

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

Introduction of bills?

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gerry Koreman

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, communities do not simply appear. They are built and strengthened through the hard work of volunteers.

Today, I wish to recognize Gerry Koreman, a Cooks Creek resident who has dedicated his time, energy and knowledge to bettering our community. Gerry has been involved with Cooks Creek all his life and has now received the Manitoba 150 honour award for his outstanding history of volunteerism.

In 1998, Gerry became the president of the Columbus community centre. He served in this position until 2007, at which time the Columbus community centre successfully merged with the Zora community centre. This amalgamation resulted in the creation of the Cooks Creek Community Centre, where Gerry continued his presidency until 2019.

Under Gerry's leadership, the Cooks Creek Community Centre has seen unprecedented growth and development. It recently went through a \$1.5-million expansion, which includes a full-size gymnasium, permanent stage, kitchen expansion and the inclusion of additional washrooms.

Gerry's involvement with the centre has continued even after the end of his tenure as president.

He still serves as treasurer and remains involved as a member of the board of directors.

Gerry also has a history of volunteerism apart from the community centre within Cooks Creek. He is known to volunteer at the medieval feast, Cooks Creek 'herit' days and the monthly pancake breakfast.

He has also served on the administration board of St. Michael's Parish, served as the financial secretary for the Cooks Creek Knights of Columbus council and is a member of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada.

Madam Speaker, I invite all members of this House to recognize the exceptional volunteers that make up our beautiful province.

Thank you to Gerry Koreman for helping make Cooks Creek a beautiful place to live and grow.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

School Division Funding

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): This government has slashed education budgets every year since taking office. They have bottlenecked divisions so terribly that school divisions are forced to defund resources for Manitoba children.

Now the Pallister government has forced Pembina Trails and Winnipeg School Division to cut millions of dollars from their budgets.

Yesterday, the Winnipeg School Division posted a \$5-million cut from their budget due to the government's austerity agenda. These cuts will end the entire milk subsidy program while scrapping teacher support positions and services for students with significant emotional and behavioural challenges. The division has been forced to cut adult crossing-guard positions, which will make schools and streets less safe for children.

Pembina Trails School Division is forced to reduce student supports by \$7 million, yet they are the fastest growing division right now in Manitoba, with over 350 new students this year. The Pembina Trails School Division needs 19 new teachers, and what did this government think was appropriate? To defund them.

Madam Speaker, Pembina Trails has proposed the following cuts: to eliminate middle-year and high-school teacher-librarian positions; cut English-as-additional-language specialists in K to 8; reduce allocations for EAs; defer the Kindergarten Here We Come program and postpone maintenance and improvement projects that have been necessary in the division for years.

These cuts are a huge step backwards for education in Fort Garry and across Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, this government continues to fail Manitobans, families and folks who work in education. Every person sitting on that side of the Chamber should be ashamed of themselves. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Murielle Bugera and Robert Cesmystruk

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): I rise in this House today to honour two constituents of mine: Murielle Bugera of St. Pierre Jolys, and Robert Cesmystruk of Vita.

Both Murielle and Robert were recipients of the Canada Life Honour 150 awards recognizing 150 people from across the province whose volunteer activities have made a real difference in their communities.

Murielle Bugera has volunteered on many organizations over the years, but her work on the Crow Wing Trail sits atop her list of accomplishments. For more than 20 years, Murielle has spearheaded the development of the Crow Wing Trail, a 193-kilometre trail from Emerson to St. Norbert, one of the longest stretches of the Trans Canada Trail in Manitoba.

The Crow Wing Trail connects neighbouring communities, promotes healthy living and brings history back to the former ox cart trail.

Robert Cesmystruk has been a community leader in Vita for decades. His list of volunteer positions include helping establish and became the first fire chief of the RM of Stuartburn Fire Department, volunteer ambulance driver-attendant, Vita Curling Club, Vita Lions Club, Vita credit union board and many more boards and committees. Robert also has a great passion for his church, the Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church, where he has served in various capacities since 1976.

I would ask all members of this Chamber to join me in congratulating and thanking Murielle and Robert for all they have done to make a difference in their communities.

Thank you.

Vaccine Rollout in Northern Manitoba

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Many community members in the North have reached out to me to express concern over the Province's disastrous vaccine rollout for northern Manitoba. They tell me the plan just doesn't make sense to have so many people travel to the vaccine rather than bring the vaccine to people.

The current plan is overly centralized and puts stress on those eligible to receive the vaccine and exposes people to unnecessary risk. Having only one or two super sites up north that everybody travels to doesn't simply work, especially as more and more people become eligible. The Vaxport site isn't even up and running yet, and the proposed second location in The Pas or Flin Flon hasn't even been selected.

There are more remote communities in the North that don't have easy, affordable transportation access to Thompson. For many of those communities it takes hours to travel to each—to travel to Thompson, and these distances are very large.

Why not bring the vaccine to more communities instead? It would save people time and stress, and not to mention reduce the risk of COVID transmission due to the travel.

The super sites may work in cities like Brandon or Winnipeg, but it's clear it won't work in the North. The government should listen to the concerns of the people who live up north and make the change to their plans accordingly.

Today I am asking again that the Health Minister meet with the northern MLAs to create effective, common sense vaccine plans for northern Manitoba. *[interjection]*

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski)?

I understand the member for Dauphin was having some technical troubles with his computer. Is the honourable member for—was the honourable member for Dauphin able to correct that?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, given the technical difficulties that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) is having, is there leave of the House for him to try again to do his member's statement prior to petitions?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the member who's having technical difficulties with the computer to do his private member's statement at the time of petitions? *[Agreed]*

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hydro/Government Relations Request for Premier's Apology

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): As of 4:30 yesterday, 2,300 Manitoba Hydro workers have been forced to strike by the actions of this government. You can actually hear them honking at the Legislature right now.

And this is what happens when you disrespect workers who are willing to go and work tremendous overtime, working—to sleep in a gym in order to get the job done. They're not going to back down when it comes to their rights, when it comes to their jobs.

These are the heroes that we all stood to honour after the 2019 winter storm, and yet, shamefully, just a few months later, this government turned around and threatened those very same heroes with layoffs if they didn't bow to the unreasonable demands of this government.

Of course, they're ordering these wage freezes all while Hydro turns a \$111 million profit made possible, no doubt, by the unnecessary hydro rate increases that this government legislated in the dark of night.

It's clear which first step is needed to help redress the problem.

Will the Premier simply go outside today and apologize to the Hydro workers of Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, this government has tremendous respect for our Hydro workers across the province. We thank them again today for their work, their ongoing efforts, not just during COVID but during the ice storm that preceded it and on an ongoing basis. I thank my friends and workers at Hydro on behalf of the government and people of Manitoba.

I would just say that the member references the word respect in his preamble. Where was that respect

when the NDP was digging a hundred–\$10-billion debt hole at Hydro, Madam Speaker? How would the negotiations go between Hydro management and the IBEW if we didn't have that \$10-billion debt hole?

I'd ask the member to reflect on that and to have some contrition and take some ownership of the reality that the attempt by the NDP to Americanize Manitoba Hydro has negative consequences for the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker, including the workers at Hydro.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the—we know that the Premier is ashamed to go outside. He won't show his face to these Hydro workers who are on strike—those who are gathered for the honkathon outside the building today.

And we know why. His government seeks to cut Hydro. They seek to privatize Manitoba Hydro subsidiaries. And they raise rates on the good, hard-working people of Manitoba through legislation—not through public oversight, but through legislation in the dark of night.

And what's happening today? Well, even as Hydro turns a profit of \$111 million, this Premier still orders that corporation to not just freeze wages, but actually to roll wages back. And what happens if these hard-working Hydro heroes don't buckle behind this government's whims? Well, then they are threatened with layoffs.

So I'll ask the Premier again: Does he have the courage to go outside this afternoon and apologize to the Hydro workers directly?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate any question from the NDP leader on courage and shame, Madam Speaker.

I've had the willingness and the ability to stand up for the things I believe in, and the things governments I've been a part of believe in, for a long, long time. I don't have the record the member has, but I do have a record of understanding and accepting principle and abiding by it.

Madam Speaker, the member speaks of Hydro profits as if it was something he should celebrate, but he ignores the fact that if Hydro is fortunate enough to make the same amount of money over the next 99 years that it made this year, it will be able, without covering the interest, to fill in the debt hole the NDP dug for it over the last decade. It will just take that

long, that century, for Hydro to get back on its feet after the damage the NDP did.

So, when the member speaks to me about shame, I understand he's coming from a place of understanding.

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

Mr. Kinew: It's quite a tangled web that the Premier is laying out there, but the bottom line is this: the Premier won't go outside and face the Hydro workers because he knows he is the one who threatened their jobs. He won't go outside and face the Hydro workers because he knows it is his government that is weakening and undermining Manitoba Hydro.

And he won't go speak to the workers of Manitoba Hydro because he is the one who had the hypocrisy to try and celebrate these workers one month and then threaten their jobs just a few weeks later.

Madam Speaker, it's one thing for the Premier to try and engage in, you know, his, you know, subtle back and forth here in the Chamber, but to disrespect those Manitoba Hydro workers, who do tremendous work on all of our behalf here in Manitoba, is just wrong.

So, again, will the Premier simply go outside and apologize to the hard-working folks of Manitoba Hydro's IBEW membership as a gesture of good faith towards, perhaps, turning the negotiations onto a better foot?

Mr. Pallister: Where was the good faith, where was the respect, Madam Speaker, when the NDP were Americanizing Manitoba Hydro and taking it away from Manitobans? Where was the respect and good faith when the NDP spent—75 per cent of the money that they spent on Keeyask and Bipole wasn't spent with IBEW workers; it was spent out of province.

Where was the respect, Madam Speaker, for trying to take away Manitoba Hydro and give it to Americans and have Manitobans pay for it? Where was the respect that the member's talking about? There was no respect.

Madam Speaker, the president of the cover-up club over there wants to—us to ignore his record and he wants us to ignore the NDP record, and he points his finger over here and says, look at that, and he can't get Manitobans to forget the fact that the NDP squandered \$10 billion of their money for no good end. And now we're doing our best to clean up that

mess, and the workers at Hydro and we will work together to make sure that happens.

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

Elective Surgery Backlog Wait Time for Procedures

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): All I know is that I'm able to go outside and have some good conversations with the hard-working Hydro employees, and this Premier won't show his face to them.

Now, when it comes to the backlog of surgeries, we know Manitoba is in one of the worst positions of all the provinces in our great country. There are some seven—some 11,000 surgeries, and this wait-list continues to grow because the Premier hasn't done enough about it.

Angie Valgardson suffers from a heart arrhythmia and needs a surgery to figure out what is causing it before she can get treatment. Now, she's at risk of having a stroke every day because of these delays. When she asked her surgeon, she simply said that the backlog was extensive and that the wait will continue to grow.

Now, what does the Premier have to say to the thousands of people who are waiting for surgeries in Manitoba and what is his plan to address it?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the president of the cover-up club's at it again, Madam Speaker. Here we go. You see, there's a pandemic on, and the member doesn't want to pay attention to that because it doesn't serve his political purposes. He wants to use the pandemic for political posturing. What a shameful way to behave.

Every province—every province—is facing incredible health pressures on its surgical demands. Every province was before, frankly, the pandemic hit, and now there's a pandemic pile-up and it's real. And that's why we joined together with all the other premiers, including Premier John Horgan, an NDP premier in British Columbia, Madam Speaker, to fight for greater resources from the federal government.

And I thought, Madam Speaker, the NDP were on side, but now they've slipped away from that position and they're looking to place blame, during a pandemic, on a government that is addressing this issue in real ways, effectively in this province, as every other provincial government is endeavouring to

do without the historic strength of a partnership with the government in Ottawa.

* (13:50)

We will continue to stand up for health care in this province, and I would encourage the member to do the same.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the member for Fort Whyte raises an interesting question.

What does the pandemic response in our province have in common with the backlog for surgeries? Well, I'll tell you what it has in common, Madam Speaker. It is the cuts of the PC government that has made each situation immeasurably worse.

We know that we had to move to code red more quickly because this government cut ICU beds during their first term in office. That left all of us vulnerable.

Now—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the same effect compounded itself when it came to the surgery backlog. Their cuts have simply made the situation worse.

Now that he's taken his free shot at Justin Trudeau, what substantive message would the Premier have to share with the people of Manitoba who are waiting for these very important surgeries?

Mr. Pallister: Two thirds of a billion dollars, Madam Speaker, more than the NDP ever invested in health care was our commitment, and that's what we budgeted to add to our health-care budget prior to COVID.

But now, Molly McCracken—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —Molly McCracken, a close personal friend and someone who I have a lot of time for, has told us, through survey work that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has done, Madam Speaker, that we are second only to one other provincial government in supports for people during COVID, including supports for health care—first in business supports, I might add, second in supports for people.

Madam Speaker, we're—our commitment's clear and it's real. The NDP's failure is real as well. The member shouldn't continue to act as the president of the cover-up club and try to deny that. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the reason that they have to spend so much money is because their cuts have been an absolute disaster in health care.

All the additional money is going to pay for nurses' overtime who are being forced to work mandatory OT shifts. It's being spent on hiring and retraining and recruiting people who have had to leave the workforce because of the stress that they've been put under—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —by this government.

But the question that I'm asking is about surgeries. It has to do with people like Hallie Thiessen, who is a young two-year-old from Steinbach.

Now, Hallie suffers from a rare condition which means she cannot eat food without an adverse reaction. Her parents actually have to force a feeding tube through her nose. My heart certainly goes out to them, Madam Speaker.

But these are the type of people in Manitoba who are being done a disservice by the waits for surgeries.

What will the Premier tell them today about what his plans are to address the backlog and to commiserate with their situation?

Mr. Pallister: The honorary president of the cover-up club, Madam Speaker, with those very emotive statements, chose to ignore the reality that the NDP government that we inherited the mess from promised—promised—that it would address wait times.

An awkward reality that the member—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —fails to accept is this: the NDP wait times doubled and tripled while they were in government. Yet, according to the Canadian institute of health information—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —the wait times in our province—the only province where wait times did not go longer—

An Honourable Member: Look at the Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Doesn't have to.

Mr. Pallister: –in our first three years in government, the only province that kept the line–

An Honourable Member: He's trying to intimidate members in the House. He's trying to–

Mr. Pallister: –on growing wait times, the only province that's–

Madam Speaker: Wab does that, too. Wab does that, too.

Mr. Pallister: –proceeded to address that issue.

But now we need to stand together. Premiers from all political parties–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: –have done that. The only opposition in Canada that's–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: –against restoring–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

I was standing quite–for quite some time before members recognized that I was standing, and what that means is there should be silence so that I can actually speak to all of you.

Couple of things here. It probably is best to put your questions and answers through the Speaker. I know that there are a number of people in the House that aren't doing that, and so I would ask everybody to refocus on that.

The other thing I would ask is to–and both sides are doing this, talking about cover-up or, whatever, gangs–I would ask everybody, maybe they want to become part of a get-along gang and everybody can get along with each other in here so that we don't end up in situations like this.

So I would ask for everybody's co-operation please. That's kind of not appropriate for this kind of a venue for references to that. So, if everybody could get along I think we would be able to get further ahead with demonstrating to the people that are watching and everybody that we do value civility and democracy and it's important to us and we respect it.

National Inquiry into MMIWG Final Report Implementation of Recommendations

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Jana Williams, a beautiful young woman and a mother to two young

girls and pregnant with her third, Madam Speaker, was found murdered last week.

Let me confirm for the House that Jana is loved by her family. Her family is absolutely devastated. Jana deserves to be honoured. Jana deserves justice, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister, after nearly two years, finally prioritize the implementation of the recommendations of the national inquiry's final report?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that Manitobans are devastated by the loss of this woman.

We know that there was a vigil that was recently held, and that it was well-attended. We know that there is an investigation underway right now, and we are all waiting expectantly for the results of that investigation, because we want someone to be held accountable for the loss of life of this woman.

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

Ms. Fontaine: And yet, we haven't heard a peep from any single member of the PC caucus in respect of condolences to the families. We didn't see them there at the vigil. We know that nobody's reached out to the family. That's shameful, Madam Speaker.

And here we are, two years after the national inquiry's calls to justice, and we've seen no action from this government. Why? Why have we not seen any action from this government? Because they simply don't care, Madam Speaker.

What we know is that the budget for the family information liaison office has been discontinued, and I table our FIPPA confirming that these funds, which are critical for engagements of families, have been discontinued.

Why is the Pallister government not prioritizing MMIWG2S?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I congratulate the member on attending the vigil the other night, and I know that she spoke well in the TV clip I saw, and I appreciate her efforts in that respect, but I think it's shameless political behaviour to try to cast aspersions at people who weren't at the vigil along with her and the few dozen people who were there.

I admire her effort in respect of this, but I don't think it's right to try to score political points using the death of a Manitoban as a lever.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I'm not trying to score political points.

An Honourable Member: Oh, yes, you are.

Ms. Fontaine: I am simply—*[interjection]*

I am simply—

An Honourable Member: In the most disgraceful way.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: The Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) is yelling at members over here on the opposite side saying that it's 'disgraceful'—disgraceful.

Madam Speaker, I am simply pointing out that not one single member of the PC caucus has reached out to the family or has even posted on Twitter, which they are so apt to do when it's Orange Shirt Day, condolences to the family. It is indicative that they just don't give a crap about Indigenous women and girls—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I think the member probably knows full well that the language she was using is unparliamentary in the House. And I'm going to ask her to withdraw that statement.

* (14:00)

Ms. Fontaine: I will not.

Madam Speaker: I'm going to ask the member—again, in this House, that was unparliamentary language. Most times, when people are asked to withdraw unparliamentary language, it is something that they are more—most willing to do. Sometimes we get caught up in the passion of something.

I'm going to give the member another chance to withdraw those comments and conclude her question.

Ms. Fontaine: There's a slaughter of Indigenous women, and I will not—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I will give the member one more chance, out of courtesy, to give some further important thought to that and ask the member one more time if she would be willing to withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Fontaine: I will not.

Madam Speaker: The member has been given three chances to withdraw her comments, and I have requested, directed, instructed the member to do that.

I have no alternative now to name the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine)—the honourable member for St. Johns, pursuant to our rules, for—oh. I have no alternative but to name Nahanni Fontaine, the honourable member for St. Johns, pursuant to our rules, for disregarding the authority of the Chair and to direct that she withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of this sitting day.

I will now proceed with oral questions, and there was a question had been posed to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and I will allow him the opportunity now to respond.

Mr. Pallister: Unfortunate, Madam Speaker, because these are issues we should all be unified behind.

We've been working diligently and, I think, with the support of the opposition, in respect of pursuing the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We've been pursuing diligently the recommendations of the missing and murdered women's inquiry. We've been working to uplift the lives of Indigenous women, Indigenous people through treaty land entitlement settlements and building Freedom Road and advancing property rights and health initiatives and homeless initiatives and 'addicts' initiatives as a government that were never before invested in.

And it is not appropriate for the member, who knew these problems existed for years while she was working with the previous administration, to try to score points by attacking a government that is addressing the issues that were not addressed as well by the previous government.

Madam Speaker, I would just simply say that and say it's unfortunate. I respect the member's passion, but I do not respect her excessive partisanship and blame-placing.

Manitoba Municipalities

Staff Vacancy Concerns

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, cities, towns and municipalities across our province work hard to provide vital public services to Manitobans.

Central to that is having a provincial partner at the table to provide fair funding and to ensure municipal

revenues can be properly collected. Unfortunately, Pallister government is doing the exact opposite.

Through freedom of information, we've learned that one out of every four assessment positions has been left vacant across the province, and that's across the entire department. There's nearly 100 good-paying jobs sitting vacant, and I'll table this document now.

Will the minister stand up for Manitoba municipalities and commit today to quickly filling these vacant jobs?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'm going to take this first opportunity to speak in the House as Minister of Municipal Relations to thank the constituents of Interlake-Gimli for entrusting me to bring their voice forward as their Member of the Legislative Assembly.

I want to thank my Cabinet colleagues for their generous support in their helping me prepare for this new role, and mostly I'd like to thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for entrusting me and my ability to perform as Minister of Municipal Relations.

Mostly, of course, I want to thank my family for their support in this exciting new chapter of my life.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the Pallister government is not meeting the needs of communities across the province. One out of every four assessment positions now sits vacant.

The minister's own briefing notes say that municipalities are concerned because less staff means more delay in assessment, which means less money provided to those local communities.

In short, the government's short-sighted cuts to services are costing communities more. The AMM is willing to call out these positions to be filled, and last year, the AMM, in fact, said to this government: funding freezes do not recognize inflationary increases and put greater financial and administrative pressures on municipalities.

Will the minister take the AMM's advice and stop the funding freezes, restore these good jobs, and support our municipalities?

Mr. Johnson: Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

And, obviously, we take consultation and our partners with AMM very, very seriously, and we have reached out to not only the president, many of the municipalities on an individual basis, and we will continue to collaborate with AMM and bring their voice forward to this Legislature.

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

Mr. Wiebe: And yet, the AMM continues to be critical of this government and this minister.

Whether it's the closure of the MASC offices, which are forcing jobs and services out of our towns; Bill 37, which this government continues to ram through, which the AMM still says poses significant risks and will lead to more red tape and delays; and now nearly 100 vacant jobs in Municipal Relations. We know this government is, in fact, not listening to AMM and our municipal partners.

The government's own documents admit that, quote, municipalities raise concern that staffing vacancies are resulting in delays and limiting municipal tax revenue.

Will the minister listen to municipalities who have voiced their concerns, and fill these vacant jobs immediately?

Mr. Johnson: I thank the member for the question and his concerns with Bill 37.

I'm really surprised that members opposite bring up consultation. They—I don't think they know much about consultation. The government on this side of the House, we have an outstanding record on consulting. Bill 37 is just one of the main examples of our working group and—with the key stakeholders. And this participation includes AMM and the City of Winnipeg.

We will continue to bring their force—voice forward in this Legislature.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba School Divisions Funding Level Concerns

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): As we know, the Brandon School Division reluctantly passed their annual budget last—just last week, and the budget includes cuts to teaching positions, support staff, and it means the division is forced to withdraw proposals for eight additional school counsellors and nutrition

programs. All this because the government is failing to adequately fund Manitoba schools.

Trustee Jim Murray, of Brandon School Division, explained it well by saying that the school counsellors are needed now more than ever, but we can't do it because there's a guy in Winnipeg that wants to balance the budget. They're still trying to change course.

Will the minister commit today to increase funding for Manitoba schools?

* (14:10)

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): I thank the member opposite for a question on education.

This being my first question, I want to take a minute, Madam Speaker, to acknowledge our stakeholders that are—been working with our government over the last year during COVID. I want to point out and thank the teachers, principals, superintendents, the boards—the school boards, all of our other support staff, including custodians, education assistants and bus drivers—certainly went through a lot over the last year.

I also want to acknowledge students and parents who have had to face so many challenges over the past year. And everyone working together is providing safety in our schools, and that is paramount.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Altomare: Well, Madam Speaker, it isn't just the Brandon School Division who is having to make major budget cuts as a result of this government's austerity agenda.

The Winnipeg School Division passed its budget yesterday. It also had to make severe cuts, including cuts to nutrition programs and to students with additional needs: physiotherapy—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —occupational therapy. This is all due to this government funding reductions and directives to school divisions.

Manitoba teachers and support staff have continued to go above and beyond to provide quality education to our kids during the pandemic. And this government is actively choosing to reduce those supports.

Will the minister today reverse course and adequately fund education?

Mr. Cullen: This year we added almost \$21 million to supports for school boards across the province. This translates to a 1.56 per cent increase. Total budget coming from the Province of Manitoba: \$1.35 billion, the highest ever in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we're also supporting—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —we're also supporting local property taxpayers. We've asked school boards to freeze the taxation, the local taxation—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: We've asked school boards to freeze the local property taxation. We've backfilled that to the tune of \$23 million. We're saving Manitoba taxpayers \$23 million.

And more good news in my third answer.

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

Education System Review Request to Release

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): We know that the pandemic has led to a greater demand on our schools, not less. And we know that our education system requires more investment and not less.

This government clearly doesn't agree. They continue to force school divisions to cut.

And Mary-Louise Davis, the Brandon school-teachers' association rep had this to say: I really hope it's hard for them to sleep at night knowing that this was the choice they made for our children.

And they haven't even released the K-to-12 review yet. Manitoba educators, support staff, students, parents, everyone in the system deserve transparency from this government, yet they continue to hide this thing.

So now, will the minister be transparent and accountable and release the K-to-12 review today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): Certainly a lot of points in that question.

I will say we take this COVID situation very seriously, Madam Speaker. We have allocated \$185 million to fight the COVID pandemic in our

schools in Manitoba. We have committed to that. We expect by the end of the school year we will have invested \$154 million of that to fight the pandemic and keep our kids safe in schools.

Madam Speaker, record investments in education here in Manitoba to the tune of \$427 million more than the NDP ever invested in education.

Madam Speaker: I just want to indicate that, due to a loss of four minutes and 45 seconds due to procedural issues that we have had to deal with, I am going to add those four minutes and 45 seconds to the clock and ask the table to do so.

Finance Minister's Business Interests Conflict of Interest Disclosure Inquiry

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): The Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) has an interest in a company called Tiber River, which stands accused of a number of unfair labour practices, including the shocking allegation around the termination of employee who was pregnant. Legal action has been taken on this matter.

Manitobans expect transparency on such serious matters, and the minister has declared his interest in the company, has declared the potential for a conflict with his duties. Despite being the minister since 2018, he only now claims he would recuse himself from anything to do with Tiber River.

Manitobans expect a high level of accountability for something so serious.

Will the minister table the memo or letter he provided recusing himself? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): Well, Madam Speaker, this is the level that the NDP has sunk to. A party that wants to someday reclaim government, it's many, many years in the future if they continue to go down this low, low road.

This issue has already been addressed and dealt with by the conflict officer in this House.

Now, I know, Madam Speaker, that they don't like independent officers and independent analysis and they don't like to actually follow the rules of the Legislature. They've already made that clear in the last several weeks. But I would ask that this member—who's a relatively new member—try to look up and try to find the high road, because he hasn't been on it since he's been elected.

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

Mr. Wasyliv: Well, if the minister has nothing to hide, why can't he stand up in this House and say that, and why does he need to be protected by the member from Steinbach?

Now, given how serious these allegations are, given that this minister's in charge of protecting Manitoba's most vulnerable workers, Manitobans need to have confidence he is going to do his job and protect them over protecting his own financial interests.

Minister is saying he's going to recuse himself. That's not good enough. To protect Manitobans, he needs to go one step further and ensure that any such investigation is done—that it's done externally from people that he directs. In the same way that Manitoba Justice can ask for independent outside investigations, the same approach should be taken here.

Will the minister commit to that today?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, it's a little rich, Madam Speaker—or maybe I should say poor—for the member opposite to talk about protection of workers. It's a little bit strange for that member, or any member of the NDP, to raise that issue in this House.

There has been many individuals who've looked for protection from the NDP, Madam Speaker. Some of them knocked on the door of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew). And they got turned away. The Leader of the Opposition said no wrong door, but that was the wrong door when they went looking for protection there.

This issue has been addressed by the conflict of interest officer. Every member on this side of the House has full confidence in the Minister of Finance today, tomorrow and in the future, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wasyliv: Well, apparently, Madam Speaker, the minister has entered the Pallister government witness protection program and can't speak for himself.

The situation at Tiber River is deeply troubling, and the Finance Minister's involvement with the company subject to such 'actients' are unprecedented. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: Manitoba has no dedicated labour minister, and handing those responsibilities to this minister has clearly been a terrible error. Troubling allegations of abuse and unfair labour practices go back some time. The minister has been in his portfolio since 2018. He has only now recused himself.

Can the minister tell us how many complaints to the Employment Standards have been received since he became a minister, and why is he only recusing himself now?

Madam Speaker: I can't hear, so I'm going to ask for everybody to please allow me to hear the questions and answers.

*(14:20)

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, again, this has been dealt with by the conflict of interest officer.

I'm glad the member is now interested in complaints. I wonder how many complaints have been lodged against the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew). I wonder how many complaints have shown up at his door, and people asking for protection. I know of at least one who was turned away and told they had no policy on protecting anybody—the NDP had no policy. That was already reported in the newspaper, Madam Speaker.

We've heard lots of complaints around here. I remember the conflict of interest officer having to go through the entire Cabinet of the NDP to see who had taken free Jets tickets. They went through every one of the NDP, Madam Speaker. I remember the Auditor General having to knock on the door of the Cabinet to find out stuff about the Tiger Dams. Complaint after complaint after complaint.

Ask me another question, I'll give you the rest of the complaints, sir.

Manitoba's Vaccine Supply Selection of Calgary Company

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We can all agree that Manitoba needs to increase its vaccine development capacity. As it happens, more than a decade ago I worked on a bid to bring the publicly funded pilot vaccine manufacturing facility here in Winnipeg. It was cancelled by the Premier's colleagues in the federal Conservative caucus.

The real mystery is how the Premier picked a Calgary company, Providence Therapeutics, with no RFP, no due diligence, because they have never completed a human trial.

I table SEC documents showing that, in August, the mailing address was a suburban house in Calgary. Apparently it had between zero and 49 employees.

How did this very junior Alberta company get chosen over scientists and organizations in Manitoba who actually have experience and success taking vaccines to market?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I think the real question, Madam Speaker, the member would like to ask—and I'm sure he'll ask it in his second one—is: how the heck did we get to be 57th as a country getting vaccines in here?

And I think the answer is: because the federal Liberal government decided to rely on people from across great oceans and far distances away—totally rely on those people—to supply us with vaccines in a time of a pandemic. And that strategy, which the Prime Minister's already acknowledged, was a miserable failure and continues to be.

So for that reason, Madam Speaker, I expect that the member will be asking himself, prior to asking the next question: why did I raise this issue, when obviously I'm the only person in this Chamber who doesn't understand how important it is to have vaccines produced here in Canada available to Canadians during a pandemic?

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

Mr. Lamont: The Premier was quite correct yesterday when he said that Manitoba Liberals stood alone in questioning this government's decision to spend millions of Manitoba dollars on an Alberta company—a company that, by its own admission, may only be able to deliver a vaccine a year from now, if they can develop one, if it gets another \$150 million in government funding.

While Manitoba schools, universities and businesses are all facing massive shortfalls and cuts, this government is gambling \$7 million in Manitobans' money in Alberta.

The one exceptional thing about this company appears to be its chairman: Ken Hughes, a former PC MLA and minister in Alberta and an MP in Ottawa.

Now, the Premier says he doesn't know him, and that's fine. But Mr. Hughes' time in Ottawa did overlap with that of David McLaughlin, who was then chief-of-staff to Brian Mulroney.

What exactly—and who exactly—brought Providence Therapeutics to the Premier's attention?

Mr. Pallister: I think Shop Easy's selling tinfoil, Madam Speaker. The member can make himself a hat to go with his tie, okay.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, the federal government has also offered assistance and invested in this same company.

So the member got to talk to his friend, Justin, about the logic or lack of logic of investing in a Canadian domestic manufacturing company—production and research company.

Now, we have a manufacturer and producer here in Manitoba that's partnered with this company for some time now, to distribute vaccines. And the member thinks that's a bad idea? I think he should cling to that position, hold onto it, go out to the media and tell everybody that he doesn't want Manitobans to get vaccines when the next pandemic comes around.

National Pharmacare Program Request for Government Support

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Living in a pandemic has further highlighted the importance of a pharmacare program, and how our province could be better supporting those in our health care fields, as well as Manitobans who struggle to afford their prescribed medications.

Currently—and just as an example, Madam Speaker—prescribed medications, such as continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps for those living with diabetes, are not covered by Manitoba Health. And that is why I am asking if this provincial government will commit to working towards a universal, evidence-based pharmacare program that would enable all Manitobans to afford their prescribed medications.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I thank the member opposite for the question, Madam Speaker, and of course the important thing here is that we need to call on her federal cousins in Ottawa to ensure that we properly fund programs like this as part of the federal government.

And I know that our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has been working with the premiers across the country to ensure that we call on the federal government to adequately fund health care in this country.

And so if the—I would call on the member opposite to call on her federal cousins to do the right thing and ensure that there's appropriate levels of funding from Ottawa in health care in Manitoba and across the country.

Budget 2021 Release Date

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, when our government was first elected in 2016, Manitoba gave us—Manitobans gave us a mandate to fix the finances, repair our services and rebuild the economy and to clean up the financial mess left by the NDP. Thanks to our hard work, that is exactly what has been done.

However, Madam Speaker, COVID-19 has presented a new fiscal challenge, and Manitobans know that our government is up to the task. Budget 2021 will be a blueprint to help Manitoba emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever.

I ask the Minister of Finance if he can tell us when we can expect Budget 2021 to be presented to Manitobans?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to discuss this important upcoming budget.

I want to thank, as we finalize our blueprint for our budget, the 50,000 Manitobans that we consulted during the budget process to identify their priorities to help shape Budget 2021. Budget 2021 reinforce our government's priorities to continue to protect Manitobans from COVID-19 and chart Manitoba's path forward with a roadmap to recovery to grow our economy.

Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased to announce that I'll rise in the Chamber and present Budget 2021 on Wednesday, April 7th.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions. The honourable member for—oh, pardon me.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

(Continued)

Madam Speaker: We were going to, at this time, revert back to members' statements, and I understand that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) has resolved his technical issues.

So, I will recognize the honourable member for Dauphin.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Next week, March 14th to 20th, is Canadian agriculture safety week. This will be the third year of a campaign empowering and celebrating farmers, their families and their communities.

If you grew up on a farm or in a farming community, like many in the Dauphin constituency, chances are good that you know someone who has been affected by a life-altering accident, and most farmers have stories about close calls and near misses that they can recall with sharp clarity.

We all rely on agriculture producers and their farms to provide for everyday needs. These men and women are busy and face many pressures as they carry out their day-to-day tasks. By nature of proximity to heavy equipment and large animals, farming is a dangerous profession. Agriculture-related fatalities and injuries seldom make national headlines, but they impact their local area and communities deeply.

Canadian agriculture safety week is committed to raising an awareness about the importance of safety in agriculture. It aims to educate, support and encourage farmers and their community partners as they stay safe and as they take the lead in agriculture safety and health. It also raises awareness of supports for farmers who have experienced traumatic injury and are returning to work after recovery.

I encourage everyone to join 2021's digital campaign by going to agsafetyweek.ca and downloading your AgSafe ribbon to share on social media. Remind your non-farm friends to be alert and patient as we enter the spring season and we encounter farm vehicles on roadways. Let's educate ourselves and our families and show our agriculture producers that we support them and that we support safe and strong farms.

* (14:30)

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

PETITIONS

Public Child-Care Grants

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care

and demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoban families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early-childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While the child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with loss of parent fees due to COVID-19 closures, spent thousands on PPE when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional funding—financial supports.

(4) The government has spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government cut to the nursery grant is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, budget implementation and tax status amendment act, which removes the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

We urge the provincial government to reverse their changes to the nursery school grant and to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keep public child care affordable, accessible for all Manitobans.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable, accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoba families.

Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have

resulted in many early-childhood educators leaving the sector.

While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE when open, to keep it safe, and the provincial government had provided no additional financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care's operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoba families.

This petition is signed by Shelby McLeod, Samantha Martin, Randi Matthews and many more Manitobans.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoba families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early-childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE,

when opened, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government's cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoban families.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Cochlear Implant Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

The technology's been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic, founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implementing

patients—implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018 and—as it is only able to implant about 40 to 50–45 devices per year.

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

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive divisive program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor.

The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years of age.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment, however. As the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available.

The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than in other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

* (14:40)

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Wilma Greatrex, Len [*phonetic*] Greatrex and Wendy Greatrex, and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

A cochlear implant is a life-changing electronic device that allows deaf people to receive and process sounds and speech, and also can partially restore hearing in people who have severe hearing loss and who do not benefit from conventional hearing aids.

A processor behind the ear captures and processes sound signals which are transmitted to a receiver implanted into the skull that relays the information to the inner ear.

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic, founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018.

The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, and it is only able to implant about 40 to 45 devices per year.

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

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out

of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor.

The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidies replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement program.

This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available.

The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than in other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or a urine sample.

(4) Further travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at further risk in extreme weather, be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer wait times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they're able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all the phlebotomy, blood sample sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Early-Learning and Child-Care Programs

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoban families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early-childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

* (14:50)

(5) The provincial government's cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible, and

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoban families.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, the DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy. No. 3–

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

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

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please call for a debate this afternoon Bill 31, followed by Bill 61 and then Bill 41.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) that the House will consider the following bills this afternoon: Bill 31, Bill 61 and Bill 41.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 31—The Horse Racing Regulatory Modernization Act (Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act and Pari-Mutuel Levy Act Amended)

Madam Speaker: I will therefore now start with calling debate on second reading of Bill 31, The Horse Racing Regulatory Modernization Act (Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act and Pari-Mutuel Levy Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable member for River Heights, who has 30 minutes remaining.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Let me begin by saying that we're in general support of this measure which would transfer the authority for ensuring that the horse races in the thoroughbred and standardbred category continue and are properly regulated under the Manitoba liquor, lotteries and cannabis commission.

These measures, which we generally support—I will bring up a couple of concerns in due course—but, first of all, I would like to say thank you to the current and past members of the Manitoba Horse Racing Commission, which has served Manitobans well—and those in the horse-racing community, in particular—for some 55 years since the Horse Racing Commission was first established in 1965.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Horse racing is an important part of Manitoba, particularly but not exclusively rural Manitoba. There are many in the city of Winnipeg who have an interest in horses and in horse racing. The horse racing provides the opportunity for breeding and training of horses. It provides an opportunity for those who are involved with the horses themselves to partner with wonderful animals and to be part of their training and racing.

I think that we, as humans, gain a lot from spending time with animals, whether it be dogs or cats or horses or, indeed, other animals or birds, and this is an important part of growing up and learning. There is a lot of, of course, training and discipline involved if you're going to be involved in horse racing. And for young people, the excitement of being involved with the horse, riding a horse or even racing a horse is a really positive experience.

I remember when I was a teenager going to a camp where we did a lot of riding horses, and it was an amazing experience. I learned a huge number of

names for many parts of a horse. I learned how to ride horses near Rocky Mountain House in Alberta, and on one occasion we went for a seven-day ride in the mountains—quite an experience being a partner with the horse in the journey and learning and seeing a lot throughout it all.

What we are doing today is to move the authority from where it has been under the Manitoba Horse Racing Commission unto the organization which regulates gaming in the province, and that, I think, is a reasonable approach, given that there are similarities between betting here and betting in casinos, to some extent, although very different in nature and in context.

I have a couple of concerns which I will talk about a little bit.

One is that as we move away from the Manitoba Horse Racing Commission there is a concern that the change will take things out of the hands of people who have had long experience with horses and horse racing and move it under an organization or a Crown corporation—the liquor, gaming and cannabis control authority—in a way that will take it away from, to some extent, the governance by people who are extremely knowledgeable about horses, who care a lot about horses. And I hope that the Crown corporation will ensure that they include people who are involved and knowledgeable and care about horses as they move this forward.

* (15:00)

I would presume that many of those who've been involved in inspections of jockeys and drivers and other racing participants would be people who have already had a lot of experience in this area. Indeed, many will have worked for the Manitoba Horse Racing Commission, we presume. I think this is a really important part of this, not to lose the context, not just to see this as some other casino-type game, some sort of gambling. It is quite different and it needs to be continued to be considered such, and I would hope that this happens.

The second concern that I have relates to one of the clauses here, and this is the clause which is added in section 14.1(2). It provides, this section, the authority for the minister to provide directions with regard to the distribution of the fund. The minister must specify the recipients of distributions.

One presumes that this is not an unbridled authority in which the minister can authorize distributions to his or her friends. I presume that there are

very clear guidance and approaches that the minister will use, and I hope that the minister will talk a little bit about this and that we may hear a little about this when we get to the committee stage.

I think the—while this may seem natural in a government like the current Conservative government, to take all the control in the hands of the ministers, I think it is really important that power is used very carefully and very fairly and with good decision making, and that this is not a power which is going to be used willy-nilly and in a way that, in fact, could cause a lot of harm, if not used properly, to the horse racing industry.

With those remarks, I just want to express my hope that we have enough people vaccinated, that we have a sufficient decrease in the number of people with COVID-19 infections that we can have an operating horse racing thoroughbred and standardbred season this year, with people able to watch in the stands.

We will see how things develop. Being around horses is a wonderful opportunity. I guess there may be some questions as to whether horses can get coronavirus infection, and that needs to be something which would need to be determined if it hasn't been already. But let us hope that there can be a positive season this year and that this will lay a good groundwork for many years ahead of horse racing, thoroughbred and standardbred, in Manitoba.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers on the—this bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 31, The Horse Racing Regulatory Modernization Act: Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act and The Pari-Mutuel Levy Act amendments.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill 61—The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll move on to second reading of Bill 61, The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act.

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Jobs): I move, second by the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Wharton), that Bill 61, The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: I'm pleased to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 61, which makes amendments to Apprenticeship and Certification Act.

In 2018, the final report of the Manitoba apprenticeship and certification governance review found that red tape and unnecessary administration in the administration—the apprenticeship system have delayed Manitoba's ability to update and harmonize trade standards.

Also, as part of the review, the industry expressed their frustration with these delays. In response to the report's recommendation, this bill introduces several system transformations to better meet the needs of industry and to ensure competitiveness, mobility and safety within the trades.

First, the bill will make changes to the size and composition of the Apprenticeship and Certification Board. This will help streamline the board to promote effective governance, practices, as well as ensure that training providers have input to board discussions.

As well, the board will shift its focus from producing annual strategic plans to five-year plans to allow for a longer term planning. This bill will also allow the board to establish committees as needed, instead of mandating permanent standing committees.

The amendments will allow for greater consideration of industry needs by establishing sector-based committees that will provide recommendations to the board. These sector committees will seek the expertise of trade professionals to inform their recommendations and consider the implications of the broader industry—'industries' decision making.

This will also provide more flexibility for the board to tailor its governance into emerging issues and reduce the administrative burden associated with maintaining a large number of advisory committees.

Next, the regulations will—voluntary trades will be replaced with board bylaws, a more independent process that requires fewer steps to make changes to the standards for the apprenticeship programs. This will allow Manitoba to update our voluntary trade

standards more quickly and easier in order to ensure that we catch up and keep up with Canadian standards.

Finally, this bill also brings clarity to the designation of occupation as a way of introducing and recognizing standards for occupations that do not meet the definition of a trade or regulated profession. The bill specifies training and certification parameters for designating occupations in Manitoba and provides industry with an opportunity to access provincially recognized certification in non-designated programs.

This will help industry establish a standard for occupation certification so employers can be satisfied the employees have met a minimum standard of knowledge and expertise in their field.

In closing, established in a more responsive apprenticeship and certification system, through this bill will better support industry and help increase Manitoba's competitive advantage by ensuring that Manitoba's program standards are aligned with other jurisdictions.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

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

* (15:10)

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I would like to ask the minister some questions. I would like to thank him for the bill briefing.

So could I ask the minister—I know he's talked a lot about consultation or the lack thereof—could he explain just exactly who it was that he consulted with when they decided to make these changes to the apprenticeship system?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Jobs): I thank the critic for the question.

We had sent out 25,000 surveys for feedback. That feedback came back to the apprenticeship board, of which we took—and took analysis on it. It was overwhelming that business and apprenticeships themselves felt that modernization was in order, in

order to move forward with the changes of which we put forward in Bill 61 for consideration of this House, and look forward to moving it into third reading once we have a good debate on it in the House.

Mr. Lindsey: I heard what the minister said, that they sent out 25,000 surveys and believes that that is consultation, I guess.

So my question would have to be, who all got these surveys and how many of them were actually returned? So that we have some idea, then—he talks about percentages that thought some of these things were a good idea, but if only 10 per cent of the surveys came back and 50 per cent of them thought it was a good idea, it's pretty low numbers. So if the minister could give us more information on who the surveys went to and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Eichler: Of the information that was sent out was sent to various sector councils, whether that be labour, whether it be the business sector, post-secondary apprentices themselves. The return actually came back—it wasn't as high as we had liked but as if—with all consultations, when we send out consultations, it was about 6 per cent return, which is about normal.

And when we look at legislative changes in this regard, out of 1.4 million people, 25,000 is not a lot and 6 per cent's not a lot, but the response we did get back was more of a positive and very little negative. So with that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up. Time's up.

Mr. Lindsey: So, 6 per cent. That seems like a ridiculously low number of responses to actually start tinkering with a system that's worked well for so many years.

Now, if—from that 6 per cent, do we know how many per cent were in favour of the government's proposals and how many were against them? And could the minister tell us—he said he went to sector councils, but how many of the surveys actually went to the trade unions that represent apprentices—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Eichler: Yes, in regards to the follow-up and to his question in regards to the—those that were for and against, the recommendations came back from the

survey that we had was, I would say, two thirds in favour and a third that was not. But, certainly, part of our consultation was very clear. And also, the modernization—it's been two decades since we had an opportunity to look at upgrading the apprenticeship act.

So there was a lot of red tape, as I said in my comments earlier on. Also, there was some reductions in the board that we decided to put in the legislation as well to make it govern better. The apprenticeship had some board representatives on there as well, and normally—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

The honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), do you have any more questions?

Mr. Lindsey: Yes, sorry, was muted. Sorry.

So, what prompted the government to send out this survey? Was there a great hue and cry from industry? Were apprentices screaming for the changes? Was anybody asking for these changes? Or was it just part of this government's overall mandate to reduce red tape, as they call it, for things that were actually working quite well?

Mr. Eichler: In regards to the apprenticeship act, as I said earlier on, it's been two decades since we had a chance to update it.

As I said, it was full of red tape; it was full of slowness. And, of course, when we looked at the PAC committees, we saw that they were aging; they were taking sometimes up to two years for an apprentice to get his certification, which allowed him or her more timelines to not be able to work and get the pay that they needed.

This is about modernizing our workforce and keeping them active with good-paying jobs.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Has the minister considered if these changes will affect either—or both—employers and employees, as far as receiving quality and fair opportunities go in an apprenticeship?

Mr. Eichler: I have a quote here from Jared Jacobson—he's the president and CEO of Jacobson & Greiner Group of Companies—who said: This is fantastic news on a new bill that modernizes and needed changes for apprenticeship in Manitoba—he's the president and CEO, as I said—as a group of companies, we employ all areas of major trades and

see this as a positive step to remove barriers and red tape for our industry.

And our consultation did tell us very clearly this was something that the industry wanted. Apprenticeship wanted it, Red Seal wanted it and that's why we're modernizing the act.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, it's interesting that the minister brings out a quote from one of the industry players that clearly wants to make getting apprentices a whole lot easier and less expensive.

And does the minister have any similar quotes from a trade union that suggests that these changes are going to work in their members' or their future members' benefits, or did he just base his decision on some industry players that responded?

Mr. Eichler: Absolutely, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One of the leaders from the government unions, Mr. Sandhu, had been outspoken concerning young tradespeople: A badly broken system which was just needed to push through the most dramatic changes we've seen in apprenticeship in decades.

And he's very clear that he's concerned about this, and he's expressed his opinions to me. However, he knows that the things need to be changes. He will be making presentation, I'm sure, at committee. We're looking forward to hearing not only from him but other Manitobans from across Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux), do you have a question?

Okay, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

Mr. Lindsey: So, the—one of the union groups that represents workers has suggested they needed some changes. Now, have they suggested to you or have you heard from them to say that these changes that you've proposed will meet their needs, will meet the needs of apprentices going forward?

Has anybody, for example, I don't know, maybe from IBEW, come forward and said, what a great idea this is, Mr. Minister; this should make our apprentices better and more trained? So, could the minister comment on that level?

Mr. Eichler: I thank the member for the question.

* (15:20)

At this point, we've had no recommendations come forward from any other group, but certainly

we've made it very clear we're a government that listens, a government that consults, and the member well knows that when we did the briefing we have been engaged with all sectors in order to make sure we get this legislation right and reduce red tape at the same time, and also meet the needs of those businesses and those employees that so badly need the jobs to help us grow our business here in Manitoba.

Mr. Lindsey: As the minister well knows from the notes I made during our briefing on this, it—the minister says they talked to the journey companies. They talked to some of the education and service providers. They did speak to some of the PAC shares. They didn't really speak to any apprentices to get their thoughts on whether this was going to make their life easier. And now they've taken apprentices off of any committees that may be established.

Can the minister explain the thought process of why leaving apprentices out of any of these decisions that directly affect apprentices, how's that make sense?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Eichler: I have to correct the record. The member is wrong. Actually, we did have consultation with the apprentices. The member should know that. If not, he knows it now.

They had every opportunity to provide feedback, which they did. And in overall consultation process, what we heard from apprentices was that the larger percentage was in favour of these changes which—that's what we based our decisions on. So we stand by those apprentices that actually did phone back and write back to us with their ideas and thoughts. So that's what I want to put on the record.

Mr. Lindsey: Seems to be slightly different than the information I wrote down at the time, but I won't quibble about it.

So if the board is now only required to submit a strategic plan on five-year intervals instead of one-year intervals, what steps are included in these changes to the act or regulations that would ensure that the board is meeting the obligations that is required of it, that the plan is actually working, that the plan makes sense, that maybe five years is too long, maybe there needs to be changes to the plan.

Is there any accountability steps along the way or changes possible along the way?

Mr. Eichler: It's a good question and one that I want to address. As we know, we have a very strong aviation sector within Manitoba, at least prior to COVID. We knew that we had an aging population within that aerospace sector, of which a lot of apprentice staff worked there, got their training in Manitoba and stayed and got good-paying jobs.

So I think it's really important that we do value the five-year plan so that we can make sure those apprentices have jobs and good-paying jobs when they graduate and get their Red Seal and go out to the work world. So I know we'll continue to update those as we go forward. It's one of those things that I'm very proud of, that our department's got a good handle on, to meet the needs of business tomorrow and those needs of apprenticeships so they have—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

Mr. Lindsey: So when I read through the changes that have been proposed, there used to be several mandated committees and it was mandated by the act what those committees were supposed to do and how they were made up. And now it seems like a watered-down version that the board may make some committees up and they may make some bylaws on how those committees function. And it seems like a pretty loosey-goosey way to run things that they may make them up or they may not.

Can the minister explain why they've suggested this change to the committee structure?

Mr. Eichler: Absolutely. There's 55 PAC boards—is what's referred to as PAC board. Some of the committees haven't met for two years. People change, people move, so a lot of the committees just weren't functioning properly.

And as I said earlier in my comments, sometimes it would take up to two years—extra years—for that apprenticeship to meet with that group. And this way, with the new modernization with four to six committees—and which, by the way, for the member's interest, they can appoint a committee very quickly to deal with a particular apprentice or a problem, so modernization is really important because what we had in the past was not working.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is open. Any speakers?

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): So here we are, in the middle of a pandemic. We've seen the government do several things already with apprenticeships and apprentices that really fly in the face of what they claim. We've seen them change the ratio, for example, of apprentices from the one-to-one—which means one journeyman to one apprentice—which guarantees proper training, to two-to-one. And then for some steps along the way, we can see that they've suggested that well, they can get their training over the phone or via radio or something. The journeyman doesn't have to be in the same room with them.

So really, we've—we looked at everything and how it ties back to this Bill 61, the apprenticeship certification act. This particular piece of legislation may not be the scary piece of legislation, if you will, or the most damaging piece of legislation when it comes to apprenticeships, but it's one piece in the puzzle, one piece in the master plan that really puts apprentices on shaky ground going forward, thanks to changes that this government has made.

You know, it really is—leaves us questioning, I guess. We've seen that the government has decided to do away with the requirement, for example, of apprentices to be a part of public construction projects, that they don't seem to value proper trades apprenticeship training. It will lead them off and then seems that this is all tied back to their ideological desire to fully embrace some kind of magic free trade agreements, because from comments the minister made, this ties in with the new west trade partnership, which, when we were in government, we wouldn't sign on to, and rightfully so, because we saw it as part of the degradation of things like we're talking about here, like trades training, like apprenticeship training.

It was really the part of the overall plan to race to the bottom, if you will, to train to the lowest common denominator. And, really, that's when you separate the wheat from the chaff in the minister's statement. That's what this is all about. It's not about providing the best apprenticeship training possible so that we have the highest qualified apprentices—which I stand behind our apprentices right now, and when they become journeypeople, journeypersons, they are without a doubt some of the best that this country has to offer—but with some of the things that this government is putting in place.

I don't foresee that claim potentially being valid going forward because, again, the whole point, whether it's the new west trade partnership or the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, it's all about

lowering the standards. It's not about modernizing the standards, unless you consider the modernization of standards to really mean the lowering of standards, because that's what happens a lot of cases here.

Now, there are some very troubling things in this particular piece of legislation. It does some things that maybe saves some money and doesn't necessarily mean the end of the world, such as decreasing the size of the board from 15 to 12 members, but one of the troubling things on that is that now there's going to be no apprentices as part of that board. They've decided that the voice of apprentices on apprenticeship training is troublesome. They don't want them there. They won't listen. They really like to listen to their industry friends to make sure they're accommodating them as much as possible, to make sure that apprenticeship training is as cheap as possible.

* (15:30)

And I'd remind the minister that—the old adage, you get what you pay for sometimes. So in the process of some of these changes, like the one-to-one ratio for electricians in particular, could be disastrous effects.

And, certainly, if the minister was to spend some time speaking to people like Cindy Skanderberg, whose son died working as an electrical helper—and she fought long and hard to get some of these changes that this minister, with a stroke of his pen somewhere in the dark of night just before Christmas, did away with, and now says that he has the inability to fix it, which seems odd. But certainly she—she's quite upset, to say the least, by this change in ratio.

And I had the pleasure of—I guess it wasn't really pleasure—I worked with Ms. Skanderberg doing Workers of Tomorrow presentations when I was the Steelworkers safety rep going into schools, talking about worker safety. And her son, her deceased son, his picture hung on my union safety office wall to remind me and to remind people coming into the office of some of the things that we were fighting for, why it was important to make legislation better, not lesser.

And that's really what this government has done. Right from the time they first got elected, they've attacked working people. They disrespected working people. They've done everything in their power to undercut working people. And this whole gambit of Bill 61 really is just another step along that path that really doesn't respect the knowledge that a tradesperson has to impart to an apprentice in order for them to be fully trained and cognizant in all aspects of the

job. And, certainly, I know the minister is aware of this.

Even figuring out during these COVID times how apprentices in the power engineers can go about writing their tests in a safe manner so that they can progress from one level to the next level, that's all just been frozen. And yet we've got kids going to school, we've got all kinds of other groups that are meeting. And, certainly, you don't want to have 45 or 50 apprentices all in the same room writing a test at the same time.

But there has to be a way that if this government was serious about making sure that tradesmen can progress and really honouring the government's commitment to those young people that are in that trade that are trying to get their ticket, that are trying to earn a better standard of living and trying to be able to do a job safely and properly, they'd really come up with some answers.

I was at the Building Trades compound that they're developing as a training centre and looked at how they've structured things so that during these times they can continue to offer training and education to young people entering the trades or thinking about entering the trades. So it's not impossible.

So I'd encourage the minister to make sure that somebody from the Office of the Fire Commissioner, who somehow is in charge of the power engineers' training, figures out how to allow those apprentices to progress.

So just before I wander too far down the path of everything that this government has done wrong—because it'd be a long, winding path—let's drag myself back to this particular piece of legislation.

So this particular piece of legislation repeals all the mandated committees that were there and now it replaces it with some language. It says the board may create subcommittees—and by the very word, may, it means that they also may not.

So it's—on the surface of it, it's left up to the board to decide what committees they would structure to help them guide their way along the path of providing the best training possible for apprenticeships.

But then there's some other bits and pieces in this legislation, when you look at it as a whole piece, that as the board makes its strategic plan, it's a strategic plan that it is to be directed by the minister.

So, just let me read part of this: The strategic plan must set out the board's priorities in advancing its

mandate—so it would seem it's the board's priorities, but then, when you read the rest of it—taking into account the strategic direction of the government in the areas of apprenticeship and training as communicated to the board by the minister. So the board will make up its strategic five-year plan as directed by the minister.

So, really, it's the government of the day, the minister of the day, that is making up the five-year plan. They're going to dictate to the apprenticeship board what the plan is and then expect the board to write up a plan based on exactly doing what they've been told.

So that seems like direct interference now by the part of the minister, which I suspect was the game plan all along, because we've seen ministers of the Crown interfere in a lot of aspects of what takes place, whether it's with apprenticeships, whether it's with collective bargaining, whether it's with the operation of Crown corporations. For a government that claims to have a hand-off approach on how Crowns operate, it's completely opposite. It's this government's usual double-speak when it comes to, well, the board's going to make up the plan; we're just going to tell them what to put in the plan.

And the minister fully admits that even though this legislation has now been introduced, there's nothing in the legislation as it's laying before us that it's going to have any accounting for how the board, how the apprenticeships are progressing along the strategic plan.

So while it may make some sense to have a plan based on a five-year projection as opposed to a one-year projection—for a lot of things, that probably is a good idea—but in this fast-changing world that we see ourselves in, something as devastating as a pandemic happens and the plan may need to change, a new technology advances and the plan may need to change.

But the minister's clearly admitted that there's nothing in here that talks about keeping track of how the apprentices, how the training, how the board is progressing along the plan, and there's nothing in here that talks about the board's ability, or, for that matter, the minister—because he's got his fingers in this pie up to his elbows—there's nothing that says how they're going to account for changes that may be required, or anything of that effect.

So, while the minister has developed an apprenticeship plan that allows him the full and ultimate

control of what the plan is, he failed to build in any kind of accounting mechanism to make sure that he or the board is living up to whatever the plan is.

*(15:40)

Now, I recognize that this minister isn't going to be the minister forever, a couple more years, maybe, at best, and then when we take over, we'll be able to fix some of this, obviously. I would hope and encourage the minister that if he knows there's some glaring omissions in his legislation as he's presented it, but—he'll have ample opportunity to make changes, to make it a better plan.

You know, he talks a lot about he's big on consultation. Now, I'll admit I didn't take part in this 6 per cent of surveys that happened, but I would offer a suggestion, now that we have something, that's quite important that should be built into the apprenticeship training: it's the ability to track that plan.

And there may be other avenues that will allow some of that to happen, such as the Auditor General, but those reports and recommendations take a while to come to light and be implemented, so it would seem to me a better way would be to have something in this legislation that talks about, perhaps, annual reporting on progress to plan, whatever that plan is. And I guess the minister would know that, seeing it's really, truly—it's going to be the minister's plan, not the board's plan.

I think it does do a disservice to apprentices to leave their voice out, and particularly if, as we move to this five-year planning, that we really need to be listening to what the people in the program, not necessarily the people in charge of the program that will see their funding, perhaps, tied into how well they think they're doing.

We really need to have the voice of those apprentices in there to make sure that, whatever the plan is that the minister foists some on the board, that those voices are heard and, one would hope, listened to. I wouldn't have a lot of faith in that action happening, but I—well, I have some faith in this minister that he will actually listen to some suggestions that are being proposed.

And while we may not completely agree on some of the changes here, I'm pretty sure that there are some things we can agree on, such as how to track the plan and the voice of some of those apprentices that are in the plan to make sure that the plan makes sense and is working.

I'm still concerned by the fact that we've done away with all of the mandated committees. Now, is the minister right by saying some of the committees have met and some of them are getting long in the tooth? Yes; I won't dispute that. But why would you throw the baby out with the bath water?

In this case, if there's some committees that aren't working, review whether those committees are still needed, review how effective some of the other committees are and what can be done to make them more effective, as opposed to just saying, well, we'll get rid of all those committees and maybe we'll make some new ones. And some of these committees are going to be tasked with deciding what's best for multiple trade groups.

And we don't see anything in here now that it would mandate that some of those very trade union groups will have much of a voice in how these committees or how the apprenticeship program will work going forward, which is troubling, because not only do they represent tradesmen, journeymen—journeypersons, excuse me, but in a lot of cases they represent the apprentices as well.

And those union folks will be some of the best positioned ones to really comment on how the plan is working, whether we're getting better tradespeople, at the end of the day, or whether we're getting lesser tradespeople. And really, that's part of the concerning part, when you look at the whole package of things that the government has recently done to apprentices, to apprenticeships—not necessarily for apprentices and for apprenticeships.

It really gets back to the whole problem that we had with free trade, which is the race to the bottom. So we'll—we won't train our apprentices to the same level, potentially, as they were before. The government is—has done away with some of the protections that used to be built in so the big construction projects, there would be apprentices.

They've done away with some of the project—or they haven't done away with that yet. They tried for many years to do away with project labour agreements that built in a lot of those training aspects that we're talking about here that helped us have better, more competent, better trained, safer workers at the end of the day, rather than this government's mantra of just cheaper work.

So it ties into the whole free movement, I guess, of workers. But, unfortunately, what it does is allows the government to always go to the lowest bidder,

regardless of where they're from, regardless of the quality of work that they may get from the lowball bidders.

It allows certain employers—and, certainly, I don't want to paint all employers with the same broad brush here—but it's going to allow some unscrupulous employers to really undercut others by undercutting what they're offering for apprenticeships, what they're offering for quality training, by bringing in employees, workers from other jurisdictions, and then lowering our standards so that we're okay with workers that have a lower standard of training.

In my mind—

An Honourable Member: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

The honourable member for Rossmere, on a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Let all members pause their work, to celebrate the Clerk, whose mother on this day, gave birth and said, hooray.

This Clerk now knows the rules, while clerking keeps her cool, and guides us with advice, calls members to be nice.

I wish her a great day, and join her mom's hooray. May this year be her best, from me and all the rest.

Happy birthday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order, the honourable member from Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, I could be critical of the timing, I think. My colleague from Flin Flon was in full flight and talking about a very important issue.

On behalf of the opposition caucus, I also wanted to extend our birthday wishes to our Clerk, and thank her for all of her work throughout this year and always. Happy birthday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order, the honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I think we need—in the midst of debate and ongoing discussion—to pause for a moment and wish the Clerk all the very best of a wonderful birthday and many more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Like, I just want to wish the—Patricia a happy birthday, and it is not a point of order, but thanks for all your words of kindness.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And we'll get on to the debate, and the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Lindsey: Certainly don't have any bad wishes for the Clerk, but interrupting the debate in the middle of a speech seems ill-timed, ill-conceived, at best.

But, happy birthday all the same.

So where was I? Oh, jeez, maybe I've got to start again.

* (15:50)

You know, maybe five years for this strategic plan won't be the end of the world because, well, what we see from this government is their failure to really invest in infrastructure projects. So I guess it'll be left up to private industry to find a way to train workers, because, as we come out of this pandemic, this would be the ideal time for the government to really sink some thought and some money into rebuilding some of the infrastructure and using it as a training opportunity, particularly when we look at some of the, like, communities in the North, where getting university educations, post-secondary educations is a dream that, really, for so many young people isn't attainable simply because it's too expensive, it's too far away.

They don't have the initial training, but it's the opportunity—it should be the opportunity for them to enter into some of these trades' training and really start their journey to self-sufficiency and bringing their families out of poverty. But the government introducing bills like this Bill 61, it really slams the door yet again to some of those opportunities because we don't know right now what they're going to do, really, with the apprenticeship training and all the rest of it.

We know that they're not making the investments that are required in the other education endeavours, so I guess that's part of their whole reducing red tape is—it's always tied to reducing dollars for themselves or some of their industry cohorts, when really it should be about using the resources to help uplift new workers, whether they're from northern communities, whether they're new workers to this country, to make sure that they actually get the training to do the jobs properly, that they get the training to do the job safely.

And with this government's weird desire to buy into free trade agreements at any cost, I guess it would allow—if we maintain the best standard of training—it would allow some of these young people that we're talking about here to really spread their wings and go work in other jurisdictions. Knowing that they had the best training, they had the best education, they were the best tradesmen, that other jurisdictions would want to snap them up because they knew that Manitoba offered the best training for apprentices.

But with bills like this one and some of the other ones that the government is introducing, really, they're cutting the legs out from underneath those tradesmen, those future tradespeople, those apprentices that may never achieve their full Red Seal status.

There's some things in here that talk about that the government coming up with some new voluntary trades, uncertain yet, but at the bill review we spent a lot of time talking about some of these new tow trucks that are out there that really are mobile cranes, but the operators won't be mobile crane operators. They'll be something less than, and really, the equipment they're operating is—it's a mobile crane, some of these new super duty tow trucks that are used for clearing crash scenes at—of certainly large vehicles.

Is that the right way to go? To say, well, they're going to be maybe a voluntary trade, maybe some kind of designated trade, to get some kind of training, but if you're to operate a mobile crane itself, you would get a whole lot more stringent training. Now, although with some of the changes we've seen in ratios and training requirements that, again, the government snuck in just before Christmas in regulations, some of those apprentices also won't get the same level of training.

Imagine you're operating a mobile crane and it's about to tip over because you haven't rigged things properly, and the best you can hope for is to the pick up your cellphone and phone some person who's a certified crane operator, maybe in some other city, and say, hey, my crane's tipping over, what should I do? Little too late then.

That—really, that's the whole point of the one-to-one, hands-on: so that the journey person with the experience is there to guide the apprentice. And what we've seen from most of this government's legislation when it comes to labour or to apprentices has really been to either disrespect them or to lower their standards of training so that it's the race to the bottom again. It's not the right way to go.

Now, like I say, this particular piece of legislation may not be the complete bad thing that I've painted here, but it's one piece in the whole puzzle that leads to the degradation of training and quality that we should expect from all our trades groups and from all our apprentices. And I'm sure that they expect, when they enter into a trade, to get the best quality training, the best possible outcome, so that they can go to work and be safe and be productive and make sure that they're a part of our economy going forward.

So, with those very few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I'll cede the floor to the next speaker.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I also want to commend the whip for adding some life into this afternoon's debate. And I'd like to thank the minister for bringing Bill 61 forward, The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act.

Our apprenticeship and certification program is too outdated, and these amendments are necessary to ensure we have skilled labour force to complement the opportunities that are required by industry.

Trades are very important, and we need skilled personnel to help improve employment outcomes of individuals who would like to pursue a career in a given chosen—or, occupation. This is important to our economy and provides the skills necessary to fulfill the needs of industry out there.

As an educator for 35 years and, more importantly, a vocational educator for 25 years, I realize the importance of a well-prepared, skilled individual in the workforce.

Manitoba's the second most regulated apprenticeship system, following Alberta. All other jurisdictions have a much smaller number of regulators.

The current system has been in place for a decade, and it needs modernization. Our government has been very clear that we are working to reduce red tape and unnecessary administration in Manitoba apprenticeship systems to help increase skilled labour, a driving force of our economy. This bill will better meet the needs of industry and ensure its competitiveness, mobility and safety within trade.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, communicating with industry and knowing the needs and implementing these needs will grow our economy. In my constituency, forestry is a huge industry, and the mill requires a highly skilled labour force, like many other occupations throughout the province.

This bill will help industry establish a standard for occupation certification so employees can be satisfied that—so employers, rather, can be satisfied that employees have met a minimum standard of knowledge and expertise in their field.

Just recently, on February 8th, the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy was successfully announced and launched by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Ewasko). This definitely complements the outcomes of Bill 61 and builds working relationships between departments to achieve positive outcomes for skilled labourers to provide industry with skilled personnel. This document, housed in Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, provides a whole-of-government approach and—as a living and breathing document over the next three years.

* (16:00)

In addition, it provides strategic direction to publicly funded post-secondary institutions and it outlines actions needed to accelerate recovery, advance Manitoba's economy and promote positive income—or, outcomes. There was robust engagement, research with educational institutions, businesses and community leaders and organizations.

Over 540 stakeholders provided feedback through the in-person meetings, workshops, summits and online town hall and surveys. The strategy includes targeted actions to strengthen alignment between post-secondary institutions, immigration, training and employment services and labour-market needs.

The amendments of Bill 61 will give us that competitive advantage by ensuring Manitoba's program standards are aligned with other jurisdictions.

Employers consistently state that hiring and retaining workers with the right skills is their greater challenge regarding competition and growth. A wide range of skills from knowledge workers with specific technical skills to those general workers with basic skills are required in a post-pandemic world.

Our government continues to invest over \$1 billion annually in post-secondary education through direct and indirect funding support. We continue to focus on student success, high-quality programs and employment success right across the province.

This is our highest priority, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our government's actions are ensuring we have the

right people that have the right skills at the right time. Again, I want to thank the minister of economic and jobs for bringing this bill forward and look forward to moving it to committee.

And with that I will give the floor to somebody else.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm very pleased to be speaking on this bill this afternoon. It's an interesting bill to be brought forward to us for debate today. You look at some of the changes that are proposed in this bill and you think about the piece that it plays in terms of the larger puzzle that is the world of apprenticeship, skills, training, education and the jobs and labour force.

As was mentioned by the member from Flin Flon in his previous comments, that, you know, this Bill 61 is a piece of that puzzle and it plays—by itself it looks, you know, one way, but when you look at it in the context—the greater context—of several other pieces of legislation and changes that this government is making, you see how—the negative effect that it can have on the apprenticeship world—not only that, but on the greater ability for people to gain skills, for them to get educated and for them to become successful, well-paid workers in our economy that is contributing to the continued growth of Manitoba.

You know, first of all, looking at the changes in Bill 61, we look at the boards that it aims to change—establishing the boards, removing the membership, changing the membership numbers from 12—from 15 to 12 members, which means that there will no longer be apprentices on the board. Now that, in itself, shows a significant change that shouldn't be taken lightly by this House, by the minister.

When we look at—when we think about apprenticeship or, frankly, if we think about any role, we've seen an increasing trend of self-determination, of industries and occupations controlling their own ability to self-regulate. You know, we have a whole host of professions in our province that are self-regulated. When you look at, you know, audiologists and speech-language pathologists, you look at nurses and a whole host of colleges that are around our province that do the work to ensure that their members are in line with regulation policy and are doing the work to ensure public safety.

And the reason—one of the reasons that works is because those folks are in tune with their own industry. They have their own voices being heard at

the decision-making table, as well with public members and, you know, people who can ensure public safety. But having actual voices who are in and active in that industry is a critical and vital part of the way that system works.

And I'm seeing some of their—some of that in Bill 61, where apprentices would be on those boards and having a direct leadership role and a direct decision-making role in the work and the—in the direct actions that can be taken to the work of apprentices.

It's important to hear those voices. It's important to ensure that apprentices are in control of what they do in the job in that any changes that are made are done so with their best interests in mind.

And it doesn't seem to me that removing apprentices from these boards would further strengthen that and further strengthen their ability to control and have a say on the work that they do. It doesn't seem like it would have any impact in increasing or improving the conditions of work for apprentices. And so it really does create a question in my mind as to why the minister thinks that this would be such a benefit for apprentices.

Then it goes to my—you know, then my mind thinks that if this is not a benefit for apprentices, then who is this a benefit for? And I can only jump to the conclusion that this might be a benefit for some industry workers and some businesses.

And I, you know, I am very much in favour of growing our business sector here, of finding ways to ensure that they have a strong, reliable, well-educated labour force to come and, you know, do the great work that Manitobans have come to expect and rely on.

But I don't think that we grow that educated labour force by weakening apprenticeships, by, you know, stripping the opportunities for apprentices and potentially make it harder for them to earn good wages. And that is done, in part, in Bill 61, but it's also done in several other actions that this government has taken.

We look at, recently, the introduction of Bill 55, which strips, you know, the apprenticeships' opportunities. That is another hit to apprentices in our province that this government brings in. We also look at their impact on that ratio for apprentices going from the one-to-one ratio, which we've had a long-standing benefit in our province, to the two-to-one ratio for job-site supervision.

And the reason we have that ratio is it keeps workers safe; it keeps workers safe in the workplace, it helps to prevent workplace injuries and it also helps these apprentices get well educated in their field. It helps to make workers better, helps to keep them safer, and isn't that what all industry should be wanting for: good workers, well-educated and well-trained workers, who also can work safely and not, you know, be injured on the job and not, you know, have to miss additional unnecessary days due to injury or due to illness.

And this goes to show that Bill 61, in combination with several other actions and legislations by this government, is showing that this government has a strategy—a clear, conscious, deliberate strategy—to weaken apprenticeships in this province and to really not take seriously the training and the education needed to maintain and build on—build up—a more skilled, higher skilled labour force in our province.

* (16:10)

And I do want to just touch back onto, you know, this fact that the government in this regard seems to be really interfering with longstanding roles that some of these boards have played, you know. And the minister says that, you know, sometimes these boards haven't been very active or they don't seem to be effective in doing their job.

Well, you know, sometimes when things need to get changed—or, as the government and other members have said, quote, modernized—it doesn't mean stripping down. You know, making change for change's sake is not always a benefit, right. You have to make change that's actually going to be beneficial for our province and for all the people in our province, not just one side, the side of industry, but ensure that the workers in our province are also benefitting from any change.

And I don't see in this bill how many apprentices will obviously benefit from this, and so I don't think this is something that is going to overall help workers in our province.

We look at—again, looking at that ratio of apprenticeships and moving that to the two-to-one ratio, which the government is doing, and doing so in a time where we are faced with so many challenges.

Over the last year, with the COVID-19 pandemic, we've been faced with this global recession and these global economic challenges. And it's imperative of every government, of every state and province and

country, to be aware of how to grow our economies out of the difficulty that we've been having.

One of the ways we do that is by ensuring that we have a well-educated population who are interested in working here, in our province of Manitoba, who are willing to use their skills and talents and know that they have a provincial government who is going to be able to help them, as workers, continue on their career, their journey of—their career journey, and know that as they're working here, they will be able to earn good wages in our province.

And this is the challenge that I think this government hasn't been able to really face in any real manner. You know, we've been in this situation for going on a year now, but we haven't seen anything that's going to significantly increase the ability for apprentices or many other workers to engage in more work in our province.

We know that apprentices and journeypeople often are relying on major projects to find work and—find consistent work in Manitoba, you know. Yet the major infrastructure funding in our province has decreased over many years.

You know, we've seen cuts to infrastructure of nearly \$500 million. You know, we're seeing huge deficits in infrastructure investments on things like roads, huge cuts in infrastructure investment on hospitals, on—huge reductions in investments in long-term-care facilities, decreases in investments in schools, a lack of investments in child-care spaces.

And I'm not just saying these things to list them off as simple matters, but as real areas where we, as a province, have an opportunity to increase our economic output and increase our economic activity. We know that when we do these types of construction projects, it employs many people in our province, many people—many apprentices in our province. And that is a good thing for apprenticeships, as we were talking about in Bill 61.

But we know that when we do this sort of work—such as building a child-care facility—once that facility is complete it also adds to the economic growth by opening the child care, creating new jobs in that facility, but also the impact of the new families who can benefit from that service and who can benefit from having their child get an early-childhood education, who benefit from parents who now have the ability to enter into the workforce themselves.

And this is—this could be all done by some smart and wise infrastructure investment, which would

allow apprentices to work here in our province. And these are the types of initiatives that we simply haven't been seeing for—haven't been seeing from this government. And now more than ever is the time when we need these types of investments—now more than ever.

We know that during a recession is the best time, is the ideal time for a government to step in and be a key investor in our economy, to kick start our economy and to keep things going along so that people, businesses and workers can continue to build up and grow our economy.

We know that, you know, during this time, interest rates are also low. So the cost of borrowing for a government is also not as severe. They have the ability and the tools. They should have the incentive, but for some reason, this Pallister government doesn't see this as the right time, and I think that it's quite a failure in this regard.

You know, there are so many challenges that we're seeing and facing around our province that, at this time, so many Manitobans are calling on this government to do more and to act more and to build a better Manitoba for us. There's been so many areas over the last year that have been highlighted as needing work.

And I think apprenticeships have a strong role to play in that. Having educated apprentices working, getting educated, getting their certifications and being able to work in our province shows that we are able to move on and actually do some of these significant infrastructure projects that are needed.

Another example of somewhere that we need to continue to build on in our province is to decarbonize our province. And there's so much work that needs to be done for this, and I feel like apprenticeships—apprentices, can play a key role in that.

You know, you look at the work that it would take to get our province to that—to meet some of our emission targets, and that. Some of that work that's going to take us to get to some of those targets, it must be done by us retrofitting and—some of the infrastructure that we currently are using today.

That—those retrofits don't happen by themselves. You know, they can't just happen overnight. It takes work by skilled individuals to, you know, go into, you know, homes, businesses, schools, other organizations and institutions and do the work to ensure that we are reducing our climate emissions, our greenhouse gases, and creating a community and a

province that is emitting less pollutants into our environment than we are now.

By—having skilled workers and, you know, skilled journeypeople to do this should be our key goal. We know this is going to take a long time to do that. And in order to have enough skilled labour to do this properly, we must begin training those individuals now.

This bill and Bill 61 doesn't help, doesn't encourage and entice more individuals to go into these apprenticeship roles. And we're going to be less prepared, we're going to be even further behind in preparing to meet the next challenges, the challenges of the future.

And, you know, climate change isn't really a challenge of the future, it's a challenge of today that we all should be preparing for. Yet, sadly, this government seems to be dropping the ball on this again: another failure to prepare for the challenges that face us ahead.

* (16:20)

And I know we've touched on this many times before, about the failure to prepare for, you know, the second wave of COVID that we've seen from this government, and that is something that, you know, is very serious and it's been, you know, we've seen it right across the province from, you know, from the impact that it had on businesses and the impact that it's had, obviously, on our front-line health-care workers, to the impact that it's had on our education system.

These are real impacts that we've already seen just in the last six months from the government's failure to prepare and plan. And again, we're seeing this from the government in Bill 61, by not putting into action bills and legislation and regulation that would encourage people to go into some of these skilled trades, ensuring that they're going to have jobs, good-paying jobs, here in our province, by ensuring that the process to complete their apprenticeship is accessible and available, and working with industry—and I say working with industry—to ensure that both industry and workers in apprenticeships—workers and apprentices—will benefit from any changes that the government makes, because we're not seeing that balance right now.

And by doing all that, we can—the government could actually plan to tackle some of these huge infrastructure challenges that we will be facing in terms of decarbonizing our province and retrofitting

so many buildings and working to, you know, get rid of the greenhouse gases as well as building new facilities for some of the things that have been highlighted as critical gaps in our system right now.

You know, we saw the challenges, and we're seeing the challenges right now, today, in education when we ask students in schools to sit two metres apart from each other. And we see the challenges that they have on physical space.

You know, we see the challenges that that has on teachers and on administrators and on support staff in our education system. And those infrastructure projects, to build new facilities and new schools, would ease some of those concerns. But we can't do that work if our government isn't investing in those skilled workers to actually do the labour for these projects.

And so it is, for this government, a real misstep by, again, presenting a bill like this that is a piece of the puzzle to harm and to decrease the effectiveness of apprentices in our province and skilled labour in our province.

And, you know, when we're looking at all sorts of skilled labour, and, in fact, the way that, you know, that universities and colleges are looking at preparing students for the jobs that we have here in our province today and the jobs that will be available in our province in the future, one wonders whether this government, this current PC government, is really aware of some of the challenges that exist out there and whether they're aware of the issues that students face. You know, there are real issues as students look to enter into the labour force. And whether they decide to take an apprenticeship or go another route or find a career in another path that's going to try to build our province, we need to make sure that they have a government that's going to try to support them, that's going to be there for their needs and for some of the help them in some of the industries that they want to get into.

Now, you look at whether our government is supporting these students. Well, we see them, again, making tuition increases regularly to get into these programs. We see them, you know, hurt and make it more inaccessible for students to enter into any post-secondary education, college, university or apprenticeship program. We're seeing those challenges again. We're also seeing challenges for many international students, again, with even higher increased costs to come and get educated in our

province. And, you know, our government has—is failing to provide for those individuals.

And it's not just as an individual problem, but in the short term, you know, these individuals will suffer. They'll pay the higher rates or they maybe will not choose to enter into these programs, but we'll all suffer—the province—later on because these are the people that we should be relying on to continue to build our province and grow our province. You know, in the last year, the previous year, we saw an out-migration in Manitoba, over 10,000 individuals; that's people leaving our province for another province. That was due to mostly economic opportunities and this government not providing the right economic opportunities. And we're seeing in Bill 61, again, this government failing to provide the right opportunities for people by not presenting a bill that is going to be effective in increasing apprenticeships in our province.

You know, this is something that has been a trend with this government. You know, we're not investing in highways—you know, there's so many highways around the province that need to be rebuilt—to help grow our economy and improve the transportation; as we know, is a huge transportation hub in our province. We know places like CentrePort and the Winnipeg airport are doing a great job in investing and in doing the work to create this hub and build this transportation hub of Winnipeg. And while we see that—we see the great work that they do in terms of creating good jobs in our province and bringing in industry in our province, we also know that the government has had a lack of investment in infrastructure, and that lack of investment means that there's going to be less opportunities for apprentices, less opportunities for journeypeople to seek work. And, you know, one of the realities is that, if people can't work, they're going to look for work out of province, and that's one of the reasons why we've seen such an out—large out-migration of individuals.

You know, it's not an easy challenge for people to be looking at well, do I stay in here—in Manitoba—looking for work when I know, you know, the wages for my skills aren't going to be as—paid as high in another jurisdiction, or do I move somewhere else and take myself and my family to go somewhere else? Or, as a young person looking at different industries, do I stay here in Manitoba and try to get educated? Or do I go somewhere else and look for opportunities? And, you know, these are the things that the province should be taking very seriously and should be looking at ways to increase accessibility to our post-secondary

institutions, increase enrolments into colleges, increase the number of people who want to become apprenticeships, and do that in a real, serious, and tangible way. We haven't seen that.

Look, we know that these people who are trying to get skilled, trying to enter our labour force, these are the people we want to be really growing and really becoming the leaders in our economy. And these leaders are relying on the government to create an atmosphere of growth, an atmosphere for people to stay and live and work by earning good wages and doing so affordably.

And, you know, I want to end by saying that, you know, Bill 61 is a piece of a puzzle that the government is putting in place to hurting—to harm apprenticeships and make it more difficult for apprentices to be—to have—to find success in our province. That, combined with things like changing the ratio two-to-one, reducing—repealing acts that we're seeing in Bill 55, it's a bad direction for this government to be taking. We urge them to take a new path, to create more opportunities for people.

And thank you, guys, for the opportunities—for the opportunity to speak on Bill 61 this afternoon.

Thank you.

* (16:30)

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I do have a few thoughts that I'd like to put on record and not quite sure where to start but start at the beginning here. And just thinking about how there is quite a bit of concern around the consultation or lack of consultation that may have happened in the creation in coming up with this legislation.

During the question and answer portion of the reading here today, the minister shared how 6 per cent of people who the surveys were sent out to submitted and gave the surveys back to the government, and 6 per cent is a lower number, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that we'd like to hear back from, I'd say, at least 50 per cent, if not more.

I'm also a little bit concerned about the timeline of these surveys. How long did people have to think about the surveys? How long did people have them sitting in their mailboxes before they could actually send them back? Did the government provide postage for people to have the opportunity to send them back?

I think there's lots of questions and that a survey didn't have to necessarily only be done through mail. I think that we could have done some polling through

phone calls, through social medias, through town halls. I think that this legislation warrants a lot more consultation than it seems that it did receive.

One of our concerns is about how the bill changes the frequency just in how often the board would need to submit strategic plans, making it every five years instead of annually, and I believe it's crucial to any organization that for strategic planning to be done properly and adequately, there needs to be some accountability and transparency.

So, taking away this accountability, rather than having annual strategic plans, turning it to five years, it does seem like a step backwards and it just doesn't make much sense. It raises some red flags, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The bill also amends a governance of the apprenticeship board by repealing the provincial advisory committees and standing committees. This is essentially done by enabling the board to establish committees and to establish apprenticeship programs for voluntary trades and certification programs. There's just not a lot of consistency in this legislation.

This bill isn't consistent of the governance structure, because in certain places of the act, the minister has decided to take power away from the boards, giving him, the minister himself, more decision-making power. And as highly concerning as this is, it does seem to be a pattern of this government and, you know, the member from St. Vital spent a lot of time talking about this, so I won't spend too much time on it, but the most recent example I think about is Bill 33, because we're hearing from students.

There is a lot of concern that this government is sort of yanking power away from people who would have a lot more experience, a lot more intel, a lot more reason to contribute quality and efficient information, and the government is making it so they can have control over this power. We think about how they're—the government is making it more difficult for international students and being able to receive health care and, couple of years ago, taking away students' tuition rebates.

You know, we need to be providing incentive for people to remain in the province, not to leave the province, and some of these decisions in this legislation are concerning. They raise red flags and make us question, is this really going to help tradespeople stay in the province or is it going to convince them to want to leave the province. And our trades is something we're very proud of. We think

about how people throughout Canada value Manitoba tradespeople. We have tradespeople who go into other provinces all the time because of the quality work that they do.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll get into that shortly, but let me give you an example here. This legislation enables the board to establish standards of technical training and practical experience for certification programs, creating it so the minister, rather than the board, has the ability to designate trades and occupations and establish apprenticeship programs for compulsory certification trades.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Again, why in the world would the minister be more qualified in making these decisions than the members and individuals on the board? So, in understanding this and the other changes in the bill, we do have some concerns and questions about why the legislation changes the composition of the board, why the bill reduces the number of persons on the board who represent employers and employees in designated trades or designated occupations by two.

You know, the interests of the public on the board will also be represented less by removing a member and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can see how we would like to be able to better understand these changes and just the appropriateness of them and how they would actually serve apprenticeship programs here in Manitoba.

Lots of concerns—it's concerning that the minister should have the control to disallow, and that is the word used in the legislation. The minister would be able to disallow the bylaw in whole or in part by written notice to the board. Upon disallowance, the bylaw or the disallowed part of it, ceases to be in effect and is deemed to be repealed. It's an important part of the bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's the concern that our tradespeople would no longer be trained one-on-one, but, rather, one teacher per two students.

And, you know, I'm trying to think about this, and I'm trying to paint an image here. When I think about our trades industry and students learning from their teachers within trades, we think about construction sites; we think about buildings with multiple floors on them. How is a teacher or an instructor supposed to instruct and teach two students on working on electrical when one student is on the 13th floor and another student is on the second floor? It does cause—

just again, it's raising a lot of red flags, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is concerning, and right now, as I was mentioning earlier, we are really, really proud of our trade industry here in Manitoba. We've got quality people who are often called to leave the province just to help out in other areas of Canada because we're that good. So why are we taking away the teachers and the instructors and having it so one instructor would teach two students, maybe even more if it's the direction of this government. I think that when something is working well, we should be trying to continue to allow that to prosper, and if we know one-on-one teaching in apprenticeship programs are working well, why are we going to try and jeopardize that?

We want to maintain it, and there is nervousness behind the quality and the fairness of training and learning. We want to keep our reputation and, again, just—we don't quite understand why the government is trying to change something that's already working very well and jeopardizing the future of education and experience for tradespeople here in the province of Manitoba when it's been something that's brought us so much pride over the years.

So, you know, we're hopeful that as this bill heads into committee, we will hear from those who this legislation will be affecting because it appears to remove voices from those who would be affected by it. We want to hear from the stakeholders; we want to hear from apprenticeship programs; we want to hear from students who are learning in the trades from journeymen who are teaching in the trades. This bill gives a lot more power to the government and potentially jeopardizes the quality of education and training that people would receive.

So we're looking forward to talking about it further at committee. We're encouraging Manitobans to come out and educate us more on this, share your opinion on this. We need to learn more about it because right off hand we see a lot of problems with the bill. We see some amendments that could be made, and we are hopeful to gain some clarity to some of the ramifications of this legislation at committee.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, I would indicate that I have received a letter from him advising that I will be—that he will be designating his unlimited speaking time for second reading of Bill 61 to the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): And I hope my dear friend and colleague from Concordia makes full use of that unlimited speaking time and never lets this terrible piece of legislation pass through this House.

I have a simple answer for the question that was posed by the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux). Why would the government want to pass this bill? Because they are corporate shills who act merely as puppets for the rich multinational corporations that have oppressed working people since time immemorial.

* (16:40)

So I'm here to speak as parent, is what I'm trying to say, Madam Speaker. And, you know, I have two kids who are working age—both teenagers, starting to do their first forays into the working world. One of them, the younger of the two, actually, works delivering flyers, which I can remember doing back in the day.

And that's a tough job. Right? It's a tough job, especially, all of us, we know from canvassing, so many of the doors have that no-flyers-please sticker on them. So that's a tough job for a thirteen-year-old, to have all these flyers rolled up, and he wants to deliver them, but, you know, so many people are saying no, thank you.

We help him out on this side of the House, though, because whenever we put an ad in one of these flyers, there's a few more mailboxes that are opening. There's a few more people saying, yes, deliver us a copy of that flyer. We want to see that thing.

But of course, the terrible, twisted Conservatives—whenever they placed an ad in one of these flyer distribution packages, well then, there's much more mailboxes being closed. Much more doors being closed. Much more people saying, no; keep that away. I don't want any of that in my house. And who can blame them, really? With what this government is up to here.

And you know, part of this conversation that I'm having with my children about, you know, encouraging them to work, to see the value of hard work, to know that, you know, they should be go-getters in their own life and they should, you know, earn the good things, is also this insight, I guess, that I think we all share on this side of the House.

Which is that work is important not just because of the paycheck. A paycheck certainly is important,

but it's also the meaning. It's the meaning and the dignity that comes with work.

And I wouldn't—of course, never put it past the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) to start heckling when I'm talking about dignity. The simple dignity of every human being so offends him that he has to speak out of turn in the Legislature—but alas. Such is the way of our colleague and the Government House Leader.

And so as we're working through these issues and we're in this part of the school year where they're now being asked to choose their courses for the next year of their educational journeys, we're having those conversations. What do you want to do when you're older?

And we've gotten past that stage of, what do you want to be when you grow up? And you know, it's—you know, I want to be an astronaut and I want to be an NBA player or an NHL player and stuff like that.

They're now giving serious consideration to the sort of careers that they want to pursue. And we're talking through the various options, and of course, you know, for us, for our family, it's the same message that I share with any young person across Manitoba: post-secondary has to be part of your plan.

No matter what you plan to do, I hope that you make part of your future educational journey to be somebody who goes to college or university, or picks up a trade, or gets a professional designation after their name.

Now, there's—I guess, role models of people I'd encourage them to be like—and, you know, this is why it's relevant to apprenticeships—I think of our federal cousin Daniel Blaikie, who was able to get a university degree, but also to get a skilled trade. To me, that's a good combination.

And so, you know, I talk to my children about that. I say, you know, consider that: maybe you get the professional—or, rather, the trade—designation, you work as an apprenticeship—you work as an apprentice, you become a journey person—but at the same time, I'd like you to get a university education. So you could study the humanities. Maybe you could get a science degree.

Whatever your interest is there, I think it's a balance to have those critical thinking and collaborative skills from one venue and combine them

with maybe the more hands-on and experiential-type learning from another setting.

The one thing that I always tell them, though, is don't be like the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Fielding). Don't be like the member for Steinbach. Don't be one of these people who studies the humanities at university, gets a degree in humanities at the university, and then spends a lifetime in public office cutting those very same post-secondary programs.

Don't do that, Madam Speaker, I say through you, to the young people of Manitoba. Because, again, on this side of the House, we don't believe in closing the door behind us. We don't believe in pulling the ladder up once we've gotten on the ship.

Rather, we believe that our role as elected representatives is to ensure that the journey, the path, the road, is a little bit easier for that next person coming up behind us. And so we're very proud to represent many different kinds of communities right across the province. *[interjection]*

Again, the member for Steinbach chooses to heckle when I'm talking about making the road easier for the next generation coming up behind you. I don't know which tradition the member is coming from when he objects to the dignity of all human beings and making life easier for the next generation, but that's okay. We come from two different political ideologies, I respect that.

In my political ideology, it's important to make things better for the next generation and to respect the dignity of all humanity. In his apparently equally valid worldview, these things that are those things that we should be objected to and heckled on in the Chamber of the esteemed Manitoba Legislative Building. So perhaps we can agree to disagree.

But when it comes to this conversation that we're having in our household, a parent to a child, a group decision, a family discussion, I can't help but reflect on the conversation that I had recently with a mother by the name of Cindy Skanderberg. She is somebody who has fought long and hard in Manitoba for us to have the current apprenticeship rules and laws that we have today.

She was put on this fight not because of anything that any of us would ever want to experience as parents. She embarked on this journey after the tragic early death of her son, Michael, who was killed on the job at only 19 years of age. And I'm not, you know, the youngest person in the Chamber anymore,

nor am I the oldest person, but I do reflect on somebody at 19 years of age and just think of how many more years that that person should have been able to enjoy life, how many more opportunities that person should have been able to enjoy and how much potential has our whole society lost on because that young life was cut short.

And so, I was very moved to talk to Cindy just a few weeks ago when the government announced this terrible new regime that they're bringing in with respect to apprenticeships in Manitoba. And she told me point-blank that she feels if the government gets its way with Bill 61, accompanied by the regulation changes that they enacted effective December 18th, then the death of her son will have been in vain. That is absolutely shameful, Madam Speaker.

The background to her saying this is such: this mother, grieving as she was from the death of her son who was killed on the job, embarked on a career of political advocacy that began in, I believe, the late '90s and stretched into the 2000s. And it brought her to this historic building; it brought her into meetings with many elected officials—of all partisan stripe, I'm sure.

And, eventually, it saw changes made to ensure that young people like her son, Michael, would actually be guaranteed, through a safe apprenticeship program, to be able to come home safely at the end of the day after they go to their training program or their work site in the morning.

And that's why we in the NDP always take health and safety so seriously. That's why health and safety is something that we always stand up for for the working person, whether it's the Hydro worker, like those that we were joined with outside today, whether it's the apprentice on the job or whether it's the custodian in the school. No matter where somebody works, whether they're the nurse in the health-care facility or the health-care aide in a personal-care home, no matter where somebody works, that person deserves to come home safely at the end of their shift.

And that's what this issue is about. This is about your kid, your son, your daughter, your child—when they go to their training program, are they going to come home safely at the end of it? That is the matter that is at stake here.

The reason why the regulation change is relevant is because this government, in watering down the one-to-one apprenticeship ratio to two-to-one, is going to mean less supervision, less health and safety for those young people in Manitoba who are trying to gain a

skilled trade, or for those Manitobans who have been put out of work by this government, who are looking to retrain and upskill and pick up a trade so that they can find a new vocation and join in our economy.

* (16:50)

It goes beyond merely just watering down the ratio, however. The government also changed the regulations so that a supervisor need not even potentially be in the same location as one of these apprentices. As long they're reachable by phone, according to this government, then the apprentice is deemed supervised. This defies common sense.

When you have an apprentice electrician, who is on a worksite and they are potentially heading into a life-and-death danger-type situation, what good is it if there is—their supervisor, that journey person, potentially hundreds of kilometres away on the other end of a phone line?

The point of having a journey person to train an apprentice is to ensure that they're able to intervene, to ensure that they're able to spot the danger and help the apprentice understand the severity and the gravity of the situation. All of that will be washed away.

The reason it's relevant to Bill 61 is because this bill changes the complement of those committees that give the working person the voice, that give the apprentice the voice. Why would you want to remove the voices of people in a democracy? Why would you want to remove the voices of the people whose health, safety and potentially even lives are at stake in the decisions that are being made from the table at which they are being taken? It simply doesn't make sense, Madam Speaker.

And so for us on this side of the House, we are absolutely clear that the best way to have an economic recovery from the pandemic, that benefits all Manitobans, that is equitable and does not fall victim to income inequality, is by having good jobs everywhere throughout our province. And the best way for us to ensure that access to those good jobs are enjoyed by people from all walks of life, all gender identities, all cultural communities, all geographic communities in Manitoba, is to ensure that there are good training programs, good post-secondary programs and, most importantly, apprenticeships that guarantee the health and safety of their participants.

You cannot have a just recovery from the pandemic at the same time that you are passing Bill 61. You cannot say you are creating a better tomorrow for Manitoba at the same time that you are

adding risk and potential danger to young people who are just trying to get ahead in this province.

And so to bring it back to where I started, not the partisan jabs that I was taking off the top and that were so, I guess, lamely responded to by the ill-equipped government members in the House, but rather to focus instead on the conversation that we have around the, you know, our family dinners. What am I to tell the child? What did you do today? Well, the government made it more dangerous for you to try and pursue those vocations that we've been talking about. How does that line up with anybody's idea of what a functioning democracy and effective government is?

And I'm sure, you know, the government has their talking points that they've been handed by the big businesses and the large corporations out there but at the end of the day, each and every one of those members has a moral responsibility to take those talking points, throw them back across the table and say, you know what? Not today. Today we're going to stand with the young people of Manitoba. Today we're going to do the right thing and today we're going to vote against Bill 61.

So that's some food for thought for the members opposite because speaking on behalf of my colleagues and I and all the young people across Manitoba, all the tradespeople, all the working people across Manitoba that we want to bring the voices forward of here in Manitoba, I vote no when it comes to Bill 61.

Madam Speaker: Is a—oh.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): It's an absolute honour to put a few words to the end of the day on this Bill 61.

First of all, I wanted to make clear that the—this bill makes several technical changes to apprentice—to apprenticeships in Manitoba and the one change that on this side of the House that we're all concerned about is that with the board decreasing from 15 to 12 members, there will no longer be an apprentice that sits on the board. In fact, a constituent of mine who runs a car dealership in The Pas also informed me that there's no northern representation on this board so I feel that needs to be changed.

We believe that apprentices should have a say in the decisions that affect them and having a representative on the board is one way to do so. And section 4(2) requires that the board's strategic plan set out, quote, any other other matters the minister may require, end quote. That sounds like government interference right there.

We are deeply concerned about this government's approach to Manitoba's apprentices and to labour as a whole. This government needs to make it harder—oh, continues to make it harder and less safe for Manitobans to work as apprentices. They've increased the one-to-one ratio to two-to-one, which will decrease job-site supervision and then increase the likelihood of preventable workplace injuries.

With Bill 55, they've repealed the need for public works projects to hire apprentices, making it harder for apprentices in Manitoba to find work. These changes will hurt Manitoba's young people and make it harder for them to become journeypeople. In turn, this will hurt Manitoba's economy as well. We need young, skilled workers to have employment opportunities and to keep folks working in the province instead of moving elsewhere.

Since day one of taking office, this government has advanced a shameful, anti-labour agenda. They've interfered with numerous strikes and they introduced Bill 16 which will remove binding arbitration. I wanted to talk about an—the attack on labour and apprentices here, which is this bill is all about. I want to share that this government continues to advance its anti-labour agenda with Bill 55, whereas Bill 55 repeals the apprenticeship employment opportunities act, which requires that all public works contracts hire apprentices.

Given the smaller amount of job opportunities, this change will make it harder for young Manitobans to complete their apprenticeship hours and become certified journeypeople. This is a change that helps the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) developer buddies as they can now bid on projects that previously weren't able to bid on at the expense of Manitoba's apprentices.

Madam Speaker, it is a shameful move that only seeks to hurt young Manitobans.

This is another change, within a matter of weeks, that this government has advanced that hurts Manitoba's apprentices. They recently—oh, sorry. The ratio was 'discreased'—was decreased, sorry—to one-to-one by the former NDP government in order to increase job site safety and learning, which is a good thing, Madam Speaker.

Unions are also concerned about the changes to the ratio. In fact, Manitoba Federation of Labour president Kevin Rebeck has said that he's, quote, deeply worried that we may see losses of life before government decides to reconsider, end quote.

MFL president Kevin Rebeck remains concerned that senior apprentices can be 'supervied'—supervised over the phone. Four construction associations and Manitoba building trades wrote to the Minister for Economic Development and Training, expressing their deep concern as well. They said that in the industry, we're unaware of the changes and they wanted to work 'collaborately' with the minister.

Fortunately, this is not the first time that this government has attacked workers in our province. This government introduced Bill 16, which impedes employees' ability to able to fairly negotiate with their employer, it makes it easier for employers to fire workers who engage in their right to strike.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When the matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 25 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	Members' Statements
Members' Statements	<i>(Continued)</i>
Gerry Koreman Schuler	Canadian Agricultural Safety Week Michaleski
1509	1521
School Division Funding	Petitions
Wasyliw	Public Child-Care Grants
1509	1521
Murielle Bugera and Robert Cesmystruk	Adams
Smook	Altomare
1510	1521
Vaccine Rollout in Northern Manitoba	Asagwara
Adams	Cochlear Implant Program
1510	1522
Oral Questions	Gerrard
Hydro/Government Relations	Lamoureux
Kinew	1523
Pallister	Diagnostic Testing Accessibility
1511	1524
Elective Surgery Backlog	Maloway
Kinew	Dauphin Correctional Centre
Pallister	Moses
1512	1524
National Inquiry into MMIWG Final Report	Early-Learning and Child-Care Programs
Fontaine	Sala
Friesen	1525
Pallister	Dauphin Correctional Centre
1514	1525
Manitoba Municipalities	Sandhu
Wiebe	Wasyliw
Johnson	Wiebe
1516	1526
Manitoba School Divisions	ORDERS OF THE DAY
Altomare	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
Cullen	Debate on Second Readings
1517	Bill 31—The Horse Racing Regulatory
Education System Review	Modernization Act (Liquor, Gaming and
Altomare	Cannabis Control Act and Pari-Mutuel Levy Act
Cullen	Amended)
1517	1526
Finance Minister's Business Interests	Gerrard
Wasyliw	1526
Goertzen	Second Readings
1518	Bill 61—The Apprenticeship and Certification
Manitoba's Vaccine Supply	Amendment Act
Lamont	Eichler
Pallister	1528
1519	Questions
National Pharmacare Program	Lindsey
Lamoureux	Eichler
Stefanson	Lamoureux
1520	1528
Budget 2021	Debate
Wishart	Lindsey
Fielding	Wowchuk
1520	1536
	Moses
	1537
	Lamoureux
	1541
	Kinew
	1543
	Lathlin
	1545

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