

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

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

Vol. LXXVI No. 43 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 27, 2022

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 235 – The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Programs)

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I move, seconded by the member from The Maples, that Bill 235, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Programs); Le modify de 'loir' sur l'écoles publiques, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Altomare: I'm pleased to rise today to present Bill 235, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Programs).

Educators know that beyond filling stomachs, school meal programs foster feelings of self-worth, community, belonging and lead to better outcomes.

This bill will require the minister to report annually to this House each school division and district schools that are providing nutrition programs the

previous fiscal year. This report must then be tabled to the Assembly and made publicly available.

I look forward to unanimous support, Madam Speaker, in this House, on this issue.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'm pleased to table the Estimates order for the upcoming Estimates process.

Madam Speaker: We thank the minister for that tabling.

Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It gives me great pleasure to table the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning for '22-23.

Madam Speaker: And further tablings?

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2022-23 supplement Estimates of expenditure for the Department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Asian Heritage Month

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Asian Heritage Month in Manitoba.

The designation of May as Asian Heritage Month, by both the Government of Canada and the Province

of Manitoba, recognizes the important role that the Asian communities played in our country and in our province. Asian Heritage Month is a valuable opportunity to contemplate and remember the vital influences that have shaped our communities nationally and locally.

Asian culture is not a monolith, but rather a collective, and one that is the most diverse in Canada, encompassing more than 30 countries, each with their own varied languages, cultures, 'ethnicities' and religious traditions. The many distinct cultures, faiths and countries of origin of Manitoba residents enrich all aspects of life in our great province.

Madam Speaker, for over a century and a half, Canadians of Asian descent have contributed to our collective success and well-being. From the first Sikh Canadians that joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War, including Winnipeggers John Baboo and John Singh to Manitoba's distinguished Mr. Philip Lee, the former Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba. We honour all Asian Manitobans and their cultural, social and economic contributions.

Throughout the month, Manitobans will have the opportunity to take part in the many events that demonstrate the collaboration of cultures that constitute Asian culture here in our province, events such as the FascinAsian Film Festival, the national showcase and the 204 K-pop Dance Competition—to name a few. You can also join me this Sunday—the Asian Heritage Society as we commemorate the 20th year of celebrations at the opening ceremonies to kick off Asian Heritage Month. Madam Speaker, I assure you this is something that everybody will enjoy.

I encourage all Manitobans to participate in the virtual and in-person activities scheduled throughout the month across the province. In recognizing our province's multicultural makeup, we're united in a common purpose, driven by shared hopes and dreams for our children and for ourselves.

Madam Speaker, for their tremendous efforts, I commend the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba who have joined us here in the gallery today for their vision, hard work and dedication in organizing the 2022 celebrations and intercultural learning events.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Asian Heritage Society on their 20th year anniversary. Happy Asian Heritage Month.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Today this House stands together to celebrate Asian Heritage Month and recognize all the ways in which Asian communities contribute to our province. Asian Manitobans are our friends, our colleagues, our families and our loved ones.

There are too many examples to list of Asian Manitobans who contribute to our province, but it's worth highlighting a few examples.

Japanese Canadian and Winnipegger Kenji Dyck recently directed the documentary *Bitter Sweet Trail*, bringing attention to the story of Asian Canadian experience during the Second World War.

Winnipeg actors Sheila Lotuaco and Rogelio Balagras recently starred in the Filipino Canadian film *Islands*, which is currently showing at Cinematheque.

The artist—the Syrian-born artist Bistyek recently created a show called *F War* to document the horrors of war. It showed in the Exchange District until mid-April.

* (13:40)

Vikas Sanger, who started a pay-it-forward program at his pizzeria after customers began to come in without money to buy food; Alan Wong, who is currently preparing for the Gimli International Film Festival as its new executive director; the board of directors of Asian Women of Winnipeg, which celebrates and supports the work of Asian women and raises funds for worthy causes in the community.

But, Madam Speaker, we also know that anti-Asian hate is on the rise. We saw it when a minority of people inappropriately blamed the Chinese community for the COVID-19 pandemic, and when the car of the owner of the restaurant *Pad Thai* in St. James was vandalized with a hateful message last year.

In a survey conducted by Angus Reid last year, over half of Asian Canadians reported experiencing discrimination in the past year, with 28 per cent saying that this happens all the time or often. The Manitoban and Canadian governments have also historically contributed to anti-Asian discrimination through the Chinese head tax, by implementing Japanese internment camps in WWII and much more.

Today, we have a responsibility to take actions to raise awareness of anti-Asian hate and to combat it in all forms. On behalf of the Manitoba NDP—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to finish his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Brar: On behalf of the Manitoba NDP, I would like to reiterate our commitment to addressing and combatting this discrimination and hate.

To all members of the Asian-Manitoban community: know that my door is always open to hear your concerns, experiences and ideas.

Asian Heritage Month is an opportunity to celebrate Asian Manitobans and Asian cultures throughout the province while also learning about their history. I look forward to celebrating with you all as we begin Asian Heritage Month next week.

And, thanks, Asian Heritage Society, to be here in the gallery today.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: I rise today to talk about Asian Heritage Month.

Asian Heritage Month has been celebrated for nearly 45 years, and this year marks 20 years since the Government of Canada signed an official declaration to designate May as Asian Heritage Month.

I think it's important that during this month of celebration that we take time to reflect upon and properly acknowledge the very rich history of Asian Canadians and the many contributions they have made.

When I reflect upon the hardships and the sacrifices that so many have faced and continue to face in order to make our country a safer, more economic and culturally accepting place to live, I'm amazed by the work that has been done.

Madam Speaker, every year, in recognition of Asian Heritage Month, I like to highlight different groups here in Manitoba. This year, I want to talk about the Asian society of Manitoba and MAFTI, the Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers. And I'm doing this for three reasons.

Firstly, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Notre Dame, because she shared with me that MAFTI was going to be joining us today, per her invitation.

Secondly, I would be remiss to share that the member from Waverley often speaks in this House about teaching he has received from Tita Gemma, who is up in the gallery, so I want to acknowledge her for that, as well, Madam Speaker.

Thirdly, MAFTI teachers, like many health-care workers, have gone above and beyond through the COVID pandemic and have impacted the lives of so many students during this time.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I had breakfast with my Ate MJ, who is a MAFTI member at Jeepney, and my constituent, Genalyn—she is actually here, as well, so I want to give her a quick hello, too.

So with—at breakfast with MJ, she shared a lot with me about isolation and mental health struggles, and so many—how so many students have been experiencing these things through the pandemic. She talked about how, for some students, school has become their safe place to talk about real issues. MJ shared a story with me about going out of her way to hold a small birthday celebration for a student who was struggling a lot with feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Madam Speaker, these are the kind of positive and tangible actions that MAFTI teachers demonstrate and just one of the many reasons we celebrate Asian Heritage Month.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Flooding Update

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, while our government mitigations and response efforts due to a previous weather event continue, the Hydrologic Forecast Centre is monitoring another system that could bring high amounts of precipitation this weekend. The greatest impact of the system is in southern Manitoba and is expected to affect the upcoming flood peak, in either duration or volume.

Four municipalities remain on state of local emergencies, being that—the RM of Headingley, the RM of Cartier and the RM of Ritchot and the RM of Morris.

There have also been some small-scale evacuations, in such cities—towns of Morris and the First Nation of O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi.

This morning, I had the opportunity to speak to the federal minister of emergency 'prepreparedness', Bill Blair, to keep him informed of the high-water situation. I also spoke to Chris Ewen, mayor of Ritchot; Lori Sellekekens [*phonetic*], reeve of Woodlands; and Dave Carlson, reeve of Emerson-Franklin; and the—and Kam Bright [*phonetic*], the reeve of Portage la Prairie and AMM president. I will continue to ensure that the government will continue to assist local governments to the best of our ability.

Our Manitoba Emergency Coordination Centre will continue to host daily conference calls with various levels of governments and communities.

For Manitoba's residents listening in: if you are in need of assistance of any kind, please contact your RM, as they will have contact the most direct line to contact our EMO staff for the Province of Manitoba. And staff—and our government is ready to assist where possible; where—however, our local government, though, EMO—will have the most active line of communication at their disposal.

Our farmers are in—critical to the Manitoba—our farmers are critical to the Manitoba economy. EMO staff are working with the Department of Agriculture to assist farmers with any issues that may arise, such as loss of livestock due to weather events.

Partial dike closures in Brunkird [*phonetic*] on P-H 3 and in Gretna are ongoing, and the full dike closure of St. Adolphe at PR 200 is now complete. Water levels at the Assiniboine River and downstream to the Shellmouth Dam are increasing, which has resulted in flood warnings to be issued in the Assiniboine River from St-Lazare to Griswold.

The intersection of 204 on Henderson Highway and the North Perimeter is now open, thanks to our pumping operations and hard-working staff. Also, the provincial crew is working to mitigate high-water levels on P-H 75 at Morris open as long as possible. Our EMO staff are working in collaboration with Manitoba Hydro to restore power outages and to impact communities, specifically in the Dauphin region and some First Nation communities. Generators are being sent to assist wherever applicable.

I want to thank staff across the levels of government as well as our general public of Manitoba for their continued preservation throughout this difficult time.

It has been said that the difficult between a drought and a flood in Manitoba is the matter of inches. I would like—would encourage Manitobans to lend their neighbour an inch of help today, as it might go a mile tomorrow.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, thank you to the minister for these continued updates to the House. The message today is clear: it is important that we stay vigilant, because even as the sun is shining outside, Manitobans must know that we're not in the clear yet. Farmers are still worried about their crops and homeowners are worried about property damage.

With more rain expected tomorrow, many communities are preparing flood prevention measures. For example, Pembina Valley Online reports that Christian Aid Ministries has set up a base in Altona to help with sandbagging efforts, in co-ordination with the local churches. Their co-ordinator, Conroy Plett, notes that they will be there for several weeks.

Thank you to all the citizens who are stepping up, and we urge the government to continue to provide supports for communities such as Altona.

At the same time, Manitobans are still dealing with power outages from this week's storm. Manitoba Hydro reported a power outage in Point Douglas and St. Johns areas of Winnipeg that impacted 1,785 customers, and another in the Interlake last night that affected roughly 4,650 Manitobans. Ground crews are working with—around the clock to fix these issues before the rain that is on its way.

We urge Manitobans to continue monitoring their property and prepare in case of flooding. We also urge this government to continue to provide support for residents seeking shelter and those looking to prevent flooding damage to their properties and affected by flooding more broadly.

* (13:50)

I want to once again commend and thank all those who are working to restore power across our province and protect Manitobans from flooding.

Our caucus commits to continue to listen to the concerns of local governments, and the particular rural municipalities as they begin to brace for this weekend and rebuild after the damage caused by this upcoming weather storm.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Lamont: I thank the minister for his fulsome update.

There is, of course, still a risk of greater flooding. As you mentioned, the RM of Ritchot and others 'desclared' a local state of emergency and there are ongoing concerns about the Red River Valley and the Assiniboine valley as well elsewhere that we are facing flooding and high waters.

I understand there is still uncertainty about a potential Colorado low headed our way, and while it might not be of the same magnitude as the previous two, it may still hit us. We can hope it will miss us entirely, but we have to wait.

We are looking forward to the minister's briefing tomorrow. We do want to note, for the record, that when it comes to Manitobans' ability to react to these emergencies and to take long-term steps to prevent the damage from flooding, there are at least five things this government can and should be doing.

First, on the micro level, to restore the basement flooding protection program; second, to thaw the funding freeze to municipalities; third, to make sure that funding for federal infrastructure projects is flowing to municipalities; fourth, investing in mitigation from climate change, but also fighting climate change.

One of the—I'll note these extreme weather events are part and parcel of climate change. As one scientist explained to me, for every degree in temperature, the air increases; the more water can hold in a warmer sky, and not just a warmer planet, means more energy, more water and more devastating storms.

First—or, finally and fifth, we'd like to encourage the government to find better ways to hold back water to protect our lakes and streams from the impacts of chemical and phosphorus runoff.

It's hard, whenever I see a car stuck under—that's half underwater or a building that's been flooded, I think of all the toxic chemicals that are under people's sinks that are just ending up running into our lakes and streams and, ultimately, to Lake Winnipeg.

Flooding is not new to Manitoba, but our knowledge of the environmental impacts of human activity are—and we learn more all the time about the things

we need to do change. We do need to change course to have a—leave a better province and a better planet to future generations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. James Jr. Canucks Hockey Champions

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Today, I rise and proudly recognize—with the member from Assiniboia, I'm sure, the member from St. James—the St. James Canucks, champions of the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League, the first time in 24 years.

Earlier this week on Monday, May 25th, the St. James Canucks beat the defending champs for Pembina Valley Twisters in the best of seven series in game 5, ending in game 5—by 5—nothing score at the Bell MTS centre which secured the first league title since 1998.

The St. James Canucks lost only four games throughout the regular season, two games in the play-offs on their way to winning the Jack McKenzie Trophy. The trophy is named in honour of the league founder and inaugural president of the league, is awarded to a playoff champion.

This past fall, the team was saddened and devastated to announce the passing of their dear friend and equipment manager, Marc "Wanks" Wankling.

Now, Marc, of course, was in his fifth year as equipment manager for the St. James Canucks. He spent countless hours volunteering in the community, Madam Speaker. From the days where he spent at Woodhaven, to coaching and managing the teams for St. James AA, as well as sitting on the executive, Marc did it all.

The St. James Canucks have dedicated this championship to Marc, and they carry on his spirit in terms of the volunteering that they do in the community on an everyday basis, whether it be at the Sturgeon Heights carnival, the Assiniboia West community pancake breakfast, the Canucks fall hockey development camp, as well as the St. James hockey day.

I also want to recognize Tom Miller, who, of course, was the president of the team from 1978 to 2015, is known in St. James circles as Mr. Hockey, of course, and as well as a member of the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame.

This, of course, is the second time, Madam Speaker, that the St. James Canucks have brought home the league championship trophy in their 44-year history of the franchise, and I'm pleased to have the team recognized today for their accomplishments both on and off of the ice.

We're joined here today, and we'll get you to stand up: Justin Steeves, who's president; coaching team members Jerry Jones, Blair Mooney as well as Matt Levins. We also have a number of the team members here: Mack Whitely. We've got Trent Haldarson, [*phonetic*] Trent Thorsteinson—sorry—Dylan Morden, Luke—Kurtis Luke, Kale Price, Rory Neill, as well as Matthew Mason-Vandel.

So thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Met School

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the students and the staff of Seven Oaks School Division's Met School, who have joined us today in the gallery.

Met School was the first of its kind in Canada when it opened in 2012, and now there are three locations.

Met School is a high school that limits class size to 15, tailors its curriculum to the needs and interests of its students, places learners in community-based internships two days a week and keeps the teacher with the same group of students from grade 9 through graduation.

It is an environment where the entire learning experience is personalized to each student's interests, talents and needs.

Hands-on experience is best accomplished in the real world. We all know the importance of being able to apply what's learned in the school to outside in the classroom. Met School prepares its students for excellence inside, outside—inside and outside of their school.

Academic is rigorous—academic rigour is built into the—each student's program, but it is not a traditional approach to the learning. Instead, academic accountability is built into an inquiry-based learning approach that follows the students' interests and passions.

The pandemic caused us an—caused an unprecedented disruption to education, and I want to thank all educators for being—for going above and beyond of their students.

The students and the staff—to the students and staff, thank you for your resiliency, continuing to teach and learn despite all the challenges thrown at you.

Madam Speaker, I ask all the members to join me in recognizing Met School students and staff.

Ruth and Wayne Reiner

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Municipal Relations): Although the weather might tell a very different story, the spring—the season is spring, and we're all looking forward to warmer weather and the summer months ahead. For many, this means camping season.

Today, I want to acknowledge and recognize Ruth and Wayne Reiner for their many years of service managing Williams Park campground in Gladstone. This year, Reiners have retired as camp managers and have passed on the responsibility to another team.

During the summer months, this couple would make their move from their—to their camper in the park, making it their summer home. For years they dedicated their summers to this space, providing a warm and friendly welcome to many campers who came to visit Gladstone. They booked sites, maintained the grounds and shelters and even saw some of the campgrounds expand during their time managing.

They have been fantastic ambassadors not only for the park, the town of Gladstone and our province of Manitoba. Campers have planned family reunions, grads and other special events at this park because it's been known that the Reiners were always happy to accommodate most requests for any guests. Their outstanding service and kind demeanour to visitors welcomed many to the park and included many return visits from the Good Sam members over the years.

Camping has always been an adventure to bring friends and families together to holiday and enjoy the outdoor life. I encourage those that enjoy the camping season to get out and explore the parks and recreation areas that you have not visited before. You might just be surprised to find so much more in our own backyard.

On behalf of all the members of the Assembly, I wanted to say thank you to Wayne and Ruth for the exceptional service in managing Williams Park. Thank you for promoting the community and always offering friendly hospitality; it encouraged many

others to come back time and time again to camp and visit Happy Rock.

When summer gets here and you all enjoy the outdoors and the many opportunities that camping experience can provide, come and check out the Happy Rock, stay at Williams Park, get a cinnamon bun at the bakery and visit the town of Gladstone this summer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (14:00)

Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, today, it is my heartfelt honour to recognize the contributions of the Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers to the multicultural fabric of our great province.

In 1977, Filipino educators in Winnipeg, including Jenny Arnaez, Linda Cantiveros, Julie Esteban, Cory Juan and Gemma Dalayoan, formed MAFTI with the original aim to preserve Filipino culture and foster intercultural understanding in our province. Founder Tita Gemma is here in the audience today, along with many current board members.

The group began supporting Filipino teachers acclimatize to Canadian civil and professional society and grew to include cultural and heritage programming that extends to the entire Canadian community.

As a professional organization, MAFTI attracts educators at various stages in their career development. Many members are newcomers to Canada who are working to have their foreign-earned credentials recognized. MAFTI provides opportunities for networking, professional development and valuable teaching experience in a Canadian setting.

As keepers of culture, MAFTI volunteers provide youth programming, including an after-school heritage program that introduces the Filipino language, customs, arts and culture to students. MAFTI also provides adult language classes, which allows a more advanced study of the Filipino culture. This year, there are 118 students enrolled in five different classes, taught by 10 MAFTI-member teachers.

My family has been very fortunate to participate in MAFTI's language and heritage classes. I sincerely value MAFTI's intercultural learning approach, especially as it relates to Indigenous history and reconciliation.

For the past 45 years, MAFTI's programming and advocacy continues to adapt to the changing needs of multi-ethnic teachers, students and Canadian society, and I invite this House to stand with me to thank this volunteer organization for their 45 years of community service and to wish them future success in years to come.

Mabunying pagbati sa inyong ika-apatnapu't limang taon ng paglilingkod sa ating komunidad. Salamat po. *[In glorious recognition of your 45 years of service to the community. Thank you.]*

Thank you.

Parkland Region—Fundraisers for Ukraine

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I rise in the House today to recognize the many volunteers in the south end of my constituency who have organized events and raised tremendous sums of money to assist in aiding with the crisis in Ukraine.

The Parkland region has a large Ukrainian descent, and this crisis is close to home.

The Roblin fundraiser organized by concerned citizens raised almost \$12,000; and the Rosburn fundraiser, pancake breakfast, organized by the Lions Club, \$16,800; as well as a Rosburn fundraiser social hosted by the Rosburn recreation committee, \$23,000; and the most recent Russell fundraiser dinner raised a whopping \$90,000.

The event that I had the opportunity to attend was organized by the Russell settlement services personnel, members of the Filipino community of Russell, clergy members of the Russell area ministerial association and the many, many citizens.

With food service by the Russell Ukrainian Catholic Church Ladies' Aid, the Russell Filipino association and Old School Catering from Oakburn, 500 sit-down dinners and 160 takeout meals were served.

There was a silent auction, straight-out cash donations and a live auction and performances by the Russell Yachminka Ukrainian dance troupe and local vocalists were also a highlight of the evening. Over 200 people made the evening a success.

A very touching part of the evening was when First Nation councillor and Elder Jim Cote from Waywayseecappo presented a star blanket to Olga Stranko and her two children who escaped the war in Ukraine. Star blankets are among the highest honour

in the Indigenous culture and given as a sign of respect, friendship and protection.

Thank you, Roblin, Rossburn and Russell and the amazing volunteers who plan to continue with fundraising efforts to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine through the Canadian Ukrainian foundation of Manitoba. You are all so awesome.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Infrastructure Spending Funding for Road Repairs

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Potholes, potholes, potholes; am I right, Madam Speaker? Seems like you can't drive anywhere these days without hitting a pothole, knocking your bumper off, maybe even catching a flat tire.

Dangerous on the highways, too, Madam Speaker. Semis are having to swerve around the potholes on provincial highways. This is dangerous.

Now, the Province—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —should be stepping up to fix roads. We should see action. Instead, we see cuts to road budgets and we see freezes to funding for municipalities.

Will the Premier stop the cuts and invest in our roads?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, there's—speaking of potholes, there's a big pothole in the middle of his question.

I will say that the litany of false accusations continues by the Leader of the Opposition. He continues to criticize. He has no plan or vision for the future, Madam Speaker.

Well, we have a plan and a vision for the future, Madam Speaker, outlined in our budget. We're—more than \$578 million in capital projects have been invested this year alone.

We will continue. We, obviously, take this very seriously, Madam Speaker. We know there's some work to do. It's been a harsh winter. We will get out there and get the job done. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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

Mr. Kinew: Some work to do? Madam Speaker, it's worse than it's ever been. There's more potholes than we've ever seen. That's inside the city. That's on provincial highways. That's in other municipalities.

Yes, there's some work to do, Madam Speaker, and that work begins with this provincial government, who need to stop their cuts to the road budgets and who need to stop the freeze to municipalities.

I really hope that people across the province are starting to connect the dots, that the things that they cut in their budgets here in this Chamber end up cutting—costing you more money out there: more in the form of vehicle repairs, more in the form of poor gas mileage and more in the form of stress.

Will the Premier please stop the cuts and start fixing some roads?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the Leader of the Opposition needs to connect the dots in his litany of false accusations and in—particularly in this area, Madam Speaker.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, the facts are that we are investing more than \$578 million more in infrastructure—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —on capital projects. We are investing more. That's more, not less, like the Leader of the Opposition says.

We will continue to make those investments on behalf of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Sure, Madam Speaker, I'll connect the dots. It's a straight line: they cut the funding for road repairs, now we got more potholes than ever.

We know that the Province could take immediate action. They could bring in an emergency fund to at least bring about temporary road repairs, but they won't even do that, Madam Speaker. They're clinging to that Brian Pallister approach of austerity, of cutting budgets.

Manitobans want better. Manitobans want their roads to get fixed.

After everything we've been through these past few years, can the PCs at least get one thing right? Can they try and fix some roads in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to put false information on the record. We are spending more in infrastructure, not less.

But all he does is criticize because he has no plan, Madam Speaker—no plan or vision for the future of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we do have a plan and vision for Manitoba. We're looking to strengthen health care. We are making life more affordable for Manitobans. And we're going to build our economy here in Manitoba so there's a better, brighter future for all Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I think you've heard me say before that when there are, particularly, students in the gallery, this is not the time for this kind of behaviour.

* (14:10)

They're—are looking to all of you as leaders in the community. They are future leaders in the community, and I really do think that they want to see some better dialogue going on in this House and no heckling, so that they can hear, actually, what is being asked and answered.

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

Surgical and Diagnostic Services Timeline to Clear Backlog

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, it's going to be a bumpy road ahead under the PCs, Madam Speaker.

When it comes to health care, we know that this Premier is spending a quarter of a million dollars just to try and convince Manitobans with advertising that their government isn't a complete failure when it comes to surgeries—\$250,000 for billboards right now, saying Budget 2022 is fixing the surgical backlog.

But guess what, Madam Speaker? The surgical backlog is getting worse and worse and worse. More Manitobans are waiting for a surgery than ever before, and they're waiting longer than ever before. Is that what the members are applauding for? I would certainly hope not.

Budget 2022 ends on the day March 31st coming up.

Is the Premier committing that the surgical backlog will be cleared by March 31st or is this campaign—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Again, the litany of false accusations by the member opposite.

The fact of the matter is that we have invested and—in our budget this year of—\$110 million towards surgical and diagnostic backlogs. Madam Speaker, I know the surgical and diagnostic backlog task force is working diligently to ensure that we tackle that.

We want to ensure that each and every Manitoban gets the surgeries and diagnostics that they need when they need it, Madam Speaker. That's why we are making these significant investments in health care in this budget—a budget, I will remind members opposite, that they voted against.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, we know it's a fact that more Manitobans than ever are waiting for a surgery or for a diagnostic test. We also know that it's a fact that those Manitobans are waiting longer—more people waiting, more people waiting for longer.

We know that this government likes, in budget season, to come out and make all sorts of promises, all sorts of announcements, and yet every year since they've taken office, what happens? They cut health care, and it's patients in Manitoba hospitals who end up shouldering the burden, Madam Speaker.

Again, they're making some commitments about Budget 2022, but that budget ends on next March 31st.

So is the Premier committing that the surgery backlog will be cleared by March 31st, or is this ad campaign simply false advertising?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, once again the Leader of the Opposition is not putting facts on the record, Madam Speaker, in this Chamber.

And the facts are that we are investing: an additional \$110 million to deal with the surgical and—backlogs, that's in this budget; \$812 million in capital funding as identified in the CPSP projects; an increase of \$9 million for 28 additional ICU beds; over \$11 million to increase nursing enrolment in Manitoba's post-secondary institutions.

The list goes on and on and on of all the wonderful things that we have introduced in this budget, Madam Speaker. These are good things for

Manitobans. These are things that will strengthen health care in the province of Manitoba. And the members opposite voted against every one of those initiatives.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, just like Brian Pallister, the Premier comes into question period with a long list of things that they want to announce.

And yet, what has happened every single year since the PCs took office in 2016? Every year they come in here and they wave around that list of announcements, and then what happens outside of the Chamber in the real world? Health care keeps getting worse and worse and worse.

What's the situation in health care right now? Emergency room wait times in Winnipeg are longer than they've ever been. Surgery wait times are longer than they've ever been, and there's more people waiting for their surgeries than ever before.

Will the Premier finally commit to stopping the cuts, and will they take that 250 grand they're spending on billboards and use it to hire some nurses instead?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the long list of things that we have announced are ways that we're taking action on strengthening health care in the province.

And I will remind the member opposite that he and all of his colleagues on that side of the House have voted against each and every one of these initiatives. That includes more training of nurses. That includes steps towards getting our internationally educated nurses trained and into the workforce, Madam Speaker.

We are taking action on behalf of Manitobans. The NDP has no plan, no vision whatsoever, for the future of Manitoba.

Surgical and Diagnostic Backlog Government Billboard Campaign

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The PC government is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on misleading ads. This government has done nothing on the surgical and diagnostic backlog; it grows day after day, month after month.

The PC billboards are the exact opposite of actually what's going on here in Manitoba. The minister can't fix health care with simple billboards.

It requires real commitments that should've been done long ago.

Why is this PC government spending a quarter of a million dollars on fake advertising?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for standing in the House today. It gives me the opportunity to thank the public health officials that I'll have the opportunity, later this afternoon, to thank in person for the incredible work that they did throughout the various phases of the pandemic to keep Manitobans safe, including the Vaccine Implementation Task Force.

And the billboards and the advertising that the member for St. Johns says is useless and has done nothing for Manitobans has helped to ensure 83.1 per cent of Manitobans have received—70 and older have received the third dose; 78.9 per cent over 60 years, third dose; 72.1 per cent Manitobans age 50 and older—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) told Manitobans that they would have to fundraise hundreds of thousands of dollars to increase surgeries at Concordia Hospital. Then the Premier turned around and spent a quarter of a million dollars to try and fool Manitobans the surgery backlog is done.

The Premier's plan makes Manitobans pay out of pocket for health care while she spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on ridiculous billboards, Madam Speaker. And because of her choices, not one new surgery has been done at Concordia Hospital.

Why is the Premier choosing to spend money on advertising instead of surgeries for Manitobans?

Ms. Gordon: I thank the member for St. Johns for asking about surgeries because, as of April 19th, 10,263 non-emergent surgeries completed since January, 2,943 emergent surgeries completed since January—total of 13,206 surgeries, Madam Speaker.

I think the 13,206 individuals who received those surgeries would be very disappointed to hear the member for St. Johns say that they didn't receive any care.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Here's something that the government can advertise that Manitobans really want to know: a date when the surgical backlog will actually be cleared. They can also announce when they will pay for all the surgeries at Concordia and not force Manitobans to pay out of pocket.

That's what they should be doing, Madam Speaker, instead of spending a quarter of a million dollars on useless billboards across our province.

Why is the Premier spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on misleading, false advertising instead of funding surgeries at Concordia?

* (14:20)

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, \$110 million invested in the backlog in Budget 2022. That is monies that will go towards reducing the backlog of diagnostics and surgeries; 4.9–over \$4.9 million for the Concordia fifth OR that is being funded by our government.

Madam Speaker, we're going to continue to put accurate information out in the public sphere, which is the opposite of what members from the opposition are doing.

Health-Care System Management Concerns

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, this government broke health care. Now they want others to fix it, and that's not accountability, that's simply not right.

Health care is a mess. HSC has reported a 10-hour wait to be seen. Doctors and nurses are reporting horrific conditions that they're working in. The CEO of the WRHA says they're having trouble getting patients out of the R–out of the ER and into hospital beds. This government cut 124 hospital beds, Madam Speaker.

Why won't the minister accept responsibility? Why is she blaming others for what she and her government broke?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Union Station for raising this at a time when we have several young people in our gallery to hear the deplorable state of our health system under their leadership.

Members opposite would do well to remember their own record on wait times. When they were in government, they ran the health-care system into the ground. We had the worst emergency department–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: –wait times in Canada for years, and that was without a two-and-a-half-year pandemic.

And the NDP-led health–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: –system had the highest wait times. Again, they don't want the young people in the gallery to hear what I have to say, or for Manitobans to know that they destroyed the health system and our government has been–

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, Manitobans do not trust this government with their health care.

This government has made promises year after year after year and has never delivered. They promised to address the surgical backlog two years ago; it's now longer than it's ever been. The minister has offered Manitobans–this is a direct quote–her thoughts and prayers, and the backlog has only since grown. Now the minister won't even reset–accept responsibility–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: –for the long wait times in emergency rooms, and she's demanding that others fix it.

Madam Speaker, why is this minister demanding that others broke what she and her government–sorry, that others fix what she and her government broke?

Ms. Gordon: I don't know what to expect from one day to the next from the members opposite.

One week they're asking me to require staff in the Thompson General Hospital and the northern regional health authority to fix the hot water, then they're suggesting that I physically get on a flight and fly to Thompson to fix the hot water. And then they say, don't require the leadership of the WRHA or Shared Health to work with–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: –officials in health facilities to generate ideas to address the ED wait times.

One week they want things fixed, the next week they don't want it fixed.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans just don't know what to expect from the members opposite.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, this government broke health care, and it's clear that we need an NDP government to start fixing it.

Madam Speaker, this minister thinks health-care needs can be addressed with billboards or with a front-page ad or a press release, but this minister and this government cut 124 hospital beds; they cut 56 surgical beds; they cut 18 ICU beds. And now they're calling on other people to fix it?

Where's the accountability, Madam Speaker? Where's the responsibility to own up to their own mistakes?

Why is this government demanding that others should fix what they broke?

Ms. Gordon: I understand the member for Union Station's lack of knowledge and awareness of what took place under the previous NDP government.

They've kept the member in the dark, but, Madam Speaker, we know the health-care system was—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —broken by their government: longest wait times in the country. And we have been slowly working towards fixing that with many initiatives.

Over the last two years, I—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —again, I want the young people in the gallery to hear their deplorable actions, in terms of the breaking and running into the ground of our health system.

Two—over the last two years we've been working on online assessments, Madam Speaker, virtual consultations with physicians, the development of—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Drug Overdose Deaths Request for Support for Bill 234

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): In the past four years, 1,200 Manitobans have lost their lives to a drug overdose or lack of services. These are friends, siblings, children, parents and loved ones who are missed every day.

We must reduce the stigma around drug use. Yesterday, I introduced Bill 234, which would make the Sunday before Mother's Day a day to reflect on the impacts of drug use and to grieve those who have lost their lives. This is the least we can do.

Will the minister support Bill 234 today?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I do appreciate the question coming from the member opposite.

I know how this issue and this topic is very close to the member's heart, as it is to many of our hearts, as well. Anyone who has experience with a loved one who has dealt with substance abuse issues, and certainly who has passed away, unfortunately, with these issues, knows that it's important to not only speak often about our loved ones but to remember them and to teach the next generation of the dangers and harms of substance use, but also where the resources and help is that they can access.

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

Mrs. Smith: Much more can be done to address the addictions crisis in Manitoba. We want to make sure that those who have lost their lives due to substance abuse will be remembered and that the appropriate actions are taken to honour them.

Bill 234 is a first step in raising awareness about the impacts of drugs in Manitoba and reducing the stigma that exists. It would provide space for us, as families, to grieve those who have been lost to drugs, including my own father and recently my brother-in-law.

Will this government commit to passing 234 today?

Mrs. Guillemard: I offer my condolences once again to the member opposite.

It's a very tough road to walk, the grief of any loved ones who are lost but let alone those who have struggled, especially with substance use. And I do look forward to being able to speak to the member's bill tomorrow and to learn from others who have walked the same path and journey.

We know that healing is when we connect with others who have similar experiences and also those celebrations of those who have been able to address some of their substance use issues and had success, to give hope to the next generation.

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

Mrs. Smith: Victims of overdoses and drug-related suicides deserve to be remembered and grieved. In their honour, action should be taken to prevent future overdoses and reduce addictions.

* (14:30)

Bill 234 will designate the Sunday before Mother's Day as a day to raise awareness about the impacts of drugs and the stigma, and help those grieve those that have been lost. This government can support this initiative by committing to passing Bill 234, a bill that I am bringing forward on behalf of families who have lost their loved ones and deserve a day to be—to grieve.

Will this minister do so today and pass Bill 234?

Mrs. Guillemard: I—again, I want to reiterate that I do look forward to speaking to the member's bill tomorrow morning during private members' business. We look forward to learning from the member, from other members and their experiences and advice that can come forward.

Madam Speaker, our government absolutely recognizes the need to invest in mental health services, which is why in this year's budget we have \$500,000 to add six crisis stabilization unit beds at the Crisis Response Centre, \$830,000 to support expansion of the Winnipeg RAAM clinics and others.

And, Madam Speaker, I look forward to sitting down with the member opposite and talking about future harm reduction initiatives.

International Student Health Care Request to Reinstate Coverage

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, many international students are being forced to pay massive bills when they seek health care that they need.

We've heard stories from students who had to pay tens of thousands of dollars when seeking health-care services or mental health treatment. These costs are a direct result of this government's cuts to health care for international students in 2018.

No one in Manitoba should have to choose between health care and finances.

Will the minister do the right thing and reinstate health-care services for international students today?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I'm proud of Budget 2022

and making life more affordable for all Manitobans, including international students and newcomers, that the members opposite voted against.

We on this side of the House are proud that many international students have chosen to study and stay in Manitoba. It is one of the top destinations for international students due to our low tuition and one of Canada's best post-secondary educations.

Madam Speaker, we want our students to study and stay in Manitoba, including our international students, and that is why we introduced the Immigration Advisory Council to redesign the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program based on the labour market needs for newcomers and international students to get good jobs once they graduate.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, this government makes more—life more difficult and more expensive for international students.

Madam Speaker, \$40,000, \$120,000—these are some of the bills that international students and their families face and are being forced to pay because of health-care services in Manitoba. That is simply unacceptable.

We know that many students fall between the cracks and are left without insurance while they're in-between studies. This deters people from accessing health care. This government can easily solve the problem by reinstating health care for international students.

Will they actually make that commitment today?

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, as outlined in Budget 2022, and which the NDP voted against, our government is making a record amount of investments in the post-secondary sector and making life more affordable for all Manitobans, including international students and newcomers.

In a recent speaking engagement with students from Bangladesh, I asked them why they all had decided to come to Manito [*phonetic*] to live, study and stay. What I heard was: the quality post-secondary education, the low tuition relative to other provinces and the highly successful Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. Those reasons—those are the reasons why they choose to study and stay in Manitoba.

We will continue—welcome many 'internash' students to our wonderful province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, while this minister avoids to answer the question and avoids international students, they still suffer.

International students in Canada pay up to five times more for tuition than domestic students. Private health-care insurance costs up to \$900 per year. And students pay out of pocket and up front for many of these costs. It's extremely burdensome for international students.

The government can actually do the right thing this time. Today, they could forgive outstanding medical bills and they could reinstate health care for international students.

I ask the minister again: Will he reinstate international students' health-care services today?

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, in Budget 2022, which the N-D-T—the NDP did vote against, our government will build and strengthen the post-secondary sector by investing more than \$1 billion every year in post-secondary education.

This year's funding announcement includes over \$11 million to increase nursing enrolment as well as Manitoba's post-secondary institutions.

Madam Speaker, for years, the previous NDP government operated without a plan for post-secondary and taxed our students to the max, making it unattractive to stay in Manitoba. Our government is taking action by making life more affordable for our students, including international students.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Abuse of Non-Disclosure Agreements Request for Support for Bill 225

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yesterday, we introduced Bill 225, a bill to reform the abuse of non-disclosure agreements, which have been wrongly used for decades to permanently silence people.

We worked together with UWindsor law professor Dr. Julie Macfarlane of Can't Buy My Silence, who has partnered with Zelda Perkins in the UK, the first person to ever break an NDA relating to the abuses of Harvey Weinstein.

We all know that Peter Nygård is facing a class-action suit in New York, extradition from Canada, criminal charges in Toronto and Montreal. The 'allegedegations' against him span decades and were kept under wraps in part due his company's routine use of NDAs to gag people.

We don't think NDAs and the law should be used to suppress the truth in this way.

Will the government support our Bill 225?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): While the member opposite would know that it's inappropriate for me to speak as the Attorney General of a case that's currently before a court, I did see the bill that he introduced yesterday, and I will have the department review it.

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

Mr. Lamont: We all know that NDAs impact people who've been mistreated at work or school teachers, nurses, students, people working in health care, education, the public and private sector alike.

At the University of Manitoba, professor Steve Kirby faced multiple allegations of sexual misconduct towards students and, despite years of warnings and even being arrested, it was kept quiet and he was offered a glowing recommendation for his next job in another country. While complainants were denied any justice, the U of M was ordered to pay the professor \$286,000 for violating his confidentiality in an NDA. That's how our tax dollars and students' tuition was spent.

We should all be able to agree that, when NDAs can permanently silence complainants while protecting powerful abusers, it's the opposite of justice.

Does the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) agree, and can we count on her for our—for her support?

Mr. Goertzen: Again, Madam Speaker, while this government has taken extraordinary lengths to add measures to ensure that, whether—students or others are protected from those who might cause them harm or act inappropriately, when it comes to the particular bill that the member brought forward to the House only yesterday, I will have my department review it.

Ukrainian Refugees Settlement Supports

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Many Ukrainians fleeing their war-'torm'—torn homes are arriving in Manitoba, and the government needs to

ensure they have proper supports as many are arriving with just the clothes on their backs.

To date, there is still so much more our Province could be doing to help these refugees settle, and it's not fair to leave all the heavy lifting to private sponsorship and non-profits.

What is this government doing to ensure refugees in Manitoba have proper resources, like living supports and access to food?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): First of all, I want to thank the many organizations that have contributed to humanitarian aid. I want to thank the member from Swan River for providing that information that all those organizations are doing for the people of Ukraine.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Tyndall Park for the question. It gives me an opportunity to remind the member opposite, her party that voted against Budget 2022 meant saying no to helping newcomers and immigrants settle to Manitoba—over \$5.1 million to support newcomers and immigrants wanting to settle in Manitoba so that they can have a better quality of life, including \$3 million to Manitoba Start.

Our government is taking action to making life more affordable for all Manitobans, including newcomers and immigrants. I wish the member for Tyndall Park would call Ottawa to get them to fix the federal backlog and capacity issue so that we can even welcome more newcomers to Manitoba as soon as possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Funding for Disability Services Supports in Budget 2022

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): With the announcement of Budget 2022 on Tuesday, April the 12th, the government revealed historic investments in order to support the most vulnerable Manitobans.

* (14:40)

Could the minister inform the House on how is Budget 2022 going to support those living with disabilities?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Accessibility): I'd like to thank my colleague for that wonderful question.

Earlier today, I was honoured to make an announcement alongside our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) of \$26.4 million more for the Community Living disABILITY Services program, which includes \$10 million to increase wages for the front-line staff employed by service providers across the country.

We also announced an additional \$12 million in— for the new income support program that will help people living with disabilities. We also announced \$5 million for Children's disABILITY Services.

These combined initiatives will help people of all abilities in Manitoba achieve a better destiny, and I'd like to thank all of our community partners for helping enrich the lives of people with disabilities in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Education System Funding Concerns

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): The government spent thousands on focus groups for their failed education plan. And what did the survey say, Madam Speaker? What did Manitobans tell them? They were worried this government was going to do to education what they did to health care. They're laughing over there. They know it's the truth.

And look around. All we see are cuts, cuts and more cuts. And it's not surprising that families completely don't trust what they're hearing from this government.

Will the minister listen to Manitobans, listen to families and stop these cuts to our education system?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate that my friend from Transcona—the MLA for Transcona—stands up today and puts some false information on the record and continues those self-serving talking points, like his Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, the member knows that, this year alone, we have funded education to the tune of \$327 million over the last two years. That's a 17.2 per cent increase. In this coming year alone, we're looking at well over \$127,000—or, \$127 million, sorry.

And there's many more—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: –announcements coming, Madam Speaker, to support our students. Tune in for tomorrow as well.

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

Mr. Altomare: Madam Speaker, I'll make it clear again: no Manitoban trusts this government when it comes to funding our schools; not a single one. And their survey said it itself. It was clear.

And that's because of their chronic underfunding to the system since 2016. Read it in the FRAME, it's right there, and it chronically shows how this government not only underfunds but totally, totally disrespects the people working in the system.

And what do we see? Fewer supports in the classroom, fewer teachers, fewer EAs, fewer things that our kids need.

Will the minister listen to what Manitobans are saying and stop the cuts?

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, this member knows that our government collaborates and works with our education partners on a day-to-day basis.

Matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I've got a quote for you: It's said if you want to go somewhere fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. And I view the shift in policy of the Province as, I quote, we'd like to go far and we'd like to go together.

Who said that, Madam Speaker? Mr. Brian O'Leary, superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Transcona, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Altomare: I'll remind this member what he said in the Lac du Bonnet register, or whatever that thing is called—the Whiteshell reporter? Something like that.

He called them the vocal minority, misinformed, fear mongers. That's what he said, and he has yet to apologize, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: –for those comments. Not a—one piece that's come out of there. And it's similar—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: What do we see? More cuts across entire divisions in this province, and has yet, Madam Speaker, to apologize to the people working on our front lines and our classrooms.

So, I will ask one more time: Will they reverse the cuts and stop with their chronic underfunding of our education system?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Ewasko: I guess, Madam Speaker, I'm going to stand and ask the member—I thought, my friend from—the MLA for Transcona, to stand up and apologize for his shameful comment, his inappropriate comments and shameful comments, to not only the Lac du Bonnet Clipper and the Beausejour clipper—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: –but also to the residents of the Lac du Bonnet constituency.

I'm asking the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Ewasko: –member to stand up and apologize—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The table could maybe stop the clock for this one, although I'll stop my clock.

I don't need members going out like this with their hands to me. I am doing my job and I know what my job is. And my job actually should have more respect from members in this House. And there have been a lot of noise coming from both sides of the House, but when I'm standing doing my job I expect respect to this position and to the—this institution, and what this has stood for a long time.

So I don't need members—I can hear who's heckling. I know very well who's heckling—on both sides—and I'm asking everybody for some co-operation here so that we can actually demonstrate that we have a democracy. So I'm asking for everybody's co-operation, please.

I don't need to do this every day and I don't have to read the University Women's Club letter, but I would again if I have to because I think we need to have more respect. And I take great offence when members are sitting there like this, to me, when they're

turning around and heckling, you know, right after that.

So, I'm asking for everybody's respect and co-operation so that I can do my job, and I think treating people better would be probably a wiser decision by all of you.

The honourable Minister of Education, to complete his response.

Mr. Ewasko: We, on this side of the House, respect our community newspapers all across this great province of ours, Madam Speaker.

It is, again, shameful and upsetting to me, as a member of the government, that the member from Transcona would belittle some of the community—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona?

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Yes.

Madam Speaker: On a petition.

Foot-Care Services

Mr. Altomare: I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

To the Assembly:

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

* (14:50)

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is been signed by Jen Hutsul, Alison Slaney, Wayne Hickey and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

(7) The implications of inadequate and/or—excuse me—or a lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Darlene Beardy, June MacIntosh [*phonetic*], David Spence and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Ekosi.

Louise Bridge

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it 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—City has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

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

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

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

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its 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) Most 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 of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed. The City expropriation process has begun.

(10) The provincial budget due in mid-April 2022 is the Province's opportunity to announce its portion of funding for this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg in her new 2022 provincial budget

to build 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 open—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—old 'Louise' bridge open for active transportation in the future.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Foot-Care Services

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

* (15:00)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this has been signed by Natale Bloomfield, Charlotte Sloan, Brian Taylor and many other Manitobans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Bobbi Moncten [*phonetic*], Adrien [*phonetic*] Dumas and Brian Champagne and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore the essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2020.

And this is signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) The northern regional health authority, the N-R-H-A, previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes

until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And signed by many Manitobans.

Miigwech. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'd like to announce that in addition to the reports and witnesses previously announced, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting on May 16th, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. will also be considering the following:

The Auditor General's report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, May 2015: section 9, Taxation Division, Audit Branch; section 18, Senior Management Expense Policies.

* (15:10)

Auditor General's report follow-up of recommendations, May 2016: food and safety; taxation division, auditor branch; Senior Management Expense Policies.

Auditor General's report follow-up of recommendations, March 2017: Office of the Fire Commissioner; Senior Management Expense Policies.

Auditor General's report follow-up of recommendations, March 2018: rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet.

The additional witnesses to be called are: Shared Health CEO, Adam Topp; head of Shared Health diagnostic imaging, John French; and the provincial clinical specialty lead of diagnostic imaging, Dr. Marco Essig.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that in addition to the reports and witnesses previously announced, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting on May 16th, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. will also be considering the following:

Auditor General's report follow-up of previously issued recommendations, May 2015: section 9, Taxation Division, Audit Branch; section 18, Senior Management Expense Policies.

Auditor General's report follow-up of recommendations, May 2016: Food Safety; Taxation Division, Audit Branch; Senior Management Expense Policies.

Auditor General's report follow-up of recommendations, March 2017: Office of the Fire Commissioner; Senior Management Expense Policies.

Auditor General's report follow-up of recommendations, March 2018: rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet.

The additional witnesses to be called are: Shared Health CEO, Adam Topp; head of Shared Health diagnostic imaging, John French; provincial clinical specialty lead for diagnostic imaging, Dr. Marco Essig.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for debate this afternoon on second reading, Bill 35 and 28 and then for third reading and concurrence, Bill 31?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider this afternoon second readings of Bill 35 and 28 and concurrence and third readings of Bill 31.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 35—The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months and Related Repeals and Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call second reading, Bill 35, The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months and Related Repeals and Amendments Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 35, The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months and Related Repeals and Amendments Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you—[interjection]

It's like being a Liberal. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House to speak to second reading on this bill, The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months and Related Repeals and Amendments Act.

I would consider this to be a good housekeeping bill, Madam Speaker, when it comes to how statutes are organized and how they are displayed and accessed by the public.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The bill will bring together in one statute 36 pieces of legislation that designate a commemorative day, week or month to recognize a significant event, issue or a person.

Manitoba currently designates 38 such periods as awareness, recognition or commemoration occasions. These occasions highlight significant issues and people that are important to Manitobans and vary in length from a single day to a month.

The proposed bill that amalgamates all of these awareness, recognition or commemoration occasions currently set out in individual statutes into a single act in order to increase public transparency, but more importantly, I think, to potentially create more awareness and accessibility for the public.

So just in laypersons' terms, if you were going to go on to the consolidated list of statutes in Manitoba—which are all online—you could find a variety of these different bills recognizing days or weeks in a variety of different places, depending on what they're named, because I believe that they're listed alphabetically. But it would be difficult for someone if they didn't—if they simply wanted to know what the different days are that are recognized in Manitoba, to be able to find them because they'd have to read each one of the bills and then try to determine if that's a bill that recognizes the day or week.

This bill will put under one umbrella, if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of the bills and so if a person wants to see, like, is there a day that commemorates whatever they're looking for, they'd click on the bill and they'd see them all listed there and they could make a quick determination.

It's probably a good time at this moment to congratulate and commend all the different members of this Legislature, but of past Legislatures as well, over the past, I guess, more than 100 years now who

brought forward these ideas. And they often come forward from opposition members.

They're not—they're certainly almost—they're mostly independent members who bring them forward because they hear from constituents or there's a particular group that raises or wants to raise awareness. And we heard, you know, the member today raise such an issue in question period today. And those are good things and I commend members who bring forward ideas and suggestions.

And so—but now we have quite a number of them and there's a good reason, I think, to order them in a more orderly way so that folks can see them.

In the future then, if a member was looking to add a day—and, again, there are members who are already looking to add a different day or months or weeks of commemoration, they would simply amend this bill and then it would get added to the list.

And again, a person then—any Manitoban or anybody anywhere in the world could go online, quickly click onto that bill and see all of the bills that are listed. It doesn't change any of the bills or the different descriptors or preambles in bills. Those just simply get incorporated under the broad umbrella, so it maintains what members have done.

Now, there are times when those preambles might get a little dated and members themselves may want to amend that. And they would just do that by amending this act, but that's up to members if they chose to do that in the future.

The one thing that it does do—it also, in terms of the preambles, it ensures that we have descriptive language when it comes to the Manitoba tartan. And so the Manitoba tartan, which we all know and recognize and I think love generally in this Assembly. And we have a Manitoba Tartan Day but there's not a descriptive analysis of it in the bill, so it'd add that.

And then one other thing which I think is important that I want to highlight, the bill will also formally designate May 12th as Manitoba Day. Since 1970, the year of Manitoba's centenary, the founding of the Province of Manitoba has traditionally been commemorated on May 12th to mark the enactment of the Manitoba Act, 1870. This has grown into an annual province-wide event celebrating Manitoba and its people but it's not a specific day in Manitoba legislation.

Of course, there was a federal act that was passed, the Manitoba Act that made Manitoba a province and

such, we recognize May 12th as Manitoba Day, the day that the act passed in Parliament, but this would put into Manitoba law the Manitoba Day.

So it only adds one new day, and that's Manitoba Day, which I thought would not be controversial for members. But, of course, members might look at this list now—if the bill passes—and go, there's other things that should be added.

And I would encourage members—all members—to bring those ideas forward because it's often ways we can celebrate things and recognize the good work of individuals or groups or recognize a solemn day, but that also reflects on the good work of members when they bring forward those ideas.

So thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to the questions.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. 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.

The floor is open for questions.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I would ask the minister: does this bill limit any specific awareness day already listed in this bill from potentially becoming a recognized holiday?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think I understood the member's question. It does not alter the former nature—form or nature of any of the current bills that have been passed in the Legislature that make a day or a week of commemoration. So, it all remains exactly the same, it is just housed in a different place.

* (15:20)

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this legislation. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: I, too, feel like a Liberal today.

And, my question for the minister is, I understand the process if a new piece of legislation is introduced

it would amend this bill. What happens to the current pieces of legislation on the docket, like turban day and Filipino heritage day, that are currently between second and third reading?

Mr. Goertzen: So, it's a good question, and I suppose it depends, you know, what passes first or what doesn't pass.

I don't want to presume passage of this bill, but let's presume that this bill does pass and then, also in this session, turban day passes, which I expect that it will. I believe that we would have to amend this bill to bring 'turban' day within it, and then all future suggestions from members would be amendments to the main bill. But we would simply fold the turban day and others that pass in the session—and there will be others, I believe, that'll pass—would come under this bill.

Ms. Fontaine: I guess specifically what I'm asking the minister is, if we look at Orange Shirt Day on schedule 32, I know that there's been discussion—we would like to see it as a statutory holiday. And so that was what my previous question is, right.

So, again, you know, does this bill limit any specific awareness day to—from potentially becoming a recognized holiday?

Mr. Goertzen: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other questions?

Ms. Fontaine: What prompted the minister to make these changes and include all days, weeks and months into one bill?

Mr. Goertzen: I think I'm one of those rare individuals—and there's probably a few else in the House and Clerk's Office, I would say, contains some of them—who are just sort of interested in how government functions and forms, and I just thought that this was a cleaner way to be able to present bills if they weren't scattered all over the consolidated acts and they were all easily to be seen and accessible in one place. So, I think it's just because of my odd curiosity and interest in the legislative process.

Ms. Fontaine: Does the minister, or does the PC government, have any plans to, in fact, make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday?

Mr. Goertzen: Those plans would not be contained within this bill. This bill is simply about putting into place—into a different place the commemoration days that currently exist. Any other sort of discussions about additional commemoration days or statutory

holidays would be in a different sort of debate or forum.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other questions?

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Miigwech, Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Thank you. *[interjection]*

Okay. Okey-doke, miigwech. Miigwech for that.

So, you know, I'm pleased to put some words on the record in respect of Bill 35, the commemoration of days, weeks and months and related appeals—repeals and amendments.

You know, I would agree with the minister and my colleague earlier in his comments when he acknowledged that, you know, we have several members currently sitting in this Chamber who have brought forward really important awareness days.

And, you know, I think that awareness days, recognition days, are, you know, among the few times that we are actually able to agree on something in this Chamber. And I would suggest, I would hope, that it's an opportunity that all of us as legislators recognize the role that we play in honouring Manitobans and the variety of different communities and peoples that we represent.

And, you know, I think that that's something that we can all agree on and quite often, we have awareness days and recognition days that I would suggest—and I've seen in the past—that bring us pride to be able to be a part of.

I know that, you know, afterwards, often when an awareness day bill gets passed, you know, we all go outside the Chamber and we take pictures with different Manitobans. And it is quite special to be a part of—and again, collectively, all of us—to be a part of something that makes Manitobans genuinely so happy and filled with so much pride that they're recognized. And it's quite special to see the smiles on faces of Manitobans to be recognized in this Chamber, and to have an official day.

And so, you know, I want to start my comments by that, because I think that it is something that we can all be proud of, that we're a part of that. And something that, long after any of us are, you know, gone, those bills, those days, still live on regardless of

whether or not we're here; and still live on in recognizing Manitobans that come even after us.

And so I am grateful to be a part of those days. I think those are important moments in this Legislative Assembly. Sometimes days can be very, very tough in this Legislative Assembly, but those days make—you know, they give you a little reprieve from what are very difficult days in here, and it's something that we can all be proud of.

I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the acts that we've—on this side of the House—been blessed to be a part of and grateful that, you know, our working relationship in some respects has allowed these bills to go forward. And I'm—you know, I'm—I'll actually put it on the record that I'm actually really grateful for the working relationship that I have with the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen). We don't always agree on things, obviously, but I am grateful for the working relationship that we have where we can agree, and there's a willingness to allow bills that are brought forward from our members to receive, you know, royal assent.

And so, to him I say *miigwech* for that partnership and that working relationship.

One of those bills was Spirit Bear Day Act that was passed by the member for—or brought forward by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith). And I think that that's really such an important bill, you know, not only for the member for Point Douglas, or for, you know, the NDP caucus, but for all of us. Because I think what that did in that moment when Spirit Bear Day received royal assent, what it effectively did was it acknowledged the life of little Jordan, and acknowledged what was a pretty grotesque situation. You know, a little boy spending all of his life in a hospital while governments decided who was supposed to pay for his care is unconscionable. I don't care what side of the aisle we all stand, it is unconscionable that there were governments that were fighting on—to pay for the bills—the hospital bills, the medical bills of a little baby.

And so, you know, yes—you know, I know that the member for Point Douglas was very proud to bring that forward, but it was a moment that the family could be assured that we recognize, you know, those mistakes and we recognize how worthy and valued and special their son Jordan's life was, and how we all should've done better in respect of little Jordan.

* (15:30)

Not only did—when Spirit Bear Day received royal assent, did it recognize little Jordan and his family and his community but it also recognized the hands-down phenomenal work of Cindy Blackstock, who has been doing advocacy for many, many years in respect of Indigenous children within the child and family—or child welfare services across our territories.

I actually met Cindy—when did I—I probably would have met Cindy back in 1997. I actually happened to be in Geneva at le Palais des Nations. I was there for the working group on the draft declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples. And I happened to be at the cafeteria in the Palais des Nations and she was sitting at the next table, and that was the first time that I got to meet Cindy Blackstock.

And she is just a phenomenal leader within the Indigenous community and just a phenomenal leader within Canada. And she shows, you know, the ability to effect change and transformative change that will impact on the lives of little children when you are genuine, when you are unapologetic, when you are willing to fight long-term; like, that is commitment—what we've seen from Cindy Blackstock for the last 20 years is real commitment to change on behalf of the lives of Indigenous children.

And so this bill, in many ways, also honours the work that Cindy Blackstock has done for the last 20 years and continues to do up until this very moment. And so I'm proud to say that we were able to do this in the Manitoba Legislature. I think that that is something that we can all be proud of.

I want to acknowledge my colleague, the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), who just recently had his first bill passed, The Emancipation Day Act. And again, another really important day where we, as a Manitoba Legislature, can acknowledge the history of slavery and though—The Emancipation Day and, you know, the role that this played here in Canada, and our own history in Canada of slavery.

And I'm really proud and I know that I can imagine that I'm—I can say the same for the PC caucus, that we are very proud to have among the first cohorts of Black Manitobans to be elected to the Manitoba Legislature in 2019. That's something that we can all be proud of. It's something that we can all celebrate, and certainly it's something that Manitobans can celebrate. And it is, you know, a moment where Manitobans' electorates see themselves reflected in the Manitoba Legislature; where they were never reflected for almost 150 years. And so that's something to be very proud of.

And as a testament to that representation, we have the member for St. James' Emancipation Day bill, and that's the power of representation. That's what happens when we elect people that look like—oh, St. Vital—sorry. I kept saying St. James. Thank you to my colleague here.

But that's what happens when we elect folks that look like and are from a variety of different communities in Manitoba. So, again, I acknowledge my colleague from St. Vital for his first-ever bill, The Emancipation Day Act, and for everyone supporting such an important day to recognize the history of slavery and the end of slavery here in Manitoba and Canada, everywhere.

The Somali Heritage Week Act—again, you know, a bill brought forward from our colleague, the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara). Again, a really—another historic election with the member for Union Station.

And actually, just yesterday, I was doing an interview with a student that was asking about—I can't—things in the House, and talking about how we change the culture in the House and to ensure that there's more representation.

And as I have said since 2016, it is important—like, who we elect to this Legislature is important. Who we elect affects change in this Legislature. If we keep electing the same old, same old that have been reflected in this space for the last 150 years, you get the same old, same old.

And I was saying that, with the election of the member for Union Station, simply by virtue of the member for Union Station being in this space, they have already dismantled certain things in this space, and one of them is language.

And I was sharing with this student how, because of the member for Union Station, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly never had to really grapple with or question the language that we use in this Chamber, in respect of gender.

And I was mentioning how the Clerk's Office was so accommodating, and so quick and willing and able to shift language to ensure that the member for Union Station, that they were—that their identity, their gender identity, was respected and honoured in this Chamber. And so much so that we have just looked at rules that will potentially change the language in the rules and procedures to be more gender neutral.

That's what happens when you elect people that look like other Manitobans, and we have a semblance of diversity in this Chamber.

And so we have the member for Union Station's first bill that they've ever received royal assent, The Somali Heritage Week Act. And I know that the member for Union Station met with many different folks in the Somali community who wanted this bill in respect of, you know, being acknowledged for their heritage here in Manitoba and, of course, across the diaspora.

And I remember that the first year—I think that this would've passed in—I don't know what year that passed, but—2021? The Somali Heritage Week Act. So, either June of 2020 or June of 2021—I think it was 2020.

And very soon after that, there was, on July 1st, a celebration at Central Park that was organized by a group of Somalian women. And they organized a celebration in Central Park, and this bill had already passed. And so, this celebration was extra special because here was, you know, only weeks earlier, a bill had received royal assent to recognize their history and their heritage.

And I remember going to attend that event. I think the member for Union Station was also organizing in part or helping to organize alongside some of the Somalian citizens. And it was a beautiful day. It was so beautiful. There was food and dance, and everybody was so happy and people were so proud.

And so that's a very special moment as well, that, you know, all of us in this Chamber had an opportunity to be part of history and be a part of a bill that gave Somalian Manitobans something to feel proudful about. And so I'm grateful for that as well.

Just—you know, we have another bill that we've all in this House agreed and received royal assent, The Sikh Heritage Month Act—which again, I know that folks in—on both sides of the aisles will remember when that day received royal assent and how happy Sikh Manitobans were to receive that recognition.

* (15:40)

And it—you know, recognizing the important contributions to Manitobans' social, economic, political and cultural life and, you know, supporting Sikh heritage here in Manitoba, art and culture and all of the organizations that operate here in Manitoba to uphold and support Sikh culture here in Manitoba. I know that that was really important. We're very happy to be a

part of that and, again, that's one of those opportunities for us here in Manitoba to recognize all Manitobans, including Sikh Manitobans.

I'll talk a little bit—a couple about—I was going to try and save mine for the—for last. I was going to say that something that goes—is very special to me and will always be something that I'm incredibly proud of. I know that one of my—or my first bill that ever received royal assent in this Legislature was the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Honouring and Awareness Day. And that bill was predicated upon work that's been across the country for many, many years prior to that bill receiving royal assent here in the Chamber.

You know, for years and years—there are several days across Canada that—*[interjection]*—miigwech—in December of 2022, yes, The Somali Heritage Week Act was passed in December of 2022. So in July, then, of twenty—2020, that was when that celebration would have been. Miigwech for that. Something I—December—no, twenty—July 1st of 2021—holy heck. These last two years—I apologize, Deputy Speaker.

At any rate, there's several days across the country that take place honouring missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. One of them, for years and years has been October 4th. And those—that was a day to recognize MMIWG across the country. And prior to this bill receiving royal assent, I think it had been going on for probably about 10 years.

You know, another day is Mother's Day. Usually, typically, there's a march or a rally, a walk, in honour of MMIWG2S, because there are so many mothers who have been killed or are stolen.

And then a third day is Valentine's Day, a memorial day. And so those take place all across the country. In fact, I was actually able to go to my first—and that, I think the—February 14th memorial march, I—if I'm correct, actually started out in Vancouver, on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. And I've always wanted to go, but I've always been here participating in our Valentine's Day, February 14th memorial march. And I actually just had an opportunity this past February, just a couple of months ago, to actually attend for my first time after, like, 22 years I've never had the opportunity, and I actually went this year. And so there are several days that recognize and pay honour to MMIWG2S.

And so I got elected in 2016 and, you know, my first bill was this awareness day, recognizing and officially creating an awareness day for MMIWG2S.

And I remember when—in fact, I think the Deputy Speaker was the House leader at the time. And I remember having a conversation trying to ask the House leader at the time whether or not they were going to support Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Honouring and Awareness Day. And I remember that when we had had a debate in the House for second reading, and it wasn't spoken out. And we had our second reading vote on it and I remember just crying because I was so happy.

And then I remember when it received royal assent, and that was something that I was incredibly proud and I—of—and I was more so not because of, you know, whatever having to do with me, but I was proud that I was, in some small way, hopefully able to give something to Manitoba MMIWG family members, something that—something tangible that recognizes their loved ones who are stolen or murdered.

You know, one of the closest—you know, often people will say, you know, what's the thing that you're most proud of in your—you know, your whole career, not only as a politician but the work that I did before, and the thing that I'm most proud of is the MMIWG monument at The Forks.

And I call her her, or she. She was erected in August of 2014. And that—2014, yes—that was a project that I had been working on with MMIWG family members for two years. It took two years from those first conversations with MMIWG until she was erected and we had an official unveiling.

And that's what I'm most proud of. And I'm most proud of that—her—that monument because she will stand there for years and years to come, long after I'm gone. You know, my children will be able to take my grandchildren to go to this monument. And Manitoba's MMIWG family members will be able to take their children and their grandchildren to something physical in a physical space that represents their loved ones, represents Manitoba citizens who were here, who lived and breathed and were loved and that were here.

If you were to ask me what my second thing that I'm most proud of in my long career, it would be this bill, which was, as I said, my first bill in this Chamber as an elected official, as an Indigenous woman elected to this space. This is the thing that I'm second-most proud of in my career because, again, long after I'm gone from this Chamber and long gone from here, this bill—this day that, again, honours and recognizes Manitoba citizens—Indigenous women and girls and

two-spirited who were here, they will continue to get recognized and continue to get honoured.

And that's one of the blessings of being a public servant, is to be able to do that kind of work. You know, there's all this other stuff that we do in this Chamber, but that is one of the blessings that I will take with me for the longest time, to be a part of these really special movements and special moments in our history. And so, for that, I am always grateful.

And I've posted videos when the bill was passed that I'm always—I'm forever grateful to members opposite that they supported this bill. And I will—I always say it, but I will say it publicly again today that I am grateful that they supported this bill.

I will say—I think this was my third bill that received royal assent, but it was on animal shelter and animal awareness day, April 10th. And that also received royal assent here. And I'm proud of that bill, and I think that we can all be proud of that bill because there's—you know, whether or not all Manitobans recognize, there is phenomenal work that goes on across the province, in respect of animal welfare.

I mean, things that I didn't even know—and, you know, most people know, you know, I am an animal rights advocate. I'm a vegetarian. I, you know, love my Chilly Dog—like, all of these different things. And, you know, I—when—my first degree, I used to take all these animal rights courses. And in this job, again, the blessing about being an MLA is the different Manitobans that you get to meet—people that you would never get to meet.

* (15:50)

And so I have met just phenomenal Manitobans that are advocating for animal welfare on things that I never even knew existed. And, you know, I'm, in some respect, embarrassed to say that, like, I—you know, I'm an animal rights activist. So many things that, you know, we—I didn't know and I would suggest that many, many Manitobans don't know. And so this day recognizes all those folks that are on the front line doing this animal rescue and advocacy work.

And I often say this: like, you know, Manitoba—we have an overpopulation of dogs, particularly in rural and northern communities, and that is only a consequence of the lack of veterinarian access in the North. That's it, it's nothing more. It's not that people don't love their dogs, it's not that they don't—they want to breed, it's not that. It's that there is not enough access to veterinary care.

And so we have Manitobans that go into communities and will round up dogs or work with communities, will go in, they will do spay and neuter clinics for free for communities. Citizens can bring their dogs in and get their dog spay or neuters, their cat spay or neutered. And then if there are dogs that are, you know, are just kind of roaming around or are feral, they will—you know, they will round up those dogs and they'll re-home them.

And they don't re-home them in Manitoba because there's actually other provinces that don't have the same issue of us as—in overpopulation. They're often sent to Ontario or BC. And that's Manitobans that do that, and often Manitobans do that with their own money.

And so, yes, there are organizations that, you know, that are on the front lines, like spirit of hope, K9 Advocates, and they take donations. Of course, I would encourage Manitobans to make donations to you—to local front-line rescue organizations. They will always take your money, they always need your money, but actually a lot of these folks that work in these organizations on the front lines pay out of their own pocket. I have met Manitobans that have re-mortgaged their house—not, you know, twice or three times—sometimes four or five times, they've re-mortgaged their house to be able to rescue animals.

And, you know, rescuing animals in Manitoba looks very different than rescuing animals, maybe, you know, in Mexico or somewhere where it's a little bit hotter. We know that the conditions—you know, Winnipeg can get to -40°, and so we know that some of the communities get very, very cold and we know that dogs really do suffer, and they will spend their own money to rescue these dogs.

I'm working right now with some phenomenal folks who are looking at, you know, the live transportation of horses. Who knew that Manitoba is actually the hub of transporting live horses to Japan for fresh meat slaughter? Who knew that Manitoba is the hub—that other provinces will send in horses that are no longer wanted or discarded by their former owners, who come to Manitoba to be bid for slaughter and then are slaughtered for their meat? And so there's phenomenal Manitobans that are working right now on that issue, trying to change laws here, but also trying to look at legislation federally.

You know, I don't believe that Manitoba should be the hub, that we're sending 40 or 50 horses in the dead of night in -40° weather to sit in the tarmac of an

airport, to be shipped 25, 26 hours to Japan to be slaughtered for their meat, and that's what these—

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

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I will be brief, I don't have a lot to add.

I do want to just signal my appreciation for the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) and the cordial contribution she has made to debate in this House, and the acknowledgement that she made of someone who I also personally very much admire and acknowledge and consider to be a role model in this House, and that's the government-side House leader. I think he does a phenomenal job for us, and I think we should all give him a round of applause. Thank you.

And this, in fact, is his legislation, which—no surprise that he would be introducing fine legislation such as this. And so I'm not quite as—I haven't been an MLA as long as the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen). We may or may not be roughly the same age, but, certainly, he's been an MLA far longer than I have, and so he's seen a great number of these bills come forward to this House and be passed, bills commemorating a particular day, a particular month, a particular week and then, you know, hopefully, being remembered on an annual basis by those who brought it forward.

But I'm sure if he digs back far enough in his recollection, he'll know, and perhaps, as he did the research for this bill, he'll find days and weeks and months that had been acknowledged and that this Legislature had chosen to honour. Where the practice and the habit of giving them the respect and the honour that they merit and that they were chosen for in the first place, has perhaps fallen to the wayside and has been forgotten as the—as people move on and as, sometimes, these laws can find themselves deep in the bowels of our Legislature and we forget that they were even passed.

And so I really want to signal my appreciation for what this bill does, because this bill is not only going—is—not only is it going to be easy for people to find and refer to which days and months and weeks are being acknowledged by this Legislature, but it's also going to be a regularly—regular reminder as we bring forward new legislation, we should be amending this bill as well to ensure that the law that—the underlying legislation at least so that we continually are reminded

that it—there is a place in Manitoba where we can go to see this complete list.

And so, you know, in my short time here as a legislator, I know one particular MLA has impressed me with his ability to get these kinds of bills brought forward to this House and passed, and that would be the Minister of Education. I don't know if he has a record or anything like that, but he certainly—he passed Lymphedema Awareness Day Act. That got through here. The school bus driver appreciation day act was also passed by this Legislature and then one—the one last one that I'm going to dwell on for a little bit longer is one that's particularly poignant for me.

There was a young girl in my constituency, Abby. She has since moved to British Columbia, but she is also continuing to battle the cancer that she had when she was very young and she's—I'm just so incredibly proud of her and her bravery. She even served with the Children's Hospital for a year as the ambassador there. And just as the member—the Minister of Education was putting forward the bill around Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, I was also getting involved with working with Abby to bring yellow balloons and gold balloons to—as part of that celebration. And she really, really loved those balloons and loves them still. And I have fond memories and the pictures to go through it of our—of my giant 12-passenger van being completely stuffed to the brim with helium-filled balloons, me and Abby, and not much room for anything else as we made deliveries throughout the constituency to a number of automobile dealers that had chosen to support Abby and to donate to the cause.

And so I just wanted to remember that and remind this House of the importance of these kinds of—this kind of legislation, the importance of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and how important it was that that bill passed. I think it took a little longer than—if I recall correctly—than I maybe would have liked it to take, but we did get it through this House and we got unanimous support for it, which is the way it should be. And I think that's often the way it is with many of these bills. We just saw that only a few weeks ago with The Turban Day Act being passed in this House as well.

So with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will take my leave and allow others to 'conuetintinue' in this debate.

But once again, appreciation both for the—for both of the House leaders in this Legislature and the way

that they were able to bring this bill forward and to conduct this debate.

* (16:00)

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to begin my remarks by saying welcome back; it's good to have you back in the Chair, helping us navigate debate in this House, and it's good to see you.

As we begin, this bill does consolidate into one statute all of the current stuff that goes on regarding all of the days and weeks and months that we commemorate in this province.

I know it makes Manitoba Day May the 12th. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you one of my first memories of school—grade 1—as a grade 1 student, in May of 1970, coming to the front of this House on my very first field trip. One of the few things I remember in grade 1 is coming here and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the province of Manitoba, and that's something that—[interjection]—Well, the member from Radisson was still a glint in his parents' eyes at that time. But not in mine, I was actually around.

And so that's an important memory and these are important things for the province of Manitoba because it highlights all of the very important work that every citizen in this province can be proud of and gets very attached to. And as we move through these—this statute, this new bill, it is good that we're consolidating this stuff because it is important to many Manitobans.

I know that my colleague from St. Johns has talked about a number of the acts that we've brought forward on this side of the House that recognize the important work of community organizations. I do want to say that I wasn't part of this House in 2016, but seeing the spirit day act brought forward by the member from Point Douglas really highlighted the importance of ensuring that kids are put first and then we'll ask questions later when it comes to 'megating' that necessary medical care that they need. It shouldn't be delayed.

And the foresight shown by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) in bringing this forward and recognizing this important day is something that is really, really indicative of what I think every member in this House wants to do, is bring forward legislation,

bring forward bills that really impact everyday Manitobans. I can't think of a better way than some of these acts that are brought forward, these special bills.

I do want to say that, in speaking about the spirit day act, there was some important work done by—even former students and myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that do important work in Manitoba. I want to lift the work of Cora Morgan, the child advocate, who was a grade 7 student that I had the honour of teaching at the time. And you could see some of the leadership pieces that are already coming through in Cora at that time as a 12 year old. And I'm just so happy to see the work that she continues to do as a child advocate here.

Moving on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm also super proud to be part of a cohort elected in 2019 that included the first Black Manitobans in this House. I'm super proud to serve with the member from Union Station, to serve with the member from St. Vital and to serve in—the member from Southdale, because it is truly, truly representative of Manitoba and of the diversity of—oh, sorry—of this province.

I'm beginning to move again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and get away from the microphone and then, of course, Hansard can't pick up these words, and I apologize for that. Thank you, Clerk.

Especially when it comes to The Emancipation Day Act and the incredible work that my colleague, the member from St. Vital, did on that, all of the consultation, all of the important dialogue that went on. Because as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being an educator yourself—and when we were going to school—at least when I was going to school—a lot of this wasn't taught in school.

And it was certainly there, in the sense that you really had to go digging for it. But days like Emancipation Day, when was brought forward by this House, it indicates the importance—it indicates how important it is to not only Manitobans but, also, you know, it can be seen as a beacon for the rest of the country, that we can be leaders in something like this, in recognizing Emancipation Day and the important work that abolitionists did, and how difficult and challenging and true to their values they were, and it's great to recognize that and ensure that this is now something that's part of the permanent piece of being here in Manitoba. And I want to commend my colleague, the member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses), for doing that.

The other piece, too, that I would like to highlight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Somali Heritage Week

Act brought forward by my colleague from Union Station. Again, very, very—looking forward to, you know, the important piece that the Somali community adds to our Manitoba fabric. And this is something that has foresight and has brought a lot of awareness to people like myself—I'll be honest, I didn't realize how long the community was part of Manitoba here. It also allowed for us to recognize that the week of July—or, sorry, June 25th to July 1st is very important to the Somali community. And it gives us an opportunity to celebrate with that community and to realize how important it is to that community that—these pieces are now recognized here in Manitoba.

The other important piece of legislation brought forward—it was Sikh Heritage Month, and I want to commend my colleague, the member from Burrows, for bringing forward that particular act. It, you know, it was something, I will tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2019, when we were in the election in the—in September, I got to share an office with the candidate that we had in Radisson at the time—the NDP candidate, Raj Sandhu. And I got to learn a lot about Sikh heritage, Sikh culture. And I learned a Sikh term, but—and it goes like this: *sarbat da bhala* [*prosperity for all*], which outlines one of the most important Sikh principles, which is that we have to actively work towards uplifting all people so that everyone can prosper.

Now, you take that very statement—and that statement can be put forward here as almost something that everyone in Manitoba believes and works towards. And so, when we have a member like the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar) bring forward this—The Sikh Heritage Month Act, it allows to not just understand how much we have in common, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but how much we need to celebrate.

And that is something that's really important here, I think, for every member in this House, that we have and continue to have these—this opportunity. And it's no accident, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that April was chosen for Sikh Heritage Month, because it's an important month for Sikh Manitobans and Sikh Canadians. And the more we get to learn about their culture, the more that we get to visit gurdwaras and understand that service is very important to this—to Sikh culture. The more that it can permeate us here as Manitobans—it permeate our culture, as well.

Some of the other important pieces—and I know this is very near and dear to the heart of my colleague, the member from St. Johns, when she talks about

Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act. I'm lucky enough to be—to—married to somebody that is a lover of animals, and I myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I never grew up with a dog or cat or anything like that. As a matter of fact [*inaudible*] that would have been, like, a no go in my household. Absolutely not.

But I married somebody that is a dog lover and absolutely insisted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if I ever got to be in this House, that something like this would be brought forward. And to my great pleasure, of course, is that we had the member from St. Johns bring The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act forward—something that is important because for us as a family, we've had two rescue dogs, and they were the best dogs. The absolute best.

And we need to ensure that we can get services to places outside of Winnipeg, to northern Manitoba, to rural Manitoba so that we can help control the pet population, but also when we have the opportunity to get a dog, to introduce a dog to a family, that we do it through rescues and through shelters.

We had a great experience with the Manitoba giant breed shelter and rescue. They were fantastic. And we currently—a dog that adopted us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, right? We're now part of his pack. And it's a great pleasure to do that. And, like I said, we have done that two times in our family, and we are just so happy.

* (16:10)

And, you know what? As—like I said, I was never a dog owner. I never experienced the joy of having an animal. But every time I go home, that person is—or, that person—I called the dog—my dog a person—that part—important part of our family is something that I can't speak highly enough about because, you know what? It doesn't matter what I do in the House, they're always welcome to see me home, right? And so that part is very important.

And that—and like I said earlier, I'm very happy to be here in the House where we can get together on bills like this. I know the member from St. Johns has talked about that, but that's really important because it does provide, you know, us faith in that we can do work together, reach across the aisle and come together on bills such as this.

So with those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will end my comments, and look forward to hearing many—or look forward to hearing more people, more MLAs that were elected in 2019 and their thoughts on Bill 35.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. And I didn't get elected in 2019, but—for the member from Transcona—I got elected in 2016. So he gets to hear from some of our remarks as well here in the House today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I just want to start by talking a little bit about the question portion of today's legislation. And I had the opportunity to ask a question about what would happen to the current pieces of legislation that are on the docket, that have gone past the committee stage, but having quite been read in third reading or passed, how that would fit into this legislation. And I really appreciated the minister's response, and we'll do what we need to do to ensure that these pieces of legislation are incorporated into this Bill 35.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason I express this and I find this is very important is because the three pieces of legislation—we've gone through thorough debate with them here in the House over the past month and even at committee. And they're important pieces of legislation. They're—it's turban day, something everyone in this House is now well-versed with because of the informative debate that took place in these Chambers, and just the importance behind the turban and the respect that the turban represents. And we learned a lot about symbolism in faiths, and I do think it would be sad to see this piece of legislation not be included. And so I'm glad we were able to talk about that.

I also think about Filipino Heritage Month, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the importance of having that also be included in Bill 35, because with our growing Filipino population here in Manitoba—and I've shared this in the House before, but I just think it's so cool that Canada now has over 1 million Filipinos. And so having June be a representation of Filipino Heritage Month, we absolutely need to be celebrating that and it is important that it's included in this legislation.

And the last bill that's currently on the docket, and it would be sad to see not be part of this legislation, is the Ukraine bill. With everything happening in the world today, this is one thing we can be doing which creates conversation about Ukraine, about the war, about the refugees arriving here in Manitoba. We talked about it today in question period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and how we need to be doing more on the ground level right now, grassroots politics, to make sure that refugees, when they're landing here in

Manitoba—and they're begun already—they have the resources in place so that they can transition, so that they can have houses to live in, that they have food on their tables, that they have jobs lined up, that students can continue their education. We need to be doing more as a province, and that's why this legislation is very timely and equally important why it's part of Bill 35 if it does move forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill can be considered a very—a form of organization, a easier place to go to if we need access to this information. I was thinking about—as I was going through the bill, the table of contents, and all these different pieces of legislation that are going to be part of the bill—and I see 39 pieces of legislation here. And how convenient this would be if this would also be used for ministerial statements. I know I would really appreciate having that notice for ministerial statements where, if we know, okay, today we're going to be talking about the human trafficking awareness act. This form, this piece of legislation, Bill 35, could be a bit of a guideline for us MLAs in that sense too.

And, again, it is—it's helpful to have all of these pieces of legislation together in one place, because it is a lot, it's easy to lose track of sometimes, but it's really important that it's kept top of mind for us. So, having it all together, I think it makes a lot of sense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this language also updates language—or, this legislation also updates language in the bill and it sets Manitoba Day as May 12th, and I'm looking forward to celebrating it this year here in the House and outside of the House; I know it's sneaking up in just a couple of weeks.

But, the one thought that I did have about the legislation that we should be debating is, we need to make sure that we give proper and due attention to the many days and months that are being commemorated. We need to make sure that, because they're all listed as one now, that they're not falling between the cracks or that they're not being given less attention because they don't have their own piece of legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, I know—I'll just pick a couple to go through here, if we look at No. 7, Sikh Heritage Month, and I choose this one because there's a huge Sikh community in the constituency of Tyndall Park in—which I represent, and we've talked about legislation with the Khalsa Panth and the importance of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And recognizing this is something that all Manitobans should be learning about. Perhaps we should be talking about having it brought into our school curriculums a little bit more, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We can talk about the turban day bill that we just had second reading of here in the House and had many guests come down to visit the Legislature for.

I think about the Komagata Maru park. This is something that I've—I personally have become quite educated on over the last couple of years because I have some very passionate constituents in Tyndall Park who are determined—and I believe it's going to happen—that we are going to have this park in the Kaur UMBER Trail and there's going to be something on this land—not just grass, there's going to be something. We're going to work with the City; I'm hoping the Province is going to pitch in, whether it's the Department of Infrastructure or Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage, and we're going to have something in representation for the park that is being named Komagata Maru park, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's extremely important.

And the Sikh heritage month, the bill—that's actually falling under Bill 35 here, it's recognizing the month of April. And we know this is in part because Vaisakhi takes place in April, and—know all members of this House enjoy celebrating Vaisakhi. Lots of events that occur, lots of colours and good food and dancing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all look forward to it.

But at the piece of legislation—and I could talk about The Caregiver Recognition Act. And I choose this one just because we're still going through a pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and caregivers, like many others—whether it's health-care workers and teachers and truck drivers bringing in food to the province and stocking the grocery shelves, and taxi drivers, Mr. Deputy Speaker—they have worked endlessly throughout the entire pandemic, and that's why it's critically important that we don't lose sight of this and that just because the bill, Caregiver Recognition Day, is being brought into a larger bill—Bill 35—we still need to give it its proper recognition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk very briefly just on No. 32 as well, Orange Shirt Day. We've been talking about this more and more inside of the Manitoba Legislature.

And I know, for myself, I really enjoy when we do talk about it because I'm learning a lot. And I really—I try my best to hear what everyone has to say

about Orange Shirt Day, about the topics of reconciliation, about the topics of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. And I consider it an honour to be able to be in these Chambers and to be part of these debates, and I think that we do need to be doing more. And with everything that has come to light over the last couple of years, it would be very disheartening if, by having it fall under this Bill 35, it kind of got shoved under the rug. That would be upsetting.

And that's why we need to make sure that we do our diligence and that we go above and beyond and we ensure that all these pieces of legislation like Orange Shirt Day are not being forgotten, and that, in fact, they continue to progress forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The last one that I want to mention, and I won't talk about too much because I did during—just about five minutes ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day—it's No. 39 in Bill 35.

And the reason I bring it up again is just because of the atrocities happening right now in the Ukraine. And the Holodomor strikes very close to home for me because it's something that I was able to go and see in person, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This was maybe five or six years ago; I had the opportunity to go to Kyiv, actually, with my father, and we met with some politicians down in Ukraine, which was an interesting experience. And one of the things we did is we visited the Holodomor, and I remember it—the most—it was probably the most surreal thing I've ever experienced; and the tone, the body language. You walk through and there's angels there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (16:20)

The statues and—they also have the statue that we have out on the lawn, the little girl holding the wheat. And when I see this legislation, it sorts of makes me step back and it makes me think of the importance of it; and it reminds me why it is critically important that we have their—its own legislation. And just by having it be part of Bill 35, it needs to remain front and centre, as all these other pieces of legislation do.

All of us represent different constituencies in Manitoba. All of us represent different demographics and people with different passions, and all of these are important to us as MLAs in different ways, in different capacities, and we'd be remiss if we didn't ensure that they were given that credit and that time here in the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a lot that goes behind the creation of legislation, and we can talk about where the ideas come from. Oftentimes, they come from our neighbours in our constituencies; they come from non-profit organizations; they come from the universities, from students, but once this idea is formed, then we have to work through legal here at the Manitoba Legislature; and we work with all of our staff. And I know I want to give a big thank you to our caucus staff right now. They go above and beyond in helping us with all of our legislation here in these Chambers.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And once a piece of legislation is then created, and this is often after months of working with legal, Madam Speaker, we then have to introduce it in the House, and we go through question portions of these answers and sometimes bills are—sometimes we provide bill briefings on these ideas, as well. And we have debate and second readings and committees and sometimes at committees we'll have tons of guests and visitors come and present. And those are, in my opinion, one of the best parts about legislation here in the House: going to committee, hearing from people who are actually experiencing and who are affected by these pieces of legislation that we're bringing forward.

You know, the member from Radisson talked about how he hasn't been here quite as long as the minister who brought forward this legislation, and I can't say I have either, Madam Speaker. In fact, the minister who brought forward this legislation was an MLA back when my father was an MLA; a couple of generations there, Madam Speaker.

What have learned is the importance that goes on and is behind introducing legislation, and I often like to remind people that there's a couple of different parts in being a politician. There's the legislative side of things—and that's what we're talking about here today: being in these Chambers, talking about all these different pieces of legislation—as well as the constituency side of things, and that's when we get to spend time in the ridings in which we represent. We get to go to—into the schools, Madam Speaker; we get to speak with our constituents and hear what are on their minds and what sort of provincial issues we can be of assistance with.

Now, Madam Speaker, one of my favourite things to do in my constituency is attend the McDonald's every weekend, and I go from 10:00 to 2:00, and it's been a lot of fun. I've really enjoyed being back since the pandemic. It's nice seeing everyone. We have a

couple of our regulars come out every week, too, and catching up with everyone.

And I do think it's important to make sure that we're not only focusing on legislative side of things but also the constituency side of things because that is half of our job, Madam Speaker, and a lot of the pieces of legislation in this bill are constituency focused.

So with those few words, Madam Speaker, I'll cede the floor.

Thank you.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I just want to take a few minutes to briefly put some comments and words on the record with respect to Bill 35, and the proposed changes it makes to consolidate and organize many of the days of celebrations that we have in our province.

And one day that I'd like to highlight for the Chamber and for Manitobans who are watching this is Emancipation Day—the day—the bill that I was fortunate enough to sponsor and lead and see passed in the Chamber here this past fall.

Emancipation Day is on August 1st and it marks the day when slavery was abolished across the British Commonwealth at the time, which, of course, included Canada. And this August 1st, August 1st of 2022, will be the first year that it is officially recognized and celebrated in the province of Manitoba. Manitoba will join a long list of provinces and countries around the globe that will celebrate August 1st as the abolition of slavery, the day when slavery in our—was deemed not allowed in the British Commonwealth and in Canada.

For us, that's a significant milestone. It means that it was the start of recognizing people who look like me, Black people, people who are Indigenous backgrounds and other people who were slaves in this country, who were slaves in the British Commonwealth. It marked the day when the process began for them to be recognized as people, to them to be recognized as free people in our country—and that's an important day.

Now, my parents immigrated to Canada from the Caribbean, from Trinidad and Tobago. There is no chance that they would have come here if Black people were not recognized as free people. My story in Canada wouldn't happen—we did not abolish slavery. So I am sure glad that we did. My children are sure glad that they—that we did, and that's the reason why it's important to celebrate it. Because our

future depends on what has already happened in the past.

Emancipation Day is as much a part of our Canadian history as John A. Macdonald. Emancipation Day is as much a part of our history as Louis Riel. And when we realize this, we must also respect it in such a way and respect it by teaching it to our kids: by showing the importance of a day like Emancipation Day, a day where we celebrate the freedom of people, the same way we celebrate the accomplishments, the achievements and all facets of so many of the historical events and historical people in our Canadian and in our Manitoban history. And as we do that, we not only inform ourselves and our children about what is the fulsome measure of history in our province, but also leads us to the path of being able to create a better future for all of our kids.

And, again, it is not difficult, Madam Speaker, to draw that direct line, that direct line between the abolition of slavery in Canada, in Manitoba—between the path that immigrants were able to take in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Many people, many Black people who worked during that time came and worked on rail lines as porters, weren't allowed to get other jobs, had menial work. But they started that path because of the abolition of slavery.

And as they worked themselves up, they worked and built communities. They found themselves in jobs. They built themselves up through education. More immigrants of Black descent came from Africa and from the Caribbean, from America and called Manitoba home and began to thrive through education.

In many different industries in our province, whether it was entrepreneurial, through the business community, in financial community, in manufacturing, through education, and we've seen so many of these individuals succeed in our province. And none of those stories happen if we don't have the ability to be free and act as free people in this country.

And as I shared of myself and my individual story, being the son of immigrants and now proudly raising myself and my family here in Winnipeg, I know that they'll learn about Emancipation Day. They'll learn the importance and what it means to them and to future generations. And they'll know not only to not make those same mistakes again in the past, but they'll learn to how to open the door for even more people in the future. Because as we learn those mistakes, we also learn how to improve upon—approve upon them and look for new areas where we can break

down walls. Back then, this was a huge milestone and it still is one that we mark today.

But there are barriers that people face in our society right now, and as we continue to break down those barriers, we find new ways to make our society more equitable. We find new ways to break the barriers down in opportunity, when it comes to respect of educational opportunities, whether that be access to education or affordability to education. Whether that happens in terms of opportunities in business and finance. You now, how many Black people are sitting the boardrooms of some of the large organizations in our province.

* (16:30)

As we continue to live in this world, we continue to see these barriers and we continue to break them down, but we can only break them down if we have the power of knowledge of what has already happened in the past. And that's why it's so important that we in this Chamber mark Emancipation Day on August 1st, that we can celebrate it in Manitoba and that we can together continue to build a better future for all Manitobans.

So, thank you very much for the time to speak on Bill 35, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further speakers in debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 35, The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months and Related Repeals and Amendments Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 28—The Prompt Payment for Construction Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call second reading of Bill 28, The Prompt Payment for Construction Act.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 28, The Prompt Payment for Construction Act, be now read a second time and be referred a committee of this House.

Do I have to say the rest? *[interjection]* Okay, sorry.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services (Mr. Helwer), seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 28, The Prompt Payment for Construction Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message is tabled.

Mr. Helwer: The prompt payment in construction act aligns with government priorities related to boosting both economic and regulatory competitiveness of the Province by ensuring that payments flow through the construction pyramid in a timely fashion.

As you all know, we've been working on this particular bill for a while—I, both as a private member and now as a government member. It is widely looked forward to by the construction industry with widespread support. There has been a great deal of consultation that has gone on throughout the development of the bill, and it is a very technical bill. And I know that there is further consultation required for this bill, as well.

We have had some new players in the industry come in and people looking at it from a different lens, so we do need to do some further consultation on it and that will be what we'll be doing as we move forward with the legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: 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 may—remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]* It's a big buildup to a question, but—*[interjection]*—that's right.

My understanding to the minister is that there's been some discussion about this bill, going back I think all the way to 2016. Given that it's about six years in the making, who hasn't been consulted yet and what's the issue for the delay?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, no real delay. As you know, there are lots of opinions in the construction industry. They're not a shy group. And they have been very engaging.

Some members of the construction industry want to see it as part of The Builders' Liens Act, which is not something that is resonant in our department, it is in the Minister of Justice. You know, we know that there's work to be done there. The liens act does have to be brought up and modernized. So we're listening to those discussions and finding out what the best path forward is.

Many provinces have it in their liens act. Others already had prompt payment legislation in an existing lien—liens act for Crowns and they extend it to private sector. So, many different paths in many different provinces, and we're trying to be consistent—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliw: So, given that this bill didn't meet the second reading deadline, I guess for the explanation there needs to be further consultation—who, exactly, is the minister going to be consulting with with this extra time?

Mr. Helwer: Well, there is a wide variety. I won't necessarily divulge the names at this point. Certainly, the member opposite could be one of those individuals that comes forward to give us advice.

We do know there is widespread support for the bill, so it is also a bill that may not have had to have been a designated bill. We've had support from the opposition parties before for this type of legislation, as well from many of the unions that I know you're well acquainted with. So we're looking at what is the best path for this type of legislation.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Just a question about the conduct of adjudication. Do you have—is there an idea is—in terms of who an adjudicator might be to deal with issues, or would it be the court, or would it be somebody who would be appointed to deal with the process?

Mr. Helwer: Well, as the member knows, the adjudication process will be outlined in regulation. And the reason—one of the reasons I thought it was

important to put in regulation is that is the most dynamic part of the legislation, and we need to make sure that, not only that we get it right that—but it can be changed quickly if we find that there's a problem with it. We wouldn't want to drive somebody out of business by a mistake we made through enabling the adjudication through this bill.

So the adjudicators usually will be private sector. They will be trained in the adjudication process. They will be agreed to by all the parties, and it'll be chosen from a list of adjudicators.

Mr. Wasyliw: I was wondering if the minister can explain—there's model legislation in Ontario, the federal government also has legislation, there's legislation in the UK, the United States has this type of legislation since 1984—but this version of it doesn't allow for a mandatory process. It basically leaves it open for parties to, sort of, opt in to this process and, conversely, it could also allow parties not to be part of this process.

And I'm wondering why the minister has left it open like that instead of making sure that everybody is governed by this?

Mr. Helwer: Well, I'm sure the member opposite knows that we're not a government that likes to force people to do things. This is an enabling legislation, so the two parties that may have a dispute can use it if they wish, or they can use the existing structure of the liens act and the courts—those are all still open to them.

But we're giving them another option here that is something they can work together on and hopefully come to a good outcome.

Mr. Wasyliw: Now, the whole issue with this type of legislation is that parties in a construction agreement often have very different amounts of market power. And the stronger party can, obviously, dictate the terms to the weaker party. And so, by having a regime that allows the stronger party to opt out, doesn't actually protect the weaker party.

And I'm wondering if the minister could comment whether he's concerned about that and the weaknesses of the bill in that regards?

Mr. Helwer: So, those are all things that we've widely consulted with industry on, and this is the recommendations that industry brought forward and accepted. There are areas in the bill where, if someone is found to not be working in the spirit of adjudication, then the adjudicator can take that into account when they're making their recommendations at the end of the

process. But we certainly feel that it's a great enabling legislation that can make—it can enable the two parties to work together.

Mr. Wasyliw: I noticed in this bill that there isn't any binding arbitration. So even if the matter does go to adjudication, it can get appealed to the courts. I mean, again, the issue for the construction industry is quick and inexpensive resolution of disputes.

Why hasn't the minister included a binding arbitration clause in order to actually facilitate that?

* (16:40)

Mr. Helwer: So, again, we consulted widely with industry. This is the path they wanted to take. They see it as legislation that would enable and come to a friendly agreement, as opposed to a forced agreement. It is something that can be registered with the court or, again, the courts are available for the process that people may want to undertake if they are looking for a more confrontational approach.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can advise who would be responsible for payment for the adjudication in these disputes?

Mr. Helwer: The two parties in the adjudication process will hire the adjudicator, agree on them and pay for that adjudicator's time.

Mr. Wasyliw: Now—and some disputes aren't very large. There could be a dispute for \$800 in a construction contract, and is the minister concerned that those types of small disputes will not get resolved because it'll be too expensive to hire an adjudicator to resolve that? And what will end up happening is small businesses and contractors will end up eating the costs of minor disputes as opposed to getting justice for, you know, their work.

Mr. Helwer: Well, it is the determination of the two entities to enter in this dispute resolution mechanism, whether they want to go ahead with it or not. Small claims of that nature are—indeed, small claims court might be a more appropriate venue for that. But that is the individuals that will determine which path they want to use.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can advise that who didn't—does the minister expect will bring in the regulations—or, sorry, let me rephrase that.

How long does the minister expect to bring in those regulations?

Mr. Helwer: Well, the regulations that I feel will be written fairly quickly with some advice from the

industry, of course. A lot of it is written down already in my records and most of it resides with me because I have the concept of what those regulations may look like. But I don't anticipate that it will take long to get them done.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can tell us, how does this bill help ensure that construction projects are completed on time?

Mr. Helwer: Well, I think it goes a great way to enabling construction processes and contracts to be done on time because it enables the work to continue while the adjudication process is under way. When you're in a liens environment, work usually stops because that's a deterrent to continuing the relationship that you have in a contractual relationship.

With this type of environment, they can continue the work and be assured that they will come to, hopefully, a good agreement that they can both agree on.

Mr. Wasyliw: In the United Kingdom version of this bill, they have a principle of pay now, you know, dispute later, and the idea is that the parties get paid immediately and then they work out any disputes later so as to provide—not to provide a disincentive for small contractors to actually pursue their claims.

That type of protection is not present in this bill, and I'm wondering if the minister can confirm that and the reasons why?

Mr. Helwer: Well, again, we listened to the industry to tell us what they wanted to see in this bill. There is some opportunities there for progress payments, but this is very much a bill that reflects the Manitoba construction industry.

Mr. Lamont: I didn't see it anywhere in the bill, I'm just wondering, is there any possibility, I mean, if they—it goes off the rails, is there a process for appeal or is it simply that's something that we would either be covered in regulations or would just go to the courts?

Mr. Helwer: The current environment in the construction industry still exists. So you can use the liens act, you can use the courts. That is something that they will have an option to use. If they do not agree with the adjudicator, they can hire another adjudicator if they wish or, again, they can resort to the courts.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can explain what is the recourse for a small construction contractor who is dealing with a large project and a large general contractor who refuses to be part of this legislation?

Mr. Helwer: So, the intent of the legislation is to have two parties that are looking for a resolution; and if two parties are not present in this then, obviously, this type of an arrangement will not work. So you have the other opportunities that are already there still exist and will exist for any conflict resolution such as the courts, such as the liens act.

Mr. Wasyliw: So I guess my question to the minister is, is why wouldn't they compel large general contractors to govern themselves with this legislation and to protect small business? Why are they leaving small business so exposed in this sector?

Mr. Helwer: Well, I disagree with the context of the member opposite's question.

This is an enabling legislation, and the spirit of the legislation will be that the two entities want to continue working together and come to a successful resolution of a dispute. This enables them to do this in a conciliatory manner. If you have two opponents in a court case or something of that nature, they're not going to do well in this legislation and they can't be forced to use it. The spirit of the legislation is that two partners or two entities will come together to a good resolution for both parties.

Mr. Wasyliw: So, my understanding is Alberta has this legislation, Saskatchewan has this legislations, Ontario has this legislation, the federal government has this legislation, I believe one of the Maritime provinces has this legislation.

Can you confirm for the Legislature that none of them have this kind of opt-in clause that we're contemplating here in Manitoba?

Mr. Helwer: Well, when we look at the legislation, we do look at the other environments and how it's been rolled out. This is a made-in-Manitoba resolution for the Manitoba construction industry. As I said, we—they were widely consulted. This is the approach that they wished to take.

Mr. Wasyliw: Why is this government not giving as robust protection to small businesses that we find in every other province and every other jurisdiction in Canada and the United States and the United Kingdom that has this legislation? Why do we propose to have the weakest form of this in the English-speaking world?

Mr. Helwer: Well, I certainly disagree with the premise. There are 'manty'—many areas of the English-speaking world that have no prompt payment legislation, Madam Speaker.

This prompt payment legislation was brought together with wide 'counciltration'—consultation through the Manitoba construction industry. Many of them are players in other markets, and this is the legislation that they agreed to, that they suggested would work for the Manitoba environment.

Debate

Madam Speaker: There being no further questions, then, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): It's getting late in the day, I see.

Now, my understanding is this bill has been in the making for years. It predates my time here in the Legislature, and I think, if history is correct, this was shortly being discussed after the election in 2016. And it's my understanding from stakeholder groups that the Pallister government was very resistant with this legislation, and so, you know, there was a private member's bill that appeared briefly and then disappeared, and then we have this version which is even a more watered-down version than the private member's bill, and it didn't make the designation bill cut off and, sort of, suddenly disappeared as well.

I certainly have heard from stakeholders that cynically think that this government really has no commitment to prompt payment legislation, has really no interest in this and they're slow-walking it and have no desire to pass it. Certainly, the official opposition was certainly prepared to expedite the movement of this bill and we're certainly disappointed that that hasn't occurred.

* (16:50)

And, again, I—in some of my questions, I pointed out that, you know, Alberta has this legislation, Saskatchewan has this legislation, Ontario has a model piece of legislation, the federal government has a legislation, and there's also, I think, one of the Maritime provinces. But the Americans are far ahead of us with this. They've had legislation in place since 1984, and the United Kingdom's also had legislation in this area for a long period of time.

So the issue here—and I think we sometimes lose focus of why we have to bring these type of legislative changes before—is that not everybody in the construction industry has the same type of market power. And there are large general contractors that have a huge power imbalance and they end up hiring small businesses, small labour companies to actually do the

work, and their fees are based on, you know, management of the construction site and the hiring of subcontractors. And they can basically dictate the terms of the contract.

We're a small province, especially, you know, former premier Gary Doer said that the—you know, most—under a Conservative government in Manitoba, the most extinct animal was the building crane. And that's certainly true. When you have Conservative governments, we don't build anything in Manitoba.

And I was meeting with Manitoba building and trades the other day, and obviously they have their issues with this government, but they also remarked, well, you know what, nothing's actually really getting built right now in Manitoba.

And—well, those are all projects that were developed, planned under the previous government, and just the time lag with construction, you're now seeing them built. But they were not, you know, contemplated because of this government, because we know this government has been a nightmare for the Manitoba economy.

So the main issue is power imbalance, and how we fix a market where you have giant players that can bully subcontractors and small businesses, and push them around and basically dictate the terms. And if they don't like it, they don't get to work on that project. So if there's—you know, it's a rare occasion to build a 44-storey building in Winnipeg, let alone the rest of the province. And so when that comes along and you have a general contractor that's building it, you pretty much have to dance to their tune.

And the problem is, is that what's been happening in the large construction general contractors is that they are moving towards financialization of their industry. They are less interested in actually building things, and they're more interested in using the money for large-contract projects to play the stock market. And the games that they make tend to be at the expense of small businesses who subcontract with them, and they make those games by basically—you know, the expense of the workers who are employed on those projects.

So, you know, it's a pretty normal thing that if you do the work, you get paid, and you expect to be paid and you expect to be paid promptly. But that's not actually what happens in the construction industry. Out of any business sector in Canada, the construction industry pays the slowest. And general contractors basically act like a large monopoly: you know, if you

want the job, you have to agree to their terms in the contract.

And I know when I met with the minister and I was asking him about this, his response, well, it was a free market, the small businesses don't have to contract with that general contractor.

So, you basically, you know, have the freedom to sleep under a bridge. You have the freedom to starve. You have the freedom not to work. Because, you know, there's only a certain number of buildings getting built and there's only a certain number of these big projects, and you absolutely—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: —can get taken advantage under those circumstances.

So one of the terms that has prompted a coalition of Manitoba workers and small businesses to come together and say we need this legislation was that the actual general contractors are coming out and saying they want extended payment terms.

And, you know, we're hearing that the Manitoba average is between 90 and 120 days to get paid. And, even of that, with the buildings lien, you're only getting 92.5 per cent of your pay because they're holding back in case there's disputes. So not only do you not get your full payment for all the work you did, you have to wait up to 120 days in Manitoba to get paid.

Now, think about that from a small-business point of view. You have employees to pay, that you have to pay every week, sometimes every two weeks. You—and that just doesn't go away. You have suppliers that have to be paid within 30 days. You have to pay GST and PST: remit that monthly as an expense. And those things don't go away. And so what happens here is that small businesses have to take out lines of credit in order to keep their businesses going and they're paying out all these expenses waiting for a job which is done, which has been paid.

When I was talking to this coalition from Manitoba, they were introducing me to some lawyers that were dealing with this legislation in Ontario. They estimate in Ontario that small businesses pay \$1 billion in interest on these credit lines to keep their businesses running.

So, obviously, we're a smaller jurisdiction. But you can imagine that our small businesses are equally burdened by these unnecessary, you know, credit line charges that could be going to develop the business,

that could be going to support it, yet are being shuffled off to Bay Street banks because we don't have prompt payment legislation in Manitoba.

So this has a very real effect on small businesses here in Manitoba—and I appreciate, like, the Stefanson-Pallister governments isn't a friend to small business, and they come into this House every day and they show that. And their disregard for the concerns of small business, it is full on display with this legislation. Everything about it talks about—they're on the side of these large general contractor businesses and that's who's basically driving the bus here, and that the concerns of small businesses that actually do the work—the concerns of the workers that they employ, well, that doesn't seem to matter and this government is not concerned about their protection.

So what do these big general contractors do with this money? It's not their money. It's owed to these small businesses and workers, and they got to pay it out, but they don't for 120 days. So what do they do with that money? They put it into the stock market and they play the stock market. They're basically casino gambling with money that they owe and they make more money off of that gambling than they actually do with putting up buildings.

I was told, you know, shocking stories of construction companies that have a whole department of financial planners, have nothing to do with building anything. They have whole wings in their offices of financial planners because this is such a lucrative part of their business model, is using workers' money that they owe to play in the stock market instead of actually paying for the services that have been rendered to them.

There is absolutely no policy justification why the Stefanson government wants to support that and think that's a good thing, and thinks that they want to, you know, back up these large general contractors.

You know, I was wondering, like, why on earth, you know, was this supposedly pro-business government behaving like this. Well, it was interesting, PressProgress did an analysis of donors to the PC Party, and what was really interesting about that analysis it turns out large general contractors are some of the biggest donors to the PC Party of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 19 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

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

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