation is a good step, but it is just starting to scratch the surface. We will be supporting the legislation moving forward, but I hope we hope we do more.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I appreciate the opportunity to be speaking on Bill 36 today, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act.

And I first want to commend my colleague, the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino), for her incredible words that she put on the record with respect to this bill, the amount of work that she's done to connect to the community that has been impacted by regulated professions and, particularly, the immigrant community that is affected by these types of legislation, and regulated health professions and, particularly, in the field of health-care workers.

And so, I wanted to commend my colleague for the—her hard work. I have no doubt that she's worked on this file harder than, you know, perhaps even the minister himself, on connecting with community and understanding the issues—understanding and being able to tell us and bring here personal stories of the impacts of not being able to work in your profession that you've been trained in outside of the jurisdictions of Manitoba. And I think it goes to show the good work that she does and—supported by this entire team on this side of the House.

And so, when it comes to the specifics on Bill 36, I think it's important for us to understand that there are a few really critical issues at play with this bill.

First, I think it's important to understand that the colleges is—colleges have an important regulatory role in many professions. It's also important to understand that internationally educated people who are coming to Manitoba are now—are attempting and trying to seek to be able to work in their profession here in Manitoba, not just because we need them, but for their benefit. This is their chosen profession. This is their trained skill that they've done for many years, and want to now be able to do that here in Manitoba.

And it's both a desire of many of these individuals, but it's also something that we ought to be doing our very best to enable here in Manitoba for our own benefit of our communities here, our health-care system, and for everyone in Manitoba. And, specifically at this time, when we know that there is challenges with staffing in our health-care system.

You know, I think it was well, you know, demonstrated and proven and shown today through question period—and the past most recent question periods—where it was outlined around the 300 less nurses we have here in Winnipeg. And the government's decision over the past number of years to reduce the number of nursing—working here in Winnipeg.

And knowing that there are hundreds of internationally educated nurses here who are bare—barred from being able to work in that profession here goes beyond frustration. It goes well beyond frustration. And so, while this bill may take some steps to ease that process, it's still just steps, right? It's still just a few small steps.

First of all, you know, this government has been in—you know, should have been well aware of these issues for the past number of years, and it could have taken some small steps like this much, much, earlier. They didn't need to wait 'til after the pandemic. They didn't need to wait 'til—see the worst health outcomes as a result of the pandemic to take a step; they didn't need to wait for community groups and advocates to work and advocate after the pandemic.

You know, listening to my colleague, the member for Notre Dame, and the amount of outreach that this—these groups have been doing for the number of years, it didn't have to wait 'til now for us to be taking these small steps. We could have done this (a) much sooner, but also, Madam Speaker, we could be doing so much more.

The fact that we know that there are a large number of internationally educated and trained nurses from the Philippines who come directly and seek to—try to seek employment here in Manitoba should mean that we should have our system in Manitoba ready to accept these individuals.

But yet, even when the minister takes trips over to the Philippines to try to fast-track the process, the government still finds ways to put up barriers. And the people who they've tried to fast-track are not yet working here in Manitoba, and they won't be able to work when they arrive here because of the barriers that the government has set up.

* (16:10)

And so, much more needs to be done to address these issues than taking small steps that we're seeing in Bill 36; much more.

And when we look at these professions, it's not only our—it's not only the individuals who are coming across who, as the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) said, convince themselves that they're not a doctor anymore when they come to Manitoba because of the barriers that are in place.

It's not only them who are affected; it's us here, who are trying to seek the health care, the services that are—can be provided and ought to be provided by these

well-educated individuals who come after receiving their training internationally.

Madam Speaker, I also want to bring up a point about many of the regulators of these professions in general: that if you go onto the website, or—and understand the purpose of many of these colleges who regulate these professions and health professions as well, these groups have a particular mandate to, you know, to regulate, to ensure accreditation, ensure competency of the people who are trained within that profession.

But they also have a very specific mandate as part of the core function of their organization, and part of that mandate is to ensure that they protect and serve the public; that they protect and serve the public. And regulators who are helping to guide and regulate professions in their field need to be well aware of that.

And it's important to understand that, in that job and that responsibility to protect and serve the public, it's on them to ensure that they look at how the entire province can be—is benefitted—can be benefitted by ensuring that there are a great number of people working in their profession with: a) a high-quality of standard, of competency, but also b) that there are just the sheer numbers to meet the volume and the demand that we're seeing here in Manitoba.

And so, if we're able to actually, you know, live up to that calling of being both able to protect and serve the public in regulated health professions, it's important to see that we can do more to invite and encourage more folks to get into these professions and, Madam Speaker, quite frankly, I'm speaking about the health professions, in general.

I can think about, for example, you know, nurses, as has been well documented, Madam Speaker. There are so many ways that we could encourage and smooth out the path for internationally educated nurses to come to Manitoba, call Manitoba home and also find a way to work in their profession in Manitoba.

And we can do this, Madam Speaker, by, you know, making sure that the requirements that they are being asked to meet in order to get their certification, to practise their profession in Manitoba, that they have a straight path in order to accomplish and meet those requirements; not a path that takes them, oh do this, oh wait, your time frame, your deadline for meeting this requirement has expired now; you have to redo it.

You know, passing an English test means that only is so good if it lasts for perhaps three years, or five years, and you have to redo that test if you haven't

completed other requirements. And that's not a fair or a straight path for those individuals. Making individuals have to, you know, read through and pass tests that, in many cases are, you know, overly difficult for the work and not specified to the type of work that that individual might be actually practising on the job. That's not necessarily a fair way to evaluate whether a person has the skill and has the training and has the education needed to work here in Manitoba.

And so, I think it's important for us to recognize these challenges as a way to relook at our entire system of how we evaluate internationally educated professionals as they come to work here in Manitoba.

And this has never been more relevant than it is today, Madam Speaker. We are in a time period right now where our economy is going to grow by the number of people that we have here working in Manitoba, both with a aging population and decreasing population size, just by a birth and death rate here in Manitoba, our province isn't growing.

Our province grows when we have more immigration coming into Manitoba, both international immigration from out of country, but also interjurisdictional 'jurisdiction,' Canadians who come to Manitoba and choose to live in Manitoba. And now, we need people to come into Manitoba so that we have enough growth in our economy, but also so that we have a labour force that can meet the needs of Manitobans.

And who better to bring into our province than people who already have skills and have proven that they are well educated, they are well trained in their variety of professions. What better people to bring over to Manitoba than those folks?

And I think we should be welcoming all immigrants, Madam Speaker, but I think it's important to recognize that those who do come here—it's on us to make sure that they have the ability, the path to work in their fields and make sure. Because it's not only to their benefit and their family's benefit; it's to our community's benefit as well.

And so, as we try to tackle some of these larger economic issues in our province and try to make sure that the labour market needs are being met through immigration, it's important to recognize that health-regulated health professions play a key impact—key role in that journey.

Now, we know, Madam Speaker, that many immigrants will look to Canada as a great place to come and live and may seek out specifically to work in our country. And when they look at Canada and

they look at the landscape, at the map, and say, which province should we try to set up shop in? Which province is it going to be? When they hear stories about professionals who come from other countries who have education and skill, unable to work in Manitoba, many of those folks might be dissuaded from coming here in the first place.

Now, that's not the, you know, friendly and welcoming Manitoba that I would want to live in. I would want to make sure that those people know that we have a system in Manitoba that would not only enable them to work in their chosen profession here, but actually welcome them and encourage them to come here because they can work. And so, Madam Speaker, in many respects, our system needs to be completely reviewed in terms of how we can ensure that there are straight paths for professionally trained immigrants to come and work here in Manitoba.

And so, I think one of the stories that the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) mentioned was quite telling, about how, you know, a newcomer to Winnipeg what—wasn't sure how they could get onto the path of working in their trained profession. And so they had to talk to friends, they perhaps had to look on websites to see what they could do to actually work in their profession. Well, Madam Speaker, you know, when there's so much uncertainty about how a process could actually go, we were quite sure that, you know, that we could do better, that we could actually, you know, find ways for our system to work far more effectively for people who are trying to come to Manitoba and call it home, and work in their profession.

* (16:20)

And so, while Bill 36 takes a few steps to actually improve the system, it's far not—it is not enough, Madam Speaker. Quite frankly, could've been done much earlier by this government. We encourage this government to do much more when it comes to supporting individuals who are trying to be—work in their profession under regulation, and we will continue to urge the government to do so. Because it's important, to not only encourage immigrants to come here and feel welcome here, but to live out that word, welcome.

And I think part of living out that word welcome means finding pathways for them to feel whole in Manitoba, both personally, but also professionally. And we can do that by making sure that we support them on their path to becoming regulated, work in their profession, do so in Manitoba. It's going to help

individuals in their lives, and it's going to help Manitoba as a whole, Madam Speaker.

So, I thank you very much for the time to speak, specifically on Bill 36, and I look forward to the comments of other folks who want to work and express their opinions and their views on how we can make life better for folks in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 36. I look forward to every opportunity that we're afforded in this House to speak to legislation that's brought forward.

Bill 36 is a bill that, you know, has significant implications for folks in our province and folks that we want to see come to Manitoba and work in Manitoba.

And so, I think it's really important when we're talking about Bill 36, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulating Professions Amendment Act, that we talk about, you know, what Manitoba provides for newcomers, for immigrants, for internationally educated professionals from other jurisdictions and, you know, the environment, the climate that we want to provide for these folks in our province.

And so, what I'd like to do is start by talking about a few of the ways in which this government has, you know, set Manitoba back in terms of being a jurisdiction that can compete with other jurisdictions across the country, in terms of our retention and recruitment of trained professionals; in a lot of cases, very highly trained professionals with specific expertise.

One example that I really think is important to talk about is the way this government has treated international students.

You know, this is something that maybe some folks would say, well, this isn't specific to this bill, and there's no relationship there. But I do think there's a relationship there. I do think it's important for us to talk about the message that we send to folks when we strip away the right for international students: folks who, you know, come to Canada, come to Manitoba in the hopes of getting a good education in our province and being able to hopefully work and stay and live and create families and homes and relationships here.

It's important we talk about the sort of message that we send internationally. It's important that we talk

about the message that we send to folks in other jurisdictions when we treat international students in such a way.

And so, many folks are well aware of the fact that in 2018, the—this PC government stripped away the right for international students to have Manitoba health care. This was a cut to health care, just over \$3-million cut at the time, that has had catastrophic impacts on many international students. And we've all heard the stories from folks who have faced incredible health challenges as a result of that cut, and mistreatment from this government.

And, you know, it's interesting because I think that this government believes in some way that, well, these are certain demographic of students and, yes, we've made it harder for them to get quality health care in Manitoba; yes, this practice is discriminatory; yes, this cut that we've made to health care has devastated some international students, both financially and in terms of their actual physical health outcomes.

But, you know, these are folks who, meh, we don't think that their voices are really going to impact, you know, beyond, you know, maybe the institution that they're studying at or their circles. The reality is that the way this government has mistreated international students is being communicated beyond Manitoba's borders.

And when you've got students who are calling their loved ones, wherever they may live across the globe, and telling them how the Manitoba Conservative government has been mistreating them, you know, that is a deterrent from people wanting to come to Manitoba and contribute their expertise and their knowledge and their skills to our health system, to, you know, a variety of systems that keep our province functioning and moving forward. It is a deterrent from folks seeing Manitoba as a place where they're welcome with open arms and they're afforded all of the rights—basic rights—that all of other citizens are afforded.

And so, we have to be honest about the fact that, even though the federal government has, you know, made it a point to improve, increase the recruitment of international talent to Canada by the hundreds of thousands, even though, you know, this government claims to care about internationally trained professionals and wanting them to work in Manitoba, we've seen time and time again that this government makes decisions and takes actions which are in contradiction with the position that they say they take.

You know, we've seen that there have not been equitable efforts to ensure that internationally trained

professionals across the board can work in Manitoba and contribute to our economy and help diversify and strengthen our economy. And that's of real concern.

You know, in the last handful of years, we've seen different organizations, newcomer and immigrant-rooted organizations, have significant cuts—you know, they're organizations like IRCOM is just one example. And we've not seen this government step up and provide the resources that these organizations need in order to make sure that when folks come to our province, they are settled with ease, that their families have contact with the supports they need, that there's a transition into, you know, Manitoba living that supports them in being successful.

You know, again, this is a government that purports to be in support of internationally trained talent being in Manitoba and yet they don't invest in the areas that one would think you would see those investments in order to allow for folks to kind of hit the ground running when they get to Manitoba. And that's of real concern.

You know, it—when we look at something as basic—what should be as basic as getting a Manitoba health card, I still hear from people who—I just heard, actually, a week ago, two weeks ago, from a constituent. Him and his wife are from Manitoba—they're Manitobans. They live downtown. They left the province for some time, returned and have been trying to get their Manitoba health card for months. It has been a series of unfortunate missteps and errors that these folks, this couple, has had to endure. And finally they reached out to my office and they asked us if we would help them because it was getting to a bit of a deadline point where if they didn't get their health card, they would actually have no health coverage whatsoever.

These are folks who are senior now in age. They have every right to be concerned about the fact that if they have a health emergency or they need to go to the hospital or something happens, you know, they're going to be experiencing these financial—potentially financial risk associated with that.

We've heard this story so many times. We've raised it countless times in this House, the fact that people who need vital documents aren't getting them.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I am going to ask the member to speak specifically to the act that is before us. They are straying somewhat from the relevancy of this act.

MLA Asagwara: So, when I'm talking about folks being able to get health cards in Manitoba, that is directly related to this bill that's being brought forward that is saying they want to have fair registration practices for regulated health professions in Manitoba.

You know, we're talking about professionals who, you know, if they come to Manitoba and want to work, some of the basic things they're going to need are things like a health card, right? That's a basic part of being a Manitoba citizen, is you get your health card, you can access health care.

And what I'm saying is that, if we want to be able to recruit and retain folks and have them integrate into our economy in various ways, we need a government in place that can get people their essential documents in a timely manner.

You know, a lot of folks, in order to get registered, in order to make sure that they, you know, can work under different regulatory bodies, they need all kinds of various documents to start that process. And having delays at the level of government, having folks not being able to get vital documents because this government is understaffed and has cut the department, has cut the civil service, you know, having, you know, underresourced aspects of our systems due to this government is unacceptable. And we're saying that we want these folks to be able to work in our province in a timely manner.

So, one of the last comments that I want to make is specific to health care. And that is because, you know, we are in a health-care crisis and internationally educated health-care workers is an even bigger conversation right now across the country. Certainly it is here in Manitoba, as it should be.

And, you know, we continue to see that, under this government, internationally trained health-care workers across the board are not able to practise in a timely manner in Manitoba.

* (16:30)

Quite frankly, you know, we've seen this government make efforts for—and this isn't specific to internationally trained folks, this is specific to professionals just outside of Manitoba. So, you know, you could say Alberta or Saskatchewan, but we've seen this government, you know, not make—take the steps necessary in order to have some of our own folks working in our own province.

And so, again, you know, when we're talking about folks being able to use their skills and their training here in Manitoba, you know, the government brings forward all kinds of legislation, right. They've brought forward Bill 36, but the reality is, in order for these amendments to be effective and in order for this legislation, like many others that this government brings forward to be effective, the government actually needs to do its job and properly resource the areas attached to this to make sure that there's a functional system in place to support these folks.

And this isn't a government that wants to invest in these ways, unfortunately. This is a government that wants to make announcements. This is a government that likes to put out press releases. This is a government that, you know, at times, we've even seen—I'm not saying it's specific to Bill 36, but we've seen this government bring forward bills and their own ministers can't speak to the details of them because they haven't done their due diligence.

And so, you know, my hope, Madam Speaker, is that, you know, when it comes to Bill 36, that this government really changes their tune and does make a legitimate effort to invest in the areas that we need to see investments made to support these professionals being able to transition well here in Manitoba, start working wherever it is their expertise can be, you know, provided and where they want to work and they want to contribute in a timely manner.

And, you know, it's long overdue. The past seven years have been very hard for many folks and it's long overdue that there's a government in place that doesn't just think about what they can take from folks who bring that kind of expertise to Manitoba.

We need a government in place that thinks about, you know, what we can provide, what we can create, what we can give to folks so that Manitoba is truly a place they're excited to come to; is truly a place they feel empowered and supported in working in, and that we do our part, as a government—hopefully, a future NDP government sooner than later—to make Manitoba a place where internationally trained professionals can be a part of all of our systems and spread the word far and wide that other folks who are looking to have the same journey or a similar path know that Manitoba is absolutely a place for them.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 36, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act.

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

Bill 29—The Life Leases Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call concurrence and third reading of Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act.

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister for Advanced Education and Training, that Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les baux viagers, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Teitsma: I will keep my comments brief, just like this bill is brief.

But Manitoba is a leader in life lease regulations, and it continues to be a leader; it will continue to be a leader, with the passage of this act. This act essentially requires three new things. One is it ensures that a tenant's interest in a rental unit during a change in ownership are increased—are or, sorry—are protected because the new owner remains obligated to the tenants, specifically through a mortgage sale, tax sale or foreclosure.

It also is going to require landlords to conduct regular reserve fund studies to ensure that the reserve fund can maintain or replace assets of the complex at all time. And, lastly, it will add requirements surrounding the preparation of audited annual financial statements so that they are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

I was pleased to have the support of the Manitoba life lease association and also the members opposite in this bill, and I expect that will continue today.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): It is an honour to rise in the House to put a few comments on Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act. As the minister said, this is on behalf of Manitoba Life Lease Occupants Association has asked for this, and we, as the Manitoba NDP, is in support of this as we—as I mentioned, during the second reading of this bill.

This bill amends The Life Leases Act to enhance the rights of tenants under life lease. Under the existing

act, when a person acquires a landlord's interest in a life lease complex or a mortgage sale, tax sale or foreclosure, the subsisting leases are terminated and the person has no obligation regarding the tenant's entrance fees.

Bill 29 ensures that the person acquiring that interest is treated as a new landlord under the subsisting life leases, but automatically terminates those leases unless the person agrees otherwise, such as—such a termination no longer relieves the person of the landlord's obligation to refund an entire fee.

Currently, a non-profit landlord or life lease complex is required to maintain a reserve for maintaining and replacing when necessary the assets of the complex. Under Bill 29, the landlord must ensure that a reserve fund study to determine the amount of money to be maintained in the fund is conducted and updated from time to time in accordance with the regulations.

If required by the majority of the tenants of the life lease complex, the landlord is required to provide an audited financial statement for the complex for each year until the request is withdrawn by the majority of the tenants.

The bill requires these financial statements to be prepared in accordance with the general accepted accounting principles.

Madam Speaker, the housing is a right and all Manitobans should have access to affordable, safe, quality housing where their rights are protected and respected. Ensuring the rights of tenants goes beyond life lease. Tenants need to be protected from out-of-control rent hikes and other fees.

Mr.—Madam Speaker, recently above-guideline rent increases—there was 343 applications; all applications were approved—100 per cent. And the average rental has gone up around 10 per cent but the minister wasn't willing to give us the list of what was the highest rent increase was. And we knew from the previous times, there were around 30 to 50 per cent rent increases—above-guideline rent increases.

Affordable housing is becoming less and less available in our province in part thanks to the action of this PC government. The PCs sold off hundreds of social housing units despite long wait-lists and—for housing. The PC government has failed to build a single unit of social or affordable housing and has, instead, cut the maintenance budget while allowing massive above-guideline rent increases to go through. As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, fiscal year '23-24, there were 343 applications, and all of them were approved.

* (16:40)

And also we know, Madam Speaker, that this PC government is not working in behalf of all Manitobans. The PCs increased tax on renters. We all know this is the second year where there used to be a \$700 tax—rent tax credit for the renters, and now it decreases to \$525—which other means there's \$175 tax on all the renters who are renting the apartment blocks. And also, this is like, we have known, like, who are these people that are renting these apartment blocks? These are the newcomers, these are students and these are the people on low income. So this is, kind of, tax on low-income renters.

Madam Speaker, while landlords are getting more benefits, renters lost the few benefits that they had, all while their rents can still get jacked up through above-guideline approvals. Landlords also have zero incentive to pass along the savings they are receiving to their tenants.

Again, we know there's, like, out-of-province landlords also got money, and what benefit did Manitobans have? This is where that money should have gone to the schools, and Seven Oaks School Division had to raise their education property taxes by 4.95 per cent. This is due to this PCs' seven-year education—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I'm going to ask the member to keep his comments relevant to the bill that is before us, and it is about life leases and the amendment that is being made to life leases. I think he's gone off track quite a bit, so I would ask him to bring his comments back to this bill.

Mr. Sandhu: I knew, like, this bill was brought forward in the request of Manitoba Life Lease Occupants Association. And they also had a few other requests that they want to see this minister to, maybe at the committee level, to include those—make amendments to those ones, I guess. I do like to list those, but they're asking was—they were asking: failure to meet a quorum, transparency of action, tenant representation, security for tenant's financial interest, good governance.

Again, Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, we are in support of this bill, again, but the PC is not working on behalf of regular Manitobans; they are raising taxes on the renters.

With this, I'd like to thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me a chance to put a few words on this. Thank you.

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

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'll just put some quick words on the paper.

This is a bill that we support. It is important, I think, just to register some of the—and for the record, to register some of the important facts around this bill. The bill does ensure that a person acquiring a landlord's interest in a life-lease complex is treated as the new landlord under the subsisting life lease. Often, when it comes to life leases, people think about housing in terms of either home ownership or rental, but life leases are something of an in-between the two.

Sponsors of life-lease projects in many cases are non-profits, which is a positive thing, and it's also positive for the—those who have a life lease because the prices of units generally reflect the cost of development. With life leases, residents typically pay a refundable entrance fee, which helps cover costs associated with upkeep and repairs. This legislation would require owners to refund entrance fees to their tenants if their leases are terminated due to mortgage sales, tax sales or foreclosures.

We do have one potential concern, which is the requirement for landlords to maintain a reserve fund for maintaining and replacing the assets of the complex. The details of this reserve fund will invariably be different from complex to complex, but how much will the maintenance of this fund cost if it's passed along to tenants, in addition to other property costs such as condominium fees? These are all outstanding questions that we hope can be resolved.

Many of these life 'layese' complexes are seniors or 55-plus housing units in Manitoba, and getting out of the housing market can be a major financial release for many people. And we do want to avoid adding financial burdens onto people, especially seniors, and especially considering the challenges around housing and shortages of housing across the board, including for seniors, in Manitoba.

And when—finally, while the requirement to provide audited financial statements is important to ensure the transparency of a landlord's property operations, it is very positive that this measure can be requested through a vote by tenants of the complex. The only concern here is that the ability to request an audit be accessible to tenants and that they're continually made aware during their residency of their right to do so should any issues arise.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act.

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

Bill 21—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the honourable minister of mental health and wellness, that Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, seconded by the honourable Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today on the third reading of Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

This bill enhances the road safety in Manitoba by allowing for stronger oversight on commercial heavy vehicle operators. This bill addresses recommendations made by the Auditor General in 2019 related to the so-called chameleon carriers. This bill will allow government to take stronger action against these carriers, who do not follow safety rules, get shut down and then—and reopen and carry on their business under a different name, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to hear strong support of this bill at the committee, as the—delivers our commitment to improving road safety for all Manitobans.

I look forward for this bill to—receiving third reading today, and I'm proud to sponsor this bill moving forward, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to share a few words on Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Highway safety, of course, is a priority for every member of this House. Every member—every Manitoban—safety on our roads is of the utmost importance. And we've seen time and time again, there's been a number of instances where there's been accidents on the road—preventable accidents on the road due to just kind of individuals or companies or, in this case, carriers of different-size vehicles not really kind of adhering to the rules that they—that are put in place.

When I had the opportunity to listen at committee, there was a presenter there also talking about not only the fitness certificate in terms of the abstract of a driver or whatever or what have you, but also the physical fitness of the drivers and how that also needs to be kind of brought into play, whether it be the—I believe, if—I'm not sure exactly what the word was, but he referred to kind of the EKG that they would have to go through in terms of a fitness.

So, whether or not it was kind of misunderstanding what the fitness certificate for a carrier would be, I'm not sure, but it also brought up the question of maybe that is something that also needs to be put in place with this legislation.

So, we have the fitness certificate meaning, kind of, technically the abstract for a driver of a carrier that would, in fact, follow them wherever they may go and follow them with various employers they go.

And I know the minister talked about a chameleon carrier and kind of being able to have—with this legislation, being able to kind of track who those may be and then track that accountability, which is a great thing to put in place so we don't have somebody trying to kind of get around the system and say, well, you know what, I had this driving record with this company. I'm going to move that on here; I'm going to change the name or what have you, and then I'm going to now go, like, whatever I had there did not happen.

* (16:50)

So, when we bring about this legislation to be able to do that, there is that component of that, too. There is that accountability component and I believe and hear it's every 12 months or so, they'll have access to those or be able to ask for those kind of documentations to be able to show that a driver is actually fit to carry on in their role in carrying in this industry.

But also, Madam Speaker, it can't always just be about, kind of, putting on the onus on the company to be able to do that and kind of the enforcement aspect of it.

So, I remember during the question and debate on this issue, we did ask the question, what happens if somebody doesn't physically have their safety certificate in hand? Does that mean they would then be charged with that, as if they didn't have it? But they still may be, by the letter of the law, still qualified to do that, just not physically have that certificate in place.

And that was a question that really didn't get a clear answer because, Madam Speaker, I'm sure members opposite have—and members on this side as well, you know, you've left home, maybe forgot your wallet, so you don't have your identification or maybe you don't have your driver's licence or what have you. And you don't realize it until you're out the door and you're kind of down the road. And you go back and do that.

But what happens in this industry if that's the case and somebody doesn't actually physically have their safety certificate and they're hundreds, if not thousands, of kilometres away from where that certificate is? Is there a—is there then ability by this government through this legislation to say, well, you know what, you're still in the registry; you're still certified, you still have your safety fitness certificate. You don't physically have it on you, but there is a little bit of accommodation there to be able to say well, there is no—technically, a charge we're going to charge you with because you don't have it with you. Because you still have it; you don't physically have the actual card.

So that was a question that was brought up during the question-and-answer period of this legislation to be able to bring that forward. And I remember clearly in the—when we had, at committee, and the presenter was there talking about it, and he was very adamant about the fact that the physical fitness should also be a part of a carrier, as well. And I think that's agreed upon, that the safety of others is not only the safety of the machinery or the truck or the bus or what have you, on the road, but the physical ability of that driver, also, to be able, too.

So that brought up a very good question on this issue, to be able to say, do we then expand this legislation to include, kind of, the physical fitness aspect of it, you know. And I'm sure that that opens up a whole other conversation to have and a whole other piece of legislation to have, but it did bring up the question that maybe that's something that really needs to be brought about in legislation, and maybe as a complement to Bill 21 to be able to do that, too.

But I agree what this piece of legislation, where it would—it's about the safety aspect of it. It's about people trying to kind of get around the rules and say, you know what, my accountability stops at this company. I'm going to change the company name; I'm going to do this and kind of avoid any kind of detection so they can carry on with whatever they're going to do.

And, clearly, that's the wrong approach for them to be able to do, and they're trying to hide something by doing this. So this legislation strengthens that and brings that forward. It brings forth that ability now to kind of track that, the employer aspect of that as well, but also the government aspect of that, too.

So, we believe this legislation is again a step in the right direction. It can be a little bit stronger, but it is a step in the right direction to be able to kind of track that because, as I began with, the safety of Manitobans on our highways is of the utmost importance, and this legislation goes to be able to do that.

So I do support this legislation, but again, looking forward to conversations further on that will help strengthen this piece of legislation, whether it be complements or amendments or what have you.

Thank you.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes. We are in favour of this.

Just to say that this is a very important piece of legislation simply because there was a point when—it's still a challenge here in Manitoba, but there was a point when we had some very unsafe operators and—as I mentioned in previous levels of debate—that the Auditor General had a report into traffic safety and there was not just one, but a number of fatalities and tragedies—an excessive number; it was growing higher and higher—because we basically had the Wild West in here in Manitoba and we didn't have sufficient inspections.

So it's one of the things that's really, really important about making sure that safety has to be first, that we're training people properly, that we're invest—we're inspecting trucks properly and also that we're actually—one of the most critical things here is that it's always—almost always a human factor.

It's the human factor that it breaks down, because it's inspections, but also making sure that drivers are properly taken care of, that they're not being abused, as there have been some cases—I mean, a number of

cases, but there was one quite recently in Stonewall where foreign temporary workers were being horribly mistreated by a company.

So, we have to make sure that we have strong oversight and, as we put it, a watchdog with both bark and bite. And we look forward to passing this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 21, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

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

Bill 22—The Emergency Measures Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act.

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I move, second by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), that Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act, be now read—and be—now be concurred in and be now read for the third time and passed. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: The honourable member of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Mr. Piwniuk: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

I move, second by the member for—Minister of Labour and Immigration, that Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act, reported by the Standing Committee of—on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to provide some comments on Bill 22, which will ensure that Manitobans receive key services during a disaster and emergency.

Bill 22 amends The Emergency Measures Act to require government departments to prepare a continuing plan. This is a all-hazards response that focuses on delivery of key services to Manitobans in an—any type of emergency.

And, again, we're also changing the name, Madam Speaker, to—from emergency merges organization to Manitoba emergency management organization. This will bring EMO in line with other similar agencies in other Canadian provinces.

With these comments, I look forward to seeing Bill 22, the third reading and I look forward to that.

And thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to put—share a few words on Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act.

I understand there is—government brings forward legislation that they feel is also housekeeping kind of methods to be able to change some terminology and stuff like that as well.

But the fact of the matter is it also calls for various departments to kind of put together a continuity plan for responding to natural disasters and disasters that we have and emergency organize—emergency things that happen in the province.

And you've heard time and time again, many times, people would refer to it as a one-in-one-hundred-years flood, a one-in-one-hundred-years forest fire season. But now we're having those conversations every two years, every year, every three years. And Madam Speaker, that's something that we really need to kind of plan for, more than just kind of a housekeeping model.

So, in this legislation, it calls for various departments to be able to have a continuity plan to say we're going to do this, we're going to do that.

But I ask the question of, where was that for Peguis? Where was that plan for Peguis?

There was no plan put in place other than saying where is the federal government to be able to do that. There is roles that this provincial government and this PC caucus are failing to do.

And while, on the premise of Bill 22, we do support that, there is questions that need to be answered in regards to the continuity plan when it comes time to emergency situations here in Manitoba. Because, Madam Speaker, those things just, under this government, have not existed. Instead, it's kind of let's scramble around, let's be reactive to the situation.

Well, let's be more proactive. This legislation is a little bit proactive but, at the same time, there is no real kind of plan for how those measures and how those situations are going to be handled by this government other than to say we're going to rename some of things, we're going to do some various acts to some of that. But there was a lot of questions that brought forward—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 28 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

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

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