

Fifth Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
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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
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
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, Hon.	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>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 11, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table this afternoon for the information of the House two reports: The Fatality Inquiries Act, section 43(1) report for 2022; and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner annual review for 2022.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Dr. Netha Dyck

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honour an accomplished and distinguished resident of Fort Richmond who was recently named as one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women.

Dr. Netha Dyck was named dean of University of Manitoba's college of nursing in the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences in 2018 and has served admirably in this leadership role.

Dr. Dyck's professional journey in nursing over the past 49 years is quite impressive and has earned her countless accolades and awards from provincial, federal and international bodies.

Recognition of her leadership qualities was noticed early on in her career. Within the first six months as work—as a registered nurse, Dr. Dyck was named head nurse of an operating room in a rural hospital.

This experience was the catalyst for her to pursue opportunities to assist in many other leadership roles, including spending more than a decade as dean of the school of nursing and health sciences at Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Saskatoon.

During this time, Dr. Dyck was successful in developing and leading the transition from a college to a

degree-granting institution, all while completing her doctorate in higher education leadership.

Madam Speaker, we all know that successful people have discovered that building relationships is the key to reaching goals. I can personally attest that Netha's reputation for building collaborative relationships and strong teams to tackle challenges that arise.

She brings a firm vision to problem solving and carries herself with grace and kindness, which brings out the best in her teams.

Dr. Dyck has been a role model to many women who are pursuing a career in nursing and leadership. Her focus on supporting others and building their confidence is a gift that will continue well beyond the years spent at university.

Madam Speaker, like many of us in this Chamber, Dr. Dyck attributes her accomplishments to the example of service for others that her parents demonstrated for her. Volunteering began at an early age and provided a firm foundation of caring for the wider community.

Madam Speaker, Dr. Dyck has joined us in the gallery today along with family and friends who have supported her through the years. I ask for their names to be added into Hansard.

And now, colleagues, please join me in celebrating a truly remarkable woman.

Henry Dyck, Dr. Netha Dyck, Jack and Dianne Froese, John and Lottie Froese, Melvin and Margaret Klassen, Stephen and Catherine Klassen, Dr. Nicole Harder, Harry Siemens

Manitoba Skateboarding Coalition

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'm honoured to rise today to recognize the Manitoba Skateboarding Coalition.

In 2019, Maddy Nowosad started attending The Edge Skatepark run by Youth for Christ, finding community and friendships there on the ramps. However, when she realized that the skate park wasn't an inclusive space for 2SLGBTQ+ community members, Maddy, alongside her partner, Em, other youth and staff, took a stand.

Bravely, Maddy and others spoke publicly about how important it is that youth-centred community

spaces are safe and affirming for all those who seek to use them, and that discriminatory practices like what she learned was happening at Youth for Christ are unacceptable.

Their voices echoed concerns which have been raised for years and calls for governments to stop providing public funds to organizations which actively discriminate against Manitobans.

Not only did Maddy, Geoff Reimer and others speak up, but they took action and founded the Manitoba Skateboarding Coalition. They are actively raising funds to create an inclusive skate park in Winnipeg, one where 2SLGBTQ+ communities, BIPOC and equity would be at the heart of what it means to connect and celebrate the sport they love.

Their vision recognizes that the diversity of Manitoba is served well when all people are welcome. They've formed relationships with organizations in my constituency of Union Station, a community which is in need of safer recreational spaces, and I look forward to not only getting a skateboarding lesson during the coalition's pride skate at the Pride festival this summer, but also supporting the park once their vision fully comes to life.

I encourage folks to follow them on social media, support their GoFundMe campaign and their upcoming fundraisers.

I ask that all members of this House join me to not only welcome Maddy Nowosad and coalition co-organizer Lyndsey Wallis, who joined us today, but to also thank them for their courage and for actioning what love for sport and love for community looks like.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families (Ms. Squires). [*interjection*] No?

The honourable member for Keewatinook.

Orange Shirt Day

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has publicly stated that she's refusing to make the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day, a statutory holiday.

This is another disrespectful and blatant example of the government's out-of-touch approach with Indigenous communities and lack of political will to reconcile with Canada's horrific past.

For multiple years, this government has committed to passing recognition of Orange Shirt Day into law, and once again they have gone back on their promise.

The Premier constantly places blame elsewhere: on consultation, on the pandemic, on everyone but herself. This is a continuation of Brian Pallister's tactics, and is disgraceful.

The Premier's defence of the status quo in regards to the relations with Indigenous nations and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is disrespectful. This decision shows the government's complete lack of respect for residential school survivors and their families who have been calling on this government for years to acknowledge and respect the lives of Indigenous children.

Last fall, the Premier stood up in her orange shirt with her entire PC caucus and voted against our bill that would make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in Manitoba. And, to be clear, each and every one of the members opposite stood up in this House and voted against that.

This is all the evidence that Manitobans need to show that the PC government has a complete disregard for advancing reconciliation with Indigenous people and that the PC government's status quo is unacceptable.

Théâtre Cercle Molière

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Today I raise—I rise to pay tribute to a truly remarkable cultural institution here in Manitoba. Now, in Quebec and elsewhere across Canada, people would surely be surprised to learn that the oldest French-speaking theatre company, Théâtre Cercle Molière, is here in St. Boniface.

In fact, it's not just the oldest French theatre company in Canada, it's the oldest theatre company in Canada in any language. It's an incredible testament to the vision of Cercle Molière's founders, and to the hard work, creativity, and resilience of all those who have followed.

En 2025, le Cercle Molière fêtera son 100^e anniversaire et, ce jeudi, il lance sa marque pour célébrer l'événement.

Dès le début, l'entreprise a parcouru les régions rurales du Manitoba. Sous la direction de Pauline Boutal, de 1925 à 1968, le Théâtre Cercle Molière a remporté de nombreux prix au Dominion Drama Festival, et en 1970, il a été la première troupe

non professionnelle à se produire au Centre national des Arts à Ottawa.

J'aimerais souligner le travail de Geneviève Pelletier, une interprète et metteuse en scène métisse de Winnipeg qui, depuis 2012, est la directrice artistique du Théâtre Cercle Molière.

TCM a également mis l'accent sur les histoires franco-manitobaines, avec quelque 70 pièces d'auteurs franco-manitobains jouées sur la scène de TCM, la compagnie continuant à rechercher de nouvelles voix au sein de la communauté.

Le Théâtre Cercle Molière vous invite à participer à ses auditions générales et rencontres artistiques ce printemps.

Que vous ayez un intérêt particulier à l'interprétation, la mise en scène, le décor, la régie, l'éclairage, le son ou autres formes artistiques, on veut vous rencontrer.

Les auditions et rencontres artistiques auront lieu les 18 et 19 mai en personne, dans le Studio du TCM. Contactez le théâtre via leur site web : cercllemoliere.com. La date limite est le 5 mai 2023.

Merci bien.

Translation

In 2025, the Théâtre Cercle Molière will celebrate its centennial, with events starting this Thursday to celebrate this milestone.

Since its inception, the theatre has travelled through Manitoba's rural areas. Between 1925 to 1968, the theatre has won many awards at the Dominion Drama Festival under the direction of Pauline Boutal, and in 1970, it became the first non-professional theatre group to have a show at the National Centre for the Arts in Ottawa.

I want to highlight the work of Geneviève Pelletier, a Winnipeg Métis actor and director who has been the artistic director of the Théâtre Cercle Molière since 2012.

TCM has also focused on Franco-Manitoban stories, with some 70 plays by Franco-Manitoban writers produced on the TCM stage, and the theatre is always looking for new voices within the community.

The Théâtre Cercle Molière invites you to its spring general auditions and artist meetings.

Whether you have a particular interest in acting, directing, decor, stage managing, lighting, sound or other art forms, we want to meet you.

Auditions and artist meetings will take place on May 18 and 19, in person at the TCM Studio. Please contact the theatre via its website: cercllemoliere.com. The deadline is May 5, 2023.

Thank you.

Movin' On Choir

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a remarkable choral group comprised of talented seniors who live in my Riel constituency at Dakota House.

The choir is called Movin' On, and it has 23 exuberant members under the directorship of Irene Young and the accomplished pianist, Margaret Rempel.

* (13:40)

Movin' On got its initial start years back when it was known as the Dakota Dazzlers, with Bob James as conductor and the late Irene Milne as pianist. Their dedication will never be forgotten for their 12-plus years of weekly practices and monthly concerts. And, the Dazzlers left a huge legacy, one that instills the belief that there is a place for amateur singing, even for retirees.

Each week at Dakota House, you can hear the harmonious Movin' On choir lifting their voices and the spirits of everyone around them, filling the halls with laughter and harmony and song. They truly embrace music as a way to feel forever young.

Rarely does a week go by when this choir isn't hard at work in practice and preparing programs for special events and holidays to celebrate with their fellow neighbours. The reward for their dedication is a full-house attendance and an exuberant spirit of community created through song.

Members of this community often say that this choir helps promote a sense of belonging and happiness and creates a pathway for truly aging with flair. Dakota House residents feel proud and very lucky to have a choir with this talent right in their very own home. They are an inspiration for all.

Madam Speaker, we're very fortunate to have with us in the gallery some members of the Movin' On choir, with many more watching from home. I am pleased that their names will all be recorded in the Manitoba Legislature's songbook, also known as Hansard, and ask that all of my colleagues of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly help me honour the talented and inspirational members of the Movin' On choir from Dakota House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Gloria Baker, Marion Biebrich, Lori Botan, Betty Bouchard, Mary Brooke, Jeanne Carlson, Wilma Coffin, Leone Durham, Vivian Gibson, Hortense Hodge, Bob Love, Romeo Montsion, Olive Norberg, Glennys Propp, Margaret Rempel, Yvonne Schneider, Esther Schroeder, Ida Schwab, Addie Thoroski, Herb Wagner, Mildred Wright, Anne Yanchyshyn, Irene Young.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have some guests that I would like to introduce to you.

Seated in the loge to my right is the former MLA for Portage la Prairie, David Faurshou.

And seated in the public gallery, from Windsor Park Collegiate, throughout the day I believe we are going to have 100 grade 9 students, under the direction of Angela Bunkowski, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Education Property Tax Credit Revenue Education System Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, Madam Speaker, the Premier has a choice to make this year. She has to decide whether she wants to keep sending million-dollar cheques to out-of-province billionaires or if she'd prefer—like on this side of the House, what we say to do—to invest that money in Manitoba schools.

For most Manitobans, seems like a pretty simple choice. If there's revenues for schools, that should probably be spent on helping feed hungry children. But, you know, the PCs, just like Brian Pallister, insist on: no, let's mail out these massive cheques to billionaires who don't even live in the province of Manitoba.

So, what's it going to be? Is the Premier going to continue sending millions to billionaires who don't need it or is she going to start feeding hungry kids in Manitoba schools?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Manitobans know that in the recent budget that we tabled in this House, we are investing more than \$100 million more, a 6.1 per cent increase, where every single school

division right across the province got a significant increase in their budget, Madam Speaker.

Those are the facts, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who continues down his path of putting false information on the record in this Chamber.

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

Mr. Kinew: Here's a fact: Charles Koch is an American who is the 21st richest person in the world.

Here's another fact: this Premier and her government sent him for—sent him a cheque for nearly a hundred grand last year. That's at the same time that school divisions, like the Interlake School Division, are debating which school they need to cut a teacher from. That's what is going on in Manitoba these days.

Cadillac Fairview—this is a Bay Street real estate holding company with a market cap of \$20 billion—they got a cheque for \$1 million from this Premier. We think that that money should be spent on kids in schools and not—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —mailed out of province to the billionaires.

Will the Premier stop sending these cheques to out-of-province rich people who didn't even ask for this?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I know the Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand this, and perhaps members opposite don't understand this, but this is the fact, Madam Speaker: The private 'secture'—sector is the engine of growth in our economy.

Now, I know that leader—the Leader of the Opposition, every single member opposite—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —doesn't have any idea how to grow our economy—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —but Manitobans want us to put in place programs that will help grow—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —our economy here in Manitoba.

So we will continue to make those investments in Manitoba because Manitobans know, Madam Speaker, that if we're growing our economy, that means more money for health care, for education and for social services.

We will take no lessons from the members opposite.

Madam Speaker: I'm going to remind all members that we have students in the gallery, and they're here to see democracy in action, which means listening carefully to the questions that are asked and the ones that are answered. And I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation please.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, it's very telling to see the Premier, supposedly of Manitoba, not standing up for the people of Manitoba, but instead standing up for the billionaires. On this side of the House, we'll stand up for working people every single day.

It's just like Brian Pallister. This government continues to mail out a million-dollar cheque this year, just like last year, to the owners of the Polo Park mall. They're going to send another half-million-dollar cheque to the owners of the St. Vital mall. These are resources that could be going into our schools to help kids.

You know who benefits when everyone in Manitoba gets a strong education? The people of Manitoba, but so does the private sector as well. On this side of the House, we believe that the best economic plan is a good education plan.

Why does the Premier continue sending all these resources out of province to billionaires when they're supposed to be going toward our schools?

Madam Speaker: And for clarification, that was the second supplementary.

Mrs. Stefanson: The Leader of the Opposition and all of the members opposite have absolutely no plan to build our economy here in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, what they have is a hidden agenda to raise Manitoba taxes. They have it—a hidden agenda to make life more expensive for Manitobans. They have a hidden agenda to kill private-sector jobs in the province of Manitoba.

Well, we will stand on the side of Manitobans who want to see us grow our economy. That's what we stand for, Madam Speaker.

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

Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, on this side of the House—and I assume that there was a unanimous belief in the Chamber on this—we believe in honouring residential school survivors.

I think it's a credit to the good work of educators that kids in this province today are now learning about the horrors of residential schools. They're learning about the truth-telling process under—that was taken by the TRC, and they're learning about the Calls to Action as well as the calls to justice that paint a picture of what this country might be in our future.

However, one of the calls to justice is for the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, better known as Orange Shirt Day, to be made a statutory holiday from coast to coast to coast. There is a consensus amongst this, among Manitobans. The only people who don't agree sit in the PC caucus.

* (13:50)

Will the Premier explain—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —why Orange Shirt Day will not be a stat holiday in Manitoba this year?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well once again, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to fear monger in the Chamber of the Manitoba Legislature.

We will continue to recognize Orange Shirt Day on September 30th. We believe that it should be a day of reflection. We believe that it should be a day of listening to those with lived experience. And we believe that it's a day that we should be learning from those with lived experience.

And so, Madam Speaker, we will continue to recognize Orange Shirt Day as a provincial day of observance in the province of Manitoba each and every year.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was very clear: it should be a statutory holiday.

Every working person should have the opportunity to gather with their families and observe, and every

person in this province, regardless of their background, should take some time on September 30th to learn about the impacts of residential schools. That's why the TRC said it should be a statutory holiday.

I'll point out to the PCs that they only needed two weeks to decide that P3s were the way to build new schools. Two years later, they're still consulting on Orange Shirt Day.

What is going on with this government, that Orange Shirt Day is still not a statutory holiday in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: We want to recognize all Manitobans and honour those who are residential school survivors, and the horrific acts of the past, Madam Speaker. That is why we are recognizing Orange Shirt Day on September 30th. We will continue to do so every single year as a provincial day of observance in the province of Manitoba.

This is a day for reflection. It shouldn't be considered a quote-unquote holiday, Madam Speaker. It should be a day of observance, a day of reflection, to show respect for those families and the horrific acts that took place in the past.

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

Mr. Kinew: I was very proud to walk with students from Windsor Park Collegiate on Orange Shirt Day a few years ago, and I strongly encourage Manitobans from all walks of life, of every age, to participate in this day, each and every year.

I would also be remiss if I did not remind the House that the PCs voted against making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday while wearing orange shirts, I would add.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was clear: this should be a statutory holiday from coast to coast so that every Canadian can freely participate in its observance. The provincial government is the one that sets regulations for most people's work places with regard to stat holidays.

So, the question for the Premier is this: Why is she ignoring the voices of residential school survivors as articulated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I feel compelled to let the students in the gallery know that we all participated in Orange Shirt Day as well on September 30th and walked side by side with those individuals, some

of them in the gallery today, those students that are out there.

So, we need to let them know; we need to put the facts on the record. We will recognize, and we do recognize, Orange Shirt Day as September 30th, a provincial—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson:—day of observance, Madam Speaker, a time to reflect, a time to remember, a time to listen to all of those families who went through the terrific—these horrific atrocities of the past.

We will continue to stand side by side those families and observe Orange Shirt Day on September 30th.

Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I will point out to the students that if they choose to walk with their parents and loved ones, they will not have that opportunity because Orange Shirt Day is not a statutory holiday here in Manitoba.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) announced today that she will not make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday this year. This is extremely disappointing. It's disappointing for Indigenous people and for Manitobans as a whole, who have called on this PC government and this Premier to not follow in Brian Pallister's steps and instead to do the right thing and make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in Manitoba.

The Premier claims ongoing consultation is to blame, yet we know this is just a deflection from a Premier who refuses—who, much like Brian Pallister, mind you—refuses to lead, refuses to advance reconciliation for Indigenous people here in Manitoba.

Can the Premier explain why she continues to refuse to make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in Manitoba?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I want to take this opportunity, in light of students here, to recognize not just students, but teachers, businesses, communities throughout this province; that since orange shirt initially became an event that they could learn more about residential schools and learn more about the culture of our First Nations and Indigenous peoples, they are attending willingly. They do not have to be legislated. They are going out and each year the crowds are getting larger and larger and they're encouraging more people.

This is being recognized and it will continue to be recognized.

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

Mr. Bushie: They are participating willingly, but at the same time having to skip and miss work just to be able to participate in events that every Manitoban should be able to be a part of.

Just last month, the Premier pretended to support Orange Shirt Day. She supported Bill 203. Our bill would have made Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in Manitoba. But now, the Premier shows us her true intentions and that is to quietly try and show her opposition to making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday. It's clear the Premier didn't truly support Bill 203. She was only trying to avoid making headlines once again.

Today, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) says Indigenous issues will remain the, and I quote, status quo. That's disappointing and, quite frankly, it's disrespectful.

Will the Premier apologize to Manitobans for misleading them on Orange Shirt Day—on making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in Manitoba?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Our government gives careful consideration to any proposal with broad impacts, such as those presented by a proposed statutory day.

Our government consulted with Indigenous leadership, residential school survivors and Labour Management Review Committee, as we were collaborating to advance truth and reconciliation.

Obviously, the NDP did not consult with provincial stakeholders.

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

Mr. Bushie: The PC government last year said there wasn't enough time to do the due diligence to make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday. Yet, here we are almost a year later, and this PC government is still standing still on reconciliation.

Making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday would give all Manitobans the opportunity to learn about the history of residential schools. That's what the Premier said when she supported Bill 203, The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act.

Yet, now, she's shown her true—and her party's true colours, just like Brian Pallister. They don't care,

and they continue to mislead Manitobans to try to convince them that they actually do.

Why did this Premier mislead Manitobans about Orange Shirt Day, and will she reverse course and support and give royal assent to Bill 203 to make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in Manitoba this year? Yes or no?

Mr. Reyes: Madam Speaker, our government is committed to reconciliation with First Nations and recognizes the importance of Orange Shirt Day. We have met with various Indigenous leaders and 'stakeholders' throughout the process, including collaboration with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

We've also partnered with community-led events across the province that honour survival of residential schools. This includes public awareness, sharing circles for survivors and opportunities for Manitobans to learn more about the legacy of residential schools.

Reconciliation remembrance of the lives affected is important 365 days of the year and cannot be regulated to just one day, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

New School Construction Use of Public/Private Model

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): To no one's surprise, the PCs are yet again making decisions that are not based on evidence. They've pledged, Madam Speaker, to use a P3 model to construct schools, despite their own findings in 2018 showing that it would cost taxpayers more.

* (14:00)

Provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia have learned their mistakes from P3s. The minister claims it will be different in Manitoba, but he's providing no explanation as to how. Manitobans, Madam Speaker, deserve answers before PCs give millions to private corporations.

Can the Premier explain why she's failed to do her due diligence before giving millions to private corporations?

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): Madam Speaker, the priorities of our government are very clear: it is to ensure that schools get built in this province and that they get built quickly and that they get built to a high quality.

Now, under the previous NDP administration, 17 years went by with hardly any schools being built and with temporary classrooms being set up in school divisions—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma:—sometimes 20—over 20—temporary classrooms on a single site under their administration. That is a failure we don't want to repeat.

We are committed to building schools. We've been building them, we're going to continue to build them and we're going to build nine more this way.

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

Mr. Altomare: Let me correct the record. During 17 years of NDP government, we built 35 schools, with 85 additions, consistently and properly; not this revisionist history.

And, Madam Speaker, the minister—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare:—knows—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare:—the minister knows that, unlike public procurement models that have built-in mechanisms for transparency and accountability, P3s don't. They have what are called confidentiality agreements—I'm sure he knows that—and those won't be released.

So, Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve an answer and they deserve it right now. How is this P3 model going to work in this province? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

For some reason, people feel that they should natter a lot today and I'm not sure why. So I'm going to ask everybody to please co-operate here.

Mr. Teitsma: My expectation is that these—this model will work very well.

And I would just—if the member claims to have built I don't know how many schools there, but how on earth did that result in 23 portables on one site under their administration? How is that even anything remotely near responsible governance?

Now, we have reversed the tide. We have been building schools. We've continued to build schools even through the pandemic. Even as supply chain issues cropped up during the pandemic, we continued to build schools.

We continue to get the job done. Manitobans have every reason to trust that we will continue to do so with this model as well.

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

Mr. Altomare: Let's bring it back to the question at hand. In 2018, the PCs themselves abandoned the P3 process because it would cost taxpayers more. And now, yet again, they're claiming they can do it using a cheaper model. Their source: just trust us.

But Manitobans, Madam Speaker, they know better. Their claims are nothing but empty promises.

So, can he finally explain why they're committed to constructing schools using a P3 model despite knowing they cost taxpayers more?

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, the member opposite purports to have been an educator in our system. I hope he's not good at math, he doesn't seem to be good at math; I hope he wasn't instructing that.

But our expectation and our focus—our expectation may be that the costs come in lower, but our focus is not on that. Our focus is on building these schools quickly. Our focus is on building these schools to a high quality. Our focus is on ensuring that Manitoba students don't have to go to school in portables; instead, they get to go to school in modern, beautiful buildings.

That's what we're going to get done.

Manitoba Hydro Privatization Government Intention

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): This PC government's political interference and mismanagement of our Crowns is well known by now. They've shuttered Manitoba Hydro International's profitable consulting services, and they've privatized access to Manitoba Hydro Telecom's dark fibre network. Those are facts.

They hired their Conservative buddy, Brad Wall, to further undermine the strength of our publicly owned utility and set it up for further privatization.

Will the Hydro minister confirm whether his PC government will come clean with Manitobans regarding their plans to further privatize Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Madam Speaker, here we go again. We've got the NDP out there trying to fear monger Manitobans. I'll take them back to the

previous election. They tried to fear monger Manitobans about Manitoba Hydro and privatization.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Manitobans didn't buy it then, and Manitobans are not buying what the NDP is trying to sell today.

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

Mr. Sala: Manitoba Hydro is a Crown jewel that benefits all Manitobans, but this PC government's secrecy continues to demonstrate—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala:—why Manitobans can't trust them.

Last year, this PC government responded to the Wall's report recommendations indicating that they would amend Hydro's legislative mandate this spring and then review, quote, its various subsidiary elements and determine if those operations are core to its mandated duty. If they are not core to its mission, then they should be considered for sale or shut down. End quote.

Will the minister commit today to reveal, before the election, his PC government's intention for Hydro's mandate and their secret plans to sell it off bit by bit?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, I can understand why that member is mad and upset, because it was his government were in charge of the biggest capital boondoggle in Manitoba's history. This is how Manitoba Hydro ended up with a \$24-billion deficit—\$4 billion over budget.

Our government has taken steps to stabilize Manitoba Hydro and, at the same time, provide low rates for Manitobans. We've done this by reducing water rental rates and the debt guarantee charged to Manitoba Hydro by 50 per cent. That is exactly opposite of what the NDP did, because the NDP doubled those rates.

We're saving Manitoba Hydro and helping Manitobans.

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

Mr. Sala: Manitobans are upset because the only focus this government has had on Hydro is jacking up Manitobans' hydro rates as quickly as possible. That's shameful, Madam Speaker.

Last week, we asked the Environment Minister where he's hiding his PC government's overdue provincial energy strategy that they spent \$1.2 million on with nothing to show for. This strategy is key to informing Hydro's rate planning and their application to the Public Utilities Board, and, according to this PC government, it's going to be used as an input in their rewriting of Hydro's mandate. Manitobans are rightfully concerned with the silence from this PC government on their plans for Hydro's mandate as we approach an election.

When will the minister release the provincial energy strategy, or will he keep it hidden, like their privatization agenda, until after the provincial election?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the NDP have a new interest in Manitoba Hydro and the Public Utilities Board.

Now, we know they created \$24 billion of debt over at Manitoba Hydro, and they did that without even consulting the Public Utilities Board. They went into—made the most largest capital investment in Manitoba's history, went all around the Public Utilities Board altogether.

Madam Speaker, what we have done, we've invested more money in the Public Utilities Board, we've strengthened the Public Utilities Board and we've saved, this year alone, \$180 million for Manitoba Hydro to strengthen Manitoba Hydro and to save ratepayers money.

Madam Speaker, we're taking no lessons from the NDP.

Families Experiencing Miscarriage or Stillbirth Guaranteed Paid Employment Leave

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): This morning, members of this House voted to extend unpaid leave when women and their partners experience a miscarriage or stillbirth from three to five days.

* (14:10)

However, this must be on record, Madam Speaker, that three separate times—twice previously and again during this Legislative Assembly—we introduced legislative amendments that would've provided guaranteed paid leave while—through Bill 210, while families grieving their loss.

Now that we have taken one important step in extending this important leave, will the Labour Minister agree that it's long past time for the Province

to provide guaranteed paid leave for those families that have had a miscarriage or stillbirth?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I thank the member for the question. I want to thank the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) for doing the second reading on this bill and successfully passing of this bill. We listened to many Manitobans with regards to this bill, to ensure that we help Manitobans in this dire situation. And we want to ensure that we continue to help Manitobans with regards to these situations to ensure that they don't suffer from anxiety and stress when a situation like this occurs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: Extending unpaid leave for miscarriage and stillbirth is just really one small step. More help is needed.

The society of 'obstrecians' and gynecologists of Canada estimates that one in five pregnancies end in a miscarriage. Families experiencing this grief, pain, loss need our collective support, not just so they're aren't fired, but also that they're aren't depleting any sick time or losing any of their income.

After seven years of inaction from this PC government, will this minister acknowledge that the approach of his PC colleagues is full of half measures this—that fails to support families in their time of grief?

Mr. Reyes: Whether it's a miscarriage, loss of life or any dire situation that affects workers personally, Madam Speaker, we want to ensure that these people are taken care of.

Our government will always be working for the workers, whether it's the beginning of the day, the end of the day, anytime, Madam Speaker. So, our doors will be always open to recommendations, to listen to Manitobans to ensure that we—ensure that they're treated fairly with regards to these situations and in these dire situations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Lathlin: You know, Madam Speaker, if he really, truly, want to take care of our workers, you know, paid leave makes much better sense. And all we get is excuses from the Labour Minister and this PC government.

Under the PC government's approach, many parents have to choose between properly grieving their pregnancy loss or putting food on the table. Money, eh? This is an impossible choice for many, and can lead to longer term trauma if parents aren't given enough time to grieve.

Will this minister do the right thing and confirm for the House that this PC government will support our bill to provide paid leave for families that have experienced a pregnancy loss?

Ekosi.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I, like many in this House, have suffered and known the challenges of when a family has a miscarriage. I've spoken about that many times in the House, and I know many other members have as well. It's not a political point to be made.

This morning, a member brought forward a private member's bill, it was—passed second reading and will go to committee. And I commend the members, and I would commend all members of the House, for moving that bill forward.

This isn't a political point. These are difficult circumstances that many families, including those in this House and my own, have gone through. This bill will go to committee—[interjection] The member could maybe heckle at a different time.

But this bill will go to committee, amendments can be brought forward and we can look at the bill further, Madam Speaker.

PPE Purchased During Pandemic Request for Spending Audit

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): There's an article in the media today, which I table, that shows this government spent \$35 million for 500,000 N95 masks that have never been used; an untended contract for masks that sat in storage.

Now, this isn't the only example. There was a court case relating to another untended contract for millions of masks that couldn't be used and didn't fit, for \$35 million US which is nearly 15–\$50 million Canadian. And there was hand sanitizer made from fuel-grade ethanol. All together over \$86 million in PPE that wasn't used, was useless or dangerous, as these tabling documents show.

Are we ever going to get an explanation, inquiry or audit into this government's wasting money during the pandemic?

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I do take a significant issue with the tone that the member opposite is taking on this matter. If the House will recall, there was a time when there was no PPE available; where N95 masks were in such high demand and low supply that we couldn't get a shipment to come to Manitoba.

And in that context, a Manitoba innovative company said, you know what? I can build a reusable N95 mask to guarantee that your health workers, that your nurses and your doctors will have the protection that an N95 mask offers them, no matter what happens to supply chain.

That's impressive innovation. I am so glad that we supported it.

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

Mr. Lamont: It's remarkable that, you know, this government boasted about how much they spent on PPE, which was a hundred times more than Saskatchewan. They just skipped the part where no one could actually use it. There needs to be an explanation.

We're talking about \$80 million in untendered contracts for products that couldn't be used. Those 500,000 masks—which are excellent—from a local company, were sitting in boxes while teachers, EAs, early learning child-care workers and staff and family in personal-care homes could have used them. They were pleading for them.

We paid \$35 million for these N95 masks, and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was Health minister. Did she know about them or why they were left in boxes while Manitobans were left with nothing?

Will this government call the Auditor General to review this government's \$85 million in misguided pandemic spending?

Mr. Teitsma: As I was saying, very impressed with the innovative ideas of this Manitoba company. Very happy to see that what this did was it took Manitoba from—in a place where we might not have PPE to knowing for certain that we would, no matter what, and that's what's important.

Now, the member seems to think that we should be using this PPE now in our health-care system. But we won't—[interjection]—we won't because when the traditional N95 masks—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma:—the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) thinks this is something that should be heckled about. I take the health of Manitobans very seriously; I take our health-care system very seriously, and I would just like to remind that member that—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma:—what we want to do is provide health-care workers with the most efficient and most effective—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

And I'm going to have to call the member for St. Johns to order. There's been a lot of heckling there today and it makes it very difficult in here. And the next person I hear doing the same, I will call you to order as well.

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

Provincial Nominee Program for Skilled Workers Timeline for Point System Review

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): When it comes to Provincial Nominee Program, specifically skilled workers, the point systems need to be reviewed. There are serious labour shortages and retention problems across the province.

Policies need to be adjusted to recognize these issues and be more inviting for skilled workers. Madam Speaker, business owners met with the minister responsible for immigration a couple of months ago, and they were told a solution would be made public by the end of March. But now, almost mid-April, no solution has been presented.

Can the minister please provide a specific date as to when skilled workers can expect the promised solutions?

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Solutions have made—have been made public via the immigratemanitoba.com site. There have been normal draws, there have been special draws. I want to thank the federal minister for giving us 9,500 allocations, an increase of 50 per cent from last year.

There was a record number of allocations processed last year—the last two years. The PNP was created by a PC government back in 1998. There are 70 recommendations in the IAC report and some of those recommendations are—being actions, and those solutions have been made public.

And we're going to continue to welcome more Manitobans to this province, future newcomers, and

advocate for them to ensure that they make Manitoba their home of hope.

Thank you.

Homelessness Prevention Initiatives Funding to Community Organizations

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): As you're aware, our government has recently released Manitoba's first homelessness strategy, and I know, along with other further announcements that were made recently in Brandon, are outstanding for this province.

* (14:20)

I want to ask the Minister of Families to outline how our government's investments to support community-wide approaches will help prevent chronic homelessness and build stronger communities right across our entire province.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I'd like to thank my friend from Brandon East for asking that question.

And I'd also like to thank him for hosting us, my department and myself, in Brandon last week, where we were very pleased to meet with members of the Blue Door Project, Samaritan House, Massey Manor and Housing First to see some of the great work that they're doing to ensure that all unsheltered people have a safe place to call home.

While in Brandon, we also announced \$330,000 in increased annual funding to Samaritan House to operate its Safe & Warm Shelter. We also expanded the homeless outreach mentor program by increasing the annual funding from \$25,000 to \$185,000. We also announced \$4.6 million to help kids aging out of care.

Madam Speaker, we know there is a lot of work to do—

Madam Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Adanac Apartment Complex Health and Safety Concerns

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Last week in this House, my colleague from Notre Dame raised concerns regarding the Adanac, an apartment building on Sargent Avenue that has become a health and safety hazard for residents and neighbours.

The Adanac used to be a decent building that families called home but now it's an illegal dumping

ground full of garbage. There's multiple bylaw infractions leading to fires, property crime, drug and sex trafficking.

Will the minister for municipal affairs advise the House whether he is aware of the problems at buildings like the Adanac, and what support his department is able to offer the city in helping these residents?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): On the issue of providing safe and affordable housing units for all Manitobans, that is something that this government takes very seriously.

It is unfortunate that when that member's party was in power, we saw an erosion of 17,485 units of affordable housing that were lost during their time in office, between the years of 2011 and when voters showed them the door.

Madam Speaker, we know a lot more work needs to be done to ensure all Manitobans have a safe and affordable place to call home, but we're the ones to get the job done.

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

Ms. Naylor: The MLA for Notre Dame has been repeatedly calling on the PC government to address the public health and safety concerns at the Adanac and other buildings like it. The Daniel McIntyre councillor, Cindy Gilroy, seconded by Mayor Gillingham, tabled a motion requesting the Province to step up to provide wraparound services that folks need to survive.

Will the minister step up and answer the mayor of Winnipeg's call for help in responding to the housing crisis at the Adanac [*phonetic*] and other buildings where vulnerable people are housed in this city?

Ms. Squires: I know this member wasn't in the Chamber at the time when her NDP party were seeing the erosion of 17,485 units of affordable housing, so I'll table the documents for her review and reflection on their time in office.

But what our government is doing is we recently announced \$126-million homelessness strategy to ensure all unsheltered people have a place to call home, with wraparound mental health supports for those who need it.

We're getting the job done, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

* * *

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, can I ask for leave to recognize additional members of the Movin' On choir that are here in the gallery, including Anne Yanchyshyn, Irene Young, Jeanne Carlson, Romeo Montsion and Lori Baton.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the names to be included in Hansard?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Anne Yanchyshyn, Irene Young, Jeanne Carlson, Romeo Montsion, Lori Baton

PETITIONS

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Thank you—oh. Okay.

Madam Speaker: Order.

I did call the—say that the time for oral questions has expired.

The honourable member for Transcona, on petitions.

Health-Care Coverage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(6) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to health care to protect the health and safety of all who live—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —in the province.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

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

Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many fine-many Manitobans.

Ekosi.

Security System Incentive Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Cities across Canada and the United States, including Chicago; Washington, DC; Salinas, California; and Orillia, Ontario, are offering home security rebate programs that enhance public safety and allow for more efficient use of their policing resources.

* (14:30)

(2) Home security surveillance systems protect homes and businesses by potentially deterring burglaries, reducing homeowners' and businesses' insurance costs.

(3) Whole neighbourhoods benefit when more homes and businesses have these security systems.

(4) A 2022 Angus Reid Institute poll found 70 per cent of Winnipeggers surveyed believed crime had increased over the last five years, the highest percentage found among cities in Canada.

(5) The same survey reported half of Winnipeggers polled do not feel safe walking alone at night, and almost 20 per cent of them said they were a victim of police-reported crime in the last two years.

(6) Although the public understands what the criminologists and community advocates point to as the main drivers of crime, namely the larger issues of lack of food, addictions and poverty, they support rebate programs like these as they help the most vulnerable in our community by removing financial barriers for personal protection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to work with municipalities to establish a province-wide tax rebate or other incentive program to encourage residents and businesses to purchase approved home and business security protection systems.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Community Living disABILITY Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Currently, people with specific or non-specific disabilities, or a combination of disabilities, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory or language processing disorders and/or non-verbal learning disabilities, will be denied access to services under the Province of Manitoba's community living and disability services, CLDS, if their IQ is above 80.

People with these or other borderline cognitive functioning issues also have extremely low adaptive skills and are not able to live independently without supports.

Recently, it has become widely recognized that access to CLDS should not be based solely on IQ, which is only a measure of a person's ability to answer questions verbally or in writing in relation to mathematics, science or material which is read.

Very often, persons with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of these disabilities have specific needs related to their executive function for support when they are adults or are transitioning to adulthood, which are not necessarily connected to their IQ.

Executive function is the learned ability to do the normal activities of life, including being organized, being able to plan and to carry out plans and adapt to changing conditions.

Those who have major defects in executive function have a learning disability requiring assistance under CLDS to be able to make a contribution to society and be self-sustaining.

Provision of CLDS services to individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities or a combination of these disabilities or executive function disability, would free them from being dependent on Employment and Income Assistance and have the potential to make an important change in the person's life.

Newfoundland and Labrador have now recognized that access to services should be based on the nature of the disability and the person's needs, rather than on IQ.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to change the requirements for accessing community living and disability services so that said requirements are based on the needs of individuals with specific or non-specific disabilities, including executive function or a combination of disabilities, rather than solely on the basis of their IQ.

Signed by Heather Groom, Kelly Lewis, Christine Defoe [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I'm advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) indicating that the member for St. Boniface has identified Bill 215, The Non-Disclosure Agreements Act, as his selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 25 permits each independent member to select one private member's bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote, and requires the Government House Leader and the member to provide written notice as to the date and time of the debate and the vote.

In accordance with this rule and the letter, Bill 215 will be called for debate on Tuesday, April 18th, 2023, as follows: debate at second reading will begin at 10 a.m., question put on the second reading motion at 10:55 a.m.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(11), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Recognize the Valuable Role that Foster Parents Play in Manitoba Communities.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Recognize the Valuable Role that Foster Parents Play in Manitoba Communities.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for second reading debate this afternoon Bill 16 and Bill 17.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second readings of Bill 16 and Bill 17 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 16—The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call Bill 16, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 16, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: In Manitoba, there are legal measures to help protect Manitobans from domestic violence and from stalking. There are well known to many members of the House. This includes protection orders that prohibit contact, communication or attending any place where the person concerned for their risk happens to be. Protection orders may also contain

exceptions that allow the respondent to go to court; as an example, when the other person is present. This is an important part of the judicial process.

Out-of-court family resolution options have expanded in recent years and now include family law arbitration and other alternatives to court, in addition to the traditional court process. This is something that has been asked for by families for many, many years as a way to avoid the often confrontational court process.

A focus on intervention, prevention and restorative justice in situations of intimate partner and family violence aims to intervene earlier, prevent escalation of violence and, over time, breaks the cycle of recurring and intergenerational intimate partner and family violence.

Family law service providers and Manitoba supervised parenting agencies have expressed concern about inadvertent breaches of protection orders during court-ordered supervised parenting time and child exchanges.

We've also heard of situations when the parents, who are the parties of the protection order, have a safety plan and are prepared to resolve family law issues with the support of a lawyer, mediator or arbitrator.

The amendments in this bill will help address the negative impacts to families experienced—experiencing intimate partner and family violence who are also engaged in a wide range of family dispute resolution services and support. This bill aligns with The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act, with new federal and provincial legislation for separating families.

These amendments were developed with an awareness of the best interests of the child and informed by community engagement through the family law modernization collaboration table. They align with the government's framework of addressing gender-based violence and represent another step in advancing the Family Law Modernization Action Plan. Addressing gender-based violence of all forms continues to be a priority for this government, and this bill is another step forward in that direction to make our province safer for all Manitobans.

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 asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

* (14:40)

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to ask the minister just a few questions here this afternoon.

First of all, he mentioned in his opening statement that this change in legislation will have an impact on support organizations. So I simply want to get a better picture of who was consulted with regards to formulating this bill.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for the question. It's a thoughtful and appropriate question.

There was engagement with supervised parenting and exchange agencies, and it—that's taken place along with engagement of the family law modernization collaboration table regarding these proposed amendments.

Mr. Wiebe: I also do believe that public communication will be an important part of this new legislation. So I'm just looking for some context about how the minister sees information being disseminated to the public.

Particularly, the people who have sought or subject to a protection order, how would they learn about some of the changes that have been made in Bill 16?

Mr. Goertzen: It's also a good question, because any time there are changes to legislation, that's often only as effective as the information that's provided around it. I can inform the member and other members of the House that the Victim Services branch of Manitoba Justice will develop and provide an education program for the protection or their designates.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Can the minister please speak to what measures are in place to protect the applicants of a protection order during trial, visitations and transfers?

Mr. Goertzen: So, there are a number of different protections that are put in place when an individual has a protection order that is given to them. Of course, there's a number of orders that an individual who has one applied against them has to follow, including court supervision at times; when there are visitations, as an example; or for mediation, that there is supervision at those times as well.

So there are some built-in protections when it comes to those protection orders. This is ensuring that when two parties agree to something like mediation, that it can happen without inadvertently breaching an order.

Mr. Wiebe: What sort of direction is being given to courts with regards to how the—this new provision for protection orders might be—it might impact a protection—sorry, might impact a mediation judgment? Is there something specific in the bill that gives direction to courts about how this might be utilized and implemented?

Mr. Goertzen: And so in some ways, this—another good question—in some ways, this comes about because the exceptions for when a protection order doesn't apply are often ambiguous currently.

So, for example, right now, the act allows for mediation only upon court referral and only in relation to custody access or a related matter, meaning parenting issues.

So, in this situation, the parties could be inadvertently breaching their court order. This act will give clarity in terms of where the exceptions apply so the judges and others in the court system will be able to more specifically ensure that it's being used in the appropriate way.

Mr. Wiebe: While looking into the impact of protection orders, did the minister explore ways to make protection orders less complicated to apply for? I know this is something that we've certainly heard about as legislators many times. What measures are being taken to make them more accessible for people who need them?

Mr. Goertzen: No, I appreciate the question. It's a little bit out of scope of this legislation, but I know the member brings it forward with the right heart and with the right intention.

I can assure him that we're always looking for ways to ensure that while the judicial process still is fair and is maintained, also is accessible to those who need to access it. And that's often an issue particularly in more rural communities where it's not as easy to access somebody within the justice system. But I'm happy to entertain that a little bit further when this bill gets to committee.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

If not, debate is open.

Debate

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I do appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record with regards to Bill 16, and specifically, I guess, to talk about ways that we can focus on making these—making sure that these protection orders are respected, that they are enforced, and that we are certainly protecting those organizations that will be doing a lot of the heavy lifting, so to speak, when it comes to ensuring that people remain safe when court orders are—and mediation is pursued when a protection order is in place.

I actually wanted to start by picking up exactly where the minister left off, and that is my eagerness to get to committee to hear more about how this will impact organizations out in our community. Because we know that the work that they do is certainly—they would have a very close knowledge about how these changes will impact their services, but we want to hear more about how we can, you know, in a broader sense, improve these sorts of orders and make sure that folks are always protected as the No. 1 most important thing that we can do.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So, I know in Manitoba, we are very lucky to have this as part of—in the process for every bill. But this, in particular, would be one of those bills where I'm looking forward to hopefully having some folks come—take the time to come down to the Legislature to, you know, educate us, to give us some perspective and some context about this bill and how this might impact them and, you know, put some words on the record that, ultimately, may end up shaping either this bill or future bills, which I think is an important part of the process as well. So I'm excited about the opportunity to move this forward beyond second reading here today.

We know just how important protection orders are. They are an important safety measure that people count on and rely on and trust as part of the system to protect them and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. Domestic violence, especially gender-based violence, is an absolute epidemic that needs to be addressed and needs to be first and foremost on our minds when changing legislation or making any kind of amendments that impact protection orders.

We know that domestic violence is also often racialized and so we need to ensure that we're protecting, again, those who are most vulnerable and making sure that any kind of changes don't negatively

impact those folks who, right now, count on those protection orders to have some sort of safety in their lives.

And we also know that, ultimately, this comes down to support and investment for women's health and safety in general, but in particular when it comes to those organizations, as I said, who are on the ground, who are doing this work, doing the heavy lifting, that we count on and it's so important for our society.

We know that protection orders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can be obtained quickly and without cost to the applicant, and so they are an important tool that is used very often. It's made—it is made without notice to the alleged abuser or stalker, and that's an important piece of this legislation, as well, that anonymity and that protection of the individual is paramount.

Such protection orders can prohibit the respondent against whom the order is made from having contact with a particular person, following them or attending their residence, school or workplace. The protection order will normally be granted for three years but could be longer or renewed, if necessary.

The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act came into effect on April 30th, 2012, and this act provides that the protection orders can be granted in relation to child victims of sexual exploitation or adult and child victims of human trafficking.

A person who has been subjected to domestic violence by a person with whom they have a family or domestic relationship can then apply for a protection order, and these relationships include the following: so, people who are living together or have lived together in spousal or conjugal or intimate relationship; family members, regardless of whether they have lived together or not; people who have been dating or in any kind of relationship; or persons who are the biological or adopted parents of a child regardless of their marital status and whether or not they have ever lived together.

* (14:50)

In addition, a person who has been subjected to stalking can apply for relief regardless of the nature of the relationships to or with the stalker or, you know, in cases where they have no relationship to the stalker, can also be applied for then. Applications are made in person, but the application can also be made by telephone; and this is important, you know, with the assistance of a police officer, a lawyer, a person who has been specifically trained and designated by the Province of Manitoba, can assist with protection order

applications. And these are incredibly important rules—resources and tools that are available to individuals.

An adult can apply for a protection order on behalf of a child and a court-appointed committee or substitute decision maker can apply on behalf of someone who is deemed to be unable to make decisions on their own, if the court has granted that authority. Anyone who applies will have to provide evidence under oath about the domestic violence or the stalking infraction that they are concerned about. But after that protection order is made, the respondent will be notified and the respondent then has 20 days to go back to the court of queen's bench to set it aside or to make that case, and has the opportunity at that point to present evidence.

Protection orders that prohibit contact, communication or attending any place where the other person happens to be may also contain exceptions that allow the respondent to go to court or attend a mediation for the purposes of a court-ordered assessment when the other person is present. The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act currently specifies some basic protections that must be included when this type of exception is made, such as staying a certain distance away from the other person.

This is why it is so important that when we're making changes with regards to protection orders and their ability to protect somebody that we get it right, and that we always think about how this will impact somebody who is currently using this tool to protect themselves or their family. We know that it can also—a protection order may also include any of the following provisions necessary for the applicant's protection: prohibit the respondent from coming to the applicant's home, to their workplace or being within a certain proximity of other specified people as well; prohibit the respondent from following the applicant or others; prohibit the respondent from contacting or communicating with the applicant or others, either directly or even indirectly, Mr. Deputy Speaker; give the applicant or a respondent temporary possession of necessary personal effects—so, to provide a peace officer assistance ensuring the orderly removal of personal effects.

Again, all of these are tools that are used to protect the individual. The anonymity, the supports that are surrounding this person and any kind of help that they might need, is what is—what gives the meat to the bones of a protection order. And that's why it is so vital that we are so careful when making these changes that there's not any impacts when it comes to the protections that are offered.

We also know that the protection order can provide—or can allow for a peace officer to assist somebody in removing the respondents from a residence. So, calling in that extra little bit of help and require the respondent to turn over any weapons or—and authorize the police to search and seize weapons when that is something that's involved in the case.

We know that certain civil orders of protection do not expire after a set period of time unless they specifically say so. So these are sometimes protections that are in place for good reason, for a very long time. And this is so important to add that sense of stability and sense of security that people need when they're victims of domestic violence or sexual exploitation or human trafficking.

Orders without expiry dates are in effect or—until changed or ended by a court order, even when the parties reconcile. A person who disobeys a civil order of protection can be charged with breaching a court order and, if convicted, can be fined, bound by prohibition—probation, rather, or imprisoned, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These are serious cases, and this is serious when a protection order has been violated.

The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act that came into effect in 1999 was the first to lay out these—some of these provisions that I'm speaking of, and prior to that The Family Maintenance Act allowed for a judge or magistrate to make an order forbidding the abuser to molest, annoy or harass a spouse or partner. This has certainly been strengthened over time, and we want to ensure that it continues to be strengthened.

I do think it is important to put on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the impact that this has on racialized communities, on Indigenous communities, but more specifically, how it impacts missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2S peoples. You know, this has been on everyone's—in everyone's hearts and on everyone's minds over the last—certainly over the last year, two years, and most recently with regards to news how this is continuing to impact those most vulnerable women and girls in our Indigenous communities.

This is a point of—this is such an important point to get right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an important point to make sure that we're always protecting those who are most vulnerable. Intimate partner violence impacts many in our communities, from all backgrounds, but we know that violence against Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people is disproportionately higher.

We know that Indigenous women are more likely to experience this domestic intimate partner violence: 61 per cent versus 44 per cent, according to Statistics Canada in 2018, and we know that that's only gotten more—gotten worse. Indigenous people are twice as likely to be victims of spousal violence, as opposed to non-Indigenous people, and we know that the inter-generational trauma experienced by many Indigenous people as a result of colonization, as a result of the residential school system and specific harms that result from those, perpetuates these systems of abuse and makes those folks even more vulnerable.

Intimate partner violence experienced by Indigenous women is often underreported or it's poorly reported, making it difficult to get an accurate picture of the scale of the problem, and this problem continues to be an epidemic that we know is certainly a reality in our province, but across Canada, the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

This is why it is so important for us to go into this, any kind of changes to protection orders, any kind of changes with regards to family law, any kind of changes that impact individuals, why it's so important to—for us to go into it very carefully, thoughtfully and in a real partnership stance, with a partnership stance, because we know that the folks who need these protection orders, that are most impacted by intimate partner violence, they need the support of the provincial government and they need it in a real way.

They need to ensure that any changes that are made aren't going to impact them negatively. And as I said, I think this is a real opportunity for members of the public, for experts, to come to our Legislature to help us understand how these changes are going to impact them and to ensure that there's not going to be any negative impacts that we might see because of Bill 16.

Bill 16 makes some changes that will impact local organizations. It will—we will be asking more, even more, of those organizations, once again, to act in a supervisory role, to act in a support role, to act in a way that gives people the confidence that the protection order will remain in place, will be honoured and will be secure, while at the same time, there is an opportunity for them to pursue, if they so choose, any kind of mediation or negotiated settlement or visitation in person, that the protection order comes first, that it's primary.

That is, as I said, paramount. And then beyond that we, you know, we can allow for the supports to come around. But, ultimately, what we're asking, once

again, is for these organizations, these support organizations, these family law support organizations and women's support networks, to once again step up, to once again be the ones who are implementing this.

* (15:00)

And not to say that they're not up to the job, because we know that they are, and they are there and willing and able to do the work. But once again, if they don't have a partner in the provincial government, there is concern that this will be a further downloading of responsibility or pressure on organizations that are already stretched thin.

We know that the provincial government has continued to cut social services across the board, and these have an impact. You know, as I often say, cuts have real consequences in the real world.

In this case, these organizations are seeing spikes in domestic violence. They're seeing more pressures on their organizations because of poverty issues, housing issues, justice issues that are unresolved or have been made worse by this government. And so now we're asking them to, once again, to step up to provide these supports.

And as I said, they're, you know—I know that they are doing that work already and I'm sure they're willing to do as much as they can, because this is their—this is what they do. But if it's not being done in a way that's supported, that is holistic as part of an overall government strategy—a whole-of-government strategy it's often called—that's very concerning to me.

So, what we're hoping is that as we go through this process, that we are thoughtful about it, that we take the time to ensure that we understand the impacts that it's going to have and, ultimately, how it's going to impact our courts. Because courts want to have more tools. They want to have more opportunities to, you know, not sort of go the hard line one way or another kind of judgments, and that's, I think, you know, a very positive development.

But, ultimately, if there's going to be any impact on the protection orders, that's where we're going to be very, very interested to hear more about those impacts and how those are going to play out.

We do not want anyone to be put into any kind of situation where their safety is compromised. And so we need to ensure that just because the changes are made and there is an impact or there's going to be an impact in a positive way, that on the flip side, that the negative isn't able to happen either by an order of the

court or, you know, potentially by just the fact that there won't be the kind of resources available to somebody to give them the kind of protection that they need.

Anonymity is a big part of this and needs to be part of what we're talking about here, how we can protect individuals so that they can feel confident that any kind of court order doesn't expose them in ways that maybe aren't intended or could be intended. We really don't know. That's the kind of thing that we want to hear.

We know that it's been just one cut after another with this government, and these things cumulatively impact the day-to-day lives of people, right? So, I mean, we often talk about, as I said, the poverty crisis and the housing crisis, the homelessness crisis, the addictions crisis, right? We talk about these things as if they're siloed, and they're not. They are all interconnected and they all impact, you know, folks in ways—in a myriad of different ways that we're seeing in domestic violence here in this province.

And we know that, specifically, this government has—there's been an attack on women's rights in Manitoba. Protection orders are only helpful if victims of domestic violence have the ability to leave the relationship. And that requires those robust social services that I talked about: domestic violence shelters for vulnerable women who have no other options.

We need an—and we need an ally, quite frankly, for victims of intimate partner violence in the provincial government. It's incumbent on the provincial government to show to individuals, and we talked about this in the question period, as well—communication, how will this—can be disseminated and communicated to individuals about the changes that are made and how they're still protected, ultimately still protected under protection orders, but gives more tools and more opportunity for them to see a path forward.

But ultimately, we've—we haven't seen that from this provincial government. And no clear evidence of that is in this provincial government, you know, taking a whole year just to get around to scheduling a meeting for the ending gender-based violence Cabinet-committee of Cabinet.

We know that that was supposed to be a priority. It was certainly a priority we heard on the doorstep, we hear every day in our communities; we see in the impact in our communities. And yet it wasn't a priority of this government.

We also know that there was a number of cuts by this PC government with regard to women's health-care funding. You know—well, I mean, all of this is—could be certainly—and will be better said by my colleagues and friends on the opposition benches here, but—and has, you know, it's not just said today, it's been said, you know, as I said earlier, we—day after day, month after month, year after year, it feels like we have seen these cuts and how the impacts to women's health care has impacted individuals in—across our society and across our province.

So we know that intimate partner violence is a women's health issue. It is a violence that's often—it often has devastating effects on a person's physical and mental health, and so these cuts do have a particularly negative impact on women who are experiencing intimate-partner violence. The PCs, again, have made deep cuts to those health-care services that support women and are part of the larger picture that are impacting people who are in the most vulnerable positions.

They cut lactation consultant positions from Women's Hospital, they closed the mature women's health centre—which, you know, served 5,000 women a year here in this province—and their budget cuts forced hospitals to ration pads and mesh underwear for people who had just given birth. I mean, this is just the beginning of the list, and I could go on and on and on, but this is the kind of impact that we have seen and the kind of cuts that have impacted women, and now we're making changes that potentially put women in more danger. That's where we have to be sure that we're making the right decisions, that we're making the right call.

So we look forward to seeing this bill come forward through the process, through the legislative process, to see it come to committee and to learn more about what these impacts are going to have. You know, I hope we hear from those—as I said—those organizations.

And if there are individuals who have gone through this process, who have had a protection order, and maybe it is the one thing that's, you know, kept them safe, that is their lifeline, but they have looked for other tools and other ways to work through their own domestic violence situation or contact with the family law system in our province. I hope to hear from them as well. And I do hope that that learned experience and that individual context will help us to ensure that this bill is making the right decisions, that it's making the right call and that this is going to then

ultimately not make changes that are going to negatively impact people who rely on those protection orders.

And I guess just in the few minutes that I have left, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to just, you know, put out a call to this government to end these cuts and to end these freezes and to end these impacts that we've seen across the health-care system, across the domestic violence support system, to actually step up and, as I said, be a true partner with—for folks who are victims of domestic violence. We truly can be, in this province, we can be a partner and we can listen to those organizations, we can step up, but at the end of the day what it really takes—or what it will take in this province—is a government that is going to invest and is going to put money to protect those who are most vulnerable in our society.

We haven't seen that over the last seven years. We've seen a government who has made these, you know, thousand cuts and thought, well, nothing's, you know, nothing bad is going to come from this; they're just small little cuts, or they're, you know, just one line on a budget sheet, let's make that cut and let's move on. But what we're seeing is we're seeing the actual impact of that. We're seeing what actually happens out in community when those cuts happen. And this is just one example of those kinds of cuts and how they can seriously impact folks.

So I do hope that as we hear from people, as I said, who come to committee, that we not just listen to them when we take their good advice, but we think about ways—collectively, as legislators—that we can actually support them more comprehensively. There are ways that we can do this better. There are ways that we can do this more comprehensively, and I do believe that if we work together there will be an opportunity to do that.

So I do hope that there will be an opportunity for others to speak this afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to put just a few words here on the record. We're going to spend more time, as I said, at committee, and hopefully at third reading, getting some more of this—you know, what we've heard and how we can improve this.

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And then, you know, going forward, I think the idea is, is that this is—continues to be a focus of certainly our caucus—it will be—and it will be an important way that we can make sure that people are safe in this province, particularly women, particularly those

who are most vulnerable. That's who we're going to focus on and that's who I think we should all be focusing on as legislators.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm glad to be able to rise this afternoon and just put a few words on record about Bill 16, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act.

Women account for almost eight in 10 victims of intimate partner violence, and Manitoba has the second highest rate of it in the country.

And I think it's of utmost important to recognize that safety remains the priority in granting of protection and prevention orders. This is in part because we need to ensure that the process to apply for a protection or prevention order should not be overly burdensome on the applicant, who in many cases may be dealing with significant threat to their own safety.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, although the decision to grant or dismiss a protection order made by a judicial justice, work must continue to ensure that supports are in place to ensure that applicants are safe from intimate partner violence and can continue to access services to help them escape domestic violence and abusive situations.

When I was doing a practicum, I actually had the opportunity to work specifically with immigrant women who were, in some cases, in abusive relationships and situations with their family and, unfortunately, even to this day some of them are still in these situations. And that's because abusive situations and relationships are actually very complex and not very easily, often times, to get out of.

There are different types of abuse that occur, from physical to mental and spiritual, and abuse can often overcome, overtake a person. It may often be seen as normalized for a person who is experiencing it and often times people don't have the resources in their lives to access the resources that they may need.

And I think about how there are individuals here in Winnipeg who I've had the opportunity to get to know over the years who were in abusive relationships and they have no independence within the relationship where they were able to even access a phone to contact a place for help, never mind have to escape—quite literally escape—from their houses to get to the resources that they needed for their own safety.

I know in Tyndall Park we have the NorWest Co-op Community Health Centre that provides family

violence programs and offer legal support to assist women applying for protection orders. And I really want to thank them for the work that they continue to do.

And, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, Manitoba has grappled with the issue of high dismissal rates for protection orders in recent years. In 2019, 52 per cent of protection orders were dismissed or withdrawn. The number was at 62 per cent in 2015-16. I'm actually tabling a copy of this from a CBC article.

And part of—out of speculation, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the reason for the high rates of dismissed protection orders could be the application forms themselves, which are legal documents and can contain information that may be very overwhelming or in—difficult to understand and use and utilize by the applicant, especially when they're often in quite a fearful state for their own safety.

The main thing is that when this is rolled out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's rolled out in the best way possible, it is user-friendly and we continue to do everything we can to make sure that it is accessible for those who need it here in the province of Manitoba.

With those words, I look forward to further debate at committee.

Thank you.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, I'm pleased to get up this afternoon and put on about 30 minutes of remarks in respect of The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act.

I think that it's fair to say that any amendments or improvements to The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act is a good thing. I think that we all know in this Chamber that we can use, you know, the greater understanding and the more knowledge and more research and more expertise that we have in respect of any variety of issues. But, certainly, domestic violence and stalking, when we can use that and enhance on current legislation and create stronger legislation for Manitobans, that's a good thing.

So, certainly, we will be supporting Bill 16 today, but before we do that I want to put some words on the record.

My colleague, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) did a really good job laying out, you know, the need for protection orders and, you know, those that are most at risk and in need of protection orders. And, certainly, I think it's no big shock that here in Manitoba we have very disparaging statistics in respect of domestic violence and gender-based

violence. We have, actually, some of the highest levels of violence across the country. And I don't know if people often think about that.

I do. And I wonder and worry about the fact that we have such high statistics in respect of domestic violence and stalking. And I worry about that at night and I think about that constantly because those—you know, behind those statistics are real people, are real Manitobans that are struggling to safeguard their lives. They're struggling to navigate systems that often they don't understand because those systems are so confusing and bureaucratic and, you know—and there are gaps. There are gaps in services and protections.

And I have said recently, in the last many months, you know, the need to, for instance, prioritize the protections of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited because of the lethal and deadly consequences when we don't.

And so, certainly, we can speak about Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited in offering those protections but we can talk about all Manitobans in offering protections and ensuring that our system, the infrastructure that we have, is able to support and able to protect those Manitobans that need it.

We should be all taking into account and should be all really concerned with the high levels of violence that Manitobans face on the daily basis. That should be something that each and every one of us is concerned with and, certainly, each and every one of us, as legislators, would want to address—*[interjection]* and I'll wait until all the noise—certainly would want to—addressed in a very substantial, comprehensive manner.

And I don't know and I don't believe we have been doing that. Otherwise, we wouldn't see these levels continue to grow, or these statistics continue to grow, year after year after year.

And, you know, I've said this many, many times, you know, inside this House and outside this House, that there are—there is no Manitoban, there is no woman or girl or two-spirited that I've ever met in my life that wants to be unsafe and wants to be in a situation where they know that their life is at risk. And for a variety of different reasons, Manitobans will find themselves staying in particular situations and particular circumstances because there are—there is no other option for them.

And that's where we, as legislators—or those that are in government, administering government—fail.

We fail to put in those protections and those measures and those supports to be able to protect Manitobans.

* (15:20)

You know, actually, I'm just going back and forth in the last 24 hours; I've been supporting this young woman—an Indigenous woman—for a couple of months now, in respect of her acquiring a protection order. And we know, in this House, because we debated it—I believe a couple of years ago, it was certainly made aware in the media, at—how difficult it was in Manitoba to actually obtain a protection order.

And even though I believe it was in, I don't know, maybe 2014-2015, my predecessor—the former Justice minister, Gord Mackintosh—had put forward a bill that would strengthen the protection orders. So, that bill was in response to how difficult it can be for Manitobans to get protection orders. And he put forward that bill—and it did pass—as a means of ensuring and streamlining the ability for Manitobans to get protection orders, so that it's not so difficult.

And where we get into the difficulty is that, you know, there's, you know, JJPs that have—their responsibility, then, is to interpret what imminent danger may mean. And so, I think that that's where we get into some of this different interpretations and then, you know, lack of response or lack of consequence in respect of getting a protection order, because there are different interpretations of what imminent danger means.

And so, for instance, a couple of months ago I had a young Indigenous woman who had reached out that was denied a protection order, despite the fact that her ex had been violent and had threatened not only her, but her child's life; and not only that, had access to a gun. And that young woman was denied a protection order.

And so, when we look at strengthening legislation, I mean, I—you know, it seems on my end that those variables constitute imminent danger in the lives of this—or, in the life of this particular woman. But yet, she was denied a protection order. Luckily, she persisted and went back, and finally was granted a protection order.

But that is like a little snapshot of, you know, how difficult it can be to be granted or retain a protection order against somebody, because of this interpretation of imminent danger.

And so, I think that on—like, on all sides of the House, we should be wanting to strengthen that piece.

You know, make it more clear what imminent danger means. Because, again, I think a couple of years ago when we were debating this in the House, I think it was like 50 per cent of individuals who apply for protection orders weren't granted them.

Now, I'm not the—I will suggest to the House that there are probably folks that apply for protection orders that don't meet the criteria. I can—I wouldn't say—I wouldn't stand up in the House and say that every single person that applies for a protection order should be granted one. I'm not going to say that. But, certainly, 50 per cent of protection orders that are not granted, there's something going on there.

And again, like I said, this was only in the last couple of months, trying to work with this young woman who, her protection order, despite these different evidence that she had presented in respect of why she was in imminent danger, was not granted. So I think we still have a lot of work to do there.

In respect of Bill 16, you know, one of the concerns that I have—you know, if you have a protection order on somebody, often, you know, if it works the way it's meant to work, that individual who the protection order is against cannot come into however many feet or distance it is.

Often, though, in particular, women who apply for protection orders—if they're able to—will change phone numbers; if they're able to, they'll move, because that's how scared they are for their life and the lives of their children. So, they'll move. Often, you know, the person who the protection order is against won't know where to find this particular person, right.

So, what I'm concerned about in respect of Bill 16 is that now we're creating the opportunity—and again, I—you know, I know that everybody has to agree to it—if it were creating the opportunity where someone—you're bringing two folks together, one that has a protection order against the other.

And, you know, from everything that I know and everything that we ought to know in respect of individuals who would harm their partner or their ex-partner or their children, is that if somebody is determined to harm that individual, they are determined to harm that individual and they will seek out and make plans. It becomes obsessive that they will do everything that they can. They'll drive down a certain street because they know that maybe their partner or their ex-partner sometimes walks the kids that way or goes to the store this way or takes this route to go to work.

And so, you know, if you have an individual like that, that maybe even might present as perfectly reasonable or fine, is fine with the protection order, but meanwhile, in the background, is planning to harm, now we're potentially in a situation where you're bringing these folks together.

And so, my concern is that, if an individual is really out to harm, what are the protections that we're putting in place when we talk about, you know, dealing with, you know, parenting arrangements and—custody or whatever it is that would bring these two folks together, what measures are we putting in place to ensure that the person that has a protection order against them doesn't have the opportunity to harm?

So, that is a really big concern that I want to get on the official record here in the House. And I don't see any discussion in that regard. I don't—I didn't hear any of those remarks from the minister, you know, that they've actually thought that piece out or they've had discussions with other experts in respect of, you know, how you're going to protect individuals.

Now, the other piece to this legislation that I think is concerning that also was not in this legislation or that I haven't heard anything from the minister, is—and my—the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) brought it up—about the additional responsibilities or stresses that we're putting on organizations that are now charged with bringing folks together and mapping out whatever it is, custody agreements, whatever it may be.

We're assuming—the bill is making the assumption that those organizations or those individuals that work in that organization actually have the training to be able to navigate all of those different dynamics. And we don't know that. We don't know if those individuals, in fact, have that.

What I would suggest and argue to the House is very specialized training to be able to navigate all of those different potentialities and all those potential personalities if—that's probably not the best word, but—so, I didn't hear any commentary from the minister in respect of that and whether or not there would be a requirement, when you're bringing individuals together, to have that type of—that more specialized training to be able to do this work.

Now, again, I'm not saying that this isn't—you know, this is a bad bill, but I'm just saying that there are some things that have been omitted or perhaps not thoroughly thought out or discussed. And so I would put that on the official record.

I want to talk a little bit about, again, going back to the fact that Manitoba has some of the highest levels of violence against Manitobans, in particular BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and women of colour. Newcomer community: we know that the levels of violence that newcomer women have faced are also quite extensive.

* (15:30)

And so, I have yet to see from this government since they took—since they formed office in 2016—and, again, we know that this government, you know, since it took government in 2016, under the leadership—or lack thereof—of Brian Pallister and now, the Stefanson government—we know that their kind of *raison d'être*, everything that they were concerned about, was always the saving of punny—a penny, right, cutting, not giving dollars.

But what we haven't seen in the last seven years under this administration is really any kind of comprehensive provincial strategy, or even acknowledgement or discussion, on the levels of violence that we face here in Manitoba.

And there's something to be said about, you know, a government taking a lead in a provincial strategy to address domestic violence, like a public awareness campaign to address domestic violence.

In fact, we know that under this government, they've pretty much starved women's shelters in the province, and I know that, you know, the next PC—if they do get up—that does get up is going to say that they, you know, just increased the budget to the shelters. That's a good thing; I think everybody will agree that that's a good thing. But certainly that's long overdue, like, seven years after the fact that they took government.

And we know that they're making all of these announcements because, first off, Manitobans are fed up, absolutely fed up, with this administration. And Manitobans see the progression from 2016 to 2023, how things have just gotten significantly worse and worse and worse, year after year after year after year of their administration.

And so, now, in the—in, you know, what some might suggest is the dying days of the Pallister-Stefanson government—now, all of a sudden, they're like kind of throwing money all over the place.

But the damage is done. When you starve services, when you sell off social housing, when you don't increase rates to EIA, when you take away, you know,

women's children, when you don't put any measures in place to have protection orders, the damage is done.

And that is why these rates continue to go up in respect of the violence that is perpetrated against, again, predominantly Manitoba women, girls and two-spirited, and again, predominantly BIPOC.

So I know that members opposite like to get up in the House and say, you know, all that they've done, and they'll start throwing out numbers now, of what they're giving, they're supposedly—again, and nobody believes them—but they're purportedly going to give whatever it is.

But that comes at a cost: year after year after year of them not caring, not giving any thought or concern to what their decisions and their policies and their actions have done to Manitobans.

And so, you know, one of the examples, and I—you know, one of the most—I could—I would suggest one of the most grotesque examples of it's too late, it's—you know, and the damage is done, is that, you know, this government has not, in any way, shape or form, really supported addressing the national inquiry's calls to justice in respect of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited.

And I think that, you know, the members opposite think because they give a bit of money every year to do the Wiping Away the Tears, which, of course, was started under the NDP and, certainly, was started under—when I was special adviser on Indigenous women's issue—I think they think that just because they give a little bit of money there that brings families together—which is important. That is important work, and I'm glad that Ka Ni Kanichihk spearheads that, that work of bringing families together.

Yet, somehow, that absolves them of any need to substantially deal with the National Inquiry's calls to justice. You give a little bit of money here, we know that they've give a little bit of money to another organization, and again, I think that in their mind, they think that they've actually—they're actually doing something about the calls to justice.

But in reality, they're not. The calls to justice are more than—are actually quite extensive. I mean, I'm sure that the House knows there's 231 calls to justice.

And it goes from, you know, from policing to housing to CFS, to—as the Leader of the Opposition said today in his QP questions, to recognizing Orange Shirt Day which, of course, they refuse to, which is, you know, performative.

Every time they get up in this House and they say that, you know, we are—we support Orange Shirt Day and we support residential school survivors and we support the calls to justice or, you know, the Calls to Action, that's all performative. It's all performative in this House, and nobody believes them.

And they had an opportunity where they could have, you know, within—with one thing, you know, addressed at least, you know, two recommendations: one out of the TRC, and one out of the National Inquiry, but they chose not to.

And we saw last year when they were wearing their orange shirts—which, again, is performative—and I don't know if members opposite understand what I mean by that, but I mean it means nothing. It's just something that you're acting as if you care. But everybody remembers them standing up in the House and voting against legislation that would have done that.

And then we find out today that they have absolutely no intention of formally recognizing in the province, Orange Shirt Day.

Again, it's all performative. And then, you know, they, you know, to—for members opposite to get up in the House and say that they care about these things when they truly don't. They're literally government. You don't have to perform in this Chamber. They are government and they can literally make things happen, including making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday.

And whether or not the members opposite can put two and two together, there's—when you perform, when you do only performance, when you, you know, express wasted breath about commitment, but you actually don't follow it up with action, and you actually don't prioritize those Calls to Action and calls to justice, there are consequences.

And the consequences are what we've seen in the last many months of Indigenous women ending up in our landfills. And, again, I don't think members opposite have the capacity or wherewithal or compassion or even care to realize that when you, as government, can't do what's right in this Chamber, there are consequences to that.

And the consequence is that, for many, many generations, until this present time, Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited are considered less-than, and they are considered disposable, so much so that it's okay to create a space in which violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited goes—without consequence.

And I know that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) is chirping right now, the same one that compared having to wear masks and COVID restrictions to residential schools, which is utterly ridiculous and so wholly offensive.

And he's still blabbering on. And you would think that in the context of talking about the disposal of Indigenous women and girls in our landfills, you'd think that the member opposite, with all his Christian values that he performs in the House, would actually just listen; would actually, just for a second, quiet himself in this Chamber and actually try to strengthen this bill, or go to his leadership and say, you know what, as a good Christian man, I think we need to do more for Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

* (15:40)

But instead of doing that, he yammers on; he tries to interrupt my debate. And the thing is, you know, members opposite see through members like the member for Radisson. They see through all of that performance. And that is literally what these members do in this Chamber—is performance.

And, you know, it's a shame, because you would think that when you reflect on your life, and your time in this Chamber, you would want to have something that is more substantial, something that you can be proud of and that you can say to your kids one day, you know, I was a part of a government that actually did what was right and, you know, and the bare minimum of what I can do as a government official, as a minister—the bare minimum that I can do is actually do the Calls to Action, do the calls to justice and make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in the province.

And I know that all of the non-Indigenous people opposite—and, again, there are no Indigenous members opposite, there—want to say on this side of the House, like, oh, it's not a holiday. Trust me, Assistant Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House, with six Indigenous members, know it's not a holiday.

We know it's not a holiday. We know that in our families, we can barely talk about residential schools, because of the trauma and the pain that it elicits in our family members; we know that. We live with that every single day. We don't need non-Indigenous members opposite to tell us what Orange Shirt Day is.

And so, again, here are members opposite that could do what's right, but are choosing not to; are choosing not to do what's right, choosing to yell down an Indigenous woman in this Chamber who's—who is the

granddaughter of two residential school—well, actually, four—who—*[interjection]*—and who are mocking that.

Who said that?

An Honourable Member: That was McPhillips.

MLA Fontaine: McPhillips. Jesus.

And so, we don't need any of the members there to perform and to tell members on this side what Orange Shirt Day is and what it isn't. We know, because we live it every day.

And I hope that Manitobans can hear and see that the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) is—thinks it's funny that I'm the granddaughter of four residential school survivors, and the niece of many residential school survivors; I think—I hope that they know he thinks that's funny.

I hope that Manitobans know that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) had to pipe up this whole—almost this whole debate, when we're—here we are, we're talking about domestic violence. We're talking about that Manitoba has some of the highest levels in the country; you think that members opposite would be quiet, and would just listen. And more than just listen; would actually want to do something and tackle this issue.

But no. In their arrogance, they can't. They don't have the capacity to listen.

And, as our elders teach us, one of the best things that you can do is listen, is that you can listen, and you can try to learn and you can try to do better. And, unfortunately, members opposite have proven time and time and time again they are simply unwilling and incapable of doing so.

Miigwech.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I'll start by saying that I do support the measures in this bill. Protection orders are an important safety measure for people experiencing violence in their home or in their relationships. And, in particular, gender-based violence is an epidemic that we do need to address, and this will help us make a move towards improving how that is addressed in this province.

But we also need to invest in women's health and safety and in all areas that can better provide support to people experiencing dangerous situations in their homes or in their relationships.

While abuse can affect anyone, it is much more common for women to experience intimate partner

violence and much more common for men to perpetrate intimate partner violence. According to police data from 2019, women were 3.5 times more likely to experience intimate partner violence than, and made up 79 per cent of the victims of intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence is a highly gendered issue, and it is crucial that we see solutions through a gendered lens. As of 2018, 44 per cent of women who had been in an intimate partner relationship—so, over 6 million Canadian women—have reported experiencing abuse at some point in a relationship.

Rates of intimate partner violence are also significantly higher among 2SLGBTQ women and among women with disabilities. Between 2014 and 2019, 80 per cent of intimate partner homicide victims were women. And Manitoba has the second highest rate of intimate partner violence among all the provinces, and that's something that we really need to be thinking about and dwelling on.

Certainly, this bill could make some positive changes for some people, but there's so many other things about our systems that are creating this problem. We also have the second highest rate of killings of women among the provinces.

Intimate partner violence is often not reported, due in part to the stigma and the lack of trust in the courts and the justice system, so the actual rates of intimate partner violence are truly unknown. Reported violence represents only a small part of the actual amount of gender-based violence in Canada, and there is also a problem with protection orders. As of 2020, more than half of the requests for protection orders were denied or withdrawn, due in part to the fact that the application forms are inaccessible and can be confusing.

While physical and sexual abuse are most commonly associated with intimate partner violence, abuse can also be emotional, psychological, financial and spiritual. These additional types of abuse can be much harder to track than physical and often go unreported.

It's also very important to reflect on how racialized an issue and how colonial an issue intimate partner violence is in this country and in this province. My colleague from St. Johns spoke extremely eloquently to the issues surrounding missing and murdered women, but I'm going to reflect on that as well, because I think that it is a substantial issue that we need to address to make any kinds of inroads to making change for violence in this province.

While intimate partner violence affects women from all backgrounds, violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people is disproportionately higher. Indigenous women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence than non-Indigenous women. Intimate partner violence experienced by Indigenous women is often unreported or poorly reported, making it difficult to get an accurate picture of the scale of the problem. And the problem contributes to the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people.

Between 1997 and 2000, Indigenous women were killed at a rate that was almost seven times higher than that of non-Indigenous women, and that is why it is so crucial that we do not just see this as a gendered issue, as statistics that only fall along gendered lines don't tell the full story of the racialized and colonialized nature of violence against women.

It is important that sexual assault is reported and taken seriously. Unfortunately, survivors of sexual assault often come up against myths and stereotypes when navigating reporting their abuse.

* (15:50)

In a study done by the Vancouver-based West Coast LEAF called *We Are Here: Women's Experiences of the Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assault*, 95 per cent of survivors chose not to report assault. Nine out of 10 women do not report incidents of sexual assault. They often cite fear of the police investigation and the court process as a deterrent to reporting.

And other problems, such as the underfunding of programs like the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, also can lead to survivors choosing not to report their assault, choosing not to seek help that they need due to the long waits or the staff being unavailable or, simply, they maybe chose to report or chose to get help, but were turned away because of underfunding by this government.

We need to address the root causes of this—rape culture, misogyny and a lack of trust—in order to end the under-reporting of abuse.

Protection orders are only helpful if victims of domestic violence have the ability to leave the relationship. This requires robust social services, such as domestic violence shelters for vulnerable women who do not have other options. Victims of intimate-partner violence need an ally in their provincial government, but it took this government a whole year to get around

to even scheduling a meeting for the ending gender-based violence Cabinet committee.

The PC government has made harmful and consistent cuts to women's health-care funding. Intimate-partner violence is a women's health issue, as violence often has devastating effects on a person's physical and mental health. So these cuts have a particularly negative impact on women experiencing intimate-partner violence.

We know—we all know—the Conservatives have made deep cuts to health-care services that women depend on, whether that was closing the Mature Women's Centre, cutting other services like lactation consultants, cutting funding levels for the Healthy Baby program.

You know, programs like the Healthy Baby program are sometimes where women who are experiencing violence first can share and talk about what's going on for them, right. But they show up because they have a newborn baby; they're there to get some support through the baby milk program, they're there to just talk to folks about a new child, but that's where their story comes out. And so, cutting these kinds of services is very dangerous for women.

And last week, you know, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was on CBC—and there's been a lot of talk about this in the Legislature, as there should be. When the Premier was asked to name any recommendations—any of the calls to justice, rather, from the national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls that this government had implemented, the Premier was unable to do so.

You know, the same night that happened, I was at a dinner gathering, and there was a guest there from the United States who doesn't really know anything about our politics. He heard that interview on the radio, and he didn't even really know who was talking, but he said, well, you can tell she didn't even read the report. Right; so, that's very transparent to Manitobans.

I'm sure a handful of people on the other side of the House some time in the last number of years maybe have looked through this report, but I don't think that it's an accident that the Premier could not point to one single thing that has been implemented from the national inquiry.

And there's so many things—I've listed these here in the Legislature before, and I know other people have, as well. But if we're actually going to make inroads into dealing with the issues of violence against women in this province, then it's critical that the calls to justice

are implemented and, in particular, all the ones that have to do directly with violence.

So, you know, for example, the report specifically calls on the provincial government to publicly acknowledge and condemn violence against Indigenous women and girls. It talks about the need for greater public education on this issue.

The report calls for the need for properly resourced initiatives and programming to address root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls. And those root causes include improved access to safe housing. It's specifically listed in the calls to justice. And yet so little has been done to improve housing and safety for women—for any women in poverty, and specifically Indigenous women in this province.

The report calls on us to address poverty among Indigenous women and the need for culturally appropriate health, mental health and addiction services for Indigenous women.

But when it comes to mental health and addiction services and health care, we know that this government has cut, cut, cut, since they came into power, without any awareness, without—or any care, I guess, is more accurate, because there's been lots of chance for awareness, because we keep pointing it out that cutting health care, cutting housing and cutting mental health and addiction services only increases vulnerability for the most vulnerable people in our province, and it has the most dramatic effect on Indigenous women.

Another call to justice from the report includes the need to heal Indigenous male perpetrators of violence and prevent the 'perpetuation' of cycles of gender violence in Indigenous communities. We've seen no action taken by this government.

There's also the need for evaluation of programs intended to address violence against Indigenous women and girls and the need for Indigenous-led programming. This government could go a long way to—you know, could make decisions that could go a long way to effecting the safety of Indigenous women and girls in this province.

There's also the call to justice for the need for law reform of discriminatory legislation. And we know that, you know, by the levels, the numbers of incarcerated Indigenous people across this province and across this country, there's no question that the legislation is discriminatory and the justice system is discriminatory.

Another call to justice from the national inquiry is to address human trafficking of Indigenous women and girls.

You know, just earlier today, I was standing in question period to ask this province to support the City of Winnipeg in something very important that they're trying to do. When folks have been taken—like, have been moved from an encampment into a building, moved into an apartment that may or may not have heat, that may or may not have running water, and, you know, the government just sends the money off to the building owner, to the landlord, without questioning whether or not people are being well cared for, and then gangs have access in that building, it is just setting up the human trafficking situation.

So, one of the buildings I recently toured, you know, the police told me that it was the worst building in the city for the amount of children who were trafficked out of that building. So, you know, you see the obvious things, like the sewage in the basement or the lack of heat, but knowing that that's happening right there in that building, that they have frequent calls on that issue.

So, what's a young girl to do, you know, if she's been—a young Indigenous girl has been trafficked out of that building. Unfortunately, it's very unlikely that she's going to be using this justice process in order to get a restraining order against the perpetrator.

So, so much more needs to be done to address this issue. There's the need for measures to improve relationships between police services and Indigenous communities, and that's specifically called for in the calls to justice. And the need for culturally appropriate and affordable judicial process and supports and the need for restorative justice alternatives to court.

These are all things that our side of the House has continually referenced and called on in different ways over the time that I have been in this Legislature, and that we will continue to look to—we will continue—at—just as we look to the Truth and Reconciliation report, we look to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as a guidepost for what is needed to heal the justice system, to end violence, to end the murders of women in this province.

* (16:00)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although I would love to talk about the issues of violence against women for hours and days, as it's an issue extremely close to my heart, I think that I will leave it there and just implore

members on the other side of the House, you know, you can make little policy changes like this, but if you really want to make a difference in violence against women, read the report. Read the inquiry. And commit in your heart and on the floor of this Legislature to implement the justice calls in that report.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Is there any further debate on this motion?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is second reading of Bill 16, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act.

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

Bill 17—The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act (2)

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): We will now move on to Bill 17, the regulated health professions amendment act.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Thank you—[*interjection*] Oh. Yes, I'm going to—thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Khan), that Bill 17, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act (2), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): It has been moved by the Minister of Health, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, that Bill 17, the regulated health professions amendment act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Ms. Gordon: I would like to make a change.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), that—can I—is that okay? Can I—he wasn't in his chair, so.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Yes, the Minister of Health, please.

Ms. Gordon: I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 17, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act (2), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Gordon: I'm pleased to rise again to provide comments on Bill 17.

The Regulated Health Professions Act, or RHPA, is the umbrella legislation that is to apply to all health profession regulatory bodies. Regulated health professions are being transfer-transitioned to the RHPA, RHPA, over time, and the department has found that the work to complete the regulations required to transition a profession to the RHPA is complex and takes a considerable amount of time to complete.

This work was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to the work required to support the provincial measures implemented to protect Manitobans.

Currently, five health profession regulatory bodies are under the RHPA. This includes, most recently, the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba, effective June 1st, 2022. Seventeen health profession regulatory bodies are still governed under their own profession-specific legislation while waiting to transition to the RHPA. The department is currently actively working to transition four of these regulatory bodies to the RHPA.

The authority of health profession regulatory bodies to self-govern the profession is delegated authority, and it is necessary for the minister to have authority to deal with issues relating to their administration or operation or the state of practice of the profession if necessary. However, the existing profession-specific acts governing the health profession regulatory bodies that have not yet transitioned to the RHPA do not provide such authority.

The amendments to the RHPA presented in this bill will enable the minister to take action in the public interest to address issues relating to the administration and operation of health profession regulatory bodies that has not yet transitioned to the RHPA or the state of practice of the profession. This can include, among other things, matters related to health, safety or quality assurance in the practice of the regulated health profession.

These changes will help keep Manitobans safe and healthy as we move past the pandemic and continue to work to transition all regulated health professions to the RHPA.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in

the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Can the minister advise the House who was consulted when writing this bill?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there are no issues identified by the regulatory bodies to be transitioned to RHPA who are waiting. It's taken some time, as I mentioned, to transition professions to the RHPA, and it's—this is about making sure that they are the—that we have the tools in the tool kit if and when issues arise.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would ask the minister how many dedicated staff in the department are responsible for helping organizations transition to being under the registered health professions act?

Ms. Gordon: We have five professions that have transitioned to the RHPA: the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Manitoba; College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba; College of Paramedics of Manitoba, formally regulated by the department under The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act; and the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba.

Thank you.

MLA Asagwara: I'm just going to repeat my question because I didn't actually get any clarity in the minister's response.

Who specifically was consulted in writing this bill?

Ms. Gordon: There are no issues identified by the health professions that are listed. And, as I mentioned before, it's taken some time to transition professions to the RHPA.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And, Madam Speaker, it's about making sure that there are tools in the toolkit for when—if and when issues arise.

* (16:10)

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that part of the slowness in moving organizations under the registered health professions act has been

the small number of dedicated staff in the department who have been working on this file.

Can the minister tell us how many dedicated staff have been working on this transformation and whether that number has changed over the years?

Ms. Gordon: So, there are many factors that have affected the timeline for the transition to the RHPA, and it depends on how ready the profession is and how many changes they need to make to their own legislation, the extent of the reserved acts that they may want to take on and how other professions may react to that.

A handbook was actually developed to help the professions as well as taking them to the health leadership to announce the upcoming transition—contract a senior retired health-care leader to try and shepherd the association through the process.

So, it may take time based on the profession's readiness, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: If there—can the minister clarify, if there was an association, a regulatory body, that was ready and willing to transition under the act and had reached out to the government to ask for support in making that happen, can the minister advise whether or not her government would be positioned to expedite that process for any organization that is ready, that has everything they need aligned and has reached out to the government for support in order to make that happen in a timely manner?

Ms. Gordon: As I mentioned, there are—we have transitioned five professions to the RHPA, and it really depends on the readiness of the organization. The department is currently working with, I think it is four or more professions, on transitioning them.

So, we certainly wouldn't want to send a message out that we're going to allow any college to skip that queue. There's a process, there's a protocol, and the department is following that.

Mr. Gerrard: It's my understanding that when this was looked at carefully a number of years ago, that there were a number of the organizations just stacked up trying to get in, but they were—kept on telling us that they didn't have enough staff to process them and that they had to work on one at a time.

Clearly, this process has taken a long, long time and we need better answers than we've got—than the minister blaming the organizations rather than talking

about the problems within her government and the previous government.

Ms. Gordon: I want to correct the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for putting words into my mouth that I don't recall saying, Madam Speaker.

There is a lot—this is very complex work. This is not work that we want to take lightly. When a profession is transitioned, under the RHPA, it really sets out what the individuals who work in that profession will be regulated to do and not do. It takes time. We want to be very aware of how the changes will affect other professions.

So, the department is working with several professions, and we will continue—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: So, I guess, what would be helpful is if the minister could clarify whether or not she will be providing greater staffing resources within the department to address this area.

The minister has stated that there is a queue, that there's a process; and we also know that there are organizations who have identified that they are ready and would like to transition to under the act, but have been told that now is not the time from this government.

So, can the minister clarify whether or not she will be ensuring that there are more staff in the department in this area supporting these organizations who have identified that they are ready and want to come under the act?

Ms. Gordon: We are certainly working with the RHPA council, and they are available to look at transitioning as quickly as possible a number of professions, and the department is currently working through the numbers as quickly as possible. And any resources that they need, they know that they can always come forward to our government—we're the government of the yes—to get those additional supports.

So there are a number of bodies that are working on this—the profession, the council and the staff—that need to be ready to take on more.

Mr. Gerrard: The answer I got from the minister was strikingly like an answer I got a number of years ago from an NDP Health minister, who told me that it was a complex problem and that she wasn't really able to solve it very well.

But my concern is that we've had a number of organizations approach us, and they've gone to the government: We want to be registered under the act.

And the government has come back and said, now is not your time; we're dealing with another organization now. We can't talk to you until some later date.

So there have been extraordinarily—delays, and we've heard of this time and time and year after year. And could the minister please stand up and tell us what she's going to do to solve this delay?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, the changes to the bill that have been introduced would allow for the minister to be able to take action when the need arises with the professions if issues emerge.

And that would apply once the profession is transitioned to the RHPA. And what we are introducing is the ability for it to apply now while they have not transitioned.

Madam Speaker, it's a very complex process. I know the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) doesn't understand how it works, although he does come from a health background. And we want to ensure that there is proper scrutiny to ensure that safe—

Madam Speaker: The member's time is expired.

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, I will say that it is perfectly reasonable for any member of this House to seek clarification from the minister as to why it's taken so long for organizations, for regulatory bodies, who are ready to make that transition to get support from this government in order to do so.

I think it's unfair of the minister to imply that anybody in this House doesn't know what they're talking about simply because they're asking for accountability from the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon).

Can the minister explain why school psychologists have not been included in this transition under the act?

Ms. Gordon: There's absolutely nothing wrong with a minister standing in this House to raise awareness and to educate members of the Chamber about how a process works.

It's a very complex process, Madam Speaker, and we want to ensure that there's proper scrutiny to ensure that safe care is provided and readiness of professions.

The attempt has been made to streamline the process, which includes a lot of consultation, socialized at various leadership tables within the health-care system, and to bring in someone who has an expertise in the area to help move the professions through their transition.

Madam Speaker, the member doesn't know, but I'm pleased to raise the awareness that a profession has to be one that is regulated now to fall under this bill.

Mr. Gerrard: Which brings me to the point that there are organizations which have been lined up, some for a number of years, trying to get under this act, and haven't been helped and haven't been facilitated, and are just waiting.

And now, they're going to be excluded from this act because the governments for many years haven't worked enough with them to help them be ready.

Ms. Gordon: What the member has placed on the record is not factual.

Individuals who are—professions that are not currently under RHPA will not be excluded from the change that is being—the amendment that is being made now.

What we are attempting to do is to bring those individuals in line with the professions that have transitioned. They're not being excluded, Madam Speaker. We are adding them into some of the powers that the Minister of Health has.

* (16:20)

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister clarify whether or not the school psychologists—their representatives, were consulted in the development of this bill and the amendments?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, the regulated professions waiting to transition to the RHPA, I can provide a list of that: Psychological Association of Manitoba, College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Manitoba, College of Physiotherapists of Manitoba, College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Manitoba, Manitoba Chiropractors' Association, College of Dental Hygienists of Manitoba, Manitoba Dental Association, Denturist Association of Manitoba, College of Dieticians of Manitoba, College of Midwives of Manitoba, Manitoba Naturopathic Association, College of Occupational Therapists of Manitoba, Opticians of Manitoba, Manitoba Association of Optometrists, College of Pharmacists of Manitoba, college of—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister—and she just read off a number of folks that she's saying she and her government consulted with, which is helpful and I appreciate that.

I'm going to ask specifically about the Manitoba Association of School Psychologists. Can the minister clarify whether or not she and her government consulted with that organization?

Ms. Gordon: The—I do want to add the last two that I missed in my earlier answer: The College of Podiatrists of Manitoba, and the Manitoba Association of Registered Respiratory Therapists.

These are the professions that have come forward to state their readiness to transition to RHPA. These are the organizations we are consulting and working with, Madam Speaker.

And I welcome others who feel that they are now ready to begin that process of transitioning, to come forward, put their organization's name forward.

Mr. Gerrard: Just to clarify, organizations which have been waiting but have not yet been considered, even like the school psychologists—I believe the massage therapists might be another one—are they included in this legislation or not?

Ms. Gordon: Again, the profession has to be one that is regulated now to fall under this bill.

Thank you.

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister advise if there are any organizations that—sorry.

Can the minister advise which specific organizations have reached out to government stating that they are ready, but that the government had to decline bringing them under the act because they don't have the capacity in the department?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I can state that we have not said, as the member opposite has stated, that we decline anyone from beginning the transition process.

These are—these 17 professions that I listed are going through the process of transitioning. It takes time, Madam Speaker. It's not put your name forward and the next day you're transitioned. It takes time.

We need to ensure that the transitioning and the reserved acts and all of the work that needs to be done takes into consideration the safety and health of Manitobans and the impact it can have on other professions.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I, of course, welcome any opportunity to stand in this House and talk about health care in Manitoba.

This bill—and I appreciate that I was able to attend a briefing on this bill several weeks ago now and was able to ask some questions there. Those briefings tend to be somewhat concise, and so I wasn't able to ask all my questions. But I did get a good bit of insight into why this bill has been never brought forward and the impact that it will have on different regulatory associations.

So I recognize that this bill is, you know, bringing forward amendments that are necessary and that there are a lot of associations that do want to be brought under this act, and I recognize that it's important that they are.

So, certainly, this bill makes sense in terms of what it is trying to achieve.

The—there are some concerns that I have. I think I articulated those a bit in my questions to the minister. I also heard plainly that there are likely others in this House who share some of those concerns that there are regulatory bodies, there are associations—health-care associations—which would like to be brought under the regulated health professionals amendment act but, unfortunately, have not been able to do so as of yet.

And there are a number of reasons for that, Madam Speaker. I'm well aware of some of the challenges that different associations have. Not all associations are resourced the same way, have the same membership base, have the same level of infrastructure as others. And so, certainly recognize that not every association is going to have maybe the same level of capacity to take the steps that they would like to in terms of this transition.

And that is where, quite frankly, this government could do a much better job. The Health Minister, along with her Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and other PC caucus members, has a habit of talking about the things that they're doing and, unfortunately, do not align those comments or announcements or press releases or whatever form it is that those—that commentary takes, it doesn't align, necessarily, with an adequate amount of resource in order to realize what they're saying their commitments are.

And so, when we talk about the regulated health professions amendment act, we do have to talk about whether or not there are adequate resources available to associations to support them. I do recognize that there are many very bright, hard-working, you know, well-informed, dedicated folks working in the department who are doing this work, and we certainly recognize that, especially during, you know, the pandemic, the last few years has not been easy for those folks.

Which is all the more reason why it's important that this minister take very seriously the opportunity that she and her government have to better resource this aspect of the department to ensure that regulatory bodies who are prepared and who have done the heavy lifting to get their organizations in a place where they can make that transition, have the appropriate supports in place to do so.

And, you know, I've had the pleasure of meeting with a number of regulatory bodies organizations over the last few years, and I've heard directly from these folks what their concerns are, what their hopes are, for their associations. Every single organization talks about the fact that they really need and want a strong partnership, strong relationship, with the government of the day.

And recognizing, of course, how these organizations operate and how they function independently and how their decision-making processes work, that is fully respected and acknowledged. But they also point out that, you know, a government really sets the tone for the culture within our health-care system, and that has an impact on associations. It does.

And so, you know, one step this government can take really right away, one thing this minister could do right away is enhance the resources—bolster the resources in the department to support organizations in making that transition. That, to me, is a pretty clear-cut step that can be taken.

And we know that the civil service has been cut, thousands of jobs lost under this government. Brian Pallister had this obsession with cutting—Brian Pallister cut everything he possibly could. If there was a slab cake in the room, hadn't been cut yet, Brian Pallister was cutting it. You know, like anything that could be cut, Brian Pallister was focused on that. And, unfortunately, health care was an area that Brian Pallister, you know, ran around cutting absolutely everything that he could.

And, unfortunately, you know, we have all been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and on—you

know, his approach really led to a near collapse of our health-care system here in Manitoba, because he had—with the full support, mind you, of his caucus.

I mean, every single member of the PC caucus enthusiastically—they were like, you know what, Brian, you don't have a knife to cut that cake, I got you covered. Let me cut that cake for you. Every single member of that caucus was happy to cut whatever Brian Pallister said needed to be cut. My goodness.

An Honourable Member: And then they cut him.

MLA Asagwara: And you know what—and then, ironically enough, they cut him. Oh my goodness. You know, like, it's incredible.

* (16:30)

It's like, you know, he really had the support of his team in all of his health-care decision making, and then his team, when they realized that, you know, maybe they were all being viewed the same way he was being viewed—which was not in a good light, as a result of their decision making, especially in health care—they cut him loose.

But you know, unfortunately, the thing that they seem to not recognize is that they were in lockstep with Brian Pallister the whole way. And I think that's a big part of the reason why we continue to see this government and this Health Minister fail and really resist the—fail to take the necessary steps to adequately resource our health-care system, to adequately resource aspects of the department that would allow for a more expeditious transition for these associations under the act.

And that's really disappointing because we are in this place in Manitoba where our health-care system, just as one example, is really struggling due to the decision making of this government. We really do need all organizations that support our health-care system, that function as a part of our health-care system, to be functioning and operating at their maximum capacity, really at their best.

That is the way that we're going to support our health-care system, our health-care workers and Manitobans who, you know, access health care on a daily basis on the spectrum of what it means to need health care in our province. You know, taking those steps would ensure that, across the board, folks are able to do their jobs and serve Manitobans in the best way possible.

And so, I've—I talked about this before, that it is not enough for this government to bring forward legislation—that does make sense—this government also needs to take steps to ensure that what is in that legislation can actually be actioned in a productive manner.

You know, we've seen this government fail to take adequate measures, like during the pandemic, they were very, very slow to take the necessary steps to ensure that we had enough health-care workers working on the front lines of our health-care system. We know that this government has, you know, over the past several years, they fired hundreds of nurses from our health-care system, they displaced nurses from their jobs.

I really and truly—and I know this, because I've heard several members opposite make the comment that nurses weren't fired, I—it just shows me that there's a lack of willingness to understand what it means when a nurse's position is deleted and they're displaced from their employment entirely and forced to compete with other nurses for jobs that they haven't been working or specialized in for years, or maybe never. It's a bit bizarre that, at this stage of things, members opposite still don't understand the impacts of that.

We saw, during this pandemic, the impacts of this government's unwillingness to act in terms of supporting internationally educated health-care workers like nurses and doctors to work in Manitoba, to become a part of our health-care system and our—the family fabric of our province. And it took a lot of advocacy, a lot of pressure—not only from this side of the House, but from Manitobans generally, from health-care professionals—in order to push this government to take the necessary steps to, you know, encourage—the college is one example, College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba—to take steps to ensure that we can get internationally educated nurses in the workforce.

And, you know, it—there are still concerns around this area. You know, a good example would be the fact that this government cut the physician recruitment and retention fund. Millions of dollars cut from that fund for several years now, during a time where Manitoba is short over 400 doctors. We need over 400 doctors in Manitoba.

You know, and the Health Minister can heckle and try to yell at me all she wants from her seat across the way, but what she should really be doing is just listening. Just listening and reflecting on the fact that she is in a position—the highest position of authority on health care in this province—and makes decisions like cutting the physician recruitment and retention

fund, which isn't the right move when, again, we're short over 400 doctors in our province.

And, over the next few years, we're going to see an attrition—a loss—of about a third of the physicians that we do have, due to retirement, due to burnout, due to areas that this government has done nothing to adequately support in the seven years they've been in power.

And I know—I know—members opposite, the Health Minister, they don't like me talking about the fact that they've been in power since 2016. They would like everybody in Manitoba to just blink and forget that they've been in power since 2016 in the hopes that they can bring forward legislation or in the hopes they can bring forward a budget that, you know—they use all kinds of language to describe what's in there in terms of funding. I've heard astronomical used. I've heard the largest amounts ever; 71 billion trillion people will be impacted, but the reality is—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I think the member is straying a little bit from the bill that is on the floor, so I would ask the member to bring their comments back to the bill that is before us.

The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)—[*interjection*—oh, sorry. The honourable member for Union Station.

MLA Asagwara: I—thank you, Madam Speaker, for your guidance. I certainly am not intending to stray away from the substance of this bill. I raise the points that I have because they are interconnected, right. The—this act, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act, is actually connected to all of these health professionals I'm talking about who work in our health-care system, or who we need working in our health-care system but are not because of this government's cuts, mismanagement and mistreatment of health-care workers since 2016.

And so, you know, I think it's important for me to draw those connections because we cannot—we can't act as though this bill, this piece of legislation, exists in isolation.

It doesn't. We're talking about regulatory bodies, associations that work very, very hard on behalf of their members who work in various aspects in—across the spectrum of our health-care system to make sure that the system is there for Manitobans when they need it.

And, right now, we see time and time again, that different aspects of our health-care system are simply not able to respond to the needs of Manitobans. And I bring up these health professions and I bring that up that the system hasn't been able to respond to the needs of Manitobans who need it at times, because it's a reflection of the fact that this government doesn't make the decisions needed for that to be realized.

You know, again, this bill is being brought forward, and it would be great—the minister knows—the minister, you know, talked today about who has been brought under this act. The minister acknowledged that there are folks who would like to be brought under this act. But nowhere in the minister's responses did she say that they're going to take more initiative, that they've got more solutions ahead of them in terms of how they're going to make sure organizations who are ready to be brought under the act are able to do so.

Madam Speaker, I had a meeting, probably now about three weeks ago, with an association that told me very plainly they are ready to be brought under this act, that they actually let the government know, they let the minister's department know, we're ready; we've done everything we need to do. We need a little bit of support now from your department to just make that transition happen. This is what we want. This is what our members want.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this association was met with, essentially, a no.

And so, I think it is valid to talk about areas of our health-care system that are struggling right now, areas of our health-care system that have regulatory bodies that are trying to take steps to advance their organizations but are unable to do that because they're met by a minister, they're met by a government, that refuses to step up and provide the resources they need and the supports they need to make that transition in a timely manner.

You know, it's a shame, because you've got these associations, you've got these organizations, you've got health professionals across the province who, since 2016, certainly, you know, in the time that this has been brought forward, have reached out to this government and said, we want to strengthen our organization.

We want to do our part to improve health care in Manitoba because we see these—to borrow a word used from that side of the House—astronomical wait

times in emergency rooms or for surgeries and diagnostic tests. We see that, you know, our community members aren't able to access a primary-care provider in their neighbourhoods, and they want to be a part of the solution.

* (16:40)

Madam Speaker, how many times do these organizations, these health-care professionals, need to offer up their resources, need to show up and say, we're here for our health-care system, only to be met with a government that is unprepared, unwilling, unable to rise to the occasion and work as a partner with these organizations? How long and how many times does that happen until folks just say, enough?

And that's what we're seeing happen in Manitoba. We're seeing that because this is a government that will bring something forward, they'll bring forward an announcement, they'll send out a press release, bring forward legislation, but they won't back it up with the resources necessary to make any of those announcements or pieces of paper a reality.

And what's the result? The result is a health-care system that is actively losing the expertise of health-care professionals who also serve in these regulatory organizations, actively losing health-care professionals and experts to other jurisdictions, because in those other jurisdictions, there are health ministers and there are governments whose No. 1 priority isn't making themselves look good for announcements but making the health-care outcomes of Manitobans their top priority.

That's why our health-care system is in the state that it's in, because of empty announcements, broken promises and a failed approach since 2016, starting with Brian Pallister, continued under this current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and executed by countless—at this point—Health ministers over the past seven years.

Madam Speaker, my hope is that in the midst of hearing all of what's been brought forward from different members of this House in regards to this legislation, that the minister will take that step, the minister will listen, you know, practise an approach that has been missing from this government for the past seven years, listen to what people are saying, recognize that the criticism is, in fact, very constructive, and take steps to appropriately resource this area so that we can support more regulatory bodies, more organizations to come under the act and be able to shift their focus to

other areas that address what's going on in our health-care system.

Allow these folks to, you know, pivot away from this area that, you know, several folks, again, that I've talked to are ready to make that transition; they just need a bit of support. So, you know, they need a government that acts as a partner so that that can be realized for them and that they can put their energy in other areas and strengthen health care in Manitoba that right now is, unfortunately, struggling under this Conservative government.

So, Madam Speaker, I really am thankful for the opportunity to stand and talk a bit about this particular bill, talk about the state of health care in Manitoba and to reiterate the really important point that, you know, even legislation which makes sense, even legislation which we support, doesn't exist in a vacuum. You know, this is connected to other aspects of our health-care system, and we have to treat it that way in order to make sure that we're strengthening our health-care system as a whole.

So, I thank you for the time today, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues on this side of the House in regards to this bill.

Madam Speaker: In the order of debate, the next member would be NDP, but has there been some—*[interjection]*

Okay, the honourable member for Notre Dame.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act—the purpose is to amend the existing Regulated Health Professions Act and that the minister's powers relating to inquiries, directives and orders are extended to the regulatory colleges and associations of health professions that are not yet governed under the act.

You know, Madam Speaker, over the last few years—especially as we wrangled through those difficult years, the early part of the pandemic—it really became painfully obvious that we were suffering from health human resource staffing shortages, and that there was a huge role to play, and that there were many barriers in play for internationally trained health-care professionals, and that there were many issues that were resulting from barriers to accreditation from different regulatory bodies, and that this government was unable to navigate those difficulties very well at all.

And so, we have this act here today that will be adding more regulatory professions but, in the existing

act, there are already regulatory bodies that the government did have the ability and powers to relate to inquiries, directives and orders, but they failed to do so.

It got to the point where I, as an opposition member, had to do so much research, including reaching out to Crown Counsel here at the Legislative Assembly to try to find out what is going on with our legislative powers, so that—why isn't there more direction coming forth from this government to try to deal with the barriers to accreditation that we were seeing.

I did get an opinion from Crown Counsel here, especially about section 221 of The Regulated Health Professions Act. Because under this act already, the council of a college has a significant amount of authority to make regulations respecting the practice of their profession and, in particular, clause 221, section (1), subsection 1 states that a council may make a regulation respecting registration and the qualifications, experience and other requirements that must be met by candidates of registration.

This was when I was looking into many barriers, including language exams that had to be taken multiple times, over and over again, even though they were already passed. Or clinical competency assessments for internationally trained nurses whose anecdotal failure rate was 90 per cent and needed recalibration.

The opinion goes on that while a council has broad authority to make regulations respecting their profession, there is existing already significant oversight authority on the part of the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council and the minister.

First, before a council can make a regulation, the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council must approve the regulation. The section on the approval of regulations is found in clause 221, section (9). A regulation does not come into force until it is approved by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council. And this section is applied, for instance, when the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba general regulation was first made, the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council had to approve it.

However, even after regulation has been approved and is in force, the minister has an oversight function. The minister may require a council to make, amend or repeal a regulation if it is in the public interest. So, there lies the rub, Madam Speaker. The power was always there already for the minister, and for this Cabinet, to act to remove unfair accreditation barriers. The regulation is required by minister—by the minister.

Clause 221, section (10), if the minister considers it to be in the public interest, he or she may require a

council to make, amend or repeal a regulation made by a regulatory council under this section. In the case of unfair barriers to accreditation for nurses, the minister could require the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba to amend the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba general regulation to make it easier for internationally trained nurses to be registered in Manitoba if the minister considers it to be in the public interest. If the college refuses to act as the minister requires within 90 days, the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council can make, amend or repeal the regulation itself.

* (16:50)

Clause 221, section 11 of this act: If the council does not comply with a requirement under subsection 10 within 90 days, Lieutenant Governor-in-Council may make, amend or repeal the regulation.

All told, the opinion said, the minister and Lieutenant Governor-in-Council have the oversight power to require a college to change their regulations if the minister considers it to be in the public interest.

Now, the term public interest interest isn't defined in The Regulated Health Professions Act. But anybody going to emergency rooms or experiencing what we've been experiencing in personal-care homes would say that, you know, Manitoba's health-care needs and our health staffing shortages that we've been experiencing—like, to the tune of 2,600 vacancies for nurses in our province, especially in northern, rural and remote areas—likely would qualify as being in the public interest.

And under this power that's already there in this act, the minister could require the CRNM to amend their regulation to remove unfair barriers to internationally trained nurses. So, there you have it, Madam Speaker. The power was always—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order please.

If the member is reading from a specific letter that was sent to her, I—my understanding is that three copies of that should be tabled in the House—*[interjection]*—if it's private correspondence, and I understand that that was an opinion provided by legal counsel privately to you?

MLA Marcelino: Be okay if I get it photocopied and present it at a later time?

Madam Speaker: Somebody would be happy—probably one of the—

An Honourable Member: Okay.

Madam Speaker: One of the pages could take it and get it photocopied.

Thank you.

MLA Marcelino: So, you know, I'm very happy to see that there are going to be more, you know, professional regulatory bodies are going to be included under this Regulated Health Professions Act.

But my point is that with the ones that are already there—especially the major bodies, where we're seeing so many bottlenecks happening due to unfair barriers to accreditation for internationally educated nurses—I would like to continue to urge the ministers and the Cabinet to use their power judiciously and to be able to make those inquiries and those directions and changes, if necessary, to make sure that they are continuing to act in the public interest.

You know, but, obviously, every single member here, all the colleges, everybody wants to make sure that there is safe practise occurring, and that is always going to be our No. 1 priority.

But in the cases where we're seeing really unfair barriers to accreditation that I would argue has made Manitoba the least, you know, least popular destination for internationally trained health professionals. There was even a campaign, a social media campaign, going on that said, anywhere but Manitoba for internationally trained nurses.

And that is really ridiculous to say that we got to that point here as a province. And we have to do so much more in order for us to get to the level where we can really continue to attract the world's best talent and compassionate care here to our province.

And with those comments, I'll leave off for now because we are very interested in seeing this bill pass.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, a few words on this bill.

As the MLA for Notre Dame has outlined, the minister actually has a lot of powers that she's not adequately using to address various circumstances.

This bill is interesting because when the registered health professions act was initially introduced, it was envisaged at the time that probably all the registered health professions would be brought under that act in about five and maybe a little more years.

But, clearly, the process has taken a long, long time, and indeed it's taken so long that now, the minister wants to start regulating the situation of—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a point of order.

MLA Marcelino: Table the letter from the Crown counsel that was referenced in my earlier speech.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

I would indicate that it's not a point or order, but we appreciate the tabling.

* * *

Mr. Gerrard: So, where we are now, is that after many, many, many, many years, we have five professions under the act, we have 17 professions trying to get under the act and we have an unknown number of professions, which includes, from what we know, school psychologists, massage therapists and we don't know how many others, which would like to get regulated and under the act, but are not even a chance—given a chance to get in the door.

I am aware that there have been times—going back, in fairness under the NDP, as well as under the PCs—when various professional organizations have been lined up to try and get under the act, but there has been insufficient staff in the government dedicated to this matter, with the result that things have gone very, very, very slowly.

So, it is—we're now in this position where we're moving forward on this legislation, which we will support, which is trying to take things a step further and make up for the length of time that it has taken to get professional organizations under the act.

It is an admission by the government that they have failed to deliver over the many years that the registered health professions act has been in place.

So, with those few comments, Madam Speaker, I will let this matter move on to a vote and hopefully pass, and move on to committee.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak 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 17, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act (2).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Is it the will of members to call it 5 p.m.?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of members to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10–until 1:30 tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 11, 2023

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