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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, 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	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Fort Whyte	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 26, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 5—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): Good morning, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox), that Bill 5, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

An Honourable Member: What about the mosasaur?

Mr. Goertzen: I can barely wait.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Today, in Churchill, far north of here, the ice is starting to form on Hudson Bay, and our polar bears are ready to make their northern journey. Already, in the last few weeks, there have been many international tourists who have come to Churchill to see the polar bears, and they will leave with the impression that the polar bear is a symbol of Manitoba. This bill will make that impression official and make the polar bear an official symbol of Manitoba.

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

Bill 6—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Bill 6, which amends The Workers Compensation Act to add five new cancers to be—presumed to be occupational diseases for firefighters at risk as well as the Fire Commissioner.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Positive COVID-19 Status

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about my experience with testing positive for COVID-19.

When I was—first went to the Shared Health website to get my COVID test results, I was completely shocked finding out that I was positive and having no—absolutely no symptoms.

I had received a call from a friend who had recently tested positive for the virus. I cancelled all upcoming appointments and meetings and drove directly to the testing site in Brandon on my way back to Virden. And I would have to say that the staff at the testing site, the people that—Manitoba Health did a very good job of—at doing their job when it came to informing me and telling me what I needed to do. In accordance with the public health orders, I've self-isolated and then I—until I received my results and continue to self-isolate to this day.

I am making my COVID experience an opportunity to let all Manitobans know the importance to get your COVID-19 vaccine, along with the booster shot and the annual flu shot. I really believe by getting fully vaccinated I was fortunate not to have any real symptoms, whereas my childhood friend didn't have it so easy.

There were a few days that he was getting worried with his breathing and even went to the doctor to make sure that it wasn't—there wasn't going to be any complications. During one of our conversations, we both agreed that our situations could have been quite a bit different if we did not get vaccinated. We could have been a lot sicker, or we could have ended in the ICU.

This past Wednesday, my friend actually turned back to his work, on-okayed by public health.

The vaccine has definitely protected my family, who I had very close contact before getting tested. They all got tested and all received negative results.

Madam Speaker, I would like to let everyone know, if you are not vaccinated yet, please, please get fully vaccinated. And the vaccinated, please make an appointment as soon as possible to get the booster shot. I truly believe that this will make a huge difference for Manitobans to help end COVID-19.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Poverty and Addiction

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): When they're in opposition, Conservatives love to talk about how they'll do more with less. And with every election, they promise that they'll be able to cut spending while providing—while still providing for Manitobans. But when they get into government, they gut social services. All that they offer to Manitobans are thoughts and prayers.

What has these thoughts and prayers—what has this thought—what has their thoughts-and-prayers approach led to? More poverty, more homelessness, more overdose deaths. Everyone knows that those struggling with addictions need safe consumption sites to avoid overdose deaths. And yet, this PC government has opposed this creation at every turn.

Everyone knows that in order to help youth struggling with addiction you need to turn—they need to fund treatment centres, and yet this PC government closed the only long-term treatment centre for teens with addictions in this province.

Everyone knows that to set up those struggling with addiction for success, they need to get them into addictions treatment. We need them to get into housing units. And yet, this government has reduced Rent Assist for thousands of Manitoban families.

And everybody knows that Manitobans looking to break a dependency on drugs need help dealing with mental health issues and finding employment, but this government has clawed back the Portable Housing Benefit for Manitobans with mental health challenges and the job seekers allowance for EIA recipients.

Manitobans struggling with poverty and addiction don't need more thoughts and prayers. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: They need tangible actions on a scale far greater than this PC government is offering.

Turn your thoughts and prayers into action and make a difference. Help save lives in this province and open a safe consumption site so people can live in dignity and ensure that they're not going to die.

Miigwech.

Rivercrest Community 75th Anniversary

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to recognize the Rivercrest community in West St. Paul, 'celerating' its 75th anniversary.

Rivercrest came into being in 1946 as a Veterans' Land Act project for those who wanted to live in a rural setting and still be able to commute to their jobs in Winnipeg. At that time, only veterans were allowed to purchase land and build their homes in this area.

* (10:10)

Fifty-six families made up the original Rivercrest families. One of the first families to move in was Cliff Gow, a navy veteran, who still currently resides in Rivercrest. And this year, Mr. Gow will be celebrating his 96th birthday on December 6th.

One of the original veterans' families was the McCalders. Mr. Doug McC Calder was a prisoner of war in Germany from 1942 to 1945. Their daughter Sharon Yackel served four years on municipal council, and her son Ryan Yackel is our current fire chief in West St. Paul.

Rivercrest was the first residential subdivision of West St. Paul and was made up entirely of military personnel and their families. Fifty-six couples—many of them women were brides from England—moved into homes under favourable financial conditions.

The spouses and children of each veteran family were one of the reasons the community thrived. During that time, people got to know each other, where they live. Children played together and communities grew.

The veterans and their families played a big part in developing this community. They built the Rivercrest community so people could gather together and enjoy them—their events. Though the community centre no longer stands, Rivercrest Park is still used and enjoyed by all in the area.

There is a monument erected in the park dedicated to the veterans. This year, the RM of West St. Paul has erected another monument listing the names of the original Rivercrest settlers of 1946.

I would like to thank and congratulate all the war veterans for building the river rest—Rivercrest community, establishing goals and learning to give back through community service.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Elmwood Supply Company

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): For students at Elmwood High school, educators Matthew Reis and Patrick Gadsby have given new meaning to learning real world business and design skills. Under the guidance of these incredible educators, Elmwood students have worked together to found the Elmwood Supply Company, a student-led business venture focused on designing, creating and selling community-based apparel entirely out of Elmwood High school.

ESC's merchandise is designed and produced in-house by students eager to learn the ropes of getting a business off the ground. From concept to sale, students learn everything from designing logos and graphics, screen printing and production, to digital marketing and sales. Working with their teachers, every student has an opportunity to find their niche and become part of the team that makes the Elmwood Supply Company happen.

Students working with ESC also have an opportunity to keep in touch with their community and build connections with leaders in the neighbourhood. Much of ESC's merchandise sports graphics of local icons and historically significant sites around Elmwood, including Roxy Lanes, the La Salle Hotel and the Louise Bridge.

I had an opportunity to visit the ESC earlier this month to check out their merchandise first-hand, including this awesome mask that I wear in the House today. I was blown away by the quality of the students' work, their attention to detail and the passion that goes into each piece of merchandise they produce.

While the Elmwood Supply Company's funding comes in part through the Elmwood High School Legacy Fund, I also encourage the government to ensure stable provincial funding can help this program flourish well into the future.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I wish to congratulate the educators and students that have made the Elmwood Supply

Company a reality, and thank them for this—for the good this amazing initiative brings to our community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Team Walter

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour Team Walter from the East St. Paul Curling Club.

Team Walter won the World Junior Qualifier at the Heather Curling Club and are now representing Manitoba at the world junior national qualifier this week in Saskatoon. They placed third in their pool, with a record of three wins and two losses, and are now moving on to the playoffs this weekend.

The winner of this competition, Madam Speaker, will go on to represent Canada in Sweden on March 5th to the 12th, 2022.

Since curling was shut down during COVID-19 in 2020, Team Walter prepared by playing a couple of women's events, Madam Speaker, and then participated three times a week at their—and practised three times a week—and hard work and their perseverance paid off.

Along with Coach Frank Walter, the team is made up of lead Mackenzie Elias, second Katie McKenzie, third Lane Prokopowich and skip Meghan Walter. Meghan is the youngest curler to win a world mixed juniors championship in history at the age of 17 years old and, Madam Speaker, she's also won three out of eight provincial finals.

Their families and their communities of East St. Paul are very proud of the hard work and wish them continued success as they compete this week in Saskatoon.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in acknowledging Team Walter and also wish them the best of luck and success in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Rural Health Care Nurse Vacancy Rate

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Now, every Manitoban knows that we need more nurses. And yet, the cuts of the Pallister-Stefanson government mean fewer nurses at the bedside.

We heard yesterday about the crisis in Winnipeg hospitals, but the situation is also dire outside the Perimeter. In Southern Health, there is a 21 per cent vacancy rate for RNs. That's one in five nurses who are missing from the bedside. There's also a 26 per cent vacancy rate for LPNs—almost one in four positions empty.

Why does a former minister for Health think leaving one in four nursing positions unfilled is acceptable?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question.

And in fact, he is wrong. There is 6 per cent more critical-care nurses across the entire WRHA since last year, and there are 36 per cent more critical-care nurses in the Grace Hospital since last year.

We recognize, Madam Speaker, that there's more work to do, and we're committed to doing that.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, on the subject of finding a map, you know, first the Throne Speech didn't mention Brandon, and now today, in response to a question about Southern Health, it appears the First Minister thinks that Southern Health is a part of Winnipeg.

But these decisions that she took as Health minister are causing real impacts for people and patients right across rural Manitoba. In Prairie Mountain Health, also outside of Winnipeg, the situation's not getting any better. There's a 25 per cent vacancy rate for LPNs, a 21 per cent vacancy rate for RNs. That means at the best of times in Prairie Mountain one in five nursing positions is sitting empty. That's affecting patients in Brandon, Dauphin, Roblin.

Why does the PC leader think it's okay for residents of Brandon to be short so many nurses?

Mrs. Stefanson: In fact, five days after being sworn in as a new Premier of our province, Madam Speaker, I was out in Brandon visiting with Mayor Rick Chrest there. I was pleased to have him as a guest here in the gallery and—during the Throne Speech.

And certainly, when it comes to nursing positions, Madam Speaker, we have indicated that we will increase by 400 seats nursing seats in the province of Manitoba. That's one step in the right direction. We recognize there's more work to do. Members opposite—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —know that this is nothing that's unique to Manitoba. This is something that's being faced across the country. And certainly, we will face it together, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Kinew: What is unique to Manitoba is that we are down 500 nurses because of the PCs' time in office, and this health-care staffing crisis just shows how similar the new PC leader is to Brian Pallister. And that makes sense, because the new PC leader was the Health minister under Mr. Pallister.

And this staffing crisis is also very bad—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in northern Manitoba. There is nearly a 30 per cent vacancy rate for nurses in Thompson. Now, we know it's hard to staff nursing stations across the North, but a 30 per cent vacancy rate in the hub for health care in northern Manitoba is a big concern.

We need accountability. We need action.

Will the government start by acknowledging that there is the staffing crisis in health care today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, we have recognized that there is a nursing shortage, not just in Manitoba, but indeed across our country, and that's why we're working diligently to ensure that we increase by 400 seats nursing seats in the province of Manitoba.

That's why, when it comes to our internationally educated nurses, we've triaged those nurses so that we can free them up and get the training that they need to get into our front lines, Madam Speaker.

That is taking action. We recognize there's challenges. We recognize there's more work to be done. We're committed to getting that work done.

* (10:20)

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

Wall Report on Manitoba Hydro Implementation of Recommendations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Good jobs, low rates, clean energy and

a commitment to reconciliation: that's what Manitoba Hydro should be, but that's not what we're getting from Hydro under the PCs.

In May, the Pallister-Stefanson government issued a secret directive to Hydro to implement all of the recommendations from the fake Wall inquiry. We're making that secret directive public today. It means selling off subsidiaries like Centra Gas potentially; it means bringing Bill 35 back where rates were set at the Cabinet table, making life more expensive; and it means more privatization with P3s.

Will the new PC leader stop interfering with Hydro and withdraw this directive today?

Madam Speaker: I would like to point out that I know this new phrase has come about, the Pallister-Stefanson government, but there has never been a Pallister-Stefanson government. There's been a Pallister government and a Stefanson government. So if there is going to be any use of that word then you're going to have to make governments plural, because there never was just one with that name.

So I'm going to ask everybody—I know it's a bit of semantics, but this place is all about accuracy in wording so if you're going to use that word, it should be governments.

The honourable First Minister. The honourable—*[interjection]*

Order.

An Honourable Member: Friday.

Madam Speaker: It's Friday, I know. I thought of that before I walked in here.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): The Leader of the Opposition knows that when the previous NDP government was in power, they in fact tripled the debt of Manitoba Hydro, costing Manitobans thousands of extra dollars per year, Madam Speaker.

Our government will continue to work hard to ensure that this will never, ever happen again in this province. We need to better manage Manitoba Hydro. That's exactly what we're doing. Manitobans elected us to fix the mess of the previous NDP government, especially when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, it's more of the same from the Pallister-Stefanson governments. The name may be

pluralized, but there's only one approach. The new PC leader continues to interfere with Manitoba Hydro.

Now, the secret directive which the PC leader kept concealed until today means that bill 35 is going to come back. That means no public hearings, that means life gets more expensive because the PCs keep raising your Manitoba Hydro rates. It means more interference in Manitoba Hydro, and that's what the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —Pallister-Stefanson governments really get up to behind closed doors. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Will the new PC leader take action and commit to public rate setting and to withdrawing this directive today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, we are taking action to clean up the mess that—left to Manitobans by the previous NDP government. They tripled the debt of Manitoba Hydro, costing Manitobans thousands upon thousands of dollars right out of their pockets.

We will ensure we take action to make sure that never happens again, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, the truth of the reality of the situation is this: the Pallister-Stefanson governments have increased Hydro rates on Manitobans time and time again without even a public hearing. That's what they've been up to. We also know that they've been interfering with Manitoba Hydro in a way that cost Manitobans more money.

And this secret directive, which the new PC leader—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —should acknowledge today, will lead to more privatization and more politics and more expensive bills for Manitobans. It's wrong. We know bill 35 was a mistake. We also know that breaking up Manitoba Hydro and selling off pieces of it, as this government has done, is also wrong. Further privatization will cost Manitobans more. That's the agenda of the Pallister-Stefanson governments.

Will the new PC leader admit that this was all a mistake and will she scrap this Hydro directive today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite wanted us to make this a public process.

An Honourable Member: Demanded it.

Mrs. Stefanson: They demanded that, Madam Speaker. And so we made it a public process and now they are complaining about us making it a public process. They can't have it both ways. The fact of the matter is this—the rate increases—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —have gone to the Public Utilities Board. That's where the decisions will be made, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Wall Report on Manitoba Hydro Implementation of Recommendations

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): In May, without telling Manitobans, the Pallister-Stefanson governments issued a directive to Hydro to implement all the recommendations of the Wall report. They didn't tell Manitobans they were forcing Hydro to implement the recommendations from the sham Wall inquiry; no press release, no announcement. That's against the law, and it was wrong.

The new PC leader should come clean with Manitobans about why they tried to hide this from the public.

Why did the PC government hide this directive from Manitobans?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I certainly appreciate a question from the member opposite on hiding things, Madam Speaker. We know under the former NDP government what they hid. They hid the PUB process away from Manitobans. When they went ahead and ran a bipole line 500-plus kilometres around the west side of the province, all the way to Saskatoon and back through Winnipeg. We know that it was a \$10-billion boondoggle. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: We know that they're afraid of the outcome of the Wall report, Madam Speaker. We know that they're—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: We know, Madam Speaker, that that is a concern for them. We'll ensure that that never, ever happens again under our watch.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, PC interference in Manitoba Hydro is growing by the day. They issued a secret directive to Hydro to implement the recommendations from the sham Wall inquiry. This will cost Manitobans money and will lead to breaking up and selling off parts of Manitoba Hydro. The report says in plain language that Hydro should sell off non-core assets. It's wrong. These directives shouldn't be hidden from Manitobans.

Why did the PC government hide this secret directive from Manitobans?

Mr. Wharton: Again, nothing hiding over here, Madam Speaker. We know that the Wall report scares them. We know that the decisions made under their government is going to cost generations of Manitobans—not just one generation, generations of Manitobans—to pay off—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —the boondoggle that they created.

Madam Speaker, we know that over 40 per cent of Manitoba's hydro—Manitoba Hydro's net income—40 per cent goes to pay the interest alone on their boondoggle. We will get it right.

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

Mr. Sala: The Wall report does scare Manitobans because it recommends selling off non-core assets and more privatization.

The law is clear: directives to Crown corporations need to be published. But the PC government hid their interference in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala:—Manitoba Hydro from the people of Manitoba. That's against the law and it's wrong.

We know this interference will lead to higher rates and breaking up of our most important—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —Crown corporation. The PCs have already started. They've sold off Hydro subsidiaries and

they've already set hydro rates at the Cabinet table. The interference should stop.

Will the new PC leader immediately scrap this directive and stop interfering in Hydro today?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

* (10:30)

Mr. Wharton: We certainly know where the NDP get their questions from, Madam Speaker. It's usually a local paper here in Winnipeg and Manitoba. And I can tell you that there's one article that we won't hear from the NDP, and the title of that article is, and I quote: Keeyask chickens come home to roost.

Well, let me tell you, Madam Speaker, we know that the NDP are afraid of the fact that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —their long-term debt nearly tripled, Madam Speaker. We're looking at \$23 billion of debt in Hydro alone by the chickens that now have come home to roost. We will ensure that Manitobans never, ever have to go through this boondoggle again under this government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

PC Leadership Race Court Case Government Priority Concerns

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Our team is focused on the concerns of Manitobans, like the cost of living and affordability, issues that were not mentioned in the Throne Speech. The PC leader is distracted with the fight going on across the street at the law court. Her own legal filings are due in court today. This is absolutely unprecedented.

Our team is here to do the people's work. The PC leader is defending her power and her privilege.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: That's an absolute mess, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Why are the PCs focused on their own status and not on the interests of Manitobans?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): I recognize that the NDP and their leader have much experience when it comes to court,

Madam Speaker, so I won't take any sort of particular advice from them on that.

When it comes to affordability, I don't think Manitobans need to be reminded about what the NDP did when they were in government when it comes to affordability. Not did they only make certain things more expensive, when it comes to haircuts, for example; they made everything more expensive by raising the PST, Madam Speaker.

And when we raised those issues about affordability in this House, members of this caucus, the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), Madam Speaker, we sat through the summer and begged them not to make everything more expensive on Manitobans. They said no. It was their determination to make everything more expensive on Manitobans.

Heaven forbid, if they ever got back into government, they'd do the same thing again, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Judge Edmond says of the case, and I quote: It's a matter of urgency and public interest. The application not only affects the parties and the intervener, but also affects the people of Manitoba, who have an interest in knowing whether the election of our new Premier was flawed. End quote.

That statement is unprecedented, Madam Speaker. A sitting Premier filing court proceedings today, defending her selection. It's an absolute mess.

Why do the PCs only care about their own power and privilege, and why are they not focused on Manitobans' priorities, like the rising cost of living, which they left out of their Throne Speech on Tuesday?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, my only regret when I left the Premier's office in my short term there is that I couldn't find all those NDP membership books that were left there from Greg Selinger when he was selling memberships out of the Premier's office to try to hang onto his leadership.

Yes, we found a bunch, Madam Speaker, but I'm sure there's still some shuffled under the desk somewhere. That is the legacy of the NDP government.

Now, I understand—I understand they're trying to change the channel because they see a Premier, a new leader, that is building collaborative bridges across Manitoba, not only \$1 billion of new investments for

the city of Winnipeg, moving forward to the federal government, Madam Speaker.

They don't want to talk about that. They don't want to ask questions about that, Madam Speaker, because they know it's good for Winnipeg. They know it's good for Manitoba. They can continue their game of distraction; we'll continue to work for Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: While the PC leader and her rival battle it out with claims that, I'm the premier, I'm the premier, down the street the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) wants entry to a public building because I'm an MLA.

Nobody cares that she's an MLA, Madam Speaker. Two years into the pandemic she should know full well how vaccination protocols work and what her—rules she should be following. Instead, she shows up with illegitimate authorizations and seeks entry based on her power and privilege of being an MLA.

People expect us to follow the rules.

Why do Conservatives think that they can push their way around based on their status? Why don't they start focusing on the priorities of Manitobans?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, I didn't hear all of the question in all that sort of word sauce that was going on over there.

I do think that the wannabe leader of NDP said that if she was the leader or she was the premier or something—I think that the current Leader of the NDP might want to get back here as fast as it is safe to do so, Madam Speaker, although I know that, of course, he probably is still dealing with those public health fines that he had when he held a event that was outside of the realm of the public health orders. But I want—I don't want to get into that, so I won't mention that.

But I will mention that this particular leader, this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), is focused on priorities of Manitobans. We see that today with the introduction of legislation that'll benefit firefighters for presumptive legislation. We saw that when she travelled to the City of Winnipeg to ensure that there is actual funding for those who need it in Winnipeg—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, focus on the priorities. They can howl like coyotes all Friday.

Paid Sick Leave Program Request to Implement

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Madam Speaker, the pandemic has made it clear that people whose labour we depend on are the very same people who have the least job protections and the hardest time securing a living wage.

They are essential. These workers deserve protection and permanent paid sick leave and living wages, especially as we approach another year of navigating the global pandemic. We must ensure all Manitoban workers have the ability to take paid sick time when they need it.

Will the minister rise today and commit to implementing permanent paid sick leave for all Manitoban workers?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our government is very proud of the fact that we were one of the first governments to push the federal government into a sick leave program. We also were one of the first governments to introduce our own sick leave program. We think it's benefiting thousands of Manitobans.

There's an important support program, two federal programs that are in place, and our program is the most—one of the most generous of all the provinces.

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

Ms. Adams: Madam Speaker, British Columbia has officially become the first province in Canada to offer permanent paid sick leave to all workers covered by their Employment Standards Act, including part-time workers.

We know that employees who do not have access to paid sick leave are often those workers who are low wage and in precarious jobs and are more often are women and racialized workers. Permanent paid sick leave for all Manitobans' workers would equal equality and safety.

Will the minister commit to permanent paid sick leave for all Manitoban workers today, yes or no?

Mr. Fielding: Our government is very proud of the fact that we allocated or provided supports—over \$407 million of supports to individuals and families during the pandemic. That's money that's needed. Almost one third of all Manitobans got some sort of support.

We were one of the first provinces to introduce a sick leave program. There's been thousands of people that have benefited from them. And we pushed hard, Madam Speaker, to ensure there's a federal program that's in place. We're very proud of the work. We'll continue to do that work.

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

Ms. Adams: Madam Speaker, no Manitoban should ever have to choose between a paycheque and their health.

No one does—not only does paid sick leave result in faster recovery times and greater health outcomes, but during times like a global pandemic, paid sick leave means more workers can stay home if they aren't feeling well, and that helps all of us.

Will the minister do the right thing for Manitoban workers and commit to permanent paid sick leave for workers in Manitoba today?

Mr. Fielding: We're very proud of the fact that we pushed, from a provincial government—with an NDP government, in fact—to make sure that the federal government had a sick leave program that's in place. That's extremely important.

We were one of the first provinces introduced that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —and that's benefited—thousands of Manitobans have benefited from this type of program. It's important support programs that we put in place—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (10:40)

Mr. Fielding: —during the pandemic, not only supports for individuals but also supports for small businesses. Over \$411 million went to support businesses and individuals during the pandemic.

That's support that will make a difference and probably some of the reasons why we got the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

North Perimeter Highway Access Road Closures

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Yesterday, Madam Speaker, I asked the minister about his rushed closures on the north Perimeter. His answers were simply unacceptable to the people of Rosser and beyond.

Thousands of Manitobans now have to have hours added to their weekly commute, drive down countless many miles, down roads that are not designed for that kind of traffic. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: The minister claims safety—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —but one local resident tells me a recent urgent trip by ambulance took twice as long as it should've because—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —of these detours.

The minister made no investments to mitigate the effects of these closures.

Now, he may not want to answer to me, but the minister should answer to the residents of Rosser and beyond.

Will he reconsider these ill-conceived closures?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, another silly question from a silly member of the opposition.

International-renowned traffic engineers here in Manitoba have suggested that these access points onto the Perimeter Highway are dangerous, and they used real data to prove that. Over a five-year period, there were 40 collisions on the north Perimeter; nine resulted in personal injuries.

My question is, Madam Speaker, why does the NDP, why does the member for Concordia and the Leader of the Opposition, take a position against safety for Manitobans? Why do they stand against safety on our highways?

Our government will always stand for safety as our No. 1 priority.

Madam Speaker: I would just remind the member that calling people by names in this House is not something that is acceptable. All honourable members are considered honourable members, and I would ask all members to refrain from making comments as we just heard.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: As I said, Madam Speaker, not questions from me, but questions from the residents that this is affecting.

Now, the minister made a promise to those people, and yet he can't even keep his own word. On October 29th, he claimed that Holmes Road would see significant upgrades before its access was removed, yet, these upgrades were 'neverly'—never properly finished, adequate signage wasn't installed and the access was just ripped out anyway.

When it comes to infrastructure, the name of the game is cut, refuse to invest in upgrades and leave Manitobans behind.

Once again, he can call me all the names that he wants, but he has to answer to the people of Rosser.

Will he reconsider his ill-gotten and ill-conceived closures to the Perimeter Highway? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member—the honourable Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Schuler: Well, how about we add to the pile: simply not true. What was just put on the record is not true.

Holmes Road still has access to the Perimeter Highway until it gets fully paved and the connections are done. The west side access is there. What our government did do is we put a deceleration-acceleration lane in. We are going to deal with the speed limits on Holmes Road.

There is still access, and it proves again that the NDP will say anything and do anything whether it's true or not, and usually it's not.

We are spending \$80 million on safety on the Perimeter, something the NDP has voted against every single time—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister is in luck. The people of Rosser have invited him down to take a drive, to take a look at what producers are dealing with, with driving their combines onto the Perimeter Highway.

They can—he can take a look first-hand and see what's happening at Holmes Road. He can get out of his ivory tower and listen to the people in Rosser: 750 residents signed a petition that I'll bring—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —forward in this Legislature.

Over 50 residents, in person, at a community meeting. Dozens protested at the access road closure sites.

Will the minister just get out of his ivory tower, listen to the people of Manitoba and rethink his closures to the Perimeter Highway?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I have—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I've indicated before that when we have members participating virtually it's very difficult to hear unless we have silence in the room so that we can properly hear them.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the member opposite that hundreds, in fact, thousands of people have gone online and they have told us, whether by email, verbally, whether they went online, that they want the Perimeter Highway to be safer. We have an NDP that voted against over \$80 million for safety on the Perimeter Highway.

I'd like to point out, in five years, that there were 40 accidents on the North Perimeter Highway of which nine of them resulted in personal injury. So the NDP votes against \$80 million for safety for the Perimeter Highway and doesn't stand for the safety of those individuals who travel that particular stretch of the Perimeter, which I drive every day when I'm not quarantining. I drive it every day. I am there, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Peter Nygård Assault Allegations Inquiry into Filing Charges in Manitoba

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): In February 2020, a class-action lawsuit was filed in New York accusing Winnipeg fashion mogul Peter Nygård of, quote, rape, sexual assault and human trafficking, with some allegations going back as far as 1977, with several here in Winnipeg.

On October 1st, Toronto police announced they were charging Nygård with six counts of sexual assault and three counts of forcible confinement, dating back to the late 1980s and mid-2000s.

It was also reported last month that Manitoba Justice has been considering whether or not to lay multiple charges for files referred by the Winnipeg Police Service to the Crown prosecutor in December 2020, nearly a year ago.

New York has acted. Toronto has acted.

Why is it that Nygård's victims still have no hope of justice in Manitoba?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows that this is a matter before the courts. It would be inappropriate to comment on this further.

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

Mr. Lamont: Mr. Nygård's extradition is before the courts; the accusations are not before the courts.

There has been a decades-long history of allegations about Mr. Nygård's behaviour being suppressed. A Winnipeg Free Press exposé in the 1990s was spiked under pressure, and when the CBC and Fifth Estate ran a story 10 years ago, reporters were sued for criminal libel in an unprecedented private prosecution that would've sent journalists to jail. These charges were only stayed recently because of delays.

I table a March 2010 Manitoba Justice policy directive stating that all private prosecutions are, quote, subject to the scrutiny of the Attorney General based on a reasonable likelihood of conviction and the public interest.

Who in the Manitoba government thought that sending CBC journalists to jail for running stories about Peter Nygård was in the public interest? And if the Premier doesn't know—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member—the matter is before the courts. It would be inappropriate to comment further on that.

What I will say is, obviously, the allegations are very, very serious against Mr. Nygård, and I just want to thank those victims who have come forward and, you know, who have shared their heartfelt stories, Madam Speaker, and our thoughts go out to those individuals at this time.

But to comment further on this matter that is before the courts is completely inappropriate.

Peter Nygård Assault Allegations Inquiry into Filing Charges in Manitoba

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, with allegations of sexual assault against Peter Nygård dating back to 1977—44 years ago—why was there not a proper investigation and charges laid against Peter Nygård many years ago in Manitoba?

We have women from Manitoba who have come forward. We have excellent investigators in our city and RCMP forces.

* (10:50)

I ask the Minister of Justice: When was the first investigation into Peter Nygård started in Manitoba, and is there a possibility that, at some point in the investigation, someone higher up prevented the investigation from proceeding further?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the Liberal leader and the member for River Heights know better than this. They know the fundamental premise on which our system is grounded is the very fact of judicial independence.

Those members know that there are very serious charges against an accused right now. Those charges are complex and heard in multiple jurisdictions. It is involving things like extradition orders. We know it would be completely inappropriate to comment in this place or reflect on the work of police, of the judicial branch, of the prosecution services. This court—the courts will decide the case, not the member for River Heights.

School Ventilation Upgrades Funding Announcement

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Our government recently announced that we're providing an additional \$6.8 million to improve school ventilation across Manitoba.

This funding could include the purchase of stand-alone filters for classrooms or other projects that don't require construction.

Will the Minister of Education please inform this House on how this significant investment will help keep students and staff safe across Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): I thank my colleague for this great question and talking about this great investment.

Ventilation upgrades are only one aspect of a multi-layered approach for reducing the risk of transmitting COVID-19 in schools. This year, our government allocated \$40 million directly to schools. That's part of our \$58-million Safe Schools Fund. So far, 14 school divisions have taken us up and reported ventilation upgrades to the tune of \$1.3 million. Yesterday, we announced an additional \$6.8 million for ventilation upgrades throughout classrooms.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank teachers, staff, administrators for all their great work in keeping themselves and our students safe in our Manitoba classrooms.

U of M Faculty Association Labour Dispute Collective Bargaining and Wage Mandate

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, during Estimates last month, I asked the Minister of Advanced Education three times about mandates to the University of Manitoba administration during this round of 'collectin' bargaining. And three times, the minister denied any knowledge of the mandate, directly contradicting President Michael Benarroch's stated—what he has stated publicly, and directly contradicting the minister's own House book from March 2021; the minister's House book states that all post-secondary institutions are now instructed to request a collective bargaining mandate from the Province.

Manitoban students and faculty are still waiting. The strike is still going on. They're waiting for this government to withdraw the mandate of unfair wage mandate.

Will the minister do so today?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, we've been more than clear: government is not the employer.

The university has publicly detailed the real nature of the impasse over monetary and non-monetary issues in the current bargaining with UMFA. I could get the member the link to the website so that he could check it out himself. He should maybe take some time to read it.

The university has also accepted the neutral mediator's recommendation that the parties resolve their differences through binding arbitration, Madam Speaker. This approach would bring the strike to an immediate end and lift the extra pressures on students and families already dealing with the pandemic.

Madam Speaker, will the member simply confirm that both sides should listen to the mediator's advice?

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

Mr. Moses: This government's trying to create for themselves a shiny new image away from Brian Pallister, but we know that this Pallister-Stefanson governments have continued that austerity agenda.

They continue to 'impoge' 'wase' mandates like the one they've put on the University of Manitoba.

So the minister's denied the mandate three times, but we know it exists.

Will the minister act and actually remove the mandates? Students are waiting to return to classes. Faculty's been on strike for more than a month, and we need this mandate removed to get those students back to class.

Will the minister remove the mandate today?

Mr. Ewasko: I strongly urge the member from St. Vital, his NDP teammates and his former political staffers to stop politically interfering with UMFA and the University of Manitoba's strike. Get out of the way, think of students first, Madam Speaker.

But, Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new president of the University of Winnipeg, Dr. Todd Mondor, on his appointment. He will be starting April 1st.

I'd also like to thank Dr. James Currie for his extensive, hard-working effort as the interim dean of the—as the—or, president of the University of Winnipeg.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Have a great weekend.

Madam Speaker: Time of oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Oh.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Ms. Fontaine: I do just want to point out that while the minister is apparently quarantining in his living room there, he's not dressed in the dress code. What minister? *[interjection]* Infrastructure. Sorry, Madam Speaker, the Minister for Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) is not dressed according to code.

I know that the PCs like to kind of do whatever they want to do and not follow the rules, but there are rules—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —even when you're participating virtually. He's not wearing up—the code for how he's supposed to be—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: –participating here.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): It's difficult for me to discern exactly what the 'minifster' for Infrastructure is or is not wearing.

I know he's been known to be a real sharp dresser in these times, though, Madam Speaker, and I'm sure if he is in some way violating—[interjection]—if he is in some way—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not sure if the minister—or the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) would like to raise another point of order. She can do that all day if she wants.

On this point of order, if in some way the Minister of Infrastructure is violating, even as sharp-dressed as he is, the dress code, I'm sure that he will take the moment to turn his camera off and adhere to the dress code, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that from what I can see, the member does raise a valid point of order.

The rules of the House are to be that men are to be wearing jackets, whether they're suit jackets or sports jackets, but that is actually the rule within this Legislative Chamber. So she does have a point of order.

Petitions? Oh.

The honourable minister of—oh. I would just ask if the honourable Minister of Infrastructure could please comply with the rules. Appreciate that.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara)? No?

The honourable member for St. Johns? The honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey)?

Louise Bridge

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

* (11:00)

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

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

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

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —of the new bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed. The City expropriation progress—process has begun.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

Are there any further petitions?

Road Closures

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba Infrastructure has undertaken the closure of all farm-access roads along the North Perimeter Highway, forcing rural residents to drive up to six miles out of their way to leave or return to their property.

(2) The provincial government's own consultations showed that closing the access of some of these roads, including Sturgeon Road, was an emerging concern to residents and business owners, yet the North Perimeter plan does nothing to address this issue.

(3) Residents and business owners were assured that their concerns about access closures, including safety issues cited by engineers, would be taken into account and that access at Sturgeon Road would be maintained. However, weeks later, the median was nonetheless torn up, leaving local residents and businesses scrambling.

(4) Closing all access to the Perimeter puts more people in danger, as it emboldens speeders and forces farmers to take large equipment onto—into heavy traffic, putting road users at risk.

(5) Local traffic, commuter traffic, school buses, emergency vehicles and commercial traffic, including up to 200 gravel trucks per day from Lilyfield Quarry,

will all be expected to merge and travel out of their way in order to cross the Perimeter, causing increased traffic and longer response times to emergencies.

(6) Small businesses located along the Perimeter and Sturgeon Road are expecting to lose business, as customers will give up on finding a way into their premises.

(7) Residents, business owners and those who use the—these roads have been left behind by the provincial government's refusal to listen to their concerns that closures will only result in worsened safety and major inconveniences for users of the North Perimeter.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to leave residents access to the Perimeter Highway at least every two miles along its length, especially at intersections such as Sturgeon Road, which are vital to local businesses.

(2) To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to listen to the needs and opinions of local residents and business owners who took the time to complete the Perimeter safety survey while working with engineers and technicians to ensure their concerns are addressed.

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

Health-Care Coverage

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social-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 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-care information and immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba, regardless of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, 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 statuses and ensure they can access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): A few things.

First of all, it was brought to my attention that I may have, during question period, referred to somebody not being in the House, and of course, virtual members by our new rules are, in fact, in the House and so I apologize if, in any way, I made a reference to somebody's attendance that I should not have, Madam Speaker. So I wanted to clear that up.

And then I have a couple of leave requests, and the one is—the first one is unique, and it's been discussed with the Opposition House Leader, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), along with the House leader for the Liberal Party, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). It is regarding a land acknowledgement here in the Legislature that's been publicly discussed, just for context.

I want to thank the MLA for Agassiz, Riding Mountain and Lagimodière, who did some work on our side of the House through consultation on the land acknowledgement. I know that the NDP and the Liberals, I think, have had their own consultations in the past, and so I acknowledge that, as well. And I'm thankful for the good working relationship with both parties and the support of our new leader, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson)—the First Minister—on this issue.

And so, we've come to an agreement on the wording for a land acknowledgement. Members will know that the rules of this House are a little clunky, and getting things onto the rules take a bit of time, and so we didn't want to not have acknowledgement—land acknowledgement—during this portion of the session, so rather than going through the formal rules committee process in the next four days, which would be next to impossible, we have decided to do this by agreement for the balance of this session and then to go to the rules committee after this session.

So, I am asking for leave, Madam Speaker—if you could canvass the House—leave to include a land acknowledgement as part of our daily proceedings immediately following the prayer for the remaining sitting days in these fall sittings, scheduled to conclude on December 2, 2021.

The land acknowledgement will use wording agreed to by all parties, and I will table a copy of the wording of the land acknowledgement.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include a land acknowledgement as part of our daily proceedings, immediately following the prayer, for the remaining sitting days in these fall sittings scheduled to conclude on December 2nd, 2021?

* (11:10)

The land acknowledgement will use wording agreed to by all parties. Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please canvass the House for leave to allocate time in debate today as follows: (1) to begin with debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne which will include only the conclusion of the speech by the honourable member for St. James, who has 15 minutes remaining. When the member concludes their speech the debate will remain open; (2) at the conclusion of that speech, the House will proceed to second reading of Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act; (3) at 12:25, or if there are no further speakers, whichever comes first, the Speaker will put the question on the second reading motion of Bill 3; (4) the House will not see the clock before the Government House Leader has referred Bill 3 to committee; and (5) if the debate on Bill 3 concludes before 12:30, the House will resume debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allocate time in debate today as follows: (1) to begin with debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne which will include only the conclusion of the speech by the honourable member for St. James, who has 15 minutes remaining. When the member concludes their speech, the debate will remain open; (2) at the conclusion of that speech, the House will proceed to second reading of Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act; (3) at 12:25 p.m., or if there are no further speakers, whichever comes first, the Speaker will put the question on the second reading motion of Bill 3; (4) the House will not see the clock before the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) has referred Bill 3 to committee; and (5) if the debate on Bill 3 concludes before 12:30, the House will resume debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

THRONE SPEECH (Third Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Therefore, resuming debate on the motion of the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, Manitobans have lost all confidence and trust in the PCs, regardless of who is in charge of the party at this point, and this new Throne Speech won't do anything

to change that. And if the government is wondering why or if they want to ask themselves where that confidence has gone and why they've lost that trust, we don't need to look any further than the current state of our health-care system.

Language in the Throne Speech suggests that the PCs are interested in repairing some of damage that they've done. But Manitobans know better. That's because in the last five years, the PCs have allowed our health-care system to slide into a state of chaos. Not because of COVID, but because of cuts, because of their mistreatment of nurses and because of their continued efforts to undermine our health-care system. It's not political rhetoric to say that Manitobans are less safe today than they were five years ago; it's just simply a true statement.

We can look today at the information we brought forward today and yesterday about nursing vacancies in my own community hospital in west Winnipeg. Thirty-seven per cent of all nursing positions in our emergency room are currently vacant. West Winnipeg residents are less safe right now than they were five years ago, and, again, that's not because of some global force or it's not because of COVID. It's because of PC cuts to our health-care system.

You know, this Throne Speech was an opportunity for this government to acknowledge the damage they have done to our health-care system. We can see in the Throne Speech that they've identified that they're going to be reassessing some of the cuts that they've made in rural health care, but Manitobans wanted to see an acknowledgement that this government understands the damage that they've done to our health-care system in every single corner of the province.

I genuinely believe it was an opportunity for them to do that, to signal to Manitobans that this was a fresh start, for them to seize that opportunity in this Throne Speech to make clear that they recognize the damage that's been done. But they did not seize that opportunity; they did not. There's been no recognition of the damage that was done with the closure of three ERs in this city and what's that—what that's caused in terms of chaos in the remaining ERs that are handling the loads that are in many ways absolutely impossible to manage.

You know, I've heard stories from local families about their experiences in our local west Winnipeg hospital: at the Grace, 93-year-old grandmothers being forced to sleep in hallways for five nights in a row. I've received these calls from families asking

what is happening and what has happened to our health-care system.

People are in disbelief about the quality of health care that they're accessing. They're in disbelief about what's happened, about what's happened to our hospitals. There's no clear recognition from this government in this Throne Speech about what they've done to our nurses and the damage that they've created and the fact that they've created a full-blown staffing crisis.

They've threatened the foundation of our entire health-care system through their mistreatment of nurses and through their failure to respond to this staffing crisis. We have thousands of nursing vacancies. We have absolutely astronomical vacancy rates at hospitals across Winnipeg, as we've just learned. And this has been created through forced overtime, nurses coming to work not knowing if they're going to be able to go home to their families—you know, dangerous working conditions and nurse-to-patient ratios that are out of control, putting both patients and nurses at risk.

This government is driving those nurses to go work for private companies, and now we're getting another commitment from this government to hire more nurses 20 months into a pandemic, five years into their governance. It's way too little, way too late. There's just no recognition of the errors of their ways and there's been no recognition of the errors that they made and the failures that we've seen throughout the entirety of the COVID pandemic.

And perhaps the most tragic of those being their failure to do what was needed to protect people living in our personal-care homes. It's a real tragedy. It's a really—an incredible tragedy to think about what families were forced to endure. And I'm thinking in particular about those families of relatives at Maples and Parkview care homes and knowing that those families were subjected to absolutely horrifying outcomes: losing those family members when we could have done something about that.

We had months and months of advance notice that there were going to be significant challenges in keeping those populations safe. We saw what was happening in other provinces, and this government failed to do anything about it. And the new leader, who was Health minister at the time, was responsible for that failure to do anything about that. It's incredibly sad.

And now, as a lagging indicator of the impacts of their cuts and their failures, we have 136,000 Manitobans in this province, one tenth of the entire population, waiting for surgery or a diagnostic procedure. Think about that. I count family members—my own family members among those who are waiting for procedures. They're suffering; they're in need of those procedures to be able to move on with their life. They wake up every day not knowing when they're going to get the medical care they need, and this government is responsible for that. And the new Leader of the PC Party was minister of Health at the time when changes could have been made that would have helped to avoid this crisis that we're currently in.

This Throne Speech did not go far enough in recognizing what they've done to our system. They missed that opportunity to do a reset. We need to do better. We need to do much better. Manitobans deserve to have confidence that if they get sick or a family member or loved one gets sick that they're going to get the care that they need. That's pretty simple, Madam Speaker.

If the PCs were serious, they would start by calling an independent inquiry into their performance during the pandemic so we could all know and learn from the mistakes that were made. I don't think that's arguable. I think we can all agree that there would be significant benefits to starting an inquiry so we can understand what happened. And we look forward to, hopefully, this government deciding to move forward with that inquiry.

I'd like to shift now to talk a little bit about one of the biggest omissions from this Throne Speech, which has been mentioned by many of my colleagues, but that's the complete and total failure to mention anything about the affordability crisis that we're seeing in this province. And I think the failure to mention that in this Throne Speech is one of the surest signs that this new leader and this current PC government remain completely and totally disconnected from the realities that are facing everyday Manitobans.

We have a huge number of people in this province who are struggling right now—huge numbers. People are making terrible sacrifices. I hear those stories myself when I speak with constituents, especially seniors and people on fixed incomes, who are making really difficult decisions to trade off between either buying food or buying medicine, or making decisions to buy groceries or paying their rent.

* (11:20)

That is absolutely unacceptable that that's happening right now in our province, and it's unacceptable that this government is continuing to fail to recognize that, to do anything about that, and to prioritize that and to make the case that that needs to be fixed. And we didn't see any evidence in this Throne Speech that this is a concern for them.

Now, you know, we know inflation is going up and some things are certainly out of control of this government, but there are a lot of things that this government is doing that is making our affordability crisis worse. Wages remain stagnant in this province; minimum wages in this province continue to be a poverty wage. You cannot—you cannot make a go at paying for the cost of living and paying for shelter working full time on minimum wage in this province.

And what do we see? In October, this government raised the minimum wage by five cents—a grand total of five cents. I think we know that costs of living are going up much faster than that, Madam Speaker. That is an absolutely shameful thing that we've seen, this complete lack of willingness on this government to raise the minimum wage to a level that will allow Manitobans to at least cover their basic costs of living.

AGI rent increases are also currently out of control in this province. It's way too easy for landlords to raise rents on Manitobans. In 2019, we saw a total of 310 applications for above-guideline increases go in and a total of 310 of those applications were approved. That was 20,000 units of rental housing in this province that saw huge rent increases. Madam Speaker, 25 per cent of those, almost 5,000 units, saw increases of 10 per cent or more.

Think about the impacts of that in a province as small as Manitoba. The government is complicit in that because RTB legislation is allowing for these rent increases to happen. We can do something about this. We introduced a private member's bill that would have done just that, that would have helped to solve this.

And we know that every time this comes up, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) likes to talk about what happened in the olden days. Well, we're saying right now they have an opportunity to take action. If they were actually concerned, they would take the private member's bill that we put forward, they would put it into action and they would change laws to ensure that Manitobans don't continue to get gouged on their rent.

This would be a huge—this would have a huge impact in helping to reduce the affordability challenges being faced by a lot of Manitobans, but this government is failing to take action.

Energy rates: we know that gas rates are going up significantly. It's going to cost Manitobans hundreds more dollars and we also know that hydro rates are going up. And we know that this government raised hydro rates by legislation. That was totally and completely unprecedented in this province. Manitobans will never know—we will never know if those hydro rate increases were actually required. We won't know because that rate increase was set at the Cabinet table instead of at the PUB.

And we know that if this government had their way, they would have continued to do that, as they were trying to ram through Bill 35 that would—allowed rates to be set at the Cabinet table on an ongoing basis. And, thankfully, because Manitobans got up and fought against that, along with our opposition caucus, they backed away from that bill. But we know we have to watch very carefully. We know we have to watch them very carefully and we know, as we just revealed today, with their pressing forward with the recommendations from the Wall report, that the Wall report recommends a number of items that are almost guaranteed to result in higher energy rates—higher electricity rates for Manitobans.

That is shameful. We need to do everything we can to control those rate increases to protect affordability for Manitobans in this province.

They've removed rental tax credits from thousands and thousands of Manitobans. We now have thousands of renters who are going to be hundreds of dollars poorer in this province because of the decisions of this PC government. These are the people that are often struggling the most to make ends meet—our renters. We're talking about a lot of seniors, people on fixed incomes. And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, we have a lot of people in my community who have reached out to our office that are going to be hit really hard by the removal of those rental tax credits. That is going to have a major impact—and, again, fuelling the affordability crisis in this province.

We have an EIA system that is forcing people to try to live on \$195 a month to meet their basic needs if you're a single person. Think about that. I challenge every single member across the way to ask themselves, could I live, could I meet basic costs of living on \$195 a month? I would venture that the answer to that is a hard no, Madam Speaker. I think the members

across the way know that, and yet we allow our EI system to continue to force people to live on poverty levels of income at \$195 a month; that is shameful.

Social and affordable housing: Another massive gap in this Throne Speech was the lack of mention of housing. There's a massive shortage of social and affordable housing in this province and the situation in a society as wealthy as ours is, frankly, immoral.

We can see how the problem has increased. We see homelessness in communities across the province. I know, again, in St. James, we're seeing more and more people who are seeking shelter in our parks. We have people sleeping under bridges and underpasses where they've never been before and that's because they can't find a place to live. It's not because they're choosing to actively live in parks or sleep under bridges; it's because this government is failing to take action to ensure that there's enough social housing to meet the needs. That's shameful.

We know that they've made a passing reference to make a plan—to make a plan in the Throne Speech, but we're five years in. We need to do something about the social and affordable housing crisis in this province. We have 1,500 people in this province who are currently homeless and that's not a surprise because we have 4,500 people on our Manitoba Housing waitlist.

Manitobans need help. They need a government to demonstrate more compassion and they need a government to recognize that they're struggling. And the content of this Throne Speech makes it pretty clear that they're going to be forced to continue struggling for the years to come. That needs to change. That really needs to change.

Now, Madam Speaker, Manitobans, as I've said, have lost confidence and trust in this government. They've lost confidence that this government is going to take the actions that are required to make life better for them.

And we all know—we've lived through the last five years—we know that the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was there every step of the way for every bad decision. And so as bad as they want to change the channel and rebrand themselves and repackage a bunch of old initiatives, we know who they are because they've already shown us.

Manitobans deserve better; we deserve more compassionate government and we're going to keep fighting for Manitobans every single day.

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed to, the House will now consider second reading of Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 3—The Family Maintenance Amendment Act

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, that Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: I am pleased to rise in the House for second reading of Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act.

This bill will replace part 2 of The Family Maintenance Act dealing with the legal parentage of children and there are also consequential amendments to The Vital Statistics Act to reflect the new rules as they affect birth certificates—birth registrations and to other acts.

Legal parentage is important. It determines who a child's parents are and that determination has impacts on a child's life. It affects identity; it affects citizenship; it affects inheritance rights and entitlement to benefits under provincial and federal laws.

It also, of course, imposes obligations on parents who have rights and responsibilities for the care and support of a child, and it speaks to the way an adult who is a parent has the ability and rights to participate in the child's life.

And so the bill that is before the Legislature now includes new and amended provisions to address parentage of children in all cases, and that means whether a child was born—conceived and then born conventionally or whether children are conceived through assisted reproduction, whether with or without surrogacy. In so doing, the new legislation safeguards the rights of children and it ensures the legal recognition of intended parents.

* (11:30)

Some cues for context: Manitobans may know that amendments to the current law are required at this time because of an order of the Court of Queen's Bench. Last year, almost exactly a year ago, the court ordered that parentage provisions of The Family Maintenance Act are unconstitutional and that they unjustifiably infringe section 15 sub (1) of the

Charter of Rights and Freedoms because they don't contemplate parentage through assisted reproduction and therefore discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And whenever that happens, then we're in an important place as a province. When we have a section of legislation that has been declared unconstitutional, the obligation then falls on the Legislature to advance a remedy in law that will address the area in which the courts have determined that the current legislation was falling down.

I would want to make clear that the legislation on the books for Manitoba was never intended to discriminate, but it was enacted well before assisted reproduction was contemplated. It simply did not keep up with the advances in medical, technical, reproductive technology. It resulted in situations where the law has become challenging to navigate for anyone using assisted reproduction to become a parent.

We know that infertility can be a real barrier for creating a family for many Manitobans. Advances in assisted reproductive technology have created new opportunities, have given hope to countless parents to become parents. Many of us in this Chamber will know someone, have someone close to us—a family member, a friend, someone in our community that we know has dealt personally with issues of—that have to do with having a baby, and we know that science and technology has greatly assisted in this way.

Couples concerned about genetic issues or individuals who can't carry a baby to term for medical reasons are among the families who need help and this legislation brings that help. I would also reflect, while we could not pretend to stand here in this House today and reflect on all the permutations and the ways in which Manitobans have experienced the shortcomings of the current laws—I know, for instance, of one family with a close connection to this Chamber in which the family was attempting to have a baby, and the mother could not carry that baby, and so they sought the services of a surrogate and engaged in a contract.

But because of that arrangement, the law did not recognize the two rightful parents as the parents, even though the genetic material was all theirs, even though the contract with the surrogate was all good and right in the eyes of the law. Nevertheless, on the birth of the child, the law dictated that only the—well, the

surrogate was the mother and then the parents had to apply to be recognized as the rightful parents.

And I recognize that in the province of Manitoba, this has played out countless times for couples who then had to make application to the courts—sometimes, it's the case that the birthing mother is recognized as the parent, but the spouse of the birthing mother would then have to pursue a remedy in the courts in order to be seen, to be—yes, this is the rightful parent that was intended.

And in some cases it goes even further than that, and with no malice or ill intention, then there is actually a process by which an 'analystis'—analysis takes place and there's measurement or observation of the individual to determine that they should be, indeed, the parent.

So we can all understand the shortcomings. And so we all understand why a remedy is necessary and, of course, as I said, responding to the courts—that's why we bring the remedy.

I would also want to make clear that this is clearly not something that is unique to Manitoba. As a matter of fact, in this country, already British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island have all updated their parentage laws to deal with assisted reproduction. I would note also Quebec recently introduced proposed legislation to address surrogacy.

We have considered the approaches of other provinces. We believe that our bill reflects a made-in-Manitoba approach. It responds to the court's direction. It provides the proper balance, safeguarding the rights and interests of surrogates, intended parents and, most importantly, children.

We believe that in Manitoba the court has an important role in ensuring the rights of surrogates, intended parents and children. Requirements such as a surrogate's post-birth consent to relinquish entitlement to parent and judicial oversight are important. They're important in that they safeguard against exploitation. We know that in this country you cannot seek to benefit monetarily from surrogacy. You cannot pay someone for those services, and it's important that we continue to recognize these are important areas of law in which the rights of people and the rights of children must be carefully guarded.

The clearly stated requirements for a surrogacy agreement in the bill will enable a streamlined court application process. It's not onerous for intended parents. It strikes the proper balance to protect the

rights of children, surrogates and intended parents. And, of course, consequential amendments will take place to Manitoba's Vital Statistics Act to make sure that there is alignment.

The bill reflects considerable work by our government to respond to the courts and to safeguard, as I said, the rights of these individuals, groups and, most importantly, children. We continue to modernize and improve the justice system in Manitoba. It's a top priority for our government. This bill, we believe, is another step forward in our government's commitment to modernize family law in Manitoba.

I would also want to make mention of the fact that we will continue to move ahead with this initiative, and in the near future, with new legislation to simplify and update Manitoba's family laws to harmonize with the federal Divorce Act where possible and to make the laws easier for Manitoba families to access and understand.

I would leave the Legislature to debate on the bill. I would simply make this last comment: Think this is a good example of how the process should proceed. We have been careful to respond to the courts, but legislatures should not be disinterested in questions like this. Some will say, leave it for the courts. I believe that when we are playing our role well as legislators in this place, recognizing that our government system is founded in the principle of court independence, executive independence and legislative independence, it is exactly and precisely our role in this place to grapple with challenging questions like this, to advance legislation that we think brings the remedy and then to pass these laws if it has the support of the House. And I'm calling on all members to read this bill, consider the changes that will benefit so many Manitobans and put their support behind Bill 3.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

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

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Section 24.6 states that after two days, the child has shared parental

responsibility between the surrogate and parents or parent.

Could the minister explain what happens or who the legal parents are after those two days and until the parent/parents receive the new birth certificate, and—in other words, who would have the legal decision-making powers for the child after two days and before the new birth certificate is issued?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for the question. It's an interesting question in law. I asked the same question of my officials.

It's an interesting situation that the surrogate is the parent at birth, but within two days, with the agreement in place, must relinquish the child. At that point in time, the rightful parents become the parent. So you might, all of a sudden—you might say that for three days, there are the three intended parents. It's solidified and finalized on that—on the surrender of the child at the second day, at which point the two rightful parents are the parents.

* (11:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I note that the legislation says under section 24.25 that a surrogacy agreement is unenforceable in law, and I ask the Minister of Justice why this is not enforceable and why he doesn't say it's enforceable in this bill.

Mr. Friesen: This part of the legislation is unchanged. Surrogacy agreements in the past and surrogacy agreements in the future continue to rely on the contracts that are written and that explicitly state the terms by which someone will carry a baby to term, birth the baby and surrender that child.

These rules that we are bringing in in Manitoba in this respect align with the rules in other provinces.

Ms. Fontaine: We all know that there are large delays in vital stats and Vital Statistics. Following a court order this information needs to be sent to Vital Statistics in order for them to issue a birth certificate.

What does the minister plan to do to address the backlog in vital stats with birth certificates and ensure that they're issued to new parents in a timely manner?

Mr. Friesen: The issuing of vital statistics registrations is a very important matter. I reflect that I think I saw a headline only yesterday that indicated that massive improvements have been made to Vital Statistics Agency and that backlogs that this government

inherited from the previous government have been largely eradicated.

We thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) for continuing to attend to the issue. We care about the efficiency and the effective operation of Vital Statistics and that's why we continue to make improvements. It's important for parents to be in possession of documents demonstrating they are parents of a child.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister has said that the surrogacy agreement is unenforceable and that that is what the law says, but he's also referred to it as a contract, a surrogacy contract. If a surrogacy contract, is that enforceable at all, or not?

Mr. Friesen: I want to be clear on this point. A surrogacy arrangement is not enforceable as a contract. If it is property we are talking about, it would be a different thing. It is a child and that is the reason that in this case it would not be enforceable as a contract.

Ms. Fontaine: The legislation does not specify a timeline component in issuing court orders. So how will the minister ensure court orders are issued in a timely manner?

Mr. Friesen: We have every intention of making sure that the process that we are describing in legislation will be carried out, that processes will be timely and support those parents who are looking for the certainty that—of their designation as parents. And so we are—we know that enormous work is undertaken every day to ensure that court orders and whatnot are done on an expedient basis.

I received an update only weeks ago from department officials who are indicating improvement's continuing to be made through technology and otherwise to assist us in making these processes timely.

Mr. Gerrard: My question to the minister in follow-up, he says that surrogacy contracts are not enforceable. Does the fact that he puts this into law mean—put at risk surrogacy agreements and contracts; that the status of a surrogacy contract not being enforceable, putting it right into law, means that parents who have signed a surrogacy agreement, you know, are in a land of uncertainty. I wonder if the minister would comment.

Mr. Friesen: No more than they were previously. There's nothing in this legislation that would substantively change that.

We know that in the past, the courts have been asked to peer into the arrangements and the contracts between a couple and a surrogate. We know that in future, those contracts may again be—come under scrutiny. The agreements can be used to prove the parties' intentions.

So the bottom line is that it's a child, as I've indicated. It's a child. It's not property, it's not chattels; it's a child and that's why these agreements are written—or that's why the legislation is written as it is.

Ms. Fontaine: One final question that I have for the minister.

Often, in these circumstances, when going through the courts, we know that legal fees can be a huge barrier for Manitobans.

How does the minister plan to ensure the model laid out here in this legislation is cost-effective for Manitobans?

Mr. Friesen: Manitoba has an excellent Legal Aid program in this province and our government, for five years, has been making additional improvements as to how Legal Aid Manitoba operates. As a matter of fact, just recently, we've increased their autonomy. We received the Allan Fineblit report and enacted every measure that was recommended in that report. Some of those changes recently became law in the province of Manitoba.

We continue to be proud of Legal Aid Manitoba. We thank those who work there for the excellent service they continue to give to Manitobans and make sure that having representation in our court system is not out of reach for Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I would comment that the concern over whether the wealthy will prevail rather than the justice prevail is there, and it is there because of the legal procedures.

I wonder if the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) would at least affirm that Legal Aid will be able to cover legal costs or legal affairs related to surrogacy matters for parents who are not able to pay for it themselves.

Mr. Friesen: I would hope that the member is not suggesting that there should not be court oversight for surrogacy arrangements because that would be troubling to me and, I think, to the other members of this Legislature.

Court oversight is necessary for surrogacy cases. It protects the rights of all the parties in a surrogacy

arrangement. It ensures that the requirements of the act have been met.

So I want to be very clear that it's important to have the oversight. Courts have, in the past, been asked to look into those arrangements when there is a dispute—and disputes do arise. Contracts need to be well written, but I would suspect in the future it will be, from time to time, important again for courts to continue to opine on these arrangements.

Mr. Gerrard: I just repeat the question that I had and that is an assurance that Legal Aid lawyers will be able to represent people in surrogacy cases where those individuals meet the requirements financially of Legal Aid representation.

Mr. Friesen: If the member is asking whether there are any anticipated reductions to Legal Aid Manitoba or the services that they offer to Manitobans in need of assistance, and who meet those threshold determinations for need, obviously, the answer is no.

This government has demonstrated already that it is expanding Legal Aid. It is making good investments in their operations. It is making sure to meet all its obligations in terms of salary and benefits, and has given more autonomy to Legal Aid Manitoba than was the case under the previous government.

Mr. Gerrard: I've just had enough experience with people who have gone to Legal Aid that they have said, well, this matter is something that can't be looked at by a Legal Aid lawyer. We can't represent you because it is not covered.

I just want confirmation that surrogacy matters are matters which can be covered by Legal Aid lawyers when they come up and where the parents in-meet the criteria financially, economically for receiving Legal Aid help.

Mr. Friesen: Thank the member for the question. Yes, if qualified, if the individual meets that threshold determination for assistance through legal Manitoba—Legal Aid Manitoba, if the party's qualified for Legal Aid Manitoba services, nothing prevents that.

Ms. Fontaine: Sorry, Deputy Speaker, just another question for the minister. Can the minister point to where in the legislation it's stipulated specifically who the parents are after two days? Miigwech.

Mr. Friesen: In a 45-second response I will not be able to give the chapter and verse, but I can indicate to the member we have a briefing coming up on here, we would be happy to point the member to the specific location in the bill where it determines those two

parents who become the rightful parents after the two days following birth in a surrogacy arrangement.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Hearing no further questions, the floor is now open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I want to just put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 3, so The Family Maintenance Amendment Act. Certainly, on this side of the House, we're in support of the bill. I think it is important, it's a timely bill—or it's a delayed bill, but it's important that we get it passed here in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. So we know that parents have clear legal rights and responsibility and it's critical to a child's life, Deputy Speaker.

Today, we know that there are many ways that Manitobans grow their families. And regardless of how they choose to do so, no one should have to overcome barriers in gaining legal parentage. Like everything else, society has changed and family structures have changed and our legislation should accurately reflect those changes. We know that the current definition of parents disproportionately impacts on LGBTQ2S families and also creates barriers for heterosexual couples using assisted reproduction and surrogacy.

You know, families and parents and children shouldn't be treated differently because of the way they are brought into this world. And that's why our previous NDP government put measures in place attempting to rectify some of that. But we do know that there was a legal counsel—or a legal challenge, and rightfully so.

And in a major decision for families in Manitoba, we know that Chief Justice Glenn Joyal ruled that the current Family Maintenance Act was unconstitutional because it discriminates against many LGBTQ2S couples and couples who are experience infertility and who choose to have children through assisted reproduction. In his order delivered on November 9, 2020, Chief Justice Joyal highlighted that the definition of parent discriminated against modern day families on the basis of sexual orientation.

The current provincial legislation considers a woman as a mother and a man as a father, but that heteronormative law excludes LGBTQ2S parents who have children with reproductive assistance. And again, as I said, it also discriminates or puts barriers in front of heterosexual couples who face fertility issues. And so the legislation as it exists right now forces

parents to currently go through a very lengthy court process—lengthy and costly court process—to be considered legally recognized as parents. And then the current legislation as it exists ensures that non-biological parents live in uncertainty and without parental rights until the adoption paperwork has been fully processed.

And certainly, these changes are important for the parents, but more importantly, are important for the child themselves. And so we know that Chief Justice Joyal gave this government, the PC government, one year until November 9th, to pass the modern legislation. They didn't. We're here today; it's—like I said, it's a little bit late but here we are.

And, you know, I want to state—*[interjection]* Thank you. That, you know, I'm very proud to have two St. Johns constituents, for what this issue is, obviously, quite dear to their heart and affects them and their family unit and their child, and who have actually been on the forefront of fighting for equity within the child maintenance act and fighting for equity in respect of their parentage here in Manitoba. And they are very dedicated, committed, loving parents to their sweet, sweet daughter who is just one of the cutest St. Johns constituents.

And I just want to share on the record a little bit of the words from one of the parents, if I may.

In regards to the government's delay to get this done, the parent explains, I have talked to many parents and soon-to-be parents who are worried they still do not have legal rights over their children. Most parents wait eagerly for the day their child will be born. The bag is packed and ready to go. My back—my bag had to include something most parents never even think about: the cell number for my lawyer. I had to plan for the possibility that the hospital would not recognize me as a parent if their baby's—I'm going to just keep the names out just for privacy—the other mom was unable to communicate our decisions about our child.

No parent should have to worry about this, and the court agreed. The government was given one year to fix this. Their refusal to do so shows a real lack of understanding of what matters and a clear demonstration that rules, even court-imposed rules, do not apply to them. End quote.

So again, we, on this side of the House are in support of Bill 3. I think that there is some concern in respect of this delay of two days. So I do look forward to meeting with the minister to have that more in-

depth discussion to ensure that this time period—that there seems to be a little bit of confusion here on who the parent is—that hopefully that's rectified here and that we have a better understanding.

But I do want to, again—you know, Bill 3 isn't a consequence of all of a sudden—the PC caucus and the Pallister/Stefanson governments all of a sudden having this profound—like—you know, newfound interest in protecting, you know, LGBTTTQ2S parents. It actually comes from a court case.

And that court case comes from Manitobans. It comes from citizens who deserve equity in our province and deserve the best for their child and their children. And, you know, they put themselves on the line. They open themselves up, their personal lives, at what is supposed to be, you know, one of the best moments of our life when we have children. And they did that not only for their family, but they did that for all Manitoba families.

And so today, Bill 3 is actually a testament to that work and that dedication and that courage. And so I lift up, you know, not only my St. Johns constituents and that family, that beautiful family with their beautiful, sweet baby, but to all Manitobans who demand to be treated equitably and demand that the Charter is upheld.

And so I dedicate my couple of minutes on the record here to them and to every other Manitoba family who has come along in this journey.

Miigwech.

*(12:00)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I'm pleased to rise in general support of this legislation. I think it's important that it's being brought forward. It has been delayed, but it is here, and we should deal with it fairly expeditiously in the next few days.

The bill, itself, goes a long way to making things easier for people, and particularly same-sex or gender non-conforming people, to become parents without the red tape and the stigma associated with past law on the subject. We're making this change, in part, because the court mandated that there needed to be a change, and it's timely that we do it.

It does well, in this bill, to define parents, and to see that they are what they intend to be: the legal parents of a child that they love and care for without some of the legal woes that would have previously been encountered.

I want to raise some concerns with the legislation as it is currently written. The first concern has to do with section 24, dash two, five, where it says explicitly that a surrogate agreement is unenforceable in law. And I think that when you see that phrase there, that we are writing a law which is unenforceable, that it creates uncertainty in the minds of people who are going to be involved in surrogacy agreements. It creates uncertainty for a child who could be the subject of a dispute. And I think that there is a better way to word this.

For example, a surrogacy agreement, instead of saying it's unenforceable, a surrogacy agreement or a contract is to be used as a guideline when and if disputes arise before a court of law. And I think if you put it clearly, what it can do, rather than putting it what it can't do—that it's unenforceable—that it would be more helpful for couples, rather than to see right from the start that they're signing an agreement which is unenforceable in law.

I think, in relationship to this, that in 24(1) it states the intended parent or parents of a child and a surrogate may enter into a surrogacy agreement, but it seems to me that the section 24(2), which states a surrogacy agreement must be entered into before a child is conceived, is the clearer sentence. And I would question why, in 24(1), the word may is used instead of the word must. Surely, it would be better to be consistent in these two sections and say that a surrogate must enter into a surrogacy agreement.

And I think that that would help ensure that there are surrogacy agreements instead of the may language, and as I have pointed out already, could—instead of saying that the surrogacy agreement is unenforceable—that the surrogacy agreement clearly is a really important guideline for any judgments that may be made in a court of law.

There is a valid concern that, under some circumstance, the parent or parents on one side or the other of a dispute, who have the more money and pay the higher priced lawyers, could have an advantage. So I was glad to see the comment from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) that Legal Aid would—lawyers would be able to be part of this.

Of course, the concern will be not for, hopefully, people who are covered by Legal Aid, but somebody with an income which is just above the threshold for Legal Aid but is not sufficient to engage in a long legal fight.

And that, clearly, is something that somehow, in order to achieve equity, we need, in this bill, to be as clear as we possibly can, and rather than saying that surrogacy agreements, basically much of this bill, is unenforceable in law, we should make it clearer that it can be used in the courts even if it is not legally binding.

The other comment that I have relates to section 18.1, where it says a child has no more than two parents. And I think this, clearly, is where we are as a society at the moment, but what is happening today is that we are seeing not polygamous relationships, but polyamorous relationships, and that the relationships may be a little bit more fluid, sometimes, than they have been in the past. And so I think this will be something that, in the future, we may need to consider whether you can ever have more than two parents and under what circumstances. I think this is a more complex subject than we want to get into today and in this bill, but I suspect it is something that will be coming in the years ahead as we move forward and looking at what is actually happening today in our society.

So, with those comments, I look forward to supporting this legislation. I hope that the minister will look kindly on the suggestions I have made and that we can move forward with a piece of legislation that we are all happy with—and that will serve Manitobans well, so in having parentage acknowledged properly and in having surrogacy processes which work well.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Seeing no further—*[interjection]* Okay.

Are there any other members that wish to speak to this bill?

Seeing no other members, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is second reading of Bill 3, the family 'maintenance'—maintenance amendment act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Tuesday, November 30th, 2021, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Tuesday, November 30th, 2021, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act.

THRONE SPEECH (Third Day of Debate)

(Continued)

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): As per today's previous agreement, we will now move back to debate on the subamendment of the Throne Speech.

I will—the Minister of Economic Development and Jobs (Mr. Reyes)?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs): I think I'm going to speak, Mr. Acting Speaker, on the Throne Speech.

This is a historic time in the Manitoba Legislature, Mr. Acting Speaker, for a number of different reasons. Earlier today I'd like to again acknowledge the work that was done by a number of MLAs within the Legislature: the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), the MLA for Agassiz, the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith), and the work they did in coming up with wording when it comes to a land acknowledgement here in the Legislature. I don't know if we're the only legislature in Manitoba that is now doing a land acknowledgement. I know the City of Winnipeg does, but we'll be among the first, certainly, in Canada, and that's significant.

* (12:10)

It was a pleasure to work together with the Opposition House Leader and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), as it is—often is on matters of the House, and course, they see—the public often sees the debate that happens within the Assembly between MLAs, but there's much good work that happens behind the scenes that the public often doesn't see. I often say that we agree on 80 per cent of the things in this Assembly, and the 20 per cent that we don't agree on are the 20 per cent that gets all the attention.

But again, I think it was a historic moment, and it will be historic on Monday when that land acknowledgement is read for the first time in the Assembly.

On the issue of the Throne Speech, Mr. Acting Speaker: this is, as well, a historic Throne Speech. It is the first Throne Speech that is being presented—of course, it's presented by the Lieutenant Governor. I'll have some things to say about her, but the first Throne Speech presented by a government that is led by a female premier in the province of Manitoba.

And I said during my short duration in the chair as premier that it is high time that this happened. And of course, I am glad that it is a Progressive Conservative premier who is the first female Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) of the province of Manitoba, but that really isn't the main point. The main point is that for the first time in our province, young women and girls will be able to look at the Premier of the province of Manitoba and see themselves, if not in that role, then in significant roles in elected life.

And I know that there have been many trailblazers within this Assembly and beyond in Manitoba who are females who have held positions for the first time, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I don't think we should ever minimize it and how important it is.

And I've had the opportunity to serve with the MLA for Tuxedo—the Premier—for 18 years in the duration that I've been here in the Assembly, and I know the great experience that she brings to the position, the heart that she brings to her—that position. In a very short period of time, she's already demonstrated that, Mr. Acting Speaker—about her willingness to reach out to individuals to ensure that there is collaboration not only in this House and within the caucus, but of course, more broadly in Manitoba. And that is both needed, it is what is expected of us as elected officials, and it is what I think will guide our province as we go forward in the months ahead.

Now, I'm very optimistic about the future for Manitoba, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker—Acting Speaker. There are many things in Manitoba that we have reason to be optimistic about. Of course, this has been a difficult time in Manitoba and around the world and, of course, in Canada over the last now almost two years. I don't think that any of us, when the pandemic began in March of 2020, believed that we would still be in this position today. Of course, there might be some medical folks who might have predicted that, but I think society generally thought we would be further along and advanced past the pandemic, and we are all disappointed that that is not the case.

But I do think that there are reasons to also look at the situation we're in today compared to where we were even a year ago and look at the reasons for optimism. If you consider only a year ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today—a year ago today—in Manitoba, restaurants, I don't believe, were open. You only had businesses that were essential that were open, houses of worship were essentially closed. As we were preparing for Christmas, it was very difficult to get Christmas gifts and to be out.

That's very different now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are events that are happening. Of course, there are requirements for many of those events, and I know that that's not an ideal situation for any of us. None of us want that to continue or 'perzist'—persist. None of us want that to be the new normal, as they now say. We all want that to end as quickly as possible.

But we also have an end goal. I think all of us wanted this particular time to ensure that our businesses do remain open, that our houses of worship do remain open, that we are able to have our kids in school—very, very important—and that we don't overrun the health-care system, of course. And so there are requirements that are now in place to ensure that those things can continue to happen, and when it is safe for those things to persist without those requirements, I think we all look forward to returning to a life that is more normal, but compared to last year at this time, we are in a much, much better position.

Even you're looking around this Assembly, the composition of this 'houthe'—of this House, which is now about two thirds of members, is much, much better than it was a year ago. I even remember—in the spring of this year, I think we had about five or seven MLAs in the House, Mr. Acting Speaker. So we're in a much better place, and of course members can still participate virtually. Our hope is that by spring that we'll have all MLAs in this Assembly and we can all for the first time, then, in two years be back together in the House. That is, of course, what all of our goals are, and in discussions with the opposition House leaders, I think we all agree that that is our goal.

So while there are challenges still in society, and nobody wants to minimize that or diminish that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think it's good for all of us to also look in perspective. Compared to where we were a year ago, we are in a much better place, and we need to continue to do the right things to advance that and to continue to get into a better place.

But I do recognize, of course, that there is much division in Manitoba and around the world; there is

much discussion about how decisions have been made in this House, in the federal House, in other houses around the world. It has been a difficult time to be anyone in society and it has been a difficult time to be an elected official in society. And I would say to all of my colleagues—and this would echo the words of Lieutenant Governor when she began the Throne Speech—I'm very proud of the MLAs who have taken on these roles and who have made difficult decisions, whether they're in Cabinet or whether they're in the government caucus or whether they are in the opposition.

It has not been an easy time to be an elected official, because we need to communicate those decisions as best as we can, and sometimes those decisions have had a change as the science has changed, and we've made mistakes along the way; that is not unusual at any time, and particularly in a time during a pandemic. I'm sure that if we could all go back to March of last year there are different ways that we would communicate things. There are different expectations that we might set out for our constituents. It has been a learning and difficult experience for all of us, and I know it has been for you as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I would say to those that we represent, and it doesn't matter political affiliation: I believe that every member of this House, regardless of their elected affiliation, has done their best in extraordinarily difficult times and divisive times, and it falls to us, even if we have disagreements among our constituents or among Manitobans, to do our best to try to minimize those divides.

There are sometimes 'binerary' decisions in elected life. There are no in-betweens. There are decisions that are simply that decision or the other decision, and there's not a lot of grey in between. Those are the most difficult decisions to make in elected life, because you can't bridge the difference sometimes. Those 'binerary' decisions are really, really challenging, because they do divide people in terms of what that particular decision is.

But in between there is our opportunity as elected officials, as people, as members of humanity to try to bridge that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to ensure that that isn't divisive. We can have disagreements on whatever those decisions are but we shouldn't have to make them personal, and we shouldn't have to make them in a way that we might not forget that division, because I still truly believe that we will be beyond this pandemic at some time in the relatively near future

and that at some point we'll forget what it is that we were fighting about. But we may never forget the division that was caused, and that is my bigger concern; that we need to act in a way now that when we get beyond the pandemic—that the lingering effect of it isn't that division and isn't the memory of how individuals treated each other.

And we have a special role to play as elected officials. I know there is division within my own constituency, among my own friends, in fact among my own family, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I haven't always been perfect in trying to heal or to manage those divisions.

But what I've come to learn—and I'm still not perfect at it—is to try to ensure that even where there are decisions that can't be bridged and where there are clearly different views on them—to try to manage them in a way that it isn't personal and that it isn't dismissive and that there is a heart of understanding on different positions. Even if we strongly disagree with the decisions that others might take, we need to do it in a respectful way, because when we're beyond the pandemic we're still going to be living with each other as communities and as members and as MLAs. And we need to be able to treat each other in a way that that can persist after.

I want to also acknowledge the Lieutenant Governor, who delivered, of course, the Throne Speech and who our expectation is that this will be her last Throne Speech that she is able to deliver in this House. I know that when Mrs. Filmon, when Her Honour, took the office there was some degree of division. It wasn't applauded by everybody in this House, Mr. Acting Speaker.

And yet I noted that when the Lieutenant Governor was recognized in this House, that there was unanimity among all parties. And I think that that's a testament also to those who maybe didn't agree with the appointment at the beginning when she began her term, and that they've come around to understand that she's done a very good job in that role, but really a testament to her.

* (12:20)

I've had the opportunity to know Janice Filmon and, of course, Gary Filmon for more years than they were in this role that they are now, as the Lieutenant Governor. And I know them as individuals who care so greatly about the community.

In particular, when it comes to Her Honour, Mrs. Filmon, she's been described in many ways. And

I've heard people say—and I've heard this more than once—first of all, both her and Gary remember names, and they remember names for years. And in some ways, it almost—it's mystifying to people how they remember the names of people who they might only meet once or twice a year or less, or be separated by years in between their meeting, and yet they always seem to remember names.

But I think it's partly because—Janice Filmon is often described of this—when you speak to her, it's like you're the only person in the room. It's like you're the only person that's around, that she has that special attention onto your own individual needs and your own individual concerns. And that is a gift and it's something that we can all learn from.

And so I think that, when I've had the people question me in the past, and they often do, and they'll say, like, the Lieutenant Governor, what is that role, what is it that they do? Of course it's largely ceremonial and it's sometimes tough to describe the role but I think in the future, I'll say, Janice Filmon: that's what you do when you're the Lieutenant Governor. She's the embodiment of that role. She is the perfect person for that particular role and she sets such a high standard and such a high bar that whomever is going to come after into that important role is going to have a difficult bar to clear.

So, if we don't have the opportunity to see her deliver another Throne Speech, I wanted to put on the record that the respect that I had for the Filmons, for Gary and Janice Filmon coming when they took over that role, it's only grown, and I really appreciate how they both have handled themselves in the role.

Of course, Mr. Filmon having been a premier in the past, now taking on this role more of as an aide, as a help for Janice in her role as Lieutenant Governor, and in speaking to him, he's mentioned to me and he's sort of, I think, mentioned publicly that this was her time; it was her time to shine; and she has shone like a bright star, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's been an honour to see her in that role.

When it comes to this Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that members opposite will take a step back from some of the rhetoric that they've been putting on the record. And I understand this is politics and it's partisan politics so there will be rhetoric put on the record in the Assembly; nobody's surprised by that and it is part of our democratic process.

But there is clearly a new tone and a new direction in the province of Manitoba and I think that members opposite need to consider that, and I think that they need to look at that, and I think that they need to respect that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I recognize that there are different views on how things should be handled and how situations should be managed. That is part of our democratic process and there's nothing wrong with those differences, even though I might feel that those different directions are not good for the province. That is still why we have this democratic forum and the democratic debate here in the Manitoba Assembly.

But I would ask the members opposite, even if they don't agree with all the different directions, to respect the fact that there is a different tone and there is a different direction and I think that, ultimately, that is good for all of us, not just here in the Assembly but for Manitobans overall.

And, you know, it was difficult, I know, for former premier Pallister during the pandemic and I don't want to diminish that. And I think for all leaders who have sat in the chair as premier or prime minister over the pandemic—and I was only there for a very short period of time—but that sense of responsibility, of making decisions that are monumental on a society, cannot be underestimated and understated, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is an incredibly difficult thing to ultimately have to make a decision that impacts people in ways that we, as elected officials, never would have signed up for. We never—there's not a person in this House who ran for elected office thinking that they may be part of a government or a Legislature that closed down a house of worship, or that closed down a small business, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or that closed down a school—and I've been at the table when those decisions were made. Those are incredibly, incredibly difficult situations.

And sometimes, as the elected officials in this pandemic, you've not been choosing between good choices, you've just been choosing among bad options and you're just trying to find the least of those bad options. And that's a really tough place to be as a decision maker, when you're just trying to find the least bad option to try to select from, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so I have respect for everyone who served in those roles, including Mr. Pallister and the difficult decisions that he had to make. And I know the toll that it took on him and I know the toll that it took on his

family, and while, you know, I might've done some things differently and while I might've done some things differently during my short time in that office, I don't diminish the difficult challenge that it was, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I know that for the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), she'll face difficult challenges as well in this role, and not just during the pandemic but otherwise. And I certainly commit myself, as I think all members should, to do their best to try to support the leader of the Province in trying to make those—very, very difficult situation.

So, the Throne Speech will be voted on next week, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm not anticipating that the members opposite will vote for the Throne Speech, but I do anticipate—or maybe I don't anticipate, I certainly hope—that in the next few days, they might step back a little bit from the rhetoric that they've been putting on the record, try to find a little bit more grace in their discussion on the record, look at it from the perspective of a new tone that's good for this Legislature, that's good for the province of Manitoba.

And they don't have to be in disagreement with everything when it comes to the text in the Throne Speech, but I do think that they should recognize that this is a positive step broadly for the province of Manitoba. And they can put forward their alternatives, as oppositions should put forward their alternatives in a respectful way, but to do so in that way with the recognition that there is a better way forward now in the province of Manitoba and that we're all looking forward to—with optimism to the days and the months that come forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this may be my only opportunity in this Assembly to wish everybody a wonderful holiday as we go into a holiday after next week. I hope that everybody is safe during that holiday season. I hope that everybody has the opportunity to be together with family. I respect everybody in this House for the work that they do—doesn't matter what party they are, doesn't matter if we've had disagreements on policies in the past. This is a difficult job at perhaps the most difficult time to do this job in the recent history of the province of Manitoba.

I wish everybody, if I don't have the opportunity, for them to have—for all of us to be able to have time with our family, time to relax, time to decompress and

to look forward to what 2022 might bring forward as a year of optimism in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): It's nice to be able to start my response to the Throne Speech virtually here today, and I did just want to begin by congratulating our first-ever Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) here in Manitoba. It really is incredibly encouraging, especially as a young woman in politics, and even though we come from different parties and we don't always agree on everything, that's fine; I'm still so, so proud of Manitoba and I'm feeling incredibly inspired by having a woman as the Premier of our province. So, congratulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank the constituents of Tyndall Park. You know, I've been elected now as an MLA here in Manitoba since 2016, and time really, really does fly. It goes by so quickly, and I think that's a little bit of a testament as to how much a person may enjoy their job and what comes with being a politician are many, many roles. There's a lot of legislative work, there's a lot of constituency work, there's a lot of work all and in between, and when you throw in a pandemic on that, and—it's a new job every single day.

What's pretty cool about this time, though, is last month, October, marked halfway through our mandate from the last election. And as we as MLAs hold the government accountable, I also think it's equally important that we as MLAs are held accountable. I think that we need to demonstrate to our constituents the work that we are doing between elections as well.

And so I want to use this opportunity to share just a little bit about these last two years and what I've had the opportunity to do with the support of those around me, and that includes our caucus staff, my constituency staff. It includes my friends and my family and, of course, my colleagues in the House—mainly my leader from St. Boniface as well as my colleague from River Heights—who have been endlessly patient with me, and they continue to educate me in so many ways; I believe I continue to educate them in so many ways.

And it makes me really proud—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): When this matter is again before the House, the member for Tyndall Park will have 18 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed—[interjection]—oh. It's adjourned?

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 26, 2021

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