

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

**The 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, Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, can you please call for concurrence and third reading Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act.

#### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

##### Bill 200—The Firefighters Recognition Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will call for concurrence and third reading of Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act, commemoration of days, weeks and months act as amended.

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** I move, seconded by the member from Assiniboia, that Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), 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.*

**MLA Pankratz:** It is my honour to stand again and speak on behalf of Bill 200, Firefighters Recognition Day Act.

You know, this day will serve as a reminder of the remarkable work done by firefighters across our province, whether volunteer, career, city, rural, active or retired, this day is about celebrating the many members of our province who have been called to a life of service.

In my time on the front lines, I witnessed life at its most fragile. I've fought fires, delivered devastating news to families, attended to births, deaths, nearly everything in between. These experiences have given me a unique experience and perspective on the world, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Yesterday, in this Legislature, we honoured a fallen hero, firefighter Preston Heinbigner, whose battle with mental health reminds us of the unseen challenges our first responders deal with every single day. It highlights why this recognition day is vital, not just to celebrate the heroism but to shine a light on the struggles and to break the stigma around seeking help.

Mental health in the fire service is sometimes sidelined and not spoken about enough, and it's time that we change that. It's time we talk openly and provide our heroes the support they need to heal, not just physically but emotionally and mentally.

You know, I was chatting with a friend of mine, Dal Gagne from Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, yesterday about Preston, and after listening to what he had to say about his very good friends, I thought it might be fitting to include a statement from him in my address today, so I asked him if he'd be willing to send a short quote, and this is what I received:

In memory of Preston Heinbigner, let's carry forward his vision to transform the conversation around mental health within the fire department. Though he may be gone, his desire for change remains a guiding light, pushing us to take action and create a system where every firefighter's well-being is valued and supported. Let's ignite a flame of hope for those who are struggling and ensure that his legacy serves as a beacon

of inspiration, driving us to ensure that his sacrifice fuels meaningful and lasting change.

Thanks, Dal, for those words.

So I ask each of you, my fellow MLAs and anyone watching today, to take that message to heart and pledge your support to our firefighters, not just on this day that will be May 4, but every day. Let's ensure that our actions and policies reflect our gratitude and our understanding for the sacrifices that first responders make every day.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to fire departments across Manitoba, my colleagues and friends of the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service and to the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg. Your advocacy and commitment to the well-being of our firefighters pave the way for a better tomorrow.

As we move forward with The Firefighters Recognition Day Act, let's let it be a reminder of our ongoing responsibility to protect those who protect us. Let it serve as a commitment to every firefighter that their community stands with them in both their bravest moments and their most vulnerable.

Thank you to everyone in this Chamber for your attention, your support and your commitment to recognizing firefighters for the remarkable work that they do.

Thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** It gives me great pride to rise in the House today and speak to Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act of days, weeks and months as amended.

Having served in emergency services for many decades, I understand the need for such a legislation and, quite frankly, I was surprised that this legislation was not already in place. Knowing the work and the dedication that goes into these individuals' lives and careers, the fact that they put the community before themselves shows how selfless that each of these individuals are in the choosing of their professions.

\* (10:10)

So I, too, have a very small history as a firefighter. When I started my career with the Department of Natural Resources in 1990, I was an emergency firefighter up in Flin Flon-Cranberry Portage area. That year, there was many fires that happened up north, and I learned very quickly the responsibilities that is placed on emergency firefighters that are called in to deal with such situations.

I have absolutely no idea what firefighters go through on a daily basis when they're challenged with large structure fires, but I do know that teamwork and dedication is all part of ensuring the safety of the people that you are charged with, ensuring that they are kept alive, that property is kept free from damage and that people have the ability to continue with their life and issues that they may be moving forward on because of the devastation of such fires.

I want to make sure that, from myself and from our side of the House, that Preston's life is valued and as are all members of the firefighters, whether it's paid, volunteer or emergency situations, private firefighters that take care of cottage industries and areas in provincial parks. This will be the only time that I actually cross over and absolutely join my colleague one hundred per cent in representing the brave men and women of the fire department.

I know from personal experience the call for duty is always there, and I have been very happy many times to see the heroes roll up on a scene when I wasn't equipped or the members that I was in charge of were not equipped to deal with the situation, whether it be a fire, whether it be an extrication of a vehicle or dealing with the aftermath of very significant motor vehicle accidents. So knowing that they are there to support the community and put their lives on the line is very important.

I also said this in committee, I've said it in this House, but I think it's significant that May 4 is chosen for firefighter recognition day, and I say that because May 4 is very close to may the force be with you; your force, your firefighting force and all of the family.

For those of you that have never been in emergency services, and specifically in a fire hall, they are truly a second family to each other. They sleep together, they eat together, they attend emergency service together, they support each other and they rely on each other, just like a family unit does. And I appreciate the work that goes through this and the daily stresses that are placed upon our emergency personnel.

One thing I would like to do is just read this line by line and give a little bit of explanation as we go through this bill.

So the first line is: Whereas firefighters put themselves at risk every day to protect Manitobans, their property and the environment. There's a saying in the firefighting world that I will risk nothing to save nothing, I will risk a little to save a little, but I will risk a lot to save a lot. And that truly reflects in the next

line of this resolution: And whereas firefighters in Manitoba have been killed or injured in the line of duty. They risk a lot. They risk their lives to ensure Manitobans and anybody visiting Manitoba are safe.

And so it's not only the issues as we heard today and that we've seen in this House over the past several weeks, the issues of being at a fire or in an emergency situation where a life can be lost. It's the long-term effects of occupational stress injuries, the stress that is put onto emergency responders.

And I hope that this recognition also provides that gateway to people seeking help and reaching out and understanding that they're recognized not just one day of the year, but every day of the year, and we thank you for your service.

And whereas many firefighters in Manitoba are volunteers, we have to look at the value of volunteers, whether it's in rural Manitoba, whether it's in our parks or, as I mentioned earlier, private enterprise, of each of these individuals taking the time to ensure the safety and well-being of their fellow man.

And whereas firefighters play an integral role in Manitoba's fire and medical emergency response system, I have to agree. Again, firefighters are mainly trained as first responders, as well, whether it's as a primary-care paramedic, an advanced-care paramedic or any of the areas in between, they're the first responders that we hope attend a scene and can manage it and make sure that life-saving initiatives are taken on. So again, we appreciate very much.

And last of all, and whereas it's important to recognize the hard work, dedication and sacrifice of all firefighters in Manitoba—again, I have many personal stories. One that resonates with me most is—it was during a motor vehicle pursuit that we had in the city of Brandon, and two of my very close friends and colleagues were involved in a collision during this. I can remember vividly the smoke coming out of the vehicle and the officers being trapped inside of the vehicle. And moments later, because it was very close to where No. 2 fire hall is located in Brandon, the firefighters were able to attend, help extract the passenger and provide emergency first aid at the time. So—and again, this'll be the only time you hear me say this, but even police need heroes.

So, again, thank you very much. I'm happy to support this very important bill, and I look forward to celebrating with all emergency service firefighters come May 4.

Thank you.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I appreciate the opportunity to rise this morning for third reading of Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act, and just put a few words on record.

I'd like to begin by thanking the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation, as well as my colleague from Brandon West for some of the words that he shared and put on record.

I think that it is so telling when the House can unanimously get on board with something so strongly. It really is a testament to how important this legislation is, Honourable Speaker. We know that it is needed here in the province of Manitoba, and it's been brought forward in such a beautiful way, in such a non-partisan way, and strong and healthy manner, and I think it's something we could even learn more from.

I know all of us together are mourning the passing of Preston Heinbigner, and our condolences are with him, his family and all of his friends. I know yesterday—I've been elected for eight years, Honourable Speaker, and yesterday was the first time I've seen the galleries filled with firefighters. To have the family of Preston come and join us here at the Legislature and have the bagpipes playing, it truly is an amazing and profound experience to be having inside of our Manitoba Legislature, and it's this legislation that enabled all of this to happen.

I would consider that this legislation is in tribute to Preston in many ways, and that my hope is we can do more for mental health here in the province. I know many of us have been advocating for having it covered under medicare and these are further conversations and dialogues that I believe could be more of a ripple because of this legislation, Honourable Speaker.

\* (10:20)

But again, I just—I'd like to thank the member for bringing it forward for everyone who came out to the Manitoba Legislature yesterday in support.

And more that—anything more that we can do, I think it's fair to say that everyone around the House here would like to be able to do that.

So thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you again to the member for bringing it forward.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** I'd like to thank my friend across the way, the member for Waverley for bringing this very important bill to the Legislative Assembly here.

I know he's very passionate about the firefighting service, and I think we all share his love for firefighters and respect for them, as well. And I'm not going to stand here and say this will be the only time I'm going to support the government caucus, but I—certainly be supporting them today.

Firefighters are the unsung heroes of our society, playing a vital role in keeping our communities safe and protected. They are the first responders in emergency situations, putting their lives at risk to rescue others from danger. From battling raging fires to responding to medical emergencies, firefighters are the epitome of courage and selflessness.

One of the most critical roles firefighters play is in fire suppression and prevention. They respond to fires in residential, commercial and industrial areas, working to contain and extinguish the blaze before it spreads. This requires immense physical strength, endurance and strategic thinking, as firefighters must navigate treacherous terrain and make quick decisions to save lives and property.

Beyond firefighting, Honourable Speaker, these brave individuals also respond to a wide range of emergency situations. Firefighters are often the first to arrive at the scene of a medical emergency, providing critical care and transportation to those in need. Firefighters extricate victims from wreckage, provide medical assistance and secure the scene to prevent further harm.

Firefighters are also deployed to respond to flood situations and other disasters, providing search and rescue services and food and shelter to those affected. Firefighters contain and clean up hazardous spills, protecting the environment and public health. Firefighters respond to water emergencies, rescuing those stranded or in distress. Firefighters navigate treacherous, confined spaces to rescue those trapped or injured. Firefighters perform daring rescues from heights, such as tall buildings in the city of Winnipeg. Firefighters use specialized skills and equipment to rescue those trapped in complex situations.

Firefighters play a crucial role in fire prevention and education. Firefighters identify potential fire hazards and provide guidance on fire prevention and safety measures. Firefighters conduct drills and training exercises to prepare the public for emergency situations. Firefighters educate the community on fire safety, prevention and emergency preparedness.

Firefighters investigate the cause of fires, identifying potential arson and providing critical evidence for criminal investigation.

In addition to their technical skills and bravery, firefighters possess exceptional interpersonal skills, providing emotional support and comfort to those affected by emergencies. They often work closely with other emergency responders, such as police and paramedics, to ensure a co-ordinated response to emergencies.

The role of firefighters extends beyond emergency response. They are also integral to community development and social cohesion. Many fire departments engage in community outreach programs, participating in local events, parades and charity work. Firefighters serve as role models, inspiring young people to pursue careers in public service.

In recognition of their selfless service, many firefighters, both professional and volunteer, have been honoured with numerous awards and accolades, including the Canadian Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal and the Medal of Bravery.

Bill 200 is a crucial piece of legislation that recognizes the bravery, dedication and sacrifices of firefighters in Manitoba. By proclaiming May 4 as firefighter's recognition day, this bill acknowledges the vital role that firefighters play in keeping our communities safe.

Firefighters put their lives at risk every day to protect Manitobans, their property and the environment. And many have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

This bill also recognizes the contributions of volunteer firefighters—firefighters, who make up a significant portion of Manitoba's firefighting force.

Honourable Speaker, I'm proud to say I was a volunteer firefighter in my community of Shoal Lake for 15 years. I certainly enjoyed every 'min' of it—minute of it. And I think, whether you're a professional firefighter or a volunteer that answers the pager or the town siren, I think your service to the public is much the same.

I want to extend a thanks to two fire chiefs that I served out—under in my community: Chief Dick Edmundson, now deceased, and Chief Graydon Bell, who's also deceased; both extremely good role models for firefighters in the community. We learned a lot from them, and we certainly miss them every day.

So by dedicating a day to honour the service of firefighters, we demonstrate our gratitude and appreciation for their selflessness. Firefighters recognition day will serve as a reminder of the critical role that firefighters play in our emergency response system and encourage Manitobans to express their thanks and support.

We owe it to our firefighters to recognize their hard work and sacrifices, and Bill 200 is an important step in doing so. I urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to support this bill and honour the bravery and dedication of Manitoba's firefighters.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** Question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is there will of the House to recognize the motion as unanimous?

**The Speaker:** Is the will of the House to recognize the motion as having passed unanimously? *[Agreed]*

The motion is passed unanimously.

### House Business

**MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader):** On House business, Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz). The title of the resolution is Respecting Seniors.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that pursuant to rule 34(7) that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Radisson. The title of the resolution is Respecting Seniors.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Johnson:** Is there will of the House to recognize the clock as 11:00?

**The Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The time now for private members' resolutions. Just a reminder to everyone as we've recognized it as being 11 o'clock, noon will now be at 11:27.

### RESOLUTIONS

**The Speaker:** So now private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is resolution 10, Respecting Front-Line Workers.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is there will to take a five-minute recess until government gets their business in order?

**The Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to take a five-minute recess with two-minute bell to ring to call members back? *[Agreed]*

The House is recessed for five minutes.

*The House recessed at 10:29 a.m.*

*The House resumed at 10:34 a.m.*

**The Speaker:** Order please.

The House is now back in session.

Time for private members' resolutions.

### Res. 10—Respecting Front-Line Workers

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** I move, seconded by the member from Seine River

*WHEREAS under the previous PC Provincial Government, Manitoba had one of the lowest ratios of doctors per capita in Canada; and*

*WHEREAS the previous PC Provincial Government cut its capital budget by 36% during six fiscal years since 2016; and*

*WHEREAS the previous PC Provincial Government closed three of six emergency rooms in Winnipeg; and*

*WHEREAS the previous PC Provincial Government's mismanagement led to a significant increase in mandatory overtime for nurses leading to exhaustion and burn out; and*

*WHEREAS reports found nurses were experiencing deep-seated unhappiness, very high levels of stress, and ER staff resignation increases due to the previous PC Provincial Government's decisions; and*

*WHEREAS the WRHA acknowledged the 'valley of despair' over significant changes in Manitoba's healthcare system in 2019; and*

*WHEREAS the previous PC Provincial Government failed to achieve multiple healthcare related election promises, failed to hire nurses or rural paramedics, failed to improve provincial wait times, and failed to build more personal care homes; and*

*WHEREAS steps were never taken under the previous PC Provincial Government to bring all partners together to streamline the process for international medical graduates to work in Manitoba, or to ensure that training pathways for allied health professionals in Manitoba were as efficient as possible; and*

*WHEREAS the current Provincial Government has begun the process of undoing the damage done by the previous PC Provincial Government to healthcare in Manitoba, including investing in more beds, more surgical and diagnostic capacity, and bringing together all partners to hire 1000 new health care staff in this year.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue respecting and working with front-line health-care workers to repair the reckless cuts and mismanagement of the previous PC provincial government. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Motion presented.**

**MLA Devgan:** You know, Manitobans were loud and clear in the election, and health care was a priority for them. They wanted a government that was going to work with health-care workers and not disrespect them.

For seven and a half years, the previous PC government disrespected workers, closed emergency rooms and dismantled health-care capacity in our province.

Our NDP government is working to rebuild health care in Manitoba by hiring 1,000 new health-care workers and building a new ER at the Victoria hospital to start.

Honourable Speaker, anyone who's interacted with our health-care system can see the devastating impacts the PC cuts have had. Anybody who goes to an emergency room and waits there for hours and hours for services recognizes that something's not right within our health-care system. And this is what the PC government left us with. It less—left us with a

system that is over—under pressure and health-care workers who are disrespected.

Respecting health-care workers means listening to health-care workers. That's why our government held a series of in-person meetings with the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Minister of Health, listening to front-line health-care workers after their shifts to get their perspective on what can be done to right the ship in Manitoba.

We're committed to improving the culture of the health-care system. The Minister of Health have—has said numerous times that it starts with changing the culture within the health-care system. But that starts from the top. It starts from the provincial government—from our government—sending a clear message to health-care workers that we are on your side.

We've added 36 new acute health-care beds at the St. Boniface Hospital, 50 new beds to the Health Sciences Centre and 31 new beds at the Grace Hospital in our larger plan to reduce wait times and fix the staffing shortage.

In response to the new bed additions at the Grace Hospital, Dr. Ramin Hamedani, chief medical officer at the Grace Hospital said, I can't contain it. This is important news for our site and for our campus. It will have a tremendous impact on our access, our flow for patients and, ultimately, for the care we provide for patients here.

This is the impact that our government is 'havening'—is having and the changes that we are implementing.

Our Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara) announced our plan to work in collaboration with three nursing regulatory bodies—colleges—and create streamlined paths for former nurses to return to work. We are ensuring that those who have knowledge, experience and mentoring capabilities are involved in bettering our health-care system.

So I want to take a moment here to break down exactly what those 1,000 new health-care workers means for Manitobans: that's 100 new doctors, 210 nurses, 90 paramedics and 600 health-care aides. That's \$309 million—record spending—to recruit, retain and train more health-care workers in our system.

So it's—the message that gets sent from government is heard on the front lines of the health-care system. The previous government and a health—a minister in Cabinet was quoted as saying that doctors



were causing chaos in our health-care system at a time when we were struggling with the pandemic.

On a personal note: In northwest Winnipeg, we've seen that part of the province, that part of the city, grow exponentially within the last 10 years.

\* (10:40)

Common sense and rationale would dictate that as the population grows, you invest in infrastructure, public services, not cut them. For whatever reason, the PCs decided to cut health care, of all things, something that we all depend on. And as our province has grown and as that part of the city has grown, we no longer have an emergency room at Seven Oaks Hospital because of the PC cuts.

And when I was knocking on doors during the summer and I came across nurses and health-care workers, they had one thing to say: that they were disappointed with the previous PC government and the sheer disrespect they had shown to front-line health-care workers.

I have a lot of friends and family who are in health care. My younger brother is a doctor. And it's tough to watch those who are in health care struggle to make up for the cuts that the PCs had—the devastating cuts the PCs had made to our health-care system.

But help is on the way, Honourable Speaker. Our government is sincere about fixing the damage they have caused and sincere about rebuilding the respectful relationship between our government and front-line health-care workers.

So, Honourable Speaker, with that, thank you very much for the opportunity to present this important resolution. I hope members opposite can support us and we can have a unanimous opinion in the Legislature.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer may exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** With all of those words put on the record, I am just wondering why the NDP fired the diagnostic and surgical task force immediately upon being sworn in, without first ensuring that

there was adequate surgical capacity here in Manitoba to meet patient needs.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** You know, the members opposite want to talk about firing health-care workers, so let's start with their firing of 300 nurses and the seven years of cuts and chaos that have had significant impact in Manitoba and are still being felt 'til this day.

So in 2022 and 2023, overtime rates were over 8 per cent under the PCs' watch. They never did the work to staff up the health-care system and it left Manitobans struggling. We're going to do things differently, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** Manitobans were loud and clear on October 3. Health care is a priority for them and the previous PC government broke it. Even now, in opposition, as my colleague, the member for McPhillips was speaking so passionately about the need to respect health-care workers, we're hearing laughing coming from the other side, gaslighting coming from the other side, gaslighting of nurses, doctors, home-care attendants, folks that work from hospitals to PCH to clinics.

Unlike them, we are a listening government, and we're doing the work that they were unwilling to do.

So I ask my colleague: What did the PCs do, exactly, to break our health-care system?

**MLA Devgan:** I want to thank my colleague for that question because it's an important one.

We know the PCs had left a massive mess for us to clean up. Wait times are out of hand. Anybody interacting with our health-care system can feel that.

And we know that they publicly criticized doctors and nurses. That to me, personally, is galling. The people who deliver our services, to criticize them through the pandemic and through now, through today, treating health-care workers as adversaries.

Like I said, we're going to do things a little bit differently. We're going to treat health-care workers and front-line workers with a lot more respect than the previous government did.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** My question is to the member for McPhillips: Why did the NDP close 20 emergency rooms in Manitoba, causing chaos in the entire health-care system?

**MLA Devgan:** If we talk about chaos, let's talk about the massively devastating impact that the cuts they made to the health-care system before a pandemic.

That had very real impacts—very real impacts on Manitobans that were felt and felt in communities all around the province, including my community of northwest Winnipeg, Seven Oaks hospital not have an emergency room there. Ask any Manitoban what they would want; they want our emergency rooms back.

I was door knocking in our community over the summer, and I came across a woman who lives a street down from Seven Oaks hospital, and she said to me that I couldn't be more disappointed with what the PCs have done to the hospital that I helped and supported over the course of its 40 years in existence. That's what the PCs—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Like my colleague, I've heard from constituents on the doorstep that they were hesitant to visit a hospital or had heard horror stories from their neighbours that, you know, prevented them from doing so. Nothing should get in the way of a human being accessing their human right to health care.

Even now in the community amid our many site visits, we're hearing from health-care workers who are continually continuing to be hurt by the impact of the decisions that were made by the previous government. And what else is consistent is that every health-care worker we spoke with felt like they weren't valued. Nobody deserves to be in a workplace where they feel undervalued, where they feel disrespected and where they feel unsafe.

My question for my colleague is: How did the previous failed—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Devgan:** I think the numbers just show how many people have left our health-care system because of the disrespect the previous government had shown. Who wants to work in a health-care system when their government treats them like adversaries, right?

And so I think that if we are going to make a change in this province, it starts from the top. It starts with meeting with front-line workers, and that's exactly what our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and Minister of Health have been doing: taking a sincere approach, a listening approach, and rebuilding that relationship with health-care workers.

That's not what the previous government did. The previous government—we all saw the ads during the election campaign. We know where they draw the line and that's respecting Manitoba workers; whether that's health-care workers, or anybody else.

That's not the approach that we're—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** You want to talk about disrespect? We've seen a great display of that from the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) here in the last short few days.

Can the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan) tell us why has the Minister of Labour and Immigration damaged Manitoba's reputation on the international stage? And what will the NDP do to repair their reputation so that internationally trained health-care workers can trust Manitoba as a desirable province to live and work in?

**MLA Devgan:** Happy to answer that question.

First and foremost, today and every single day, and along with all our caucus colleagues, I'm happy to stand with our Minister of Labour and Immigration and the hard work she is doing to recruit talent from across the world to Manitoba.

Let's take a trip back in history and look at the previous Immigration minister under the previous PC government: \$2.3 million on a vanity trip to the Philippines to recruit 11 nurses—\$2.3 million—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Devgan:** —to recruit 11 nurses.

Our minister is hard at work making sure that those who come to Manitoba—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Devgan:** —to make a life here and work in our health-care system—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Our NDP government cares about the health and safety of our health-care workers. Unlike the previous failed PC government, we're making progress to improve working conditions. We will take no lessons from members opposite on how to treat workers.

How is our government making our hospitals a safer work environment?

**MLA Devgan:** I thank my colleague for that very important question.

Unlike the previous PC government, we care for the safety of our staff. Our minister has met with front-

line workers and emergency departments to help them meet their needs.

Where the PCs have broken their promise to deliver institutional safety officers, we are fulfilling those needs. This is just the first step of many of restaffing our health-care system.

**Mrs. Cook:** Is the member aware that the Manitoban Nurses Union is currently running an advertising campaign stating that nothing is changed and the NDP are not sufficiently listening to them?

\* (10:50)

**MLA Devgan:** Honourable Speaker, our government will take no lessons from the previous failed PC government on what listening to front-line health-care workers actually looks like.

From day one of this government, our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our Minister of Health have been listening to front care—front-line health-care workers and sitting down with them in a sincere and honest way.

We all remember the press conferences of the previous Health minister and the kind of respect they showed to health-care workers. That's not what we're going to do, and we are committed to treating health-care workers with respect.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Seven years of cuts and chaos, and members opposite continue to heckle and continue and continue to say that it isn't true as they walk immediately behind me. Our NDP government's key priorities are rebuilding health care because we know the truth.

It will take time to fix our system after the seven years of cuts, but we are committed to this work. What we've done so far to fix the PC's mess, I hope that the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan) can tell the House.

**MLA Devgan:** Our government hit the ground running. Across the province, we've added 76 new staffed beds. We're changing the culture of the health-care system. And again, I've said it many times and I'll repeat it again, that's starts from the chop—top.

The change of culture starts with the Minister of Health and they've been crystal clear with the front-line health-care workers that we are on their side. That is what this PMR is about: it's resetting that relationship.

Manitobans set—sent us a clear message on October—in October during the election. They wanted

a change and they wanted a government that was sincere and serious about rebuilding our health-care system. That is what we're doing.

And I would love for the PCs to take a lesson of what real, sincere collaboration actually looks like with health-care workers.

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

### Debate

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

The honourable member for Roblin. No—the floor is open for debate.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** So we see with this resolution again today the NDP putting a ton of misinformation on the record. And I want the member for McPhillips to know that I don't personally hold him responsible for this. I actually quite like and respect him.

I know that what's happened here is NDP staff have put forward a resolution and said, MLA for McPhillips, we're putting your name on this, and then he has to come in here and own that.

This resolution is nothing more than regurgitated talking points from the last election. And I think the danger is that if elected officials start to believe their own spin, they've lost the plot. And it's sad—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cook:** —to me that this, the new government, isn't coming forward with anything new or meaningful or helpful, or anything that's going to improve the lives of Manitobans with this resolution. The best they can do in private members' hour is put forward a political attack for reasons unknown.

It's surprising, really. I would have thought that, with seven years in opposition, that they'd be championing at the bit. That they'd come in here with fresh ideas and things they want to implement, a robust legislative agenda to improve health care in Manitoba. And instead we get this: they prefer to stay in election mode. They govern like an opposition.

So, that's fine. You know, I'd much rather be standing up here today and be debating substantive policy ideas, exchanging ideas with members opposite because I think that's what our constituents elected us to do. But today, I have to stand in my place and correct all of the misinformation put on the record today by the NDP with this resolution.

So, first of all, let's talk about what the NDP have done since coming into office last October. This will be a short discussion, Honourable Speaker, because the list is short. Job 1: cut the diagnostic and surgical task force. They did this for purely political reasons.

So, they have friends in an organization called the Manitoba Health Coalition. The head of that organization is actually married to a Cabinet minister. And they didn't like the task force. So, this coalition, which was instrumental in getting the NDP elected, said, get rid of the task force. And the minister said, on it.

And within two weeks of being sworn in, task force—gone. The NDP didn't like the task force because it was innovative in its approach. It was partnering with service providers all under the publicly funded health-care system to increase surgical and diagnostic capacity here in Manitoba and get Manitobans the care they needed sooner.

The task force was taking a non-ideological approach to this and their care was focused on patience. And it didn't matter where the care was taking place so much as when it was taking place. And I realize this may be a difficult concept for members opposite to understand, who owe so much to union leaders for their seats on that side of the House, but the health-care system actually exists to serve patients.

And I know members opposite like to gloss over this fact, but there was a global pandemic for a couple of years there. And that pandemic created a massive backlog of surgeries and diagnostic tests that needed to be dealt with. And that pandemic exacerbated staffing shortages as understandably burned-out health-care workers left this—left the profession. And that didn't just happen here in Manitoba. It happened in every jurisdiction across the country. There is not a jurisdiction in this country that was not dealing with a backlog and a serious shortage of health-care workers.

So the task force was created as a solution. And it got results: over 80,000 surgeries and tests for Manitobans in the wake of the pandemic, in fact. And members opposite like to gloss over that fact too. They've vilified the task force in the media, and that is shameful. It was co-chaired by Dr. Peter MacDonald, who is an internationally recognized and respected physician that we are lucky to have here in Manitoba.

I'm going to quote from an op-ed submitted by Dr. MacDonald to the Free Press in February, where he notes that the task force steering committee, quote: included provincial medical leads of surgery, anaesthesia, diagnostic imaging and lab services. We also had

on our committee a retired chief of surgery, who was also a patient representative; university professors; Doctors Manitoba representatives; nurses and Indigenous representatives. End quote.

Dr. MacDonald further notes, quote: the DSRTF has been mainly identified in the media for out-of-province referral of patients for surgery, which was always intended to be a temporary measure until provincial capacity allowed increases close to home. Provincial capacity was mainly limited after COVID by severe human resources shortages, mainly nursing. Despite the common conception that out-of-province work was our sole mission, this only accounted for 18 per cent of our budget and 3 per cent of the patients that we were able to help through increases in funding, unquote.

And finally, let's talk about what the task force accomplished, according to Dr. MacDonald:

(1) expanding orthopedic surgery capacity by opening a fifth operating room at Concordia general hospital to enable an additional 1,000 hip and knee replacements. That doesn't sound like a cut;

(2) mitigating the endoscopy wait-list by expanding the use of fecal immunochemical tests, as well as providing funding for additional endoscopy in the system, including rural access to endoscopy—another concept for the members opposite;

(3) expanding general surgical capacity at Grace and Victoria hospitals, Steinbach and Ste. Anne hospitals;

(4) expanding the anesthesia clinical assistant program to help address the global shortage of anesthesia providers;

(5) providing operating costs for the new surgical wait information management system to centralize wait-lists in Manitoba and make wait-list management more efficient;

(6) expanding the Spine Assessment Clinic at Health Sciences Centre to a provincial resource as well as funding for additional outpatient spine surgery at Maples surgery centre;

(7) expanding diagnostic imaging capacity Manitoba-wide through the addition of staff and expanding hours for MRI and CT scanning, and by purchasing one new mobile CT and one new mobile MRI;

(8) expanded provincial pain clinic capacity for chronic pain sufferers; and

(9) supporting the RFSA, request for supply agreement program, which funded additional cataract, endoscopy, outpatient orthopedic surgeries at Pan Am Clinic, gynecology surgeries, men's urology, ear, nose and throat cases, plastic surgery cases, echocardiography, among many other procedures and diagnostic tests.

In total, the task force funded over 80,000 additional surgeries or diagnostic procedures that would not have been otherwise funded.

And, finally, I quote: In the end, the DSRTF eliminated 83 per cent of the identified COVID-19 backlog in Manitoba; 90 per cent of the diagnostic backlog had been eliminated and 69 per cent of the surgical backlog had been eliminated.

That was what the task force was set up to do. And what did the NDP do immediately upon taking office? They cut it. Because on that side of the House, politics come first.

The task force is the most glaring example of this, but there are others. Agreements that had been signed with public and private service providers that were set to expire on March 31 were simply allowed to lapse. It wasn't until we brought this to the attention of the minister here in question period and the media pressed them for answers that it became clear that they were eventually going to talk to these service providers and maybe extend them. We're still not entirely sure what's going on there.

\* (11:00)

They—this is the NDP government that actually rescinded job offers made to Philippine health-care workers. They like to pooh-pooh this program as though we have enough health-care workers in Manitoba. We don't need them.

These were health-care workers that were prepared to come here. They were going through the arduous processes involved with immigration and all of the checks and balances needed to practice here in Manitoba. When they couldn't come here as nurses, they asked: Can we come as health-care aides? We just want to come and work in Manitoba. And what did the NDP do? They said no. They ripped up their job offers.

I have so much to say here and I'm going to run out of time.

So, I want to read into the record something that the Manitoba Nurses Union recently posted to Instagram. It's a letter they received from a nurse. And the letter

reads, quote: When this government was elected, I was full of hope, hope for better working conditions, hope for announcements to retain nurses, hope for changes in leadership and change to the current culture like they promised to do. I have waited and I have watched and have seen no change. This government promised to listen to the front line, but we don't feel heard at all. In fact, we feel more devalued. When is this change they spoke of coming? Unquote.

I want to end my comments today by putting a few words on the record in tribute to health-care workers. It's really too—I have so much more to say. We've spent a lot of time talking about heroes this morning. Earlier today we recognized the work of firefighters with the unanimous passage of Bill 200. And every day paramedics, health-care aides, nurses, doctors, dozens of other types of specialists and technicians and technologists go into work and they serve their patients. They work incredibly hard to serve Manitobans, and I know I speak for all of us when I say thank you to all of them.

And I think it's a shame that members opposite use the health-care system as a political football like they are today instead of putting forward a plan. Thus far, they have been all talk and no action. And I would just caution them. If they are not careful, they run the risk of becoming victims of their own hubris. They continue to parrot talking points from the last election instead of governing.

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

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** As usual, it's always an absolute honour to be standing here to speak on behalf of my constituents from The Pas-Kameesak. And also, too, it's also an honour to stand here to educate and share my experience as someone who lives in northern Manitoba.

And when it comes to reckless cuts that the PCs have made, I believe and have suffered that the PCs really, really, devalue us northern Manitobans in such ways where they contracted Lifeflight. As soon as that was done, the very next day a man from OCN had a heart attack at 10 a.m. Usually we have planes ready to go to medevac our patients to Winnipeg. And it was very frustrating for our front-line workers to work without that very important service to save your life.

And it was so frustrating for our front-line workers that the ER doctor actually talked to me—and usually people don't like talking to politicians—but this ER doctor was absolutely shocked. And he said: Of all

my years working here, I have never, ever had to wait for a plane to be dispatched for a heart attack victim.

It wasn't until 12 hours later that this patient was finally flown over, where—I hear the medevac planes fly over my house all the time in The Pas. And as soon as I heard that, I was like, holy smokes, it took this long.

And guess what, Honourable Speaker, we lost him that night.

Imagine if there was planes there for crucial services for us northern Manitobans, because we don't have that in The Pas. We always have to come to Winnipeg. So with that, talking with the front-line workers and the ER doctor, you could just hear and feel their frustration. And they knew that there was going to be more trouble ahead.

And in fact, Honourable Speaker, that these are one of the major calls that we get to my constituency office, not only from our front-line workers, but from our patients, explaining how long they have to wait in the hospital in order to be medevac'd now for life-saving services and also pain management as well.

So the other thing, too, that really upset me is when they closed down the 'obstetrics'—I can never say that word, I can never—you know—

**Some Honourable Members:** Obstetrics.

**Ms. Lathlin:** Yes. When they closed that down in office, do you remember that, Honourable Speaker?

I remember thinking, our poor women. In fact, last year, our first baby of new year's was from Flin Flon. Imagine being pregnant, living in Flin Flon and hoping—I hope I get there on time for this hour-and-a-half drive. Because, imagine having a baby being born on Highway 10. You know, that's not acceptable.

And this is what our Indigenous women go through anyway. In Cross Lake and Norway House there's no birthing station there, so they have to come to Winnipeg. And so, again. Nothing with—for our front-line workers to work with.

When you live in northern Manitoba, you have to get used to being without, such as mental health workers for children in northern Manitoba. You—there's nothing: no psychiatrists in northern Manitoba to deal with many, many, many, many children, especially Indigenous, who self-harm themselves and they have to leave their community and either go to Brandon or Winnipeg.

Again—front-line workers—this has happened to me twice with my two teenagers where I've been medevac'd with them twice, to Brandon and to Winnipeg. And we were even in a back of an RCMP truck cruiser going 140. I've never made it to Winnipeg—from The Pas to Winnipeg in five hours. We even hit a beaver, you know. And, like, that's how fast we were going for my daughter who self-harmed herself.

So, with the front-line workers working with us, you can see their frustration. It's very common that this happens in northern Manitoba and it's very common that our families choose not to leave to access service to mental health.

So, when we go to the ER, or when there's RCMP involved, as well, we have to sit there for a very long time as well, because there's shortage of nurses and it's really impossible to access the services and I can tell you the staff, the shortage of nurses in The Pas—they're doing their best.

They're doing their best and it's frustrating hearing many, many constituents that are just absolutely frustrated because there's lack of health-care services. So, guess what happens? People will blow up. People will get angry, maybe cause harm.

So, I am very, very hopeful that working with our Minister of Health, that we will hire nurses. You know, we need nurses in northern Manitoba and I want to work with the Minister of Health to ensure that happens.

And also, too, here in Winnipeg. Speaking of medevac, a lot of my—I get a lot of calls at middle of the night from constituents from Opaskwayak Cree Nation where they're medevac'd out in the middle of the night or they drive to bring in their patient. And their complaints are, again: no one is looking after my uncle; no one's looking after my dad; his dressing hasn't been changed yet; he needs to be cleaned because he needed the washroom in there.

So, guess what? Twice, I've managed, in the middle of the night, talk to the nurse, the constituent will call me and—talk to the nurse. And I don't know what kind of power they think I have, but at least I'm listening. And I talked to the nurse twice and said, I really—I understand that you're stressed out, lack of workers, and she agreed.

I said, so what the family is requesting if the daughter can stay, and the mom, with the patient, so they can do that while you're, you know, attending other patients.

\* (11:10)

And twice it was successful.

Once I understood and gave them respect as front-line workers, as health workers, that they were valued—and yes, they were overworked. We need more health-care workers. And it worked twice.

So now I get more calls now, thinking, you know, I could work magic with that. But what it was, it wasn't magic, it was just showing respect for our front-line workers, understanding what they're going through. And they were able to work with me.

So with that, that's what this whole resolution is about. And I really have to commend the nurses who work up north, you know, in the nursing stations. My stepmother was a nurse there for life. She's still doing casual work there. And just imagine, having to deal with, you know, patients that need crucial attendance, you know, right away.

Like the way my dad would describe somebody in, I believe, Garden Hill. Imagine breaking your leg in Garden Hill. You go to the nursing station. And then they put—you got to go downhill to the boat, you know, in a stretcher, walking. And then you got to get in the boat, and please, there's—the waters are not rough. So now you're in the boat, getting to the other side, where a plane is, right? So imagine health care up there and imagine our nurses, what they have to deal with.

So I just want to absolutely show my respect and my gratitude to the health-care workers that have helped me and my family, that have helped us here and I absolutely support this resolution as everyone should here in this Chamber, and as everyone should here in Manitoba.

Ekosi.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** Having had a look at this resolution and reading through it, once you get past the headline, realize that it is the furthest thing away from what the headline proclaims. It says: Respecting Front-line Workers and then it is one of the most disrespectful things you could do to front-line workers.

I know the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan). I've worked with him over the years and I understand how this place works. Someone would have written this and would have offered it to him to present to this House. He had the option to say no. He should have.

This is junk. It's offensive—[*interjection*] And the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) wishes to speak. My advice would be he waits his turn.

This is a offensive—this is offensive to health-care workers who every day work hard. And they were looking for something that would edify them, lift them up, show the importance they have in their society. Instead it uses them for what I think is a bitter political party who just wants to keep reliving the previous election.

Instead of putting forward some uplifting terminology—in fact, I look through here and there is nothing uplifting in this resolution. The member for McPhillips actually says nothing kind, nothing nice, about front-line workers. Nothing. He doesn't lift them up. It is a political slandering, muckraking on a Tuesday morning in the Manitoba Legislature.

And we've all made mistakes in our career. I would suggest the member for McPhillips, he just made one of his. Because I would point out to him—the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) is a little surprised at that. And I listened to her speech and I have amazing respect for the member from The Pas and for her predecessor, her father, outstanding leaders in this province. And I have great respect.

And I listened to actually what she said, and she pointed out all kinds of difficulties. And I would suggest to all members the stories she told were stories from 20 years ago, 19 years ago, 15 years ago, 10 years ago, a year ago. We are facing a crisis in health care that came under, in large part, to the NDP party.

I'd like to point out some inconvenient truths to them, because they seem to want to make this a political statement; not uplifting those men and women who help us when we are in need with our health.

It was this NDP that closed 20 emergency rooms across Manitoba. And maybe you could have viewed it as punishment politics for how they voted, but the problem with that is, people from—[*interjection*]

Member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) wishes to speak, and I would like to point out to him that he actually doesn't have the floor. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) should know rules, should know the law and clearly he doesn't know the rules. [*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schuler:** And maybe we should send him Beauschesne over there and he can study it and understand how the rules work.

But they closed 20 emergency rooms. Winnipeg is our largest centre and then comes Brandon and Steinbach. Manitobans travel our highways and byways. They take their families, they go travelling and, at times, there are accidents or there's a health issue. Those emergency rooms do not just service the people in those communities. They also service all Manitobans and, in truth, all Canadians, because Canadians do travel on those highways.

What this NDP did is they closed 20 emergency rooms on all Manitobans and all Canadians, making it incredibly difficult. Now, those 20 emergency rooms would have gladly have accepted an urgent-care centre, but the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) took out his cutting scissors, cut those emergency rooms, no urgent health care, no nothing. Many of those were actually turned to personal-care homes only for long-term care; they shut them down. And—most unfortunate.

Now, the member for Concordia: here's another inconvenient truth as he's heckling—you'll have to listen between all his heckling—is that when they were in power, Manitoba had the worst wait time in—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schuler:** —the entire nation. And it wasn't that we were 10th; it's that every year the gap between ninth and 10th got worse.

In fact, under the member for Concordia's cutting ways, you could actually get on a airplane, fly to Toronto, get your health care, turn around and fly back in less time than you sat in emergency room under the member for Concordia's rule of error on health care when they were in power. It was less time to fly to Toronto and back.

In fact, there was that terrible situation where an individual went into an emergency room and it wasn't until 30 hours later they figured out that he had passed away. That was under this—the member for Concordia, the Minister of Justice. It was under their leadership that that took place.

That is the kind of shambles that the emergency room was—the system was in place in this province. And they can heckle and they can put this kind of junk—junk—resolution forward that says nothing nice about our health-care workers, nothing nice about the health-care system.

It was under their watch and I would suggest—and that was a time when they were getting unprecedented

transfers from the federal government and they weren't facing a pandemic of epic proportions. We—there was nobody alive politically today or during that pandemic who had been a leader during the last pandemic.

They governed with none of that and ran a system into the ground. Our government faced a pandemic, came through it. It was tough; they were tough, tough times and we came through it, as every other jurisdiction, the best we could around the world.

I would like to say in the last few moments I have, unlike what the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan) or member for Concordia, who—I doubt he'll have the courage to get up and speak to this; it's—his modus operandi is usually just to sit and heckle.

\* (11:20)

So, he probably won't get up and put any words on the record, and that's kind of expected.

But I would like to say that from all of the individuals that I've spoken to have had a good interaction with the health-care system, not always perfect; the outcome hasn't always been what they expected.

I would say that our government with—we finished. Because under the NDP, the Selkirk hospital was like—it was a concrete mushroom pile field, and we actually built it. And I had the opportunity to go in there one evening for a MRI for my knee, and it was unbelievable. What a beautiful facility. And to the individuals who work there, what a pleasant experience, and they do a great job. And to the MLA for Selkirk and the previous MLA who pushed for it.

Not the NDP. They built nothing. They shut all that down. No schools, no hospitals, no nothing.

We actually built the hospital in Selkirk, and we built all those different facilities that now we get to enjoy, that give us the good care, and I would say to all of those individuals—and I can't name them, because I wasn't privy to their names—right from when I walked in the front door, the service that was given was phenomenal. And they were kind, and they were friendly, and they ran such a good system.

To all the front-line workers, whether it's Health Sciences, St. Boniface, Concordia, Seven Oaks, across this province, I would say to them: they deserve a resolution that uplifts them. They deserve something that says nice things, that says kind things, that points out the good things they do, not this junk that the member for McPhillips thinks is the way he's going to build his career by just putting ugly, ugly verbiage on the record. Uncalled for.



Get up. Get up and say nice things. Get up and say pleasant things. Uplift people. They look to us to be uplifted at times when they're working so hard. That's what this resolution would be.

And I would suggest some of my colleagues, make sure you take some of your time; please uplift the front-line workers, unlike what the NDP has done with this resolution.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed with more debate, I'd like to draw members' attention to the public gallery, where we have seated from Country View School, 20 students under the direction of Vaughn Bartel, and they're guests of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Welcome.

\* \* \*

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I am pleased to stand today in this Chamber and put a few words on the record.

And I—first and foremost, I want to send a special thank you out to all the front-line workers both past and present, who have demonstrated unwavering dedication and selflessness in the face of unprecedented times.

Many of these workers both past and present have been there and been witness to the challenges of a global pandemic and have faced workforce shortages. Many of these folks have put their own lives at risk to save the lives of others, working tirelessly day and night, sacrificing family time and putting their own well-being at risk in all pursuit of protecting the health and well-being of others.

I would also like to thank my colleagues, member from Roblin and member from Springfield-Ritchot, and sharing the great work and the accomplishments of the PC—previous PC government.

There are and there have been many seeking surgery. Many Manitobans were seeking surgery out of

province, and there were measures put in place to see that this was able to happen.

The current NDP government cut the surgical task force right out of the gate, so to speak, without having a plan to—in place to help or assist those that were in the queue or those that were seeking this option. This put many Manitobans at a disadvantage and left them to face painful days ahead with no surgery dates or plan in place. Many were left and are left sitting and waiting in pain because this NDP government cut the surgical capacity.

You know—and let's talk about what that task force did and some of the accomplishments. And I'm going to reiterate again some of what the—my colleague, the member from Roblin, shared with us because it's important that it goes on the record what that task force did accomplish.

They expanded the orthopedic surgery capacity by opening a fifth operating room at the Concordia Hospital; mitigated the endoscopy wait-list by expanding the use of fecal 'immochemical' tests, FIT; expanded general surgical capacity at the Grace and Victoria hospitals, Steinbach and Ste. Anne's; expanded the anesthesia clinical assessment program; providing operating costs for the new surgical wait information management system; expanding the Spine Assessment Clinic at Health Sciences Centre; expanding diagnostic imaging capacity, Manitoba-wide, through the addition of staff and expanding hours of MRI and CT scanning; expanded provincial pain clinic capacity. That's just to name a few, and there's more listed.

The NDP have put out news releases talking about the new beds and emergency rooms that they'll open. But the question what is on everyone's mind is: Where are they going to get the staff to fill the roles?

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is next before the House, the honourable member for Agassiz will have seven minutes remaining—six minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 o'clock, the time for—the House is recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, April 23, 2024**

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