

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

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

**Vol. LXXVI No. 26 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, March 21, 2022**

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
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, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Fort Whyte	
<i>Vacant</i>	Thompson	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 21, 2022

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### **Bill 33—The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Municipal Board Amendment Act**

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations):** I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Johnson), that Bill 33, The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Municipal Board Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Clarke:** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 33, The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Municipal Board Amendment Act, to modernize how Manitobans are able to assess their property assessment notices, allow municipalities to improve access to assessment roll information as well as support the Municipal Board in managing appeals.

This bill will enable Manitoba to send electronic assessment notices to property owners outside the city of Winnipeg. It will enable the City of Winnipeg to do the same, should they choose to do so. This bill will

also enable all municipalities to make a portion of their assessment rolls available to the public in an electronic format.

Finally, this bill will support and clarify the enhanced authority of the Municipal Board to manage planning appeals effectively and efficiently through 'paper' scoping and case management.

I'm pleased to present the bill to the House for its consideration.

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

#### **Bill 34—The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act**

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations):** I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 34, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Clarke:** This bill will amend the City of Winnipeg Charter and The Planning Act to streamline land use planning, reduce red tape and modernize building inspection processes.

This bill will provide greater clarity and transparency around land use planning processes to prevent development from being stalled. For example, it provides a clear timeline to process development applications, and it also allows timelines to be extended by agreement between the municipality and the property owner. It also provides additional time when applications are considered at a single combined hearing.

The proposed bill also includes a number of changes to alleviate unnecessary administrative burdens on the City of Winnipeg, property owners as well as the court system.

This bill builds upon previous legislative changes under The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act that was passed May 20, 2021. I'm pleased to present this bill for the House to—for its consideration.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Families, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

### Journée internationale de la Francophonie

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs):** Madame la Présidente, j'ai l'honneur de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Le 20 mars chaque année, des millions de francophones et francophiles de partout au monde célèbrent la langue et la culture françaises. En ce 21 mars, nous les rejoignons pour rendre hommage aux valeurs de la Francophonie.

Au Canada, plus de neuf millions de personnes parlent le français, dont près de 100 000 ici au Manitoba.

Madame la Présidente, l'histoire des francophones ici a commencé il y a maintenant plus de deux siècles. Depuis ce temps, ils ont contribué positivement à l'essor de notre province, influençant la culture, l'économie et le patrimoine.

En 2016, notre gouvernement a adopté une loi visant à appuyer le développement et l'épanouissement de la communauté francophone. Madame la Présidente, j'aimerais vous dire que le Manitoba est toujours aussi engagé à soutenir cette vitalité.

À titre d'exemple, le gouvernement a récemment annoncé un investissement de 350 000 \$ dans le programme d'éducation de l'Université de Saint-Boniface. Cette contribution permettra de former un plus grand nombre d'enseignants francophones et d'augmenter la capacité des écoles à recevoir des étudiants.

À titre de ministre responsable des Affaires francophones, je suis fière de rendre hommage aux francophones du Manitoba. Madame la Présidente, je demande à tous les membres de l'Assemblée de se joindre à moi pour souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie et de célébrer le fait français au Manitoba.

Merci beaucoup.

### Translation

*Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak about the International Day of La Francophonie. Every year on March 20, millions of Francophones and Francophiles all around the world celebrate French language and culture. Today is March 21st, and we are joining them in honoring the values of La Francophonie.*

*In Canada, more than 9 million people speak French, including over 100,000 right here in Manitoba.*

*Madam Speaker, Francophone history in Manitoba started over two centuries ago. Since then, the Francophone community has positively contributed to the growth of our province, influencing its culture, economy and heritage.*

*In 2016, our government adopted legislation pledging to enhance and support the Francophone community, and Madam Speaker, I can tell you that Manitoba today is just as committed to support this vitality.*

*For example, our government recently announced a \$350,000 investment in the Education program of the Université de Saint-Boniface. This contribution will enable the training of a larger number of Francophone teachers and will increase schools' student intake capacity.*

*As Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, I am proud to honour Manitoba's Francophones. Madam Speaker, I would ask all the members of this Assembly to join me in marking the International Day of La Francophonie and to celebrate the French aspect of Manitoba.*

*Thank you.*

*\* (13:40)*

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Madame la Présidente, c'est une journée importante au Manitoba : la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. C'est une journée pour célébrer les Manitobains et Manitobaines francophones au Manitoba et de rendre hommage à l'histoire de langue française ici dans notre province.

Depuis sa fondation, le français fait partie intégrale de l'histoire de notre province. La langue française rayonne toujours ici en dépit des grands défis que la communauté francophone a subis au cours des années.

On a connu un temps au Manitoba où le français était banni des écoles, dans les institutions, dans les lieux d'emploi. Depuis ce temps-là, grâce au grand travail de la communauté et les représentants tels que

les organismes comme la Société francophone du Manitoba, on a beaucoup amélioré la situation de la langue française ici au Manitoba.

Ceci dit, on connaît encore des défis. Ce gouvernement a coupé des appuis importants pour la langue française au Manitoba, tel que le Bureau de la langue française et les services de traduction, entre autres.

On a besoin d'un gouvernement qui appuie la communauté francophone pour que tout le monde qui veut vivre, travailler et recevoir des services en français peut le faire chez eux. Pour l'opposition officielle, on est dédié à ce projet, et on va continuer d'appuyer la communauté francophone au Manitoba pour qu'elle puisse épanouir dans le futur.

Je vous souhaite tous une bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Merci.

### **Translation**

*Madam Speaker, today is an important day in Manitoba: it is the International Day of La Francophonie, a day when we celebrate French-speaking Manitobans in our province and we pay homage to the history of the French language here in our province.*

*Since the founding of Manitoba, French has been part of our province's history. French still shines here, in spite of the many challenges endured by the Francophone community of our province.*

*There was a time here in Manitoba when French was banned from schools, institutions and workplaces. Thanks to the hard work of the community and its representatives, like organizations such as the Société francophone du Manitoba, the situation of French has vastly improved in Manitoba since then.*

*This being said, there are still challenges. This government cut important supports for French language in Manitoba, such as the Bureau de la langue française and translation services, among others.*

*We need a government that supports the Francophone community, so anyone wishing to live, work and receive services in French can do it right here in their home province. Our official opposition party is committed to this project, and we will keep supporting the Francophone community in Manitoba so it can flourish in the future.*

*I wish everyone a good International Day of La Francophonie.*

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

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

**Mr. Lamont:** Chaque année, au 20 mars, on célèbre la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Le fondateur de notre province, Louis Riel, était francophone et il a fondé le Manitoba sur le principe de la préservation des droits de la langue française.

Mais pendant des décennies, le droit de parler et d'apprendre le français au Manitoba a été sévèrement réprimé, et les Franco-Manitobains ont été la cible de la haine. Ça fait 100 ans, en 1922, que le Collège Saint-Boniface est incendié et 10 étudiants meurent.

Ma maîtresse d'école primaire, Madame Gobeil, a raconté que ses professeurs cachaient des manuels de français à l'inspecteur de l'école, et pendant les années 1980, lorsque la Cour suprême a reconnu que la Constitution du Manitoba exigeait le respect des droits de la langue française, les conservateurs l'ont combattu bec et ongles. Il y avait même un incendie au bureau de la Société franco-manitobaine.

### **Translation**

*Every year, on March 20, we celebrate the International Day of La Francophonie. The founder of our province, Louis Riel, was Francophone, and he founded Manitoba on the principle of French language rights preservation.*

*For many decades however, the right to learn and speak French was severely curtailed, and Franco-Manitobans were the target of much hate. A hundred years ago, in 1922, St. Boniface College was torched and 10 students died.*

*My primary school teacher, Mrs. Gobeil, used to tell us about her teachers hiding manuals from the school inspector, and in the 1980s, when the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that Manitoba's Constitution required respect for French language rights, the Conservatives fought tooth and nails against it. There was even a fire at the office of the Société franco-manitobaine.*

### **English**

I'll quote from historian Raymond Hébert: From May 1983 to the end of February 1984, Manitoba was racked by one of the most intense, divisive debates in

its history that, in its final stages, virtually paralyzed the government of the province.

Ces défis n'ont pas cessé.

Aujourd'hui, des organismes comme la Société franco-manitobaine, le Conseil jeunesse provincial, l'accueil, la Fédération des aînés francophones du Manitoba, Francofonds et l'Association des municipalités bilingues et bien d'autres continuent de promouvoir, de célébrer et de faire croître leur culture, qui est aussi la nôtre.

Restez calmes : il y a des francophones hors de Québec!

À mes enseignants et à la communauté francophone à Saint-Boniface et à travers le Manitoba et le Canada : merci. Je te dois une dette de gratitude que je ne pourrai jamais rembourser.

### **Translation**

*These challenges have not stopped.*

*Today, organizations such as the Société franco-manitobaine, the Conseil Jeunesse provincial, Accueil francophone, the Fédération des aînés francophones, Francofonds and the Association of Manitoba's Bilingual Municipalities continue to promote, celebrate and grow their culture, which is also our culture.*

*Keep calm: there are Francophones outside of Quebec!*

*To my teachers and to the Francophone community in St. Boniface and throughout Manitoba and Canada: thank you! I owe you a debt of gratitude that I will never be able to repay.*

## **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

### **Aspen Winds**

**Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** Madam Speaker, just as the aspen tree is known for its far-reaching root system and ability to grow quickly, Aspen Winds represents a grounding that their day and residential programs provide for their clients. Aspen Winds is a day program and residential agency that provides services for adults with intellectual disabilities to live, work and socialize in a variety of rural communities.

It has been said that early land surveyors in this region made specific mention of the rolling hills covered the aspen trees that trembled and shimmered in the winds. The aspen tree often spouts many branches, which represents the multi-fascinated

programming opportunities that Aspen Winds has offered, with numerous centres in this region.

The day program varies based on individuals' needs, from working in their workshop on a variety of projects including but not limited to woodworking, card making and crafting. As well, opportunities can be provided to individuals to work with supervision or independently with local businesses in the surrounding areas.

As–Aspen Winds is a non-profit organization run by board of directors dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable persons within their communities. In doing so, it has directed impact on the abilities, quality of life in these communities. The organization involves many people who go above and beyond towards achieving these goals.

Currently, Aspen Winds operates two storefronts, one in Notre Dame de Lourdes and one in Carman. In both locations, participants work under supervision, with staff creating and marketing their products.

Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to tour the Notre Dame location last year.

Please give a round of applause to the management, staff, board of directors and especially the residents of Aspen Winds for the organization's success in their communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which was proclaimed by the UN in 1966.

This year's theme is Voices for Action Against Racism, which highlights the importance of meaningful participation and representation in all spaces where decisions are made in order to prevent and combat racial discrimination.

People from all backgrounds have been a fundamental part of Manitoba's social, historical, cultural, political and economic landscape. This is why I was proud to introduce bill—and have passed bill 232, The Emancipation Day Act, which recognizes August 1st as Emancipation Day in Manitoba.

This day, which celebrates the freedom of slavery in Canada, is an integral part of our country's history. Education and awareness are crucial in preventing and combating racial discrimination, and I hope that

recognizing August 1st as Emancipation Day in Manitoba does just that.

Sadly, racial discrimination is prevalent around the world. To date, the UN counts more than 2.8 million refugees fleeing Ukraine. Many of these refugees come from countries around the world. Some refugees from Africa, India and the Middle East and elsewhere have experienced racism, violence—particularly foreign students—while fleeing the war in Ukraine.

I want to recognize those who are raising their voices out against this racism. All those who flee situations of conflict deserve the same right to safe refuge, and we must all condemn such racial discrimination. Now, more than ever, we must combat racism in all its forms, whether it's here in Manitoba, in Canada or anywhere around the world.

Again, this year's theme is Voices for Action Against Racism. I ask you, whose voices should be raised? The answer is everyone. So I call on all of us to speak out against racism.

Thank you.

### **World Down Syndrome Day**

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** Today I am wearing some seriously bold, seriously mismatched and undeniably crazy socks. That's because today we're celebrating World Down Syndrome Day, also known as crazy socks day.

Down syndrome is known medically as trisomy 21 and is celebrated each year on the 21st day of the third month. Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always been a part of the human condition. It's universally present across all races, all genders and all socioeconomic conditions in approximately one in 800 live births.

And you know what? People with Down syndrome are among the happiest group of people on earth. A recent study showed that a full 99 per cent of people with Down syndrome said that they are happy with their lives. They love who they are. They love their families.

I've seen first-hand how their happiness is infectious. Including people with Down syndrome makes our communities better. They make us smile. They help us to be kind and considerate. They warm our hearts.

When prenatal parents receive a diagnosis of Down syndrome for their unborn child, their first reaction may be one of sadness or even shock. It takes time for them to understand that, despite having different abilities and medical needs, a child with Down syndrome will be able to live a happy and fulfilling life. It's important that expectant parents are given accurate information and the time that they need to process it.

In that same study I mentioned earlier, people with Down syndrome were asked what advice they would give to such expectant parents. Participants wanted parents to know that their child will be happy, that their family will be better because of that baby and that their baby will love them. These themes of self-worth, value and acceptance were echoed again when participants were asked to provide advice to physicians.

Our community is better when it includes people with Down syndrome. So let's be sure to welcome them and make sure that they feel included.

### **Rita Frejuk and Jim Kirkhope**

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** I rise today to pay tribute to some regular Transcona folks that had their life story in a newspaper this past weekend.

\* (13:50)

Many of us will recognize people like this, regular folks who raised families, worked, volunteered in their communities and were much loved by their families and friends.

I bring attention to this today because these two were in the paper this past Saturday, lived on the same crescent, had their notices on the same page of the newspaper and were friends of people I went to school with and—their parents, sorry.

Rita was raised and lived in Transcona her entire life. She is survived by her husband, Peter, of 62 years. While growing up, and this is a Transcona thing, they had the same address on Yale Street: one on Yale Ave East, the other one Yale Ave West. They raised their family on Cloverdale, with daughter Wendy and son John, and her granddaughters Shayna and Kara will dearly miss their grandma.

Rita was a people person involved in many community groups and events. She attended TMUC, taught Sunday school for many years and sang in a choir.

The other person whose notice was in the paper was Jim Kirkhope. Jim was pre-deceased by his wife Patricia in 2013, survived by his children, Bob, Susan and Debra, along with grandchildren Nikki, Melissa, Dallas, Tia, Mario, Julia, Braden, along with great-grandchildren Mason and Marcus.

Jim apprenticed as a pipefitter, learning a new trade and working at CN shops in Transcona since 1950, retiring in 1990 as a supervisor. When retired, he loved meeting his Saturday morning breakfast and coffee crew.

Jim had a love of the outdoors, camping, fishing, time spent at the lake riding his bike. His family mentioned his great love of food, especially cakes, cookies, hamburgers.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, regular people who will—remembered for their extraordinary accomplishments—their love of family, friends, community—and both will be dearly missed.

Thank you.

### **Invasion of Ukraine**

**Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Madam Speaker, we find ourselves in unprecedented times as we face the major war of the 21st century, which for many of us is on a scale that we've never seen in our lifetimes, nor did we ever expect to see.

The current human toll in Ukraine, as a result of the unprovoked Russian assault, is abominable. Over 3 million people have fled their country thus far, with many more families being displaced, their communities destroyed, and thousands of innocent lives already having been lost.

Manitoba is home to over 180,000 people of Ukrainian extraction, who make up almost 15 per cent of the province's population. For over a century, Ukrainian immigrants were instrumental in building our great province. Many hard-working Ukrainians currently live in my community as friends and neighbours, such as Vera and Willie Mandryk and Helen Shewchuk Lymburner.

For all those Manitobans with Ukrainian roots, it is the most difficult of times. Many still have loved ones in Ukraine who are at risk and I think we all pray for their safety.

This is not the first time Ukraine has faced aggression. Three hundred years ago, Catherine the Great of Russia sought to convert Ukraine into Russia,

and then many, many, many years later, Stalin tried with a more barbaric approach: purposely starving millions of Ukrainians to death in the 1930s, an attempt at genocide which has become known as Holodomor.

No matter how horrific it is for the survivors, they never lost their resolve. That tenacity is at the core of all Ukrainians, and the driving force behind what keeps them fighting for their freedom, even when faced with such insurmountable odds.

Right now, more than ever, the people of Ukraine need help. I am proud that our government is providing financial support, and opening our province to Ukrainian refugees with open arms.

For those who can help, please refer to the website [manitoba4ukraine.ca](http://manitoba4ukraine.ca), where you'll find a list of resources to guide you in assisting the people of Ukraine.

Thank you to everyone who, in the true spirit of Manitobans' charity, offered their help to the people of this great country.

Thank you.

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Death of Krystal Mousseau Request to Call Inquiry**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, Krystal Mousseau's life mattered. She is dearly missed by her friends, family and by her children.

Now, we've been advocating for justice for Krystal. We now know a lack of equipment and a lack of staff training with the company hired to transport her contributed to her death. Those are systemic failings.

We need to know how these failings took place and which steps are being taken to address them. Only an inquiry can give those answers, as well as to provide accountability.

Will the Premier act and then call an inquiry into the death of Krystal Mousseau today?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Madam Speaker, our thoughts and hearts go out to the family of Krystal Mousseau for this incredibly tragic situation that happened to their family.

As a result of the letter that was tabled by the Leader of the Opposition last week, there is no new information within that letter that would warrant the



call for a public inquiry. In fact, the Chief Medical Examiner, also, who reviewed the critical incident report, Madam Speaker, indicated that there is no reason for further investigation into the matter.

We listen, again, to the Chief Medical Examiner when it comes to these issues, not the Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** There's no mention from the Chief Medical Examiner of the fact that somebody died being moved from an ICU because there was a lack of equipment and a lack of training at the company hired to transport them—a company that was hired by this government.

Manitobans deserve answers. They deserve accountability. We ought to learn from the mistakes here. Specifically, we need to answer the question, what due diligence, if any, was conducted by this government prior to hiring this company? And what is the nature of the agreement, if any, that they struck with this contractor?

There are many outstanding unanswered questions. An inquiry is an effective way to answer them and to provide accountability.

Will the Premier call an inquiry into the death of Krystal Mousseau today?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** In fact, the issues that the Leader of the Opposition is bringing forward and talking about today were issues that were addressed in the critical incident review, Madam Speaker. That critical incident review report was looked at by the Chief Medical Examiner, and he determined that there was no need for a—an inquest.

So, again, we will take the advice of the Chief Medical Examiner when it comes to this. The critical incident review dealt with those matters.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** The Chief Medical Examiner made no mention of the lack of equipment and the lack of training. The critical incident investigation makes no mention of what due diligence, if any, the government conducted prior to contracting this company. That same critical incident process, by law, cannot provide accountability.

Accountability is needed. Justice is needed. An inquiry can deliver those things to Manitobans as well as providing safer outcomes in the future.

Will the Premier call an inquiry into the death of Krystal Mousseau?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, the issues that the Leader of the Opposition has identified were—I also identified in the critical incident review that was reviewed by the Chief Medical Examiner.

The Chief Medical Examiner said to that, and I quote, if rapid changes are to be made to the provision of health care in this province, they will stem from—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —decisions made by the relevant health authorities incorporating, among things, the result of the critical incident reviews such as that undertaken in this tragic case. End quote.

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

#### **Manitoba's Pandemic Response Request to Call Inquiry**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** We have seen many clear examples, including in this Chamber, of why we need an independent, expert-led inquiry into Manitoba's experience with the pandemic.

We need to know what led to the failures that we all had to live through as Manitobans these past two years.

Why did so many seniors die in personal-care homes like Maples and Parkview Place? Why did we have to send ICU patients out of province? Why did our health-care system fail so badly during that third wave?

We need an expert-led, independent investigation in the form of an inquiry to get to the bottom of these and many other challenges.

Will the Premier take action and call an inquiry into Manitoba's pandemic response today?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** The Leader of the Opposition and members of the Chamber will know that the Stevenson report was a report that was done on our personal-care homes during a tragic situation, during the pandemic. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** During the pandemic, Madam Speaker. That was—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, that was an independent review that took place, and we already indicated that we learned much from that, and we indicated our commitment to implement all 17 of those recommendations.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** We need an evaluation of what happened during the pandemic. What went wrong with our pandemic response here in Manitoba?

We need to look at the health-care system; we need to look at personal-care homes; we need to ask why we had higher case counts and more deaths, even compared to jurisdictions, like Saskatchewan, that have similar populations. We had longer lockdowns in Manitoba and more stress on our hospitals and our health-care workers.

We need answers. The only way to get to that truth, it would appear, is 'bying' having an independent, expert-led inquiry. And these experts should bring back recommendations for Manitoba's future.

Will the Premier listen, call an inquiry into Manitoba's pandemic response today?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, again, Madam Speaker, there was an independent review that took place with respect to what happened in our personal-care homes.

That was the Stevenson report, Madam Speaker. We indicated already that we would implement all 17 of those recommendations by the independent report by Stevenson.

We will continue to look at ways to improve our health-care system. That's why we've moved in a number of directions. We know what one of the challenges is—is obviously a shortage of nurses. That's nothing that's unique to Manitoba.

We've learned that we need to ensure that we train more nurses here in Manitoba. That's why we've indicated already that we would train 400 more nurses through our various programming—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —Madam Speaker.

We'll continue to learn more and more from the pandemic each and every day, and we'll continue to take action.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Manitobans deserve an independent, expert-led inquiry into what we all went through together here in Manitoba during the pandemic.

We need to look at what worked, what didn't, and most importantly, what do we have to do now and going forward into the future.

We have to look at our health-care system and ask questions like, how many ICU beds do we need? We have to look at education, the experiences of youth and mental health. We have to ask, how can we make our economy more resilient? And after everything we've been through together, we owe this to the people of Manitoba.

And I will tell you this, Madam Speaker. If this government will not call an inquiry, a future NDP government will call a pandemic inquiry within the first 100 days of taking office, should we have the great privilege of doing so.

Does the Premier agree an inquiry is necessary, and will she call one today?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, we listened to experts in the health-care field at—each and every day, and we learned from them throughout this pandemic. Again, this is a worldwide pandemic—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —Madam Speaker, and we're learning from things not just that happened here in Manitoba, but that happened around the world. And we see how we can make things better and improve things here for all Manitobans.

We'll continue to listen to those experts—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —throughout this time—those experts here in Manitoba, those experts around the world, so that we can ensure that we have a health-care system that's here for Manitobans when they need it, Madam Speaker.

### Premier's Financial Disclosures Conflict of Interest Concerns

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Premier—the Premier of Manitoba (Mrs. Stefanson) is out of touch with regular Manitobans.

Not once, but twice, the Premier has broken the conflict of interest rules. Apparently, the rules don't apply to her. Manitobans still haven't heard an apology from the—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —Premier. One was an oversight, but no apology. Another was business, but no apology. So I'll give the Premier another opportunity today.

Will the Premier admit her mistakes and get up in the House and apologize to Manitoba—Manitobans for breaking the conflict rules?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Of course, the Premier did not break the conflict rules. And when this government brought in increased conflict rules to strengthen them, Madam Speaker, the opposition decided they didn't agree with them and didn't want to support them.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** The Premier sold \$31 million in real estate but chose not to tell anyone. She was supposed to—that's the law—but when she was asked about it, she called it an oversight.

Manitobans have a hard time believing someone could forget about \$31 million and then not provide an apology to Manitobans for breaking—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —the conflict laws. It's just wrong, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** So I'll ask the Premier again: Will she apologize for breaking Manitoba's conflict of interest laws?

**Mr. Goertzen:** This issue has been well debated and well discussed. There was no breach of the conflict laws, Madam Speaker.

I know that the member opposite feels that she's an expert in all sorts of laws. Certainly, there are members on that side of the House who've had—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** —great experience with breaking laws, Madam Speaker, but I won't get into the details of that.

When it comes to the conflict of interest legislation, this government has brought in legislation to strengthen those laws. The NDP didn't seem to want to support those laws. I wonder what they were hiding, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** The Premier helped give \$23-million contract to a company that her husband does and has a financial interest in, Madam Speaker.

Those are the facts. They can get upset, but those are the facts. It's a conflict, Madam Speaker, and it's wrong. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** How out of touch does a premier have to be about forgetting to keep—disclosing millions of dollars worth of business deals, and then somehow fail to apologize to Manitobans?

I will give her another chance to get up in the House today, admit her mistakes and apologize to Manitobans. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The issue has been well debated, well discussed. There was not a breach of the conflict laws, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, we know that the members opposite have lots of experience when it comes to breaking laws. Already, now, of course, just in this question period, the NDP have now besmirched businesses through this question. They question the efficacy of the Chief Medical Examiner. They've now questioned the efficacy of the conflict officer, Madam Speaker.

It's a long question period yes—yet. I suppose they'll attack the child's advocate and maybe the Lieutenant Governor before question period is over, Madam Speaker.

### Health-Care Support Workers Union Contract and Pandemic Supports

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, health-support workers help us in our hospitals, personal-care homes and throughout our communities. Whether it's health-care aides, home care,

attendants: everyone working the front lines of health care deserves a fair deal.

Yet, they haven't been included in COVID top-up pay. That's simply not fair, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister recognize these staff and provide top-ups to those working in the front lines of this pandemic in our health-care system?

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I thank the member for the—opposite for the question.

There are active negotiations with several unions in the health-care sector. We advocate that those unions continue to negotiate with Shared Health. That is the employer, Madam Speaker. And we hope for an early agreement, but we'll wait to see how those negotiations go.

\* (14:10)

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, health-support workers like those in the Brandon emergency room took the same risks as front-line workers, but they weren't shown the support that they deserve.

Thousands of workers in personal-care homes worked in places with outbreaks to care for our loved ones. They're doing so without a renewed contract. In fact, they haven't seen a raise in many, many years now. It's time to show these workers the respect they deserve with COVID top-ups and a new contract.

Will the minister do this today?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, the member opposite, I guess, seems to be a bit confused about how negotiations work.

I've learned a great deal about this in the last few months, Madam Speaker, but perhaps they are experts in how this should happen.

So, I encourage—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Helwer:** —them to engage with the union members. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Helwer:** Through the—in active—Shared Health is in active negotiations with the unions, and we await to see what those outcomes are.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, inflation is now 5.7 per cent. Many health workers have had their wages frozen for several years, and they've put themselves at physical risk working in our hospitals, in home care and personal-care homes with patients who are sick with COVID.

It's time for a fair deal for all health-care workers, and that includes all of the support staff. They deserve new contracts and COVID top-ups that recognize their service on the front lines of this pandemic.

Will the minister deliver this to all those health-care workers today?

**Mr. Helwer:** It is Shared Health that is responsible for negotiating those union contracts, and they're doing so, Madam Speaker. We wait to see what that outcome is.

We thank all the health-care workers that worked throughout the pandemic. And we had a very successful vaccination process in Manitoba. You know, we dispensed over 1.4 million doses of vaccine, Madam Speaker.

Thank you to Manitobans that stepped up. Thank you to all the vaccinators and the volunteers, Madam Speaker.

#### **Ukrainian Canadian Congress Resettlement Services Funding**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** Madam Speaker, today is now day 28 into the Russian invasion of Ukraine. There are now 10 million Ukrainians internally displaced in the country, over 3 million and counting that are now seeking refuge outside the country.

We absolutely must increase settlement services to help those fleeing devastation.

I ask again, will the minister and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) announce increased funding for settlement services today?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** Today is day 28, and the member continues to politicize the situation. We, on the other hand, have taken concrete actions.

Our government provided \$650,000 in direct humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and Canada-Ukraine Foundation, waived the \$500 application fee for applications, and I want to share that

Manitoba Student Aid will expedite the repayment assistance application—plans of borrowers financially affected by the war, such as those donating money back home.

That's action, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wasyliw:** You know, Madam Speaker, when the history of the Stefanson government's written, the story that's going to be told is a government that lacked empathy: lacked empathy for Manitobans and lacked empathy for the suffering of Ukrainian refugees.

This is 28 days, and we are going to keep asking—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** —this government until they act.

They have not pledged one dollar for resettlement services in almost a month since the invasion has occurred. Saskatchewan has pledged money. Alberta has stepped up. Even Newfoundland has stepped up.

So we'll ask again: Will the minister and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) announce substantial additional funding for resettlement services today?

**Mr. Reyes:** Our government has and will continue to work with our federal government under these circumstances. They know that we have actually—we'll be, actually, investing \$2 million in newcomer community support programs, to ensure that newcomers, whether they're from the Ukraine—or, Ukraine refugees, from all over the world, will have a safe haven here when they're in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

And I want to actually tell the member as well, that we'll continue to support our—your community, the Ukrainian community, our community. And I don't know if you've been to the website, the manitoba4ukraine.ca website, where there are many resources there, and we'll continue to work with them.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Madam Speaker, it is sad that this government, when they don't want to act, hides behind the federal government. There is much and more that can be done by the provincial government, especially when it comes to resettlement services.

On day 28 of the invasion, the UN high commission for human rights estimates over 902 civilians have been killed; 1,459 have been wounded. Over 100 children have been killed.

This government refuses to commit the needed resources. It's unacceptable. We're not going to stop demanding this government act.

Will the minister and the Premier announce funding for the Ukrainian resettlement services through the Ukrainian Canadian Congress today?

**Mr. Reyes:** I don't know if—may I remind him that we have taken action: \$650,000 in additional funding for the Ukrainian community. We've also waived the provincial nominee—the \$500 fee for the Provincial Nominee Program. We've also established a task force specifically for the Ukraine refugees when they're going to be coming to Manitoba. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Reyes:** So, we are doing more—that we can, and we'll continue to work with the federal government because we want to ensure that they come to Manitoba safely, and we'll protect them.

Thank you.

#### **MMF and Government Relations New Negotiation Approach Needed**

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** This government treats its partners in bad faith, and that's a proven record. The entire board of Manitoba Hydro resigned because Brian Pallister refused to meet with them to discuss Hydro's finances. To cover up his failure, Pallister attacked the Manitoba Métis Federation. He then ripped up agreements negotiated in good faith. The Red River Métis and the—Manitobans deserve betters.

Will the government reject Pallister's approach? Will they return to the table in good faith with the Manitoba Métis Federation, today?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** Happy to take any question on the subject of Manitoba Hydro.

That member and all members of this House know that our government is committed to continuing to have a hydro utility to provide clean power at a low rate to Manitobans, while we're focused on the stability of the corporation, while the NDP mis-managed Manitoba Hydro. They were responsible for the biggest financial boondoggle of our times. Billions of dollars added to the debt of Hydro. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** We are committed to low rates for Manitobans. We're committed to a stable and strong Manitoba Hydro.

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

**Mr. Bushie:** The Stefanson government is following the same path as Brian Pallister. And of course, we can expect no less. He refused to meet with the Hydro board and then attacked the Manitoba Métis Federation to cover up his failure after they resigned. That was wrong. And then, the Pallister government ripped up agreements negotiated in good faith.

The Province has refused to work with the MMF. We need a new approach in the spirit of reconciliation. To do so requires this government to return to the table. It requires this government to negotiate and sign agreements in good faith with the Manitoba Métis Federation.

Why won't this government do that today?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, I want to make clear that our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has been very clear about her priority with engaging with grand chiefs and with Indigenous leadership.

Our minister for—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:**—Indigenous and northern relations has made very clear that his calendar is full of meetings with Indigenous leaders. I, myself, have had the opportunity just in the last weeks to meet with Manitoba Hydro board, with Manitoba Hydro chair, with Manitoba Hydro CEO and with the Manitoba Hydro CFO.

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

**Mr. Bushie:** Brian Pallister may be gone, but it's very clear that his remnants still remain in this government, and his 'repoach'—his approach still remains.

\* (14:20)

Pallister caused the entire board of Hydro to resign because he refused to meet with them. Then he disrespected the Manitoba Métis Federation to cover up his failure and ripped up agreements that were signed in good faith.

The Premier should reject that failed approach and return to the table. This government can make a

choice and make a commitment to real reconciliation. They can negotiate in good faith with the Manitoba Métis Federation.

Will the minister do so today?

**Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations):** To say that I'm disappointed in the member opposite would be an understatement.

The member opposite goes above and beyond to drive a—try and drive a wedge between government and Indigenous groups in Manitoba. Member opposite needs to understand that reconciliation is everybody's business, including theirs, Madam Speaker.

We have been engaging with Indigenous leadership. I have—in fact, tomorrow we have a meeting with one of these groups and—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:**—following this, I will be meeting with Indigenous groups in the North in the last week of the month here.

#### **Transfer of Patients Out of Community Request for Plan to Reduce Practice**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Earlier this month, we heard a very distressing case of Joan Hodgson from Winnipeg, 80 years old and as of March 4th had been isolated from her family and friends since December twenty—21st at the Russell health centre.

Though her case resolved—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:**—her family said they remain incensed that people transported away from their communities have no plan for return, because she is far from the only one.

We are sending people out of province. We're sending people to North Dakota. And Russell is a fine community, but it is four hours from Winnipeg, just at the Saskatchewan border, so many families do not have the time or resources to visit.

When will these long-distance transfers stop, and will the Premier step up with travel and accommodation assistance so patients aren't stranded for months at a time?

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

It gives me an opportunity to put on the record again, Madam Speaker, that the patient transfer protocol within the province has been in place for decades and the decisions that are being made on—about patient transfer is being made within the health-care system by clinicians, by the care team, in terms of ensuring an individual receives the care they need, in the right location at the right time.

Our government has taken a very proactive step to establish with Shared Health a patient transfer reimbursement program. I would be happy to speak with the member so that they can share with their constituent how that program works.

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

**Mr. Lamont:** It's worth saying that these are not just challenges due to the pandemic. This government was warned repeatedly by its own experts not to close urgent-care centres like Misericordia or to—not to rush to close ERs and ICUs at Seven Oaks, Concordia and Victoria hospitals because there was no way that other hospitals like St. Boniface could build a brand new ER in a couple of weeks.

I heard on Friday, March 18th, from a constituent whose family member was also going to be sent far away, where none of their family could get to them. They were told, quote, they have no beds in the surgical unit, so they try to move people out of the unit as fast as possible. End quote.

What is the plan to reduce patient transfers to normal and ensure that patients and families can afford to see each other in their own community?

**Ms. Gordon:** The plan, Madam Speaker, is to support our health-care professionals. They've gone through—perhaps the member for St. Boniface missed the last few waves of the pandemic—a very, very difficult time. They've had to make some very difficult decisions to ensure all Manitobans receive the care they need here at home in our province.

Again, Madam Speaker, the decisions that are being made about patient transfers are being made by clinicians. Our government has come alongside Shared Health to develop a program to ensure family members can visit their loved ones.

And if the member hasn't looked at it yet, we have a seven-page COVID health system recovery plan to ensure Manitobans continue to get the care that they need.

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

#### **Access to Public K-to-12 Education Accommodation for Ukrainian Refugees**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** At this point in time, 3 and a half million people have had to flee Ukraine. Now, all over the world people are stepping up from a humanitarian point of view, and our province, Manitoba, needs to do our part, and that includes being prepared to receive these refugees.

Madam Speaker, for children coming to Manitoba from Ukraine from grades K to 12, will the minister commit to ensure we have the capacity for all children to have access to public education?

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I'd like to thank the member for the question.

When it comes to K-to-12 education and also working with the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration within our government, with our partners on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, and all through the—all through this great province of ours, we're going to make sure that we are working with our Ukrainian partners to make sure that those students that are coming to Manitoba are supported, and that's why we're also working with the federal government to make sure that when they do get here they are supported.

#### **Ubisoft Expansion Investment Announcement**

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, it has recently been announced that Ubisoft Winnipeg will be investing an additional \$139 million into our province. So, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade.

I'm asking: Can he elaborate on the recent announcement by Ubisoft and how this will benefit Manitoba?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade):** I thank my colleague for the opportunity to talk about the good investment that Ubisoft is making. Just last week, Ubisoft has signalled a \$139-million investment over the next few years to create 200 new jobs. This will triple the studio size here in Winnipeg.

Our digital media tax credit has created hundreds of jobs here in Manitoba. We are attracting skilled workers from across the world to this growing sector.

We are also training Manitobans to fill the demand for these highly paid jobs.

Congratulations, Ubisoft, and thanks for your additional investment and your confidence in Manitoba.

### **Internationally Educated Nurses Request to Expedite Applications**

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Madam Speaker, while the minister and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) spend time misleading Manitobans, many qualified international nurses are waiting to get to work here in Manitoba. These are nurses who are already qualified elsewhere in Canada, but they want to come to work here in Manitoba.

Again, I'll repeat: These are nurses who are qualified in other provinces and want to come to work here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we need their help, since this PC government has created a staffing crisis in our hospitals.

So will the minister expedite applications for internationally educated nurses immediately?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question—gives me an opportunity to share again with Manitobans that it's our government that has invested \$19.5 million to add 259 nurse training seats this year, and we look forward to adding 400 new nursing education seats. Of—couple of weeks ago, that member—the member opposite questioned the numbers of individuals that had applied for internationally educated nursing positions here in our province.

I'm happy to see that she's now on board with our government in supporting those nurses.

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

**MLA Marcelino:** Numerous internationally educated nurses who are licensed to practice in other provinces such as Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland are still facing tremendous difficulties in transferring their licences here to Manitoba.

It's wrong, Madam Speaker. The minister and the Premier should be doing everything that they can to get these dedicated professionals to work here quickly in our hospitals to help fix the chaos that they have caused.

Will the minister ensure their applications are expedited immediately?

**Ms. Gordon:** It was our government that also made available \$23,000 of financial aid to assist internationally educated nurses to go through the licensing process, and we're working very closely with the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba to streamline the process so that individuals who want to come and practice their nursing profession here in the province can do so.

\* (14:30)

And, Madam Speaker, just last week I met with the association of regulated nurses of Manitoba and learned that their incoming president was an internationally educated nurse who's now practising here in the province.

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

**MLA Marcelino:** Madam Speaker, these nurses are already certified in other provinces, and there is a significant nursing shortage here in Manitoba and a crisis in our hospitals created by this government's cuts. Yet, for some reason, they are encountering significant challenges in their ability to practise, as well as a timeliness of processing their applications.

We need immediate action to get these professionals working on the front lines.

Will the minister ensure that applications are expedited immediately?

**Ms. Gordon:** Madam Speaker, the answer to the question from the member is: yes. I will ensure that applications are expedited and streamlined so that individuals who are—or—who are internationally educated in the nursing profession can practise here.

That is why our government has provided that financial aid to support those individuals, to pay for some of the tests, to be able to study and go through the licensing process.

And I thank the member for all the letters and emails she has written to me supporting what our government is doing to ensure those nurses get licensed.

### **Manitoba Hydro Energy Bills Assistance for Customers in Arrears**

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** If life hadn't gotten expensive enough already with record high inflation, it's about to get a whole lot worse. Manitobans are feeling the pinch each and every time they go to pay for their basic needs.



So last week I asked the minister if he'd step up and commit to not raising hydro rates and, sadly, we heard no commitment from him. Yet, we know thousands of Manitobans are behind on their bills.

So I'll ask the minister: Will he commit to not cutting any Manitoban's hydro off because they can't pay their bill?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

That member knows, actually, that there are numerous programs in place in the province of Manitoba and within Manitoba Hydro that are designed to do exactly that: meet people at the point of their need with compassion; consider those who can't make their payments; puts them on schedules. They have forgiveness for some amounts in some cases.

But those are programs that are there, and if the member needs to, we will disclose to him exactly where he can find them and help point his constituents to those programs that are in place and are there to help Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Sala:** Madam Speaker, it doesn't sound like the minister is interested in helping struggling Manitobans, not one bit. He doesn't want to raise the minimum wage by more than 5 cents and now he won't commit to helping struggling Manitobans who are at risk of having their hydro cut off. It's shameful.

While this minister sits back and refuses to do anything to ease the burden of high inflation of 5.7 per cent, more and more Manitobans are falling behind.

I'll ask again: Will the minister commit to not cutting any Manitoban's hydro off because they can't pay their bill?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, it's very loud from the member, but it's also disingenuous because Manitobans won't be fooled. They know that that NDP party overspent Keeyask by \$2.2 billion; overspent Bipole III by a billion and a half; \$3.7 billion over budget and the NDP failed to disclose to Manitobans the rising rates.

It was the boondoggle of the century, and Manitobans know that, while it still matters to have affordable rates, it also matters to have enough—a stable Manitoba Hydro.

Where they failed, we'll get it right.

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

## PETITIONS

### Foot-Care Services

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

(2) A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary foot-care medical treatment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Louis Bignell, Derek Beardy, Ila Miles and many other Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

### Abortion Services

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

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

(1) Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons deserve to be safe and supported when accessing abortion services.

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to detrimental outcomes and consequences for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

(3) The provincial government's reckless health-care cuts have created inequity within the health-care system whereby access to the abortion pill, Mifegymiso, and surgical abortions are less accessible for northern and rural individuals than individuals in southern Manitoba, as they face travel barriers to access the handful of non-urban health-care professionals who are trained to provide medical abortions.

(4) For over five years, and over the administration of three failed Health ministers, the provincial government operated under the pretense that reproductive health was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and seniors care and shifted the responsibility to a secretariat with no policy, program or financial authority within the health-care system.

(5) For over four years, the provincial government has refused to support bill 200, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, which will ensure the safety of Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons accessing abortion services, and the staff who provide such services, by establishing buffer zones for anti-choice Manitobans around clinics.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion services for individuals, regardless of where they reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

### Foot-Care Services

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* (14:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

### Abortion Services

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons deserve to

be safe and supported when accessing abortion services.

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to detrimental outcomes and consequences for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

(3) The provincial government's reckless health-care cuts have created inequity within the health-care system whereby access to the abortion pill, Mifegymiso, and surgical abortions are less accessible for northern and rural individuals than individuals in southern Manitoba, as they face travel barriers to access the handful of non-urban health-care professionals who are trained to provide medical abortions.

(4) For over five years, and over the administration of three failed Health ministers, the provincial government operated under the pretense that reproductive health was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and seniors care and shifted the responsibility to a secretariat with no policy, program or financial authority within the health-care system.

(5) For over four years, the provincial government has refused to support bill 200, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, which will ensure the safety of Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary and trans persons accessing abortion services, and the staff who provide such services, by establishing buffer zones for anti-choice Manitobans around clinics.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion services for individuals, regardless of where they reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

Signed by many Manitobans.

**Vivian Sand Facility Project—  
Clean Environment Commission Review**

**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:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares, making it the largest

claim ever given to a single company in Manitoba's history. It is larger than the city of Winnipeg, which is 46,410 hectares.

The amount of dry, solid sand mined, produced per year according to the EAP, is 1.36 million tons, and much of this sand will be used in fracking.

A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, including both carbonate and sandstone aquifers, which covers much of south-eastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and an abundance of wildlife and ecosystems. Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

The sustainable yield of the combined sandstone and carbonate aquifers has still not yet been established by provincial authorities.

The mine could cause leaching of acid and heavy metals and pollute the aquifer, as it will go down 200 feet into the Winnipeg formation of the sandstone aquifer. There's concern that the shale, which separates the carbonate and sandstone aquifers—sand and pyritic oolite itself contain sulphites—will, when exposed to injected air from the CanWhite Sands extraction process, turn to acid.

An additional concern with the proposed mine and plant is the potential to pollute the Brokenhead River and the aquatic food chain leading to Lake Winnipeg.

Residents in the area have also expressed fears of being overexposed to silica dust during production, as there has been a demonstrated lack of safety in the environmental procedures by the CanWhite Sands Corporation during the exploratory drilling phase. Signage and fencing has been poor; identifying and required mine claim tags were missing; there were no warning for silica dust exposure and no coverings to prevent exposure of the silica stockpiles to the elements.

Residents' concerns include the fact that boreholes, which should have been promptly and properly sealed, were left open for a year. The drilling of hundreds of improperly sealed boreholes yearly creates significant risks of surface contamination, mixing of aquifer waters and drainage of 'sulfur' fecal matters—surface fecal matters into the aquifer.

There's also a risk of subsidence around each borehole as a result of sand extraction.

There are also potential transboundary issues that need to be addressed as the aquifers extend into Minnesota.

This project should not proceed, as no licensing conditions and mitigation measures will alleviate the risk to all Manitobans and the environment, since CanWhite Sands corporation plans to use an unprecedented mining technique with no established safe outcome. The corporation has gone on record indicating that it does not know how to mine for the silica in the water supply. We need to develop a new extraction methodology that's never been done before.

Contamination of the aquifers in the environment is irreversible and there are many surface sources of high purity silica that can be extracted without endangering two essential regional aquifers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to undertake a combined review of the Vivian Sand Facility processing plant and the mining/extraction portion of the operation as a class 3 development with a review by Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to include public hearings and participant funding.

To urge the provincial government to halt all activity at the mine and plant until the Clean Environment Commission's review is completed and the project proposal has been thoroughly evaluated.

Signed by Crystal LaCasse, Mason Marino, Autumn Garana and many, many other Manitobans.

### **National Drug Plan**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Madam Speaker, present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

There have been repeated calls to include prescription drugs in Canada's universal health-care system, including National Forum on Health;

Commission of the Future of Health Care in Canada; several national organizations, including Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Medical Association, Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

To urge the provincial government to develop, jointly with the federal government, a universal, single-payer, evidence-based, sustainable public drug plan that contains purchasing power to secure best available pricing, a list of essential medicines addressing priority health needs, and the ability to expand to a comprehensive, permanent plan that would promote the health and wellbeing of all Canadians.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

### **Provincial Road 224**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

\* (14:50)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

### **Diagnostic Testing Accessibility**

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

The background to 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; residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or 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 are able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly 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 doctors, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

### **Health-Care Coverage**

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

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

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

#### **Eating Disorders Awareness Week**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

An estimated 1 million people suffer from eating disorders in Canada.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses affecting one's physical, psychological and social function and have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

The development and treatment of eating disorders are influenced by the social determinants of health, including food and income security, access to housing, health care and mental health supports.

It is important to share the diverse experiences of people with eating disorders across all ages, genders and identities, including Indigenous, Black and racialized people; queer and gender-diverse people; people with disabilities; people with chronic illness; and people with co-occurring mental health conditions or addictions.

It is necessary to increase awareness and education about the impact of those living with or affected by eating disorders in order to dispel dangerous stereotypes and myths about these illnesses.

Setting aside one week each year to focus attention on eating disorders will heighten public understanding, increase awareness of culturally

relevant resources and supports for those impacted by eating disorders and encourage Manitobans to develop healthier relationships with their bodies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support a declaration that the first week in February of each year be known as eating disorders awareness week.

This has been signed by Tanya Zubert, Paula Denbow, Ladine Klassen and many other Manitobans.

#### **Foot-Care Services**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

\* (15:00)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical

foot care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

And this has been signed by Savannah Brant, Chris Hempel [*phonetic*], Michael Nichol-Sash [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### House Business

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, March 21st, 2022 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act; Bill 9, The Scrap Metal Act; and Bill 12, The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, March 21st, 2022 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act; Bill 9, The Scrap Metal Act; and Bill 12, The Peak of the Market Reorganization Act.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, could you please call for debate this afternoon Bill 16, 15, 26 and 23.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the House will consider this afternoon debate on second reading of Bill 16, second reading of Bill 15, second reading of Bill 26 and second reading of Bill 23.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 16—The Financial Administration Amendment Act

**Madam Speaker:** I will, therefore, call debate on second reading of Bill 16, The Financial Administration Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Keewatinook, who has 30 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** I think one of the words when we talk about a lot of bills that are being brought before this House, especially in the last two years, three years of going through this global pandemic, is the word normal. And sometimes you have to wonder exactly what that word may mean when it comes to the operation of government, of just society in general.

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

We've been part of Estimates now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a couple of years now and I really don't have a concept of what quote, unquote normal may be. I would have been part of Estimates in the beginning,

not long after the election in 2019 to be able to have the ability to ask questions, have the ability to ask detailed questions and understanding the role of government is to sometimes share that information or sometimes be a little bit more non-forthcoming with that information.

And a lot of times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's frustrating. It's frustrating to ask questions and try and hold government to account just to—so Manitobans have the answer, so Manitobans have a true picture of questions that are being asked of opposition, of statements being made by government, of expenditures being done by government, so that Manitobans have a clear understanding of what's going on.

And the Estimates process is supposed to be able to help that along and help that clarity and give Manitobans that clarity as to what's happening, what's going on each and every day. And Bill 16 makes some changes, makes some amendments and the government has the argument that it makes positive amendments to the accountability process.

And I don't think, in reading the bill, in reading the notes of the bill and hearing and listening to Manitobans, that that accountability is more forthcoming. In fact, it's now becoming less and less, and the democratic process that we have here in Manitoba should be one that is increasing that accountability and increasing that—more forthcoming, that transparency; to be able to say that I have a question, I want an answer; I have a question as to how my tax dollars are being spent, I have a question as to how this government is going to look after me as a Manitoban.

And quite honestly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a part of what the Estimates process is designed to do, is to be able to bring out those answers, to bring out those intelligent questions. And Bill 16 and the amendments that are being brought forth is now going to limit that ability.

When I spoke about the word normal in saying, you know, what is normal—and albeit being a new MLA here in the Chamber, recently elected in the last couple of years and kind of being an MLA and a member of this Chamber through, for the most part, the pandemic, I don't really know what a normal day may be.

And I know we want to get to that point and we want to get to that sense of normalcy, and we are seeing that. We are seeing that, even just in the ability in the House here to be able to come and meet in person and have a full complement here in the

Chamber, in person. Whether it be virtual or whether it be in person, in person is the way to go and it's—there's that disconnect that doesn't—that exists there when we don't have that ability, and the Estimates process was no different.

So when we went in—through the Estimates process prior to the pandemic, I mean, it was very limited. There was maybe one session of being able to do that and then we'd get into the global pandemic and it became very limited, and the question and the ability to ask questions and get answers and look for accountability and look for transparency got to be more and more limited.

\* (15:10)

And the frustrating thing more than anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there was blame brought out during that in terms of—there was a lack of transparency. There was lack of accountability because of the pandemic, and the pandemic is something that is here and COVID was here. COVID was an impact, COVID was a factor.

But it wasn't the driving force to be able to limit transparency and limit accountability. But government choosed to do that. They choosed to limit the access to information; they choosed to limit the questions that are going to be answered. They choosed to limit the information that was being shared under the topic of the pandemic—and Bill 16 now tries to do that, even more so.

When we talked about the Estimates process and the ability of Estimates process—and it was designed to be able to, like I said, share that information—Estimates book got to be—you know, at one point in time, I understand, it was fairly thick, fairly detailed—not everything, mind you. There was still a lot of items in there that were not transparent and not being held accountable.

But it was there, and over the course of the last two years now it's become more and more limited. You've got from Estimates books that have, you know, over 100 line items in them to now, you know, a quarter of that. And that's just a telltale sign of the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability on behalf of this government to have to answer questions.

And while we went through this pandemic and while we're still continuing to go through this pandemic, that Estimates process got to be even more and more limited. Depending on what portfolio you may had and what minister was in the Estimates room



and in the Estimates process, whether it be Zoom or whether it be in person, it was very limited.

So you had to try and get more bang for your buck, more answers to the limited time you had, more answers to the limited access to information that you had, which got to be difficult. And having COVID and the pandemic as the excuse to not maintain that accountability was, honestly, just shameful. It's a reality, it's here, but at the same time it doesn't limit you from answer questions. It doesn't limit you from being accountable. It doesn't limit you from being transparent.

And it was frustrating to see, when you finally got your Estimates book from government, to see the very, very limited amount of information that was actually in there. It was limited to begin with, but now even more so. Now you had to kind of dissect the one line item that used to be able to entail three or four pages of Estimates books. Now it's one line item.

And Bill 16, Mr. Deputy Speaker, now is wanting to kind of celebrate that, celebrate that lack of information, the lack of transparency, the lack of accountability, and it's something that Manitobans deserve. Manitobans deserve to know what is going on.

Last week, in listening to the minister speaking to Bill 16, he referred to it as a way to evaluate and a way to better look at the total performance of government. Well, then, let's do that. Let's look at the total performance of government in terms of—in referencing this bill.

So when we—you see different aspects, and there's been a number of questions raised by Manitobans—not just members opposite, not just us in the NDP caucus, Mr. Deputy Speaker—but just in Manitobans, because our concerns and our questions are coming from those voices, are coming from those stakeholders. They're coming from those individuals. They're coming from those Manitobans. So when we bring forth those concerns, those are concerns brought about by Manitobans.

So Manitobans are wondering that question too. If Bill 16 is looked to further evaluate the total performance of government, then let's do that. Let's truly look at all aspects. Let's look at the health-care system. You know, when we refer to Bill 16 in the Estimates book, at—and how health care has gone and how health care has been operating during the course of the pandemic, and here we are sitting here today. The government still will not admit that there's a crisis, that there's a crisis in the health-care system.

And, albeit, I fully understand that they're not wanting to kind of admit the shortcomings and admit the failures that existed prior to the pandemic that were just exasperated by the pandemic, but they were there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those concerns were there. Those issues were there. Those failures were already there, and now they just get amplified and they get echoed.

But government can't look and use the pandemic as a way to explain that all away. Like I said, these issues were there before the pandemic. So when we—the pandemic came, it just kind of highlighted all of these gaps, all these failures, all these shortages in nurses, shortages in the ICU capacity. And it showed a lot of gaps that were already existing.

So when Bill 16—and the minister talked about, let's use this as a total performance of government, then the minister also has to be willing to answer for those, answer for that total lack of performance of government when it comes time to a number of different files, and as I'm speaking about right now, the health-care portfolio.

So this—in looking at Bill 16 and The Financial Administration Amendment Act, to be able to bring that in and use that as a tool to evaluate the total performance of government as it pertains to health care, then it's shameful. It's shameful to be able to say that we have these funds over here and we're not allocating them where they need to be, we're not getting those funds to the bedside, we're not getting those funds to Manitobans; but, rather, I'm not going to spend what I have.

And I remember that question being asked many, many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we sat here and debated, asking for additional funds from the federal government, and the question was asked, are you spending the money that you already have? Are you spending the money that's already in Manitoba, that's already designed for Manitobans, that's already designed to go to the bedside?

And it's a simple question to be able to ask, are you truly spending all the money that you have there? And the government could not answer that question concretely to say, yes, we are. We're truly exhausting all of our resources. We've emptied our bank accounts. We've done everything we can and we still need help.

And that's something that—that's a reality. We sit here in a global pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's a concern for jurisdictions all around the world—

not just in Canada, not just in Manitoba, but all around the world—to truly say: we've exhausted all of our resources; we need more help. There's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with being able to say that and having to admit—in fact, that's a strength to having to admit, I need help.

That's an ego that you have to overcome to say, I need help. But this government is not doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're not saying, we need help because we've exhausted all of our resources. We're saying, we want help because we're still got a pocket of money here. We want to look at—we're going to come out in a positive way at the end of the pandemic, whenever that may be. Hopefully, that pandemic, you know, is something that's done today—not a year from now, not months from now, but done today. Are we at that point? I would like to think we're getting there, but we're not there yet.

But to be able to say that we need help and we're—'we've' exhausted everything we have, we've truly filled every gap, we've filled every seat, we've filled every vacancy we have in health care, but we still don't have enough—there's nothing wrong with being able to admit that. But if you're not doing that, then you don't have the right to go and ask for additional resources, for additional funds.

Another comment that the minister made when—in his opening comments last week was to be able to—to kind of live within your means. You know, you're not going to sit out there and go and borrow, borrow, borrow, borrow your way out of it. But yet, here we are. We're still asking for additional funds to be able to say, let's do this; federal funds to be able to say, let's help and do this. And Bill 16—coming back to that accountability, or that lack of accountability, begs to answer that question.

So if your federal counterparts have that question in there, saying, well, are you truly spending all the money you have there, are you truly doing everything you can?

Then, fine—here's the resources necessary to help guide you through, to help assist you through. But if you're sitting there, hoarding funds and not fulfilling programs and not fulfilling your obligations, then you have to answer the question of: why aren't you? Why aren't you doing that? Why aren't you assisting Manitobans and doing everything you can to assist the people of Manitoba? Rather than saying: you're on your own; we don't have any help from you; there's no nurse at your bedside because we don't have that availability.

Yes, you do have the availability. You just have to be—have that desire and that willingness to fill that. Because you owe it to Manitobans. Manitobans have stepped up and done their part, throughout this pandemic. Time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see and hear of different individuals, different groups, different communities that are stepping up and doing that. And Bill 16 will now take away that ability of those individuals to say: well, where is my help; where is my ability; I have a question. And that's unfortunate to be able to do that.

\* (15:20)

When we—you have a government that's continually saying one thing and doing another, that's frustrating to be able to take what that government has to say, to take those announcements at what they're worth and the face value of what they are. To be able to say that, you know, we're doing everything we can, we're not going to borrow our way out of this, yet talking about the federal government and criticising the federal government for borrowing their way out of the pandemic, for borrowing their way out of debt, yet this government is doing the exact same thing.

And Bill 16 brings that now to be almost an official way to be able to say that we want to be able to avoid that accountability for any funds that we have. We want to avoid that accountability for any programs that we may want to bring in.

The whole basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the Estimates process is to be able to ask those questions. And it's become more and more apparent that on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, yearly basis, that that accountability is lessening. And that really is discouraging and frustrating to the democratic process that we all live in.

To be able to say that I have this book, I have this Estimates book, however thick it may be, and different departments have different items in there. One department may have, you know, hundreds of pages, one department may have 50 pages.

And to limit that now, if you have a department that has 50 pages, now it's cut down to a quarter of that, then here, here's a major department in government that's now has a 10-page Estimates book that now you have to dissect and you have to interpret to be able to expand that to be what it truly should be. And it limits our ability.

And is that a matter of privilege? Maybe that's an argument for a different time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because that then—that affects every individual MLA

to be able to do their job here in Manitoba. To be able to say that I have to go to my constituents, my stakeholders, my groups, my individuals, all Manitobans to say, here's a book that nobody can make sense of. Here's a book that just has one line item that basically describes an entire department. And that's frustrating.

So—and what does that say? That says there's no accountability. There's no way to be able to say with—concretely that I can get this answer out of this book. Because then now you have, however long you may have, you may have 10 minutes in Estimates, you may have 15 minutes, you may have an hour, but now those questions that you can probably go through yourself, get a lot of solutions, get a lot of answers for yourself, get a lot of interpretations as to how that goes, now you have to, honestly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, waste your time trying to get an answer that should be already given to you. And that's very frustrating to be able to do, and that limits the ability of MLAs to be able to do their job sincerely, to be able to do their jobs thoroughly. And that's frustrating to be able to bring that to the table, let alone have items like that be a—Bill 16 be now legislated.

To be able to say and go to Manitobans and say, oh, here's Bill 16. You know what this bill is designed to do? This bill is designed to limit accountability. This design—this bill is designed to limit transparency. How can you go to Manitobans and say that? How can you go to Manitobans and say, oh, I brought forward a bill that's going to limit me having to answer your questions; that's going to limit me having to answer your concerns.

And, at some point in time, Manitobans will ask, Bill 16, what's Bill 16? Well, that's the answer. That's truly the answer to what Bill 16 is. Bill 16 is to not be accountable, to not be transparent, to be able to say that we're going to limit access to information.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's just shameful to be able to say that. We should be going in the opposite direction of this. We should be saying that, you know what, we're going to put piece forth—put forth a piece of legislation that's going to enhance transparency, that's going to enhance accountability, not limit it. We shouldn't be having these discussions to say, I'm going to limit accountability, I'm going to limit the information that's being shared. If you don't ask the right questions, then you're not going to get the answer.

And Manitobans should not have to look like they're having to interrogate the government to be able

to say, I just want a simple answer to a simple question. And Bill 16 goes to eliminate that. Bill 16 goes to eliminate that accountability.

When the minister spoke, and in his comments, he talked about living within your means, don't borrow your way out of the pandemic. Yet that's exactly what's happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And Bill 16 is trying to avoid that accountability for asking all those questions, for asking for more money, for trying to borrow your way out of the pandemic, and not have to give a reason why: I don't want to live within my means, but I don't want to tell you why I don't have to do that.

And that's frustrating. That's frustrating for all of Manitobans to be able to say. And it can't be just attributed to the pandemic because these issues existed long before the pandemic and they'll exist long after the pandemic, as you can see by legislation—legislating a way that that ability or that inability to share that information.

And when a government brings forth a piece of legislation that's going to avoid accountability, is that democracy? No, it's not. Is that 'accountability'? Absolutely not. Is that transparency? Absolutely not. And those are simple questions; very, very simple questions.

We can go to any Manitoban and they'll just ask a question of government: What are you doing here? What are you doing with your dollars? What are you doing with our funds? What are you doing with the tax money? And if you can't answer the question or you're going to now cite—the Bill 16 says I can't share that information with you. Bill 16 doesn't require me to share that information with you.

That's just a cop out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to avoid that accountability, to be able to now go to those Manitobans and say, oh, by the way, we legislated this away. I don't have to give you the answer. I don't have to share that information with you. Here's a one-line item here that explains why I don't have to share information.

You know, are we going to get to the point now—will there be another piece of legislation coming forward later on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, further to Bill 16 that says, now Estimates books will be one item. There'll be one Estimate book for all of government, just to say, boom, there we go—you know, here's the millions and millions of dollars. Here's the billions of dollars that are being spent. Just one line item and that's it: no breakdown by department, no breakdown

by ministerial department, no breakdown for the programs here in Manitoba.

And that's where Bill 16 is leading to, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's leading to—now, under the guise of the—you hear the word streamlining, avoiding red tape, eliminating red tape, being able to say we're going to do this. Well, you know what? That's another way of saying we're going to avoid accountability, we're not going to share that information, we're not going to be forthcoming with that information. And Bill 16 is now a step towards doing that. It's a step toward less and less of sharing of information, less and less of accountability, less and less of transparency.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, now when we get to that point of being able to now say, we're trying to limit your ability to question, we're trying to limit your ability to ask questions, we're trying to limit our ability to have to share information—ultimately, we're having to eliminate and limit the accountability that we have to Manitobans. And in a democratic process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's just shameful for a government to want to do that, let alone think they can do that, let alone think they're able to do that.

And Manitobans will see it. Manitobans are already seeing it today. You know, we can sit there and we can talk about opinion polls and pre-election polls and those kind of things. So you're hearing that and you're 'seering' those voices and hearing those concerns.

And Manitobans will not be fooled by Bill 16 and throwing out the words Financial Administration Amendment Act and, you know, the—all the hype that the government might put on it to be able to say this is a great thing for Manitobans.

The reality is it's going to limit your access to information. It's going to limit your ability to ask those questions. It's going to limit your ability to make informed decisions on behalf of your family, on behalf of Manitobans—to be able to say that I can't ask a simple question of government as to where you're spending your dollars.

I can't ask a simple question of government to say, what are we going to do without having just to—the ability because not every Manitoban is inept to be able to say, you know, we're going to go—I can read financial statements; I can dissect all these government contracts, all these government agreements, all this funding announcements.

Manitobans just want to be able to ask simple questions and sometimes just get simple answers, and

Bill 16 eliminates that ability. It takes that away from Manitobans. It takes that limit to be able to say: I have a question. Why can't you be accountable? Why can't you answer?

So Bill 16 takes that away, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It takes away that ability to hold government to account. And government should be held to account every day—every single day—not just on election day, not just when there's—in a global pandemic, not just when they're asking for additional funds in the millions of billions of dollars, but every day.

\* (15:30)

So Bill 16 is a step towards limiting that. It's a step towards limiting that accountability. It's a step towards being able to tell Manitobans that you don't have the right to ask me those questions, you don't have the right to question government.

When Bill 16 comes forward it should be used—and I've heard the word—it's a road map. It's a road map to be able to say, this is how government is going to run. But at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather than it being a road map, it's actually creating a number of roadblocks. It's now creating a roadblock for Manitobans to come forward and ask questions.

It's not a road map. There's no—in this bill, in this piece of legislation there's no easier way for a Manitoban to navigate a system. There's no easier way for an MLA to navigate the system. There's no easier way for an MLA to be able to ask questions on behalf of Manitobans. In fact, it creates roadblocks. It creates roadblocks for MLAs. It creates roadblocks for Manitobans to be able to hold government to account.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and I call—and I'm sure there's a number of Manitobans that over the course of time will watch these debates or read these debates in Hansard or on video, and it'll start raising the questions and they'll start asking questions: Really, I didn't even know what Estimates was; I didn't even know what an Estimates book was. And maybe Manitobans will start saying that and saying, well, now I want to ask that question. Now I want to be able to ask about Estimates. What is an estimate? Show me.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll show them and we'll go back years of Estimates, and years of Estimates books, and we'll see it get thinner and thinner and thinner and thinner. And, eventually, it'll go—probably go the way of the phone book, where it started off super thick; now you can barely find a phone book anywhere.

And maybe that's what's going to happen to the Estimates book. Or we'll—now we'll have a—one line item to say, there's the Estimates for all of government, you know, X millions of dollars, X billions of dollars. That's it—one line, one page.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a democratic system that we have here, that just absolutely goes in the opposite direction. In a democratic system we should be able to say we have questions of government. We're looking for answers.

And, ideally, in a perfect world, you don't go there demanding answers. Those answers should already be forthcoming on behalf of government. I should be able to ask the question and get the answer—simple as that.

But now, under Bill 16, you're going to ask that question, and you're going to get a—you know what, if you may ask a simple question as to, you know what, how much nurses are we short? How much nurses do we need? What fills our need? You know, what funds did you spend on that? What was our pandemic response? What money did we spend on the pandemic?

And the government's answer will just be, oh, here's the big dollar amount. You figure it out for yourself. I don't have to be accountable to you. I don't have to share this information with you. I've done my due diligence. I've fulfilled my obligation. I've given you the dollar amount you asked for. You asked how government is run? Here you go. Here's one page, here's one dollar amount. You figure it out.

And that's just shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We—Manitobans are very, very intelligent. Manitobans deserve to be treated as such, deserve to be treated with the respect that they deserve and they've earned.

Throughout this pandemic the—Manitobans have been told they're on their own. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans have stepped up. They have accepted that challenge, took it head-on. But at the same time, they should not feel like they're in it alone.

And members on this side of the Chamber in our NDP caucus hear that loud and clear. And I say to them: You are not alone. We are with you, we are voices. We are asking these questions here today, holding government to account today on these issues just like you deserve, because you're not on your own.

And Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have stepped up throughout this pandemic. You hear a number of stories where communities and individuals have stepped up and truly done their part. But there's

also times and groups, and stakeholders and individuals that do need that help. They do deserve that help. They need that help. They also deserve that accountability and that transparency.

A government can't just push them aside and: I'll come and see you on election day. I'll come and see you six weeks before election, and that's the only time I'll—we'll have to deal with you. I'm good for three and a half years of not contributing to anybody, not talking to anybody; and six months before, that's when we'll all of a sudden have all these announcements, all these great things we're doing.

That accountability needs to happen every day. And Bill 16, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a step towards taking away that working together, taking away that ability to be able to say here we go, here's our information, here it is, here's the documents, here's the Estimates books that's bigger than ever, it's now 1,000 pages long because I've put every single line item in that Estimates book that I could possibly think of.

But, instead, it's going the opposite way. It's getting thinner and thinner and thinner, less and less information available, less and less ability for MLAs to do their jobs.

And like I said, Mr. Deputy, is that a matter of privilege? Maybe that's something that's taken up. But when Bill 16 comes forward, it's going in the opposite direction. It's being regressive, it's not being progressive and it's unfortunate to be able to say that under Bill 16, Manitobans' voices are being silenced.

Thank you—

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

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** I am very grateful for the opportunity to ever rise in this House and put some words on the record on important issues, but certainly I'm very much grateful to put some words on the record in regards to Bill 16.

I think I would want—I want to start my remarks by stating what you probably already know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly what every member on this side of the House is well aware of. I think the majority, the vast majority of Manitobans, certainly understand is that, unfortunately, you know, Manitobans generally just don't trust the PCs to manage any finances. They don't.

And that is not a criticism, it's just a literal observation. You can go talk to people at your local

grocery store, community centre, you can be, you know, at a restaurant, and folks generally, when talking about this government and their spending, don't have very good things to say. They don't trust this government, and that's based on the track record of this government from day one.

But what I'm going to focus on in regards to Bill 16 is what's going on in health care, and I'm going to talk a bit about the constituency that I very proudly represent, Union Station.

So, I mean, there's a narrative that is pretty prevalent now. That is that the government has been cooking the books. And I haven't heard that sort of language used so much as when I've, you know—since being elected in reference to this government. They cook the books.

And I've really seen, in quite an interesting way in health care, in the way this government has moved the goalpost in terms of how they measure things in health care, how they just altogether don't report on certain things in health care anymore. They just decided, you know what, this doesn't look good so we're just not going to report it at all.

It's like people can't—I think they think people won't be 'cridental'—critical or can't be critical if the information just is no longer being provided at all. They were wrong. People are smarter than that. And, of course, that indicates this government just has no desire whatsoever to be accountable to the decisions they make financially in the health-care system.

You know, it's something to witness not only how terribly this government has managed the finances of this province and, specifically, in health care. But it's actually devastating to see the impacts of that mismanagement. And, you know, we see that; we saw it before the pandemic; we've certainly seen it during the pandemic in the rates at which agency nurses and health-care workers are being used in our health-care system.

To think that if this government had just practised basic human decency and respect in the way they treat health-care workers that they wouldn't have health-care workers leaving our system in droves, retiring early. And they wouldn't be forced to pay multiple millions of dollars for agency nurses and health-care workers when they could just be paying fairly negotiated wages to health-care workers instead of having frozen health-care workers' wages for a number of years.

You know, they could have made sure that instead of Manitobans being subjected to highway medicine and hallway health care, that Manitobans could know that their dollars, their tax dollars, are going to them being able to receive health care right here at home and not being subjected to, you know, 10, 11, 12 days, actually, worth for some folks in some terrible cases of waiting in the hallways of emergency rooms without receiving the care that they desperately need.

\*(15:40)

All of these things are the direct result of this government government failing to adequately and appropriately invest in health care, and then deciding to treat our health-care system like some sort of, you know, profit-generating entity where they can also, you know, give their buddies or folks that they know contracts in the private system or, you know, threaten to send people to America for vaccinations, make empty promises and countless empty, meaningless announcements about how they're going to spend dollars that were announced many, many months previously, that they don't get the hopes up of Manitobans who are desperately needing to know how those dollars are going to be invested to improve their health-care outcomes; but they don't provide that information and just leave Manitobans waiting in pain and waiting with questions.

So, you know, when I think about the realities of this government failing to spend adequately, it is not just, you know, standing up to be critical or to point out their shortcomings or their multiple ongoing failures, it is to highlight the impacts of that decision making and that their refusal to be financially responsible, to be financially proactive, progressive, you know, reflective of the communities that exist within Manitoba has very real negative consequences, and, in fact, costs our health-care system and all of our systems more money.

That's the thing that I really have a hard time wrapping my head around, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is countless evidence; there is research from across the globe, from jurisdictions with comparable populations to Manitoba and central Canada; there are studies that go back decades which make explicitly clear that when you invest in bolstering public health care and when you communicate those investments meaningfully to the public, when you're transparent and you report and you're accountable, what you actually see is an improvement in health-care outcomes; that when you invest at early levels of intervention—so, you know, when children are young,

when you invest in making sure that parents who are giving birth have good prenatal health care—when you invest early and meaningfully in that way, what you actually do is not only improve outcomes but you actually reduce the burden of costs on the health-care system. That has been long proven.

We also know, based on evidence, that jurisdictions that invest and focus primarily on bolstering private health-care services—creating what some folks would call an American-style health-care system or two-tier health-care system—you also harm health-care outcomes that we actually know that increases the burden on the public health-care system in terms of human resource and in terms of cost.

And so with all of that information available, with all of that data available for decades, all of that information being very clear, this government somehow, some way has consistently made the decision to do the opposite of what makes sense in terms of health-care responsibility and improving outcomes and in terms of financial responsibility. And it begs the question, you know, what is it about this government that makes them so resistant to doing what makes common sense?

I mean, I think we all saw pretty plainly that the former premier, Brian Pallister, didn't really give two hoots about what anybody else thought or said. He had an agenda. He had a mission. That was all that mattered

But I think what Manitobans are seeing very clearly now is that that man didn't act alone; that the former premier Brian Pallister could not have achieved the monumental mess he made of our health-care system—and other systems—without the full support and participation of his entire caucus, certainly, his Cabinet.

And I think that is very obviously, you know, why we can see now that the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) seems completely unable to shift, to pivot—which is a word I've learned, you know, is used a lot here in this realm—she's been able—she's been unable to pivot at all from the previous agenda because, quite frankly, she was championing it. Every single member across the way was championing it. I mean, I saw that every time that the former premier would get up and say something ridiculous or offensive or problematic or nonsensical in terms of how we're actually going to improve the health-care system. And they'd all get up—and sometimes they actually stood up, like an ovation—and would just clap and clap and clap and clap and clap. It was totally surreal.

But now I understand that that wasn't just performance; it was actually commitment. They really believed in all of that, and they still do, which is why we continue to see terrible decision making in terms of finances.

I was dismayed last Estimates, dismayed, when the book that I received was, I mean, pretty much—you may not believe me because how can the biggest budgeting government have an Estimates book this thin? But quite literally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just—I realize I'm not supposed to use props. I apologize for that, but I just wanted to make sure what I was communicating was very clear, that it was—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

Yes, just for the sake of Hansard, it is a breach of the rules to use a kind of prop of whatever kind, so member is correct.

But the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) does have the floor.

**MLA Asagwara:** For the sake of those in Hansard, I just held up the Order Paper, which is a very thin document that is about the same size as the Estimates book I received last time around.

And, quite frankly, I was surprised. I was confused. I thought a mistake had been made. It was that thin.

It went from being previously about 145 pages to being barely 32 pages. I posted that on social media because I couldn't believe it. I thought, the people need to see this. And the response from people—not just from the constituency that I represent, but the response from constituents throughout the province was utter disgust.

People who don't even really know what the Estimates process is knew right away that there's no way this government could provide the kind of financial information that I need to do my job, that we need to do our jobs, in a book that small.

And people asked me, like, what is their play here? What—why are they doing this? Why are they making it impossible or difficult for you to get the information that you need to hold this government accountable about the way that they're investing—in their case, not investing—meaningfully in health care?

And all I could say was, you know what, look at their past behaviour. This is a government that has no desire to be transparent. This is a government that doesn't believe Manitobans deserve the answers to

their questions about decisions that are made in terms of the finances of this province. That is not a government that is fit to lead. That's what I told those constituents who reached out—and again, not just constituents from Union Station, constituents from all across the province.

I hear from constituents from all of members opposites' constituencies on a regular basis, mostly because those constituents don't actually hear back from their Conservative MLAs and have to reach out to us. Or because they don't think they're competent, and they don't trust them, and so they reach out to members of our caucus because they do trust us. They know that we care. They know that we're accountable. We know that if we don't have an answer that moment, we're going to get the answer for them as soon as we possibly can, which is not the track record of this government.

Which is why this government refuses—I wouldn't even say fails because that would imply maybe there was an effort—but they refuse to do the right thing and provide the information that Manitobans deserve in order to get the answers that they need to really important questions about spending and planning—strategic, you know, rollouts that are going to happen across all of our—all of their portfolios, all of our portfolios that we're the critics of.

So, all of that to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Manitobans have good reason not to trust this government in terms of how they manage the finances. And they have zero faith—they have zero faith that a government that is led by a Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) that is more concerned with hiding \$31 million than actually working on addressing the departments within her government, working at actually meeting the needs of—the financial 'needs'—needs of Manitobans. We see that they don't care about that.

They know that they can't trust this government, unfortunately. Because, you know, there's a lot that we can be critical—and we will be critical of—as opposition. A strong opposition does that and holds this government and holds a government to account. But there are some areas where I think we all can say, like, we don't want to have to be critical about certain things.

We don't want to have to push this government to call an independent, expert-led public inquiry into their handling of the pandemic. This government, if it were proactive, would have already done so, right? That's a reasonable decision to make. It's an important decision to make, and it is because this pandemic has devastated families across this province.

\* (15:50)

And when it comes to investing, when it comes to financially making sure that our province can move forward in the best way possible for all families, calling a public inquiry can help inform how that happens. That's just a—that would just be good decision making. That's where the government can invest in real dollars to make sure that decisions being made moving forward as we get through this pandemic and try to recover across the board, is done in an informed way, in a way that actually doesn't leave folks behind.

So, I know I've covered a lot already, but I do think it's important when we talk about, you know, what this government intends to do with a bill like this. And what this government has done historically is to talk about the realities of what that kind of financial responsibility looks like across the board.

So, what I'm talking about here, really, is that, you know, it's not just health care that I care about. Obviously, I care about, you know, all departments, and we should all recognize that these areas don't operate in silos, right? That all of these departments are actually connected and that when we look at whether or not the government is going to be responsible and transparent in Health Estimates, I expect, and I would hope, that they would do better across the board.

I would love to be able to sit down with my colleague, the MLA for Transcona, the critic for Education, and talk about what he's learned from his Estimates book, what questions he's going to be focusing on, what his areas of concern are in terms of education and how he thinks we need to hold the government accountable, because education and health care, they're connected, right?

I would love to be able to sit down with, you know, my colleague, the MLA for Keewatinook, and talk about reconciliation and, you know, what is it that he's seeing in the Estimates books that is supporting those efforts and what he's not seeing, because that affects health care as well.

But I know that, unfortunately—I don't think—none of my colleagues can actually open up or were able to open up their Estimates books and get the kind of information that they need to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. They all do a fantastic job, but let's be clear, you know, being able to go into Estimates and ask the questions that you need answered, you know, depends on the information being provided in those books that we expect.



And so, you know, this government is actively trying to make it very difficult for us as elected representatives to do our jobs on behalf of the people that we represent. And, again, we don't operate in silos. We don't operate as singular entities. We have to work together.

Thankfully, on this side of the House, we can do so joyously. It's not like what goes on over there, and I know there's big challenges over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you. Let me tell you, drama on that side of the House. Media knows it; they put it all over the news. Some people wearing scarves, not liking masks, other people championing all kinds of things.

On this side of the House, we actually get along. We work hard on our critic roles. We work well together to try and make sure that Manitobans have the best shot at having the outcomes that they want for their families and communities. *[interjection]*

And, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while members opposite choose to heckle me when I talk about that, what they should really be doing is hearing what I'm saying and reflecting on it deeply because this does affect the people that we all represent. They should take that very seriously.

It is incumbent on them to make sure that, you know, they're not operating in silos, which is what we're seeing, ultimately. I hear that from folks who I won't, you know, I won't name in this House for their own privacy. But I hear that from folks, that there's some real challenges in getting different departments that communicate, that there's some real challenges in knowing what's going on, you know, with the right and the left at the same time. And that—unfortunately what that does is it creates further gaps and people get hurt by that. People fall into those gaps and don't get their needs met, which we see time and time again.

So when I was talking about the social determinants of health in relation to, you know, the financials in Estimates, it is critically important that this government is transparent across the board, in every which way possible. We need to have a good sense of what their plans are in all areas in order to best understand, you know, what things are going to look like for Manitobans moving forward.

The interesting thing, most recently, this government has been doing—outside of, like, their ongoing empty announcements and press conferences that are just really for photo ops but not have any substance in them whatsoever—this government has been talking about the recovery in Manitoba and, you know, how

good things are going. But it's strange because they fail to talk about how people in the core, central Winnipeg, are really struggling, that the recovery doesn't look the same across the province.

And, you know, this is a government who has that information, but, again, fails to do anything meaningful with it. I think—when I make that statement, I think back to the race-based and segregated data that was collected during this pandemic, and how Manitoba remains the only jurisdiction to have collected that data in that way.

And I know that folks fought really hard for that data to be collected and for the investments to be made. That data, you know, should be, like, when we talk about financial reporting, when we talk about this in particular, it would be great to go into Estimates and be able to have information in terms of what was invested there to make that a reality and ask questions about that.

But, you know, like, we're seeing in—by way of this legislation, this government, you know, isn't transparent and wasn't transparent with that data that they collected during the pandemic and didn't put that data to good use. Because, you know, the information that you gather is sometimes only as good as what you do with it. And this government didn't actually action the information that they were gathering, which had harmful effects on the communities who we knew—those, who, you know, were paying attention and looking in other jurisdictions, knew would impact certain communities disproportionately.

And so when I look at a bill like Bill 16 and what this government is purporting to do, I look at Union Station that has a very diverse demographic to it, incredibly diverse and dynamic community that I'm fortunate to represent, a community that has been impacted disproportionately throughout the pandemic, a community that definitely is not recovering at the same pace as other communities, a community that would highly benefit from being able to see plainly from the government what the financial strategy is to support the community and having improved outcomes.

I know that people in Union Station are paying attention. I know that people in constituencies like Southdale, Riel, Brandon East, McPhillips, Lagimodière, Fort Richmond—I know that folks in those constituencies as well are also paying close attention, that they're very invested in knowing what this government's financial strategy is and how this

government intends to be transparent in terms of how they're going to help communities recover.

And, you know, we can't act like folks who live in Fort Richmond don't care about folks who live in Union Station; they do. I was somebody who grew up, you know, in what would be, I guess, Seine River now—was for my whole life connected to what is now known as Union Station. So I can tell you that there are folks living in all different places.

I got an email, actually, just on Friday from a gentleman who lives in—I think he lives in Portage la Prairie, but he has a brother and his mom, who's 93 years old, who live in downtown Winnipeg, who live in Union Station. He is highly invested in the decisions that are made by this government. He's asking questions about how's this government going to be transparent, how are they going to report on the decisions that they're making that are directly affecting his mother and his brother?

I was grateful he reached out, and my point is that across the province, regardless of where we live, we are connected and people are paying attention and that one simple thing this government could do to facilitate trust, a belief from the citizens of this province is to make decisions financially that don't reflect all the decisions they've been making since 2016—which is to hide information, to withhold details and to make decisions financially to the detriment of people, prioritizing profit and privatization over people.

\* (16:00)

*Mr. Brad Michaleski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

People are tired of that. They're fed up. They're exhausted. They're beleaguered because of this pandemic. And, you know, we have all been encouraging this government to shift gears. Like I said earlier: pivot already, figure it out, do the basics that people want and need you to do to instill some confidence.

But, judging by this bill, the government has absolutely no interest in that. This government shouldn't have to legislate themselves to commit a practice that is long-standing. That is like—and my colleague, the MLA for Transcona, said this when he rose in the House, and I was with him on that—the notion that this government is going to actually try to legislate themselves to do something, to commit to doing something that is a long-standing practice—tabling detailed Estimates of expenditures across government—is just mind-boggling—mind-boggling.

Like, I just—I look at the decisions of this government and I just—you know, you've got to wonder, is it that they're tired? You know, which to me is pretty—like, how? Look at the fact that we've got health-care workers, nurses, doctors working mandated double shifts—some people triple shifts—multiple times a week and still showing up to work, giving their absolute best, doing the most for Manitobans to make sure they have the best chance at good outcomes.

And this government—[interjection]

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —is tired? And this government is throwing in the towel? This government tells Manitobans they're on their own, and then backs that up with pieces of legislation that reflect that this government has basically given up on the constituents they're meant to protect and they're meant to represent in this House?

It's unbelievable to me. It's unbelievable to me that any member on that side of the House could get up, leave their homes, go out in their communities, look people in the face, when that's their attitude.

And it's reflected in the bills they bring forward. And it's reflected in their decision making, in their flippant and disrespectful coulda, woulda, shoulda. Or coulda, shoulda, woulda—I'm not quite sure what the line is. I think I almost had it. You get my point. You know, like, that is the behaviour of a government that thinks they can coast. That is the mentality of a government that takes for granted the responsibility that they were given and entrusted with.

And, you know, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, when this government brings forward pieces of legislation that, you know, make really clear that they're not changing their ways, that they're committed to moving ahead, full steam ahead with the agenda that was initiated under Brian Pallister when they make statements publicly, making very clear that they don't care that Manitobans are watching, they don't care that Manitobans are hurting. They don't think they're accountable to anyone. They stand up in the House and they respond to our question period questions as if it's like some joke.

They don't care that we're bringing forward these questions on behalf of the people that we represent, on behalf of people who really need answers. When they call pressers to make empty announcements, half of the time—at this point, we should probably just do a tally on the percentage—half the time, aren't even true. Going out and making—having pressers announcing

that they're going to send teachers to America to get vaccines and talk about \$50 million to address a surgical and diagnostic backlog that only continues to grow, that affects 10 per cent of the population here in Manitoba, that I hear from constituents in Union Station about on a daily basis—people who can't get their tests done, people who are waiting for three years for spinal surgeries have lost their jobs, their income, their ability to go out in the community and live meaningful, full and rich lives because they're waiting in pain with no end in sight because this government won't give them an end date, because this government thinks it's better to go out and make empty announcements and bring forward pieces of legislation that are saying they're going to legislate themselves to do what they should already do and what's common practice in this Legislature.

It is embarrassing. It is disgraceful. It is unacceptable.

And, again, Manitobans see it for what it is, which is why Manitobans are organizing and they are excited for the opportunity to get this government out, and to elect a government that puts people first, that believes in accountability, a government that listens to the experts, listens to front-line workers, that understands that investing meaningfully in health care and across all areas that address the social determinants of health is better for everyone as whole people and health-wise, but, certainly, better fiscally, as well.

I look forward to that opportunity, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, as do my colleagues and I.

Thank you for the chance to rise in the House today.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Glad to have an opportunity to put a few words on the record.

It appears that the folks across the way here have no interest in speaking in support of their own bill. I think that's quite telling—not a single speech we've heard today from anyone. This speaks to the overall level of support from folks across the way for their government's agenda.

You know, this bill that we're here to debate today is fundamentally a piece of political theatre. It's political theatre through and through, and it's about trying to help this government create some sense out there in the public that they are financially responsible.

That's what this bill is for. It's to try to sit—to try to create some sense for Manitobans that they are

watching the finances, that they're responsible with government finances and that they are ultimately interested in controlling spending at some level.

But we know that this bill achieves none of that. This bill does not achieve that. It's purely theatre—one hundred per cent. And, you know, it's important, I think, just to right away talk about why that's theatre, and we can look simply at what this government's done with Hydro.

You know, the bill, of course, focuses specifically on raising Hydro's debt and ensuring that it's limited. But, you know, this government's attempt to try to create an appearance of wanting to manage Hydro's debt or be financially responsible rings hollow. It rings absolutely hollow when we look at the decisions that this government has made relative to Manitoba Hydro, that speak to their financial incompetence and their lack of real concern over, ultimately, the—what's in the best interests of ratepayers.

So, you know, this bill proposes to put a cap on Hydro debt and to demonstrate, again, this theatre of financial responsibility. Meanwhile, if we look at what this government has done on the Hydro file, we can see a long record of terrible financial decisions that are going to cost Manitobans money, and ultimately raise our overall costs in this province.

We can start by looking at—going back a couple of years—their decision to sell off a Hydro subsidiary, Teshmont. That was a decision that, ultimately, will lead to reduced profits for Manitobans, reduced revenues for Hydro.

We know that that subsidiary was a profit-making entity that was helping Manitoba Hydro's revenues, helping to keep rates low. But for some reason, this government made a decision to support the hiving-off of that subsidiary—the selling-off of that entity. And in that—in making that decision, ultimately stopped revenues from coming back to Manitobans, stopped Hydro's ability to contribute to paying down the debt with profits that were being made from that subsidiary.

And this government, I know, feels shame relating to that decision because, often, when it comes up, they scoff and they yell, but that is one really terrible example of this government's poor decision making, poor financial acumen and the kind of, frankly, poor decisions that Manitobans have come to expect from them.

\* (16:10)

Another real concern that we can point to in terms of this government's lack of financial responsibility, again demonstrating that this bill is fundamentally a hollow attempt at creating an appearance of financial responsibility, is that they have increasingly, over the last six years of their being in government, continued to increase the percentage of Hydro employees that are contract employees.

So, you know, if we go to job sites around this province, we can see that—you look at the licence plates on Hydro job sites, and IBEW leadership will share story after story about what they're seeing in terms of this increased trend of seeing more and more out-of-province workers instead of Manitobans having an opportunity to go to work and support our economy here at home.

This increased reliance on contract labour, that costs Manitobans more money, and that percentage of work that's being done, ultimately, by contract workers for Hydro, continues to grow. It continues to expand. And the question needs to be asked if this government wants to be perceived with this bill to be a government that cares about the finances of this province: why are they—for example, here when it relates to getting the job done and helping ensure Manitobans can have access to reliable power—why are they continuing to, again, cut Hydro employees, cut services for Manitobans and move towards this reliance on contract labour?

That's an example of poor financial decision making. Contract labour for Hydro costs us more money. It costs Manitobans more money. It will add to the debt of Hydro.

So their decision making and the actual things we're seeing them do on the ground—not this political theatre, this grandstanding with this bill—which, again, as many have written about and we've seen articles in the Free Press and elsewhere speaking to this, this bill achieves nothing in the way of increasing the actual, you know, management of our overall debt—it does nothing except it puts forward this theatre while the government actually takes actions, in reality, on the ground, to make our financial situation worse. And contract labour at Hydro is a really embarrassing example of that that needs to be brought under control if we want to help Manitoba Hydro's finances and ultimately the finances of this province.

You know, we also—we have seen with this government them cause a strike that ended up costing Manitobans a whopping \$18 million—an unnecessary, wasteful strike that ended up costing Manitobans

\$18 million—a strike that could have been avoided, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. That strike didn't need to happen. We did not need to have IBEW workers walk the picket line. It was an absolutely needless, needless strike.

Instead of trying to illegally freeze wages or mandate wage freezes and force those on workers who are helping us to keep our lights on in our houses, to keep our fridges cold and our houses warm—instead of doing that, this government chose, of course, to force wage freezes on those workers.

And those workers were forced to, of course, as we know, defend themselves and walk the picket line needlessly, and, ultimately, at the end of the day, Manitoban ratepayers were on the hook for \$18 million. That is financial irresponsibility at its worst. That's a gargantuan waste of funds that could have gone towards so many other really valuable purposes in the middle of a pandemic, like paid sick leave or helping to increase wages for workers who are working on the front line and keeping Manitobans safe.

So, again, theatre—bill that proposes to control costs; reality—increasing costs for Manitobans.

They wanted to highlight Hydro in this bill, so let's keep talking about Hydro and their poor financial decision making as it relates to Hydro.

Manitoba Hydro International was a subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro that this government interfered in and ultimately helped to shut down. Manitoba Hydro International had a long and storied history of doing incredible things, not only in this province, but abroad. If you look elsewhere and you see some of the countries that they've worked in, you hear stories about the association of Manitoba with security, with energy reliability, with a good future.

And this government saw fit to shut them down even though Manitoba Hydro International made this province—made ratepayers \$80 million in profits—\$80 million in profits—that were being sent right back to Manitoba Hydro and their bottom line, and, in turn, helping to reduce Hydro's debt, helping to keep rates low.

That's a shameful decision that we've seen from this government and one that confused a lot of Manitobans—people who were very familiar with the good work of Manitoba Hydro International, employees that worked there reaching out, saying we just don't understand why this government could be so financially irresponsible as to want to shut down a

subsidiary that was making all of us a bunch of money.

How does that make any sense? Why are we getting out of a business if Manitobans ratepayers, if Manitobans are benefiting financially? There's no explanation for that, just another example of poor financial decision making.

So, again, over here—theatre, a bill that ultimately achieves nothing, that has no teeth, that can, you know, puts these imaginary caps that can just simply be removed every year and then replaced. And then, over here, genuinely concerning pattern of decision making that places the finances of this province at risk, that places—in the case of Hydro—more burden on Manitoba Hydro, that places a greater burden on Manitoba Hydro ratepayers. That's a real concern.

And, you know, again, those people that reached out to say, what is this government doing? We can't really understand it. These are people who worked there, who saw the value that Manitoba Hydro International was creating for Manitobans, that saw how exciting of an opportunity that was.

Manitoba Hydro International served as this incredible opportunity internally for Hydro workers who were able to voluntarily sign up for Manitoba Hydro International work, potentially have an opportunity to go support the development of energy reliability, energy security in nations across the way, across the ocean—to do great things, to have something to be proud of, to bring our province's amazing knowledge and history of Manitoba Hydro investment to bear in other jurisdictions—in places that needed it.

And while we did that to improve the finances right here for Manitoba Hydro, for our province—what an incredibly short-sighted decision that was. And you know, this government has kind of been able to skate on that one. They've been able to skate on that. It was very quiet sort of shutting down, dwindling down of Manitoba Hydro International.

And, again, you know—let's talk about some of the other effects of that.

We had somewhere in the range of 25 to 40 per cent of employees at Manitoba Hydro International that disappeared. These are very good paying jobs. These are engineers, people who were making great wages in this province that were contributing to the economy of this province through the taxes that they were paying. And those highly skilled individuals now have zip. They've left the economy. They've gone to Stantec in Toronto. They've gone to

offices in Vancouver. They've gone to firms in Calgary.

Again, what kind of economic management is that? This shrinking down of our pool of taxpayers, shrinking down of our pool of professional jobs. Why on earth would we eliminate good-paying jobs that help to contribute to our provincial economy, to ultimately the well-being of all of us?

That makes zero sense to me, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, zero sense and it made zero sense to the workers who worked there who just could not figure out what this government was thinking—bad financial decision making, poor level of fiscal prudence over and over again. That's the reality that we see on the ground. Those are the actual decisions, not the theatre that we see with this bill.

You know, again, they wanted to focus on Hydro finances in this, so it bears focusing down on the decisions that they've made relating to Hydro. And another really important one is one we're seeing them bragging about as of late, which is ultimately the decision to give away management and the ability to profit from our collectively owned Manitoba Hydro fibre-optic assets.

\* (16:20)

You know, we've seen this government brag and—well, brag is one way of putting it. We've seen them announce, you know, that they've partnered with an out-of-province company—who happens to be owned, by the way, by a hedge fund based in the US. We've seen them partner with this company to, ultimately, overtake and to take ownership over our publicly owned asset, that fibre-optic cable—what amounts to probably hundreds of millions of dollars worth of investments. Those are investments that belong to you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and they're investments that belong to every single member in this House. That belongs to all of us, that infrastructure.

Now, what have we seen? We've seen announcements that celebrated the giving away of a huge profit-making opportunity. You know, that fibre-optic network, that infrastructure up until this government gave it away, was governed by Manitoba Hydro Telecom, which is a subsidiary of Hydro that we can all, again, be very proud of in this province. They did incredible work of helping to expand access to broadband in this province, to regions of the province that didn't have access to it. That was a Hydro subsidiary making money for Manitobans, making money for Manitoba Hydro, keeping our rates low, reducing

Hydro's financial debts—unbelievable benefits to this province that were being brought forward by Manitoba Hydro Telecom.

But this government saw fit to hand those over to a private company from outside of Manitoba that's owned by an international hedge fund—or by a US-based hedge fund. Let that sink in.

So, here we've got a bill that purports to, you know, demonstrate their financial responsibility, that they care, apparently, about the finances of the province, and then again, over here, another example of terrible fiscal decision making—of giving away dollars to a company from outside of Manitoba who's owned by—which is owned by an American hedge fund, instead of having those dollars, those profits come back to us. That is an embarrassing indictment of this government's decision making, of their financial irresponsibility.

And, you know, I don't think we've heard the end of this particular deal because, as I understand it, things aren't quite settled yet with this out-of-province company. This deal is still in motion.

And, you know, it's clear that, at the end of the day, this government is in the process of giving away a great amount of wealth and we need to watch them very carefully. We need to watch them very carefully because we can see over and over again that they're taking assets that belong to us, that we're profiting from, that we all own as Manitobans, we can be proud of, and giving them away so another company, a private company, can make dollars off of us.

You know, again, we got to say the more bad financial decision making within the Hydro space here, I'll—you know, I'll point to another—yet another example: their massively wasteful investment in the Brad Wall Hydro inquiry. Again, a massively wasteful investment that brought no insights to us as Manitobans, that simply was used to create partisan attacks. They hired their friend from—you know, an ex-Conservative premier, by the way—the second Conservative premier that they hired in a row for this hatchet job that had been put together.

And, ultimately, you know, surprise, surprise: the second Conservative premier in a row that was hired to do this, you know, to do this analysis of the decisions that had been made by the last NDP government turned out to not really provide a lot of insight—not a lot of insight in that document.

And, unfortunately, Manitobans were on the hook for about \$2.5 million. Again, that's a huge amount of

money to spend on a review that didn't bring a lot of value to Manitobans. Another example of the financial irresponsibility that we've seen from this government.

And, you know, the entire attempt to again highlight Hydro's debt, to really put this toothless law forward, is an attempt, in a way, to try to criticize previous NDP government investments in Hydro—also doesn't really make sense to me, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

You know, we know that they continue to rail against our investments in building our hydroelectric infrastructure, which they have always done, of course. The NDP in Manitoba is the only party that's really made significant investments in Hydro and has helped to build out this system.

So they like to criticize and rail against that, rail against our decision to build the Keeyask dam, which, by the way, resulted—I think most recently we learned—or several months ago, or going a little ways back—in a \$5-billion sale of energy to Saskatchewan, which was hidden away from Manitobans in the Brad Wall report, unfortunately. You know, they tried to sweep that under the rug; it was a really inconvenient little detail.

So we know that, you know, that those decisions, which they criticize, have already started to bear fruit, and we know in a world that's going to be increasingly energy insecure, you know, a world where we're seeing energy prices skyrocket and, you know, jurisdictions around the world are looking for cleaner energy options, Manitoba, thanks to those Manitoban NDP investments, is going to be incredibly well positioned going forward.

I'm hearing snickering across the way. It's not a surprise because this government just likes to snip, you know, chop, cut, shrink, make everything smaller. Unfortunately, if we had followed their, you know, their approach to governance, Manitoba simply wouldn't be in an energy-secure position. We wouldn't be in a position to benefit from our incredible natural wealth that we have in this province, from our incredible natural hydroelectric wealth.

So they rail against that. You know, again, this bill is an attempt to try to, again, rail against past NDP government investments in Hydro, but Manitobans know that those investments were important for our future. Manitobans know that that firm, secure supply of reliable energy is going to serve us incredibly well going forward. So, regardless of what this government

likes to say about it, how—regardless of how much they like to put out the spin and criticize the decisions of the last NDP government, they know in their hearts, every single one of them, that that was a good investment, that we needed to make those investments.

You know, moving aside from Keeyask here, let's talk about their constant railing against Bipole III. You know, we've heard from this government constant critiques of the last NDP government's decision to invest in another bipole. I don't know if this government, or any members of this government, have actually looked at the risks that we were facing by having two bipole lines located directly next to each other, but there's significant risks associated with that—significant risks associated with that. We—if we had a big fire or a big storm, huge portion of Manitoba's energy would be cut off.

This government apparently didn't support the need to make those types of investments. Again, we've heard from them nothing but looking backwards instead of looking ahead and saying, you know, what do we need to do to make sure Manitobans can have access to the reliable, secure supply of energy that we need access to? Just railing against that, again, trying to argue for shrinking, cutting, staying where we are, stasis, moving backwards, that's what Manitobans think about when they think about the PC party of Manitoba. They think about cuts, shrinking. They certainly don't think about investments in Manitoba's future. They don't think about a government that is going to do what they—what needs to be done to make sure Manitobans can be secure going forward, that Manitobans can have an economy that works for everyone. They think of cuts.

They think also of financial irresponsibility, which I think is, quite frankly, why this government has brought this bill forward. It's a desperate attempt, a very desperate attempt, I might add, at trying to create an appearance of financial responsibility, which, again, has absolutely no teeth. There's no teeth to this bill: creates this pretend debt ceiling, and, ultimately, those can be changed every year.

So, you know, they can go out and tell Manitobans that they're financially responsible and that they're limiting spending when, in reality, there's nothing different. There's—no changes have been made. There's nothing meaningful here in this bill of any kind whatsoever.

You know, the last thing I'll point out, that we know that this government, again, railed against in terms of Hydro development is, you know, beyond

Bipole III, beyond the development of new hydro-electric capacity in Keeyask—again, is the Manitoba-Minnesota tie line.

\* (16:30)

Again, we've heard this looped in to these other investments as though these were bad decisions by the last NDP government, when what do we know in reality? That investment is going to support our ability to continue to sell huge amounts of energy down to the United States, and will, in fact, also help to support greater energy reliability and security in Manitoba because it allows us to have an increased capacity to bring energy from the US to Manitoba, if needed, in an emergency.

You know, I don't know any Manitobans who would argue that we wouldn't want to have more energy security, that we don't need to increase the amount of energy security and reliability we have in this province. The only people, it seems, in Manitoba who would argue against that are in this Chamber, on the other side of the aisle here.

Again, so we're seeing, you know, railing against investments in Hydro. This is a transparent attempt at trying to create a sense of financial responsibility that's not there. And, you know, arguably, we can see that not only in Hydro, we can see that in departments across government.

My colleague from Union Station made some great points about the very same concern which is, you know, this government's cuts in health care ultimately result in other costs to Manitobans. I think back to some of the other financially irresponsible decisions that have been made years ago. And if—forget, sort of, what we're seeing over the last couple of years: basic things like cutting in-patient physiotherapy, cutting foot care. In what universe does that make any sense from a financial responsibility perspective?

You know, you speak, like—I'm sure many of the members across the way had many conversations—I'm sure they've had many conversations with people who've reached out who said, you know what? The fact that I couldn't get in-patient physiotherapy meant that I was back in the hospital, taking up provincial resources so I could get the care that I need, because I couldn't afford to get physiotherapy because I didn't have an insurance policy.

We see, in theory, what the government is trying to achieve with these cuts that they make. We see what it is that they're aspiring to do but, ultimately,

Manitobans know that it doesn't work out that way. We know that it ends up costing us more money. That PC mentality, that short-term thinking, short-term cuts result in huge amounts of long-term pain for us.

Cutting in-patient physio is just a perfect example of that. It's so simple. It's so clear to anybody you speak with. It demonstrates with total clarity the short-sightedness that we've seen from this government. We make a cut here. We pretend that all of a sudden we've got these savings, and then we kick the can way down the road, and we forget, we pretend that those costs aren't there. Meanwhile, those costs just balloon. They grow, and they continue to grow.

So, you know, we've seen—again, this government brags about cutting deficits. They just create another deficit, and a much bigger one, over here. So, you know, shameful decisions like that over and over again, are all the evidence that Manitobans need to see to demonstrate how financially irresponsible this government is. We know that they're constantly making these short-sighted decisions over and over again, and that's why this bill isn't fooling anyone. It's not fooling anybody in this province.

No, what we'd like to see—and I think what Manitobans want to see—is a government that understands the importance of making investments that will ultimately help us to save money. Not going the other way. Not going backwards. Not cutting investments in health care. Not cutting profit-making, you know, entities within Hydro. We need a government that looks forward, that understands that those cuts have impacts over the long-term.

We don't need more political theatre, more meaningless bills like this one that achieve nothing—at a time, by the way—like, the fact that we're here, debating this bill that has, frankly, zero substance to it, at this point in time, when we have so many other pressing concerns that are of critical importance to Manitobans, just speaks to the—you know, what this government is hoping to achieve right now: political theatre.

We're not seeing a serious attempt by a government to do what's needed to help Manitobans to recover from the pandemic. Instead, we're getting this. And I know that every single member across the way knows that what I'm saying is true, that this is a hollow attempt at trying to create, again, this sense of being financially responsible.

They all understand, I'm sure, that this doesn't achieve that. I'm sure this is actually a little bit embarrassing for members across the way. Maybe it's actually really embarrassing. It should be really embarrassing. Because this has been revealed for what it is. It's not a serious document. It's not a serious piece of legislation. It's a sham.

It demonstrates this government's hubris in thinking that they can pull the wool over Manitobans' eyes. That Manitobans will forget about the decisions that they've made over and over again; the financial irresponsibility that we've seen from them since day one that they got into government. And, frankly, this government should be embarrassed about this bill.

So I'm grateful for a chance to have had this opportunity to put a few words on the record, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, to talk about this embarrassing bill. And, ultimately, we need to invest in Manitobans. We got to stop the cuts. We need to start looking forward, stop looking backwards and do what's best for Manitobans.

I thank you very much.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I gotta say I could listen to that all day long. The member for St. James (Mr. Sala) has it exactly right, you know. And not just the member for St. James, but this entire team, you know, has really laid bare this government's piece of legislation here and exposed it for what it is.

And I think the member for St. James called it a sham, and I couldn't have said it better myself. And, in fact, I'll try over the next half an hour, but I don't—really don't think I will be able to put it better than he did just now.

I also want to note that while members on this side of the House are putting facts on the record and are really talking about the real-life experience of Manitobans right now and how legislation like this either doesn't address it or, in fact, you know, by way of its 'obsflic'—what's the word now?

**An Honourable Member:** Obfuscation.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Obfuscation—thank you very much to the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare)—actually hurts Manitobans who are worried about their affordability, are worried about our health-care system, worried about education, worried about so many things in our province.

And all the while, while we're putting, you know, good words on the record and laying out the concerns



of our constituents, it's dead silent on the government's side; aside for, I would add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a bit of sniggering when it came to the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) talking about the importance of keeping Manitoba Hydro a public-owned entity in this province. That's the only time we got a reaction and it was to laugh because, of course, the members opposite don't believe that. But we do and we'll continue to say that every single day here in this House.

**An Honourable Member:** Well said.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I hope it was well said, I heard from a member in the Chamber, except for that one word, which I hope Hansard will forgive me on exactly the pronunciation.

Anyway, I digress. This is an important piece of legislation to discuss because, as the members here have been saying, it does need to be picked apart, and there are some facts that need to be put on the record with regards to Bill 16.

We know that this bill amends The Financial Administration Act and it effectively works with the Treasury Board's authority to regulate the financial affairs of the reporting organizations within the province of Manitoba that are now being modified. Its authority to specify reporting requirements related to performance and outcomes becomes clarified under this bill and it gives additional authority to regulate the borrowing or lending of money and the giving of guarantees by reporting organizations.

Time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we go out on the doorsteps and we're talking to people about their real struggles and their real concerns in this province, what they say to us is, let's make sure that we're being financially responsible, that we're being respectful of people's monies. The hard-working people of Manitoba want to make sure that we're being responsible with their money.

And they know that we're the party to do that because they know the experience of 10 straight balanced budgets in this province under Gary Doer. They know that history. They know that's who we are. And they know that that is the party that is coming to their doorstep talking about the important issues, talking about innovative ways to solve those problems but, ultimately, always being financially and fiscally responsible while we're doing it.

\* (16:40)

So, when the party went—you know, the party opposite goes and they knock on their doors and they say, you know, well, what are your concerns, they have to, in fact, answer for a record of now six years of, you know, meddling and adjusting and changing their own legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to how we account for the balanced budget and the budgets here in this province.

It's their party, in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that came in and right away, with great fanfare, said, well, we're going to open up the balanced budget legislation—oh, but we're going to also make a bit of a caveat there, that if we don't balance the budget right now, oh, that's okay; don't worry about it. We'll give ourselves five years to do it, okay. That was the initial change they made.

And then they said, well, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, looking at the forecast. This is before the pandemic, I might add, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They said, well, while looking at the forecast, there's no way we can do that. There's no way we're going to be able to balance. We're not going to be able to hit those targets, so let's change it again—let's change it again and let's modify what the standards are that we're going to hold ourselves to.

And then when even that wasn't good enough—and I heard from all the members on the front bench of the government, under the Pallister government, and now under the Stefanson government—they were all very concerned because there was a clause about losing some of their salary if they couldn't come back into balance.

So, what did they do? What did they do? Pressing problems; again, this is before the pandemic. We had huge undertaking in the health-care system, in the education system. We had these guys hacking and slashing across government. And they said whoa, whoa, let's stop all of that and let's—what should we spend our time at the Cabinet table talking about? How can we protect our salaries? How can we go in and meddle once again with the balanced budget legislation?

Four times, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Four times before 2019 did this government bring the balanced budget legislation, scratch it out and—okay, well, wait a minute, what can we do here? How can we give ourselves that salary?

And at this point, if I'm not mistaken, I—there—you know, I've got—there's much smarter members than myself on our side of the House, they can correct me

here, but I think the way that it works is that if they don't—if they come into balance any time in the next decade, they're going to get retroactive pay, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That means that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) will be out of this House; he'll be on the golf course; he'll be kicking back, and all of a sudden he'll get a phone call from payroll and say, oh, we've got a cheque for you. We're going to pay you for the time that you were a minister retroactively.

I mean, it just—it's beyond the pale, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's absolutely mind-boggling to the average Manitoban. But that's been the priority of this government.

So, when we saw Bill 16 come forward, you can imagine that we were a little skeptical. We thought: What are they up to this time? But it actually goes a lot further than the previous balanced budget legislation and other financial and fiscal legislation that's been brought forward.

It's actually even more concerning than, you know, making sure the Minister of Finance gets his paycheque in 10 years, because while that is egregious and is something that, you know, all Manitobans, I think, are very aware of—being the only priority, is to make sure that this government, they get their pay—what this does is this actually enshrines and codifies some of the—I'm going to ask the member for—of Transcona for the pronunciation again—

**An Honourable Member:** Obfuscation.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —obfuscation that this government has already been undertaking when it comes to financial reporting.

And that is why it is incredibly important that Manitobans understand exactly what is going on with this legislation.

You know, again, you know, I spend a lot of time—well, you know, before omicron changed the dynamics, we were out on the doorstep a lot in the fall talking to Manitobans, talking to my constituents, talking to people about what was really concerning them.

And one of the things that often comes up is—so there's a lot of questions that are, you know, what I would call the big questions, right? So, what are you going to do about, you know, education? I'm concerned because you cut, you know, the government cut my emergency room, CancerCare at my hospital, diagnostic testing in my neighbourhood. I

mean, the list goes on, and the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) can—he'll help me out, make sure we capture everything in what's been going on in health care.

But these are the big questions, and these are the questions that sometimes, you know, we can say, look, you know the cuts have hurt. We understand that, and here's how we can fix it.

But sometimes you'll get a question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a little more in-depth. Like, it really is. Like, the voters on the doorstep, the average voter on the doorstep is a lot more well-informed than the government seems to give them credit for. And sometimes they'll ask questions that are quite specific. And what I'm always happy to do is, I'm always happy to say, okay, you know, I don't know the answer right now but I scribble it down on my notebook, and I know that then, when we come to this place and ask about—during the Estimates process, we're going to have a chance to dig into the numbers. We're going to have a chance to get a little bit more in-depth.

And there was a time in this Chamber where you could actually ask questions of a minister, and they wouldn't just try to bloviate—I don't know if I got that word right—and sort of take up the, you know, ten minutes allotted to them. But they'd actually confer with their officials, and they'd actually try to answer the question, and they'd try to get to the bottom of what we were asking about. That—there was a time that that happened. It doesn't happen so much anymore.

But beyond that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what in fact happened is, all of a sudden, we go, you know—I guess, was this—this was last year. We get out Estimates books distributed to us and everybody's going, where's the rest of them? Where's the information that we need? Where's the information that we need as legislators to go in, line-by-line, and check what are the concerns? How are these cuts really affecting the people in our constituencies?

And that's what they're asking us. They're asking us: How is this affecting us? How is this impacting us? And so we had this opportunity in the past where we could actually go in, and we could actually, you know, track this stuff on a more granular level, and hold the government to account over it.

And what did this government do, you know? And they're going to blame Brian—this was Brian Pallister. This was all his fault, you know. Boy, that—we didn't like that guy either, that's what they're going

to say. But then they go ahead and they keep the same team. They keep the—exactly the same, and they, in fact, pick one of the ministers that was front-and-centre in that government to be the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). So we know that they're not going to change anything. They think they've pulled a fast one on Manitobans. Oh, yeah, he was terrible. But we're going to do everything exactly the same.

And we haven't seen our Estimates books but I don't think anybody over here is holding their breaths that they're actually going to get the information, because this is the kind of legislation that actually codifies and enshrines that way of doing business in legislation and in law. And so, you know, this has been a regular practice of this government. We know that they're going to do this and they say well, COVID, you know, it was—you know, times have changed and things are different.

Manitobans want the truth and they want the answers and they're not getting it from this government. So, you know, okay, well, we're going to work with what we've got. We're going to work with the information that's in front of us. I look forward to the Estimates process because Manitobans are asking some hard questions and we want to get them answers. So that's what we're going to be doing.

So beyond that, though, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, beyond that, you know, this government knows that they have a terrible record when it comes to their public finances, right? So, not only just the information they're giving us, but the information that they're going to the Auditor General with, right? And this is unbelievable to me. Because, you know, I guess they figure, well, we've got this reputation; we're the money guys, right? We're the blue team. We're—you know, don't worry. Don't worry, we've got this all under control.

Okay, fine. You don't have to tell us that. You don't have to tell Manitobans that. You go to the Auditor General. That is the—where the buck stops when it comes to making sure that our books are being handled properly.

And they can't even meet that threshold. That is the absolute, basic threshold that a government should be able to meet. So, I mean, because look, they can cut all day long and Manitobans are going to hold them account for that. There will be a reckoning for the cuts that have have happening, and they will pay a price at the polls for that.

But before we even get to that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans just want a government at the very basis that can, at least, have the Auditor General sign off on their books. These guys are cooking the books. I mean, not only are they cutting, they're cooking the books. It's unbelievable to me that they would think that they could get away with this; that they think that nobody's paying attention, and oh well, you know, it's just the NDP bringing this up. It's not just us. Like I said, you don't want to discount how informed Manitobans are. They're watching this stuff. They know that this government continues to put disinformation out there.

So what did they do? They said, okay, well, you know, going back to their balanced budget legislation, they said, well, okay, we're going to hit that target. They didn't hit it. Okay, well, change what the target is. Didn't hit it. Move the goalposts some more, didn't hit it.

\* (16:50)

The only time—so, they come in and they say, well, guess what, actually, this upcoming year, we're going to balance our budget. Whoa, unbelievable. Can you imagine that they're going to balance a budget? At the same time, this—I want to remind the House here—at the exact same time that a worldwide pandemic is shutting down the entire world, this government says, well, we're going to balance the budget.

So, at the same time that the flood is coming down the street, the water's coming into the basement, they're saying, ha, ha, I got my mortgage paid off. Okay, all done. Financial problems are over.

It's a sham, it's an absolute disgrace and it's a sham, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It makes no sense. You're going to balance the budget while the—while your house is leaking, your basement is leaking. It makes no sense. They haven't hit one single target.

So, it is important to remind people why this matters, what this is all about. Why does it matter that we're being honest and upfront about our reporting and our accounting with the Auditor General? Why does it matter that information is shared, there's transparency in government?

It matters because, when you go to cut health care, when you underspend on a budget when it comes to COVID relief for schools and for education, when you start downloading costs onto Manitobans in the form of higher tuition, higher fees across the board,

Manitobans want to understand: Why are we doing this? What does this mean? What exactly am I a part of here?

Because Manitobans understand. They pay their taxes. They pay their fair share and they want to make sure that their money is being properly managed. And they're willing to say, we're going to pull together. I mean, we did this.

We did this in the flood of 2011. You know, some of these members, maybe, were still in grade school, I don't know, back in 2011—and that's not a shot, that is not a shot, I just want to make sure we understand this. I am very envious of some members' age in this place. As my, you know, as I—as I get greyer here, I can—I—trust me, I—this is not a—this is by no means a shot.

But what I'm trying to say is, is that some people may not really remember or have an appreciation for what this province went through in 2009 and then, most significantly, in 2011. These weren't just flood events that affected people's homes and communities. And they certainly did that; we're still cleaning up, so to speak, in some communities because of the flood of 2011.

But folks need to remember what a financial hit that was for our province. This wasn't just—it didn't just have the effect of displacing people and hurting our economy, but it actually—there was a huge impact to our budget, our budget in 2011.

And I remember very clear, I was a brand-new legislator at that time, and I remember very clearly us now trying to talk to people in a different way, in a different way of communicating to Manitobans. We're all in this together. We are here together.

And I remember the premier being out there and throwing sandbags and difficult decisions about how it was going to be—how the flood was going to be managed and how we then could support communities and support individuals coming out of that, producers.

Like, this was a time when all Manitobans said, this is significant and we're all in this together. And there were some tough conversations that had to be had about our budget, about our expenditures and about our revenue. And those were decisions that were made, not—you know, not easily, but they were made with all Manitobans understanding this is a different time, right? The recession of 2008, the flood of 2009 and the flood of 2011. This was a different time in Manitoba.

So there is a way that the government—that a government can talk to people about these kind of issues. Everybody understands that we've been going through this pandemic. Everybody understands that there have been sacrifices made and there needs to be a new kind of investment.

This is not—this is a challenge, but it's also an opportunity. It's an opportunity for us to talk differently to people and to say, look, we need to come together, we need to support those that are most vulnerable, we need to make sure that things like health care and education are properly funded. Like, we can do this.

But did this government do that? No, no, no, the basement's flooding, the basement's filling up and they're saying, oh, the balanced budget, cut, cut, cut, what else can we cut? Right?

So if this government was serious about taking this opportunity, this challenge and hopefully an opportunity to change the way we do things here—Manitoba and around the world—if they were serious about that, then they would be, at the very least, honest with people; at the very least, open and transparent about that.

But they failed to do that. They failed to do that at every turn. And Manitobans, again—I mean, I think this is the fourth time I've said this, but I really do believe Manitobans are smarter than they—this government gives them credit for.

And if you give them the opportunity to say: look—you know, we're just talking about my critic world here today. Let's talk about infrastructure. You can go to absolutely every single community in this province, and they'll say we want to partner with you, and here's our priorities, here's what we want to work on. And these are all things that are needed. These are all good projects that need to be worked on.

And when you've got a federal government that's willing to step up—like, this is a once-in-a-lifetime, once-in-a-generation opportunity. And what does this government do? They walk away. They walk away from the table, or they—

**An Honourable Member:** They blame Trudeau.

**Mr. Wiebe:** They blame Trudeau, but they also—

**An Honourable Member:** Obfuscate.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —obfuscate and say: well, oh, we're going to slow down the process. We're not going to step up to the table.

Talk about projects, in terms of our highways and our roads, road safety. Again, Manitobans are saying: these are things that are important. These are ways that we can invest in our province. That's not just about what I'm going to get—sure, I'm going to get a new highway to drive on—but they understand it's about our economy coming out of the pandemic. It's about our future as a province, and it's about an investment that last for generations going forward.

So you can do this stuff. You don't have to fake it. You don't have to, you know, hide things. You can just tell people: this is where we're at as a province and this is how we can build and grow out of this. We can get out of this and we can grow.

There are opportunities that are being missed every single day. And maybe it's just because I've got the member for—

**An Honourable Member:** Transcona.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —Transcona in my eye line here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've mentioned him a few times in this speech. I don't think I'm allowed to mention presence or absence of members—anyway, let's not go down that road. I appreciate the Chair being very, very, very—giving me a wide berth there.

What I will say, though, is when it comes to education—and, of course, folks know my kids are in public elementary school and in middle school. Like, this is where teachers are asking us: let's step up now. Let's see how we can support kids in a real community sense, talk to them about mental health issues, support them, build out our schools as not just places of learning but also as community hubs, places where people can come together.

There is so much that can be done when it comes to how we look at education going forward. And it doesn't just have to start with the premise of cutting or amalgamating or shutting down, right, which is where this government often starts. I think members on this side of the House are saying: look, we can do this in a really constructive and collaborative way.

And—but again, where does it start? It starts with the finances of this province, and if we don't even have a basis that we can talk to people from—that, you

know, all we're saying to them is: well, you know, we've been hiding stuff, and we're just going to make sure that that continues. In fact, we're going to expand it.

How can you expect people to trust? How can you expect people to work with you? How can you expect Manitobans to be on your side?

I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that increasingly, these members opposite, they're knocking on doors—maybe, maybe not—but if they are knocking on doors and they're having a lot of difficult conversations in their communities and, you know, maybe some of them didn't sign up for this, right?

It was good times. You know, there was a government on its way out in 2016, and they thought: well, this is good times. This is—I don't mind this MLA gig. You go to events. Everybody's on your side. You're—you know, you're a celebrity in your community. This is a great gig.

Well, I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the next—how long do we have?

**An Honourable Member:** Sixteen months.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Sixteen months.

I know it's been tough. Well, members opposite need to get ready because it's going to get a heck of a lot tougher to have those conversations at the doorstep, to answer for why their government puts this kind of legislation as their priority, why this government doesn't want to tell the people of Manitoba what's really going on with their finances, doesn't want to be honest with them.

We're going to continue to be honest with them, and members on this side will always be fighting for the issues that are important to them.

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Order. *[interjection]* Order.

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

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 21, 2022

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>		MMF and Government Relations	
Bill 33—The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Municipal Board Amendment Act		Bushie	871
Clarke	861	Friesen	871
Bill 34—The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act		Lagimodiere	872
Clarke	861	Transfer of Patients Out of Community	
<b>Ministerial Statements</b>		Lamont	872
Journée internationale de la Francophonie		Gordon	872
Squires	862	Access to Public K-to-12 Education	
Sala	862	Lamoureux	873
Lamont	863	Ewasko	873
<b>Members' Statements</b>		Ubisoft Expansion	
Aspen Winds		Teitsma	873
Piwniuk	864	Cullen	873
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination		Internationally Educated Nurses	
Moses	864	Marcelino	874
World Down Syndrome Day		Gordon	874
Teitsma	865	Manitoba Hydro Energy Bills	
Rita Frejuk and Jim Kirkhope		Sala	874
Altomare	865	Friesen	875
Invasion of Ukraine		<b>Petitions</b>	
A. Smith	866	Foot-Care Services	
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Kinew	875
Death of Krystal Mousseau		Abortion Services	
Kinew	866	Asagwara	876
Stefanson	866	Foot-Care Services	
Manitoba's Pandemic Response		Bushie	876
Kinew	867	Abortion Services	
Stefanson	867	Fontaine	876
Premier's Financial Disclosures		Vivian Sand Facility Project— Clean Environment Commission Review	
Fontaine	869	Gerrard	877
Goertzen	869	National Drug Plan	
Health-Care Support Workers		Lamoureux	878
Asagwara	869	Provincial Road 224	
Helwer	870	Lathlin	878
Ukrainian Canadian Congress		Diagnostic Testing Accessibility	
Wasyliw	870	Maloway	879
Reyes	870	Health-Care Coverage	
		Moses	879
		Eating Disorders Awareness Week	
		Naylor	880
		Foot-Care Services	
		B. Smith	880
		Wiebe	881

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**  
**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Debate on Second Readings**

Bill 16—The Financial Administration  
Amendment Act

Bushie	881
Asagwara	887
Sala	893
Wiebe	898

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

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