

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak?

Is the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak online? Maybe we'll move on, then, and we can revert to that when she is online.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development First Report

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Chairperson): I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on November 23, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 42)** – *The Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur l'attestation à distance (modification de diverses lois)*
- **Bill (No. 211)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Unpaid Leave for Reservists) /Loi modifiant le code des normes d'emploi (congé non payé à l'intention des réservistes)*
- **Bill (No. 300)** – *The United Church of Canada Amendment Act/Loi Modifiant la Loi sur l'Église-unie du Canada*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mr. CULLEN*
- *Ms. FONTAINE*
- *Mr. MICKLEFIELD (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. NESBITT (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. REYES*
- *Mr. WIEBE*

Your Committee elected Mr. MICKLEFIELD as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. NESBITT as the Vice-Chairperson.

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the November 23, 2020 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Substitution

- *Mr. LINDSEY for Ms. FONTAINE*

Officials Speaking on the Record

- *Glenn Joynt, Law Officer*

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 42)** – *The Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur l'attestation à distance (modification de diverses lois)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 211)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Unpaid Leave for Reservists) /Loi modifiant le code des normes d'emploi (congé non payé à l'intention des réservistes)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 300)** – *The United Church of Canada Amendment Act/Loi Modifiant la Loi sur l'Église-unie du Canada*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment.

Motions

Your Committee agreed to the following motion:

THAT this Committee recommends that the fees paid with respect to Bill (No. 300) – The United Church of Canada Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Église-unie du Canada, be refunded, less the cost of printing.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Anne Thoroughgood

Ms. Audrey Gordon (Southdale): I'm honoured to recognize Anne Thoroughgood for her extraordinary commitment to volunteerism in our community. Her inspiring dedication has led to her receiving the 2020 Premier's Volunteer Service Award. This award was established to honour the outstanding efforts of volunteers in our province that go above and beyond the call of duty to support others.

A current resident of Windsor Park, Anne Thoroughgood has dedicated over 40 years of volunteer time to United Churches across the multiple provinces where she and her family have lived. Anne's parents instilled in her the importance of volunteerism at a young age, so she began volunteering in Sunday school as a teenager.

She feels these values to give back to society were reinforced 20 years ago after a 45-day hospitalization saved her life. This experience motivated Anne to continue to volunteer with several organizations and groups in the community where she lived, and now in Windsor Park.

Anne's grandchildren describe her as a force to be reckoned with, and this statement reflects not only in her extraordinary work with the United Church of Canada, but also in Anne's participation with the St. Vital Swingers, High Steppers Senior Club, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and more.

She is more than deserving of this honour, and I am extremely happy to congratulate her on this achievement and wish her continued health and prosperity in the years to come.

Please join me in thanking Anne for her volunteerism and congratulating her on receiving the Premier's Volunteer Service Award.

Main Street Project

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): This pandemic is hitting vulnerable Manitobans hard in ways most of us could never imagine. When you are experiencing homelessness, organizations like Main Street Project are a desperately needed lifeline.

Main Street Project detox was recently forced to close due to staffing issues. Many staff tested positive or had to self-isolate. These staff often work at multiple sites, and this is putting a huge strain on the support system of—available in our city. They need supports today to hire more staff to ensure programming isn't closed or decreased indefinitely.

Main Street Project recently had to decrease the amount of beds that they provided nightly due to low staffing and a lack of support from this provincial government. This is just one example of a program having to close or scale back their supports due to staffing shortages, but it is the result of the failure of the Pallister government to plan and provide extra supports to some of Manitoba's most vulnerable organizations like Main Street Project. They've received no new funding—no new provincial funding, and any new supports they have received have come from the federal government.

These strains are happening all across our province and non-profits are especially being hit hard. Staff-to-staff transmission is happening and so is client-to-client. Isolation space is full and staff are burning out, testing positive or having to self-isolate, which adds stress to an already stressed system.

This government has shown time and time again that they only care about their bottom line, but the real bottom line, the one Manitobans care about, is keeping people safe and saving lives.

Those who use these services are some of Manitoba's most vulnerable, and many have existing health conditions which put them at greater risk for COVID-19. We need a government that puts people first and is willing to make investments that will save lives.

I want to send our gratitude from my colleagues and I from the NDP to all of our non-profits who have continued to provide supports to our community in these trying times. We see you, we acknowledge you, and we appreciate your heavy lifting. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere.

The honourable member for Rossmere, can he please unmute.

Shagun Sweets

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Sat Sri Akal, Madam Speaker.

On August 15, 2019, a devastating kitchen fire gutted East Indian takeout restaurant Shagun Sweets at 836 McLeod Ave., instantly closing the business and triggering over a year of cleanup, insurance claims, renovations and inspections.

I remember that summer day trying to console my friend Harbhajan Singh, owner and chef, who came to Canada in 2004, and whose family own and work in the restaurant. Visibly shaken and unsure how he would survive, Harbhajan was not alone in wondering if Shagun would ever reopen.

Yet, despite English not being his first language, he persevered for more than a year through the paperwork and practical challenges of rebuilding. Now, 15 months later, a new and expanded Shagun Sweets restaurant has literally risen from the ashes and reopens tomorrow for takeout.

Shagun now seats 60 guests, and once COVID restrictions are lifted, it is sure to resume its status as a neighbourhood favourite. For now, guests can order to take out.

Despite its obvious drawbacks, the pandemic is an opportunity to support local businesses, including restaurants. If you want to help Harbhajan recover, consider ordering butter chicken, samosas, veg korma or fish pakora from Shagun Sweets. After a year of lost business, I know it would be appreciated.

Like Shagun, all of us will emerge from the present challenges stronger than we entered it. But the struggles we all face will take a similar resolve and endurance to come through and enjoy the blessings and opportunities our province will continue to offer for those willing to pursue them. Harbhajan is proof that tragedy, far from marking the end of something, can often give rise to a new beginning.

Shukria, Madam Speaker.

Genevieve Melegrito

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge the owner of Sugar Blooms and Cakes Inc., Genevieve Melegrito.

Located at 1020 McPhillips St. in our constituency of Burrows, Sugar Blooms and Cakes offers delicious treats such as regular and custom cakes, cupcakes and macaroons.

Like many small businesses in Burrows and across Manitoba, Sugar Blooms and Cakes had to close for two months in March and April. Genevieve shared with me that their sales decreased by 40 per cent in June and July, and they had to lay off 80 per cent of their staff.

She is grateful that she is still open at this time but worries about fellow small-business owners across Manitoba who may not recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

Since summer, Genevieve has been able to bring back some staff with reduced hours, but due to the new COVID-19 restrictions, all of their large orders have been cancelled.

She hopes customers will continue to support her small business and many others in Manitoba that have been impacted due to COVID-19 pandemic.

*(13:40)

What amazes me about Genevieve and small-business owners across Manitoba is the determination and perseverance through the pandemic to supply Manitobans with baked goods, handmade products and other great services irrespective of the difficult times we are in.

A recovery that benefits small-business owners and all Manitobans is possible. I will continue to advocate for the needs expressed to me by small-business owners in Burrows and across our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface?

An Honourable Member: No, it's River Heights.

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable member for River Heights.

EIA Accessibility for the Homeless

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, people experiencing homelessness are having a difficult time today.

A critical issue is delay in accessing employment and income assistance. EIA is needed to get a place to stay and food to eat. Today an intake appointment to get EIA has a wait time of about three weeks. Because

the intake interview is on the phone, those who are homeless may not be available on the phone at the time that the interview is scheduled.

Those who are homeless do not always have access to a phone. When they do have access, at a thrift store, for example, the store may be closed or someone else may be using the phone at the moment when the EIA intake worker calls.

The government needs to make changes so that people can have their intake done when they initially call, instead of waiting several weeks. The person would have their intake quickly and when they are available. When a person misses their intake call, they have to start all over again and wait another three weeks to get an intake appointment.

The minister should act immediately to ensure there are enough staff that everyone can have their intake interview the first time they call. After the intake, there is identification to present and forms to sign at the EIA office. Sometimes, for varied reasons, people have difficulty getting the necessary identification. EIA needs to be much more proactive in helping homeless people.

Lastly, most people who are homeless do not have credit cards required for purchasing online or an address to which the purchase can be delivered. People who are homeless need to be able to purchase low-cost essential food and winter clothing easily, given their circumstances. Thrift shops must be considered essential.

Merci. Miigwech. Thank you.

* * *

Madam Speaker: As the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) is now online, I will revert back to introduction of bills.

The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, please go ahead. The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on your first reading. We can hear you; go ahead.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Okay, Bill 212. This bill will help protect—

Madam Speaker: Order. The member has to make a motion and second it.

Ms. Lathlin: Okay.

Madam Speaker: I move, seconded by—

Ms. Lathlin: The member for Thompson (Mr. Lindsey)—

Madam Speaker: The member for The Pas-Kameesak has to actually move the motion herself.

Ms. Lathlin: Okay, I'm trying to. I'm having difficulties here on this end.

Madam Speaker: Shall we come back to you once you can see the full motion in front of you, then?

Ms. Lathlin: Yes, please.

Madam Speaker: Okay. We will, then, move on and come back to that later on.

We will now, then, move to oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hiring and Training of Nurses Request for Staffing Increase

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, every Manitoban knows that we need more nurses and not less. And yet, even prior to the pandemic, this government was in the business of cutting nurses and cutting positions at nursing programs in post-secondary institutions.

COVID has taught us many things. One of them, of course, is that that was a big mistake. We need the government to be able to not only hire more nurses, not only to employ more nurses, but also to train more nurses. More nurses at the bedside means more people getting life-saving treatment. It also might mean that our hospital capacity would be strong enough so that we could begin to move to normal maybe a little bit sooner. However, we know that the Premier has been reluctant to make any of these moves.

Will the Premier simply commit today that he will do everything in his power to hire more nurses?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We've been doing that, and we plan to continue to, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: No, I don't think that's true, Madam Speaker, because you see I have a proposal here from Assiniboine Community College, which proposes to be able to add 25 seats to their nursing program.

Now, before the pandemic, this was shot down by the Premier and by his Cabinet. ACC, after surviving the spring budget cuts that were forced upon them by this Premier and his Cabinet, well, they dusted themselves off and they resubmitted a proposal, Madam Speaker, to, again, be able to train 25 more nurses at a time: 25 more nurses per cohort.

Now, why hasn't the government proceeded with this plan? Why has the government so far refused the funding? It says in the document themselves that ACC can't move ahead due to, I quote, lack of funding.

The Premier has refused this proposal in the past. Will he finally admit the error in his ways?

Why is the Premier refusing to fund the training of more nurses in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, just to educate the member, since June, we've hired 358 nurses over the last five months.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, that's the problem with this Premier and his Cabinet: they're always playing catch-up.

Not only is he playing catch-up with the first question that I asked, Madam Speaker, but that number that he provided is still this government trying to dig themselves out of the hole that they caused by their health-care cuts. They cut 500 nursing positions. So far, they've only added back 350. They're still repairing the damage of the cuts that they caused before the pandemic.

And we know where else those cuts went. They went to Red River College, as well. They cut 75 nursing spots from Red River College, Madam Speaker.

And, again, ACC is trying to be part of the solution here. They know what Manitobans need. They know Manitobans want more nurses working at the bedside. That's why they've submitted this proposal, which I will table for the Premier to put eyes on.

Will he simply commit today to repairing the damage his cuts has caused and to fund the training of more nurses in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Despite inheriting perhaps the most incredible fiscal mess in the history of Manitoba, this government has maintained its spending on health care, Madam Speaker.

Despite the incredible mismanagement of the previous government in doubling our debt in the last six years they were in power, in raising our debt service costs to over \$1 billion a year—\$1 billion, Madam Speaker, that can't go to health care—we've maintained our spending levels at among the highest levels of any Canadian province, and first overall in

supporting social services, in supporting education, in supporting health care. First overall in the country.

So I need no lessons from the member—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —when we are actually investing this year alone two thirds of a billion dollars more in health care than the NDP ever did.

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

Manitoba Hydro International Request to Cancel Stop-Sell Order

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Pretty sad that he can't commit to training more nurses, Madam Speaker, so we'll move on to another aspect of this government's failing pandemic plan, which is the continued increase of Manitobans' hydro bills during the pandemic that has made life more expensive.

We know that—today the—we learned that the managing director and 15 other staff have departed from Manitoba Hydro International since this Premier and his 'cabinint' ordered that stop work at that subsidiary. Now, as one employee has said, everyone's on pins and needles and afraid for their jobs.

Now, that's not fair to those hard-working Manitobans, but the impact is compounded when you think about all the hundreds of thousands of people all across the province who have to pay higher hydro bills as a result of this mismanagement during the pandemic.

Will the Premier simply stop interfering and end his stop-sell order today?

* (13:50)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, if our government was to do that, we would be interfering.

And, Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Hydro management is reviewing their own operations. A stop order is part of that operational review. So the member is caught in his presumptive preamble in asking me to interfere while telling me that I am.

Madam Speaker, we're not going to interfere. We'll let Hydro do what they didn't get to do under the NDP. With all the political manipulation and influence the NDP government exercised over Hydro, they

dug a quintupled debt for the people of Manitoba. We're not going to repeat that mistake.

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

Sale of Hydro Subsidiaries Increase in Hydro Rates

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's a pretty heavy boulder that the Premier's trying to push up that hill, Madam Speaker, especially since Manitobans know what happened this fall.

This fall, this government privatized a subsidiary for Manitoba Hydro, and then what happened next? This government, during a pandemic, ordered an increase to their hydro bills without even bothering to hold a public hearing. Privatization, followed by increase in rates, more expensive bills.

I'll table the letters that these folks at Manitoba Hydro International are writing to warn the board—two sets of letters, in fact—to warn the board about the damage that this government's interference is going to cause. But again, if this government continues to proceed with privatization, then Manitobans' bills are going to get more expensive.

Will the Premier simply acknowledge that this is a bad move at any time, but it's particularly bad during a pandemic?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I always appreciate the NDP raising a question on Manitoba Hydro. I always appreciate them floating out that old bogeyman about privatization. They've done it for years and Manitobans are into it. They catch on to it, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is the boulder the member is trying to push about consultation has pretty much rolled back all over him, Madam Speaker, because Manitoba Hydro's debt under the NDP government was quintupled: '99, when they came into power, it was \$5.7 billion; in 2020, it was \$23 billion-plus.

And, Madam Speaker, guess what? They did it without asking Manitobans. In fact, they did it while ignoring Manitobans. In fact, they did in the dark, hiding from Manitobans.

That's not how it works now. We know who Manitoba Hydro belongs to. It belongs to people of Manitoba; that's who.

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

Manitoba Bridge Grant Eligibility Barriers

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, not only is this Premier ordering the bills of Manitoba Hydro ratepayers to be more expensive and making life more expensive for small businesses, he's not even holding a public hearing before he does so.

We also know that his Bridge Grant program, as it's mistakenly called—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —is not actually helping many Manitobans who need it.

Obviously, we've been writing letters and advocating on behalf of photographers and wedding planners, graphic designers and many other people who use their home addresses to conduct business, but today we've also learned—and I'll table this evidence for the Premier—that there are businesses who actually do have physical locations who are being turned down from the Bridge Grant program.

Will the Premier simply admit that this program is failing, and commit immediately to dramatically expanding the eligibility criteria so business owners can get the help that they need?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): More generous program than any other province, Madam Speaker, and 5,564 businesses are already thanking us because they've already got the money going out this week.

So, you know, the member, Madam Speaker, talks about supporting small business. He has a record of raiding small businesses, he and his party. I would only say on the Hydro rates, the 2.9 he talks about is an interim increase until we can strengthen the PUB so there's never again going to be another bipole Keeyask boondoggle.

And, Madam Speaker, the NDP Hydro rate increases were—in '12, they were 4.4 per cent; in '13, 3.5; '15, they were 3.95; '16, they were 3.36.

They were always higher than ours, Madam Speaker.

Positive Cases of COVID-19 Contact Tracing and Follow-Up

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, yesterday I brought forward concerns regarding testing and tracing. Obviously, testing and tracing are inadequate and have been inadequate, as

we now face the highest infection rates in the country and the highest case count to date.

In response to my question about how many resources are being put forward to improve contact tracing, the minister's response was, and I quote: More all the time.

That's not accountability, Madam Speaker, and it's far less information than what's being provided in other jurisdictions.

I ask again: How many public health nurses are doing contact tracing, and what percentage of contacts are being called within 24 hours of a positive test?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I welcome questions from the NDP today on nursing.

It was only Thursday when the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) went on social media and attacked front-line nurses in Southern Health-Santé Sud and said they were not wearing PPE in hospitals—attacked our front-line nurses in hospitals.

It was dodgy. It was demoralizing. It is dangerous. My question for that member: was it also deceitful? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: The—order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, over 200 Manitoba doctors are still waiting for their apology from this minister.

Madam Speaker, there is a real contradiction here between what the minister is saying and what front-line staff are actually experiencing. The minister would be wise to provide much more detail. You know, obstruction—ongoing obstruction—on this information just undermines public health and—confidence, rather, in public health.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) said over the weekend that there was no contact tracing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —backlog, yet media reports that backlogs remain with yesterday's contact investigations done on positive cases from four days prior.

Again, I ask the minister: How many public health nurses are doing contact tracing, and what percentage of contacts are being contacted within 24 hours of receiving a positive test result?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the NDP for a focus today on nurses.

The member for St. Johns actually said that it was irresponsible and that lives were being put in danger, attacking nurses on the front line in our hospitals during a pandemic with zero evidence. It took 30 minutes for the Southern Health-Santé Sud to absolutely disprove this and say, we have no idea where this information is being taken.

It is dangerous. It was divisive. It is discriminatory. Was it also deceitful? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, for the second day in a row we are bringing forward concerns of Manitobans. Front-line staff are telling us that they are—they're doing contact and case investigations that are many days old, yet the Premier, just this weekend, said everything was fine and that everything was caught up.

Manitobans need to have confidence that contact tracing is strong and that adequate testing is being done, but the minister and the Premier have not been forthcoming with regular data that would reassure the public.

Will the minister commit to providing ongoing and regular updates about the number of public health nurses doing contact tracing, as well as regular updates about the percentage of contacts being called within 24 hours of receiving a positive test?

Mr. Friesen: The member speaks of concerns. Manitobans are concerned that one week after someone on that side of the House leaked a confidential video that had the senior leaders of the health-care system, there's been no apology. And now the member for St. Johns attacks front-line workers, nurses, during a pandemic, calls them putting lives in danger. There is no substance. The region says this is without any merit. It is devoid of merit. It is deceitful. It's dangerous. It's divisive.

Will she apologize? Will she admit that this was an attempt to deceive Manitobans?

Medical Examiner's Office Workload and Staffing Concerns

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): In August, we started to hear stories from families experiencing huge delays in holding funerals for their loved ones because

of a–backlogged autopsies due to COVID-related deaths. Families are still waiting to grieve and send off their loved ones in a dignified manner.

* (14:00)

The Premier has failed, as usual, to provide the resources needed to get autopsies done on time. Last week, a group of nurse investigators at the medical examiner's wrote a letter, and I quote, that they are facing overwhelming and unsustainable working conditions, and that the quality of their work is at risk.

Will the Premier give the medical examiner's office the staff they need today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate the member raising a question about staffing levels. It's a concern, with COVID obviously being widespread, that staff are not available to do their jobs.

However, linking this to the pain families feel in terms of not being able to celebrate the lives of lost loved ones, Madam Speaker, is not a justifiable linkage. I'm one of those people, and my family hasn't been able to celebrate the loss of my sister because the rules don't allow people to convene for funerals.

So to make those links is unjustified and hurtful, and the member should apologize to everyone in Manitoba for doing that.

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

Ms. Fontaine: According to this letter written to the Premier, a regular workload for nurse investigators is 500 cases a year. Even before the 'cavid'–COVID-related deaths of the last two months, each investigator in the unit had already surpassed that figure. With crushing workloads and staff shortages of almost 40 per cent, Madam Speaker, this is unsustainable.

The Premier has failed to prepare in any way for this pandemic, Madam Speaker. Will the Premier commit to providing the resources needed to the medical examiner's office today?

Mr. Pallister: Again, Madam Speaker, the rhetoric, again, the heat exceeds the light.

The reality is that the entire Western world is facing an unprecedented pandemic. The reality is that staff shortages are rampant in every jurisdiction in the world. The reality is that COVID is impacting every household. These are the realities, but the argument that the failure by our public health officials or this

government to prepare, that can't be supported by the actual facts.

The preparation is made evident in the fact that we've multiplied our effectiveness in terms of offering testing to people, making sure that we are making those test results available–never as fast as one would like, Madam Speaker, I admit to that, but I do think that we are making every effort in every respect, in supporting our small-business people, in supporting our families; no province is making a greater effort.

This is a result of a comprehensive team effort on the part of this government and many people in our civil service. I would encourage the member that when she is making political attacks, she must consider she is also attacking these hard-working civil servants of our province.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The only failures that I'm pointing out are solely the Premier's and his failure at taking the pandemic seriously and putting the measures in place that we need, like the backlog in autopsies that was made worse by this Premier, who deemed these nurse investigators as non-essential and required them to take unpaid days off in the middle of a pandemic, Madam Speaker.

The letter that was written to the Premier says, and I quote, we knew the second wave was coming. However, the government of Manitoba to date has yet to provide our office with additional supports or made reasonable attempts to fill the long-standing vacancies on a timely basis. End quote.

Will the Premier listen to the pleas of these experts and give the supports that they need to the medical examiner's office today?

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, we're actually taking significant action, and have been for months now, to address COVID in our province. The numbers have risen to the point that all of us are extremely dissatisfied with that. Positivity numbers are at 14. Yes, they've leveled off reasonably in the last three or four days, but that should be no cause for comfort for anyone here.

But the fact of the matter is also that some Manitobans have forgotten that they need to follow public health orders. And so, Henry's photography; Robins Donuts; Hyatt House; B.A. Robinson, on Ellice; GoodLife Fitness, 18th Street in Brandon;

Town Centre mall food court in Brandon; McDonald's in Neepawa; Holiday Inn Polo Park; Bar Italia café on Corydon; and Pony Corral Restaurant & Bar have all been fined in the last week because they failed to comply. I'd encourage them to get with the program.

What our small-business people, what our communities need is everybody on team Manitoba, not people trying to score cheap political points and not people disregarding the health and well-being of others. Get on the team.

Government's Pandemic Response Support for Municipal Services

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the minister of municipal affairs would not stand and condemn her government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that's because, at best, she stood idly by and, at worst, she's been actively carrying out the cuts that have been making things worse.

When directed by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to freeze municipal funding, she complied. When told to take action, she sent a letter to municipalities telling them to lay off staff and to cut services. And when municipalities begged for assistance to support their economies and local services during the pandemic, she stayed silent.

Why won't the minister tell us: Does she stand with the Premier and his mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'm always pleased to take a question about the supports that our government has provided our municipalities, including \$170 million in unconditional fair-say operating dollars that we flowed to the municipalities well ahead of schedule so that they could have the money that they needed to offer supports and programs to their ratepayers, such as tax deferrals or other programs that municipalities wanted to roll out.

Our Premier also negotiated—he was one of the first premiers in the country to negotiate a federal restart program for our municipalities and on behalf of our municipalities, which we were able to just provide the supports to municipalities to cover any of their operating losses for—and for transit as well. We were very pleased to give the municipalities that support that they desperately needed very recently.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I realize, Madam Speaker, that the minister won't answer me, but she should be answering to the communities that she represents.

Yesterday's convention of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, a resolution sponsored by the cities of Selkirk, of Dauphin, of Thompson and of Portage la Prairie, said that municipalities are, quote, suffering, as their local needs are not being met due to reduced access to services.

In fact, they had to call on the Province to stop their heavy-handed cuts and to discontinue—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —the practice of removing and reducing provincial Crown agency and health services.

Why won't the minister listen to those on the front lines, stop the cuts and get the cities and towns in this province the supports that they need?

Ms. Squires: Our government is pleased to provide a total amount to municipalities of \$623 million this year through strategic infrastructure.

We know that shovel-ready projects are very essential right now to not only build our economy and to get major important projects under way in Manitoba, so we have—we are committing all this money to municipalities, which is almost 25 per cent more than what the NDP ever did in any year that they were providing supports to the municipalities, notwithstanding the fact that this year we are in a pandemic.

I did write to all municipalities at the onset of the pandemic to assure them that our money will continue even though the provincial coffers have suffered because of the pandemic.

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

Mr. Wiebe: What the minister, in fact, told municipalities is cuts, cuts and more cuts.

That's what they have continually asked cities and towns across Manitoba to endure during this pandemic. While we know that this is, in fact, the time to invest in services that protect our economy, that this government, in fact, has been only focused on their own bottom line.

The minister has made her approach crystal clear by sending that letter: when there's a recession, when there's an emergency, you are on your own.

She encouraged municipalities to follow the Province in its path of layoffs, reduced work weeks and wage reductions.

* (14:10)

Will the minister stand up and just admit that she and her government were wrong to ask municipalities to fire workers in the middle of a pandemic? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: So, Madam Speaker, I understand that the member must be reading a memo from 2014, when municipalities certainly did feel as though they were on their own when they were being ignored by the NDP government and being forced to go through an amalgamation.

Right now, municipalities are being heard through the collaborative efforts of this government. And let's talk about some of the investments that we are making with our municipal partners. In 2003, for example, when the C—the clean environment commissioner told the NDP to invest in the North End Water Pollution Control Centre, they were ignored by the NDP for 17 years. We're working with all of our partners—municipal partners and federal partners—to get that project done.

Golden Links Lodge Care Home Staffing Support Request

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, the situation at Golden Links Lodge has grown dire. With over half the residents testing positive for COVID and a very significant staffing challenge, the home is now asking families of residents to sit by their bedsides and monitor for any change in condition.

I've spoken directly with family members of residents, and they are having to make very difficult decisions and are rightfully afraid of their loved ones and for themselves, largely due to the lack of proactive measures on this government's part.

What steps is the minister going to commit to today to ensuring that no families have to risk their own health to ensure the care of their loved ones at Golden Links Lodge?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

We are all concerned when it comes to COVID getting into our personal-care homes in Manitoba. That is why this government has taken action. That's

why the—so many resources right now are being focused on stabilizing.

We have 28 outbreaks right now in Winnipeg among 36 personal-care homes. So that is why we have WRHA clinical leads at these sites. It is why the Canadian Red Cross continues to support with personnel. It is why we have our clinical IV teams that are there providing care.

And I would appreciate the opportunity to continue to answer the member's question in the next available time.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, we know how hard the staff at Golden Links Lodge and care homes across Manitoba are working. We also know that these staff are struggling and—as many staff are sick and isolating. They've reached their shift capacity or are COVID-positive themselves. These staff are overwhelmed and desperately need additional support immediately.

Asking families to provide that support is not the solution. It will put families at risk and could potentially lead to further spread of COVID-19 within the homes and across Manitoba.

Will the minister commit today to providing immediate support for staff working in Golden Links Lodge by calling in the military?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, we share the concern of the member. Let me continue to describe to that member and all members the immediate response that is going to those places.

The member may not be aware that, on this weekend alone, 82 shifts were picked up by redeployed home-care workers. We had our rapid response system in place and responding. We had the Community IV Program team responding to multiple sites, helping at those sites.

We all know it is devastating when the virus gets into those homes, and that's why we're responding. But I would also say to that member, help is on the way in the form of this micro-credential and the workers who will be coming from Red River College, where we've already received 700 applications to come and help out.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, the staff at Golden Links Lodge have made it clear they cannot keep up and they need support now.

It is this—within this government's power to call in the necessary supports to ensure the health and safety of the staff and residents at Golden Links Lodge and their family members. With this home and other homes across Manitoba experiencing outbreaks, immediate support is needed in the way of military assistance.

Will the minister commit to immediately calling in the military to take over Golden Links Lodge and to hire more staff to work in long-term care?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, immediate support is needed, and that is why immediate support has been deployed. Even right now, with Shared Health and the provincial resource redeployment team, that work is under way to expedite the ramping down of other services to allow for the redeployment of workforce to these sites.

But I want to say again this is an incredible new resource that will be available within just a week or two to personal-care homes in respect of this new Red River College training program where, in just five days of posting, already 700 applications have been received, and hundreds of those may not even need to take the training in order to be redeployed; another way in which this government continues to take immediate action now. Why? Because our focus is on the health and safety of all Manitobans.

PPE Procurement Contract Mask Supply and Distribution

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): In the early days of the pandemic in April, there was a scramble to purchase PPE, and expired masks had to be issued instead. I table a contract from April 4th, 2020, for \$46,871,800, with Private Trading Group, who are currently suing the government for partial nonpayment for selling the masks.

Now, the government says the masks didn't fit properly, but \$46.8 million buys a lot of them: 5 million N95 masks and 5 million KN95 masks.

Without getting into the lawsuit, where are the 10 million masks? If they can't be used, why did the government buy them, and if they can be, why aren't they being distributed?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We established, in response to COVID, early on, the most effective supports for small businesses in the country. We

introduced a summer student wage support program that saw four times as many young people, over 8,000 young students, get jobs in the summer months, four times as much as ever before, Madam Speaker. We set up a Seniors Economic Recovery Credit, which both the opposition parties opposed, and I don't know why they don't like seniors, but it gave support to the most vulnerable seniors at a time they needed it quickly and easily.

We addressed the new financial—additional financial needs of over 23,000 Manitobans living with a disability, with support programs, and, yes, we did get PPE for people when the federal government didn't provide it.

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

Positive COVID-19 Cases in Schools Testing and Contact Tracing Delays

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We have serious doubts about this government's claims on contact tracing because we've heard from teachers across Manitoba working in the education system, telling them they keep hearing about multiple COVID cases in their classes from parents, and sometimes never hear from public health at all.

Schools and ECE centres can have 13, 30 or even 50 people in a gym. There have been over 600 cases in schools, including all three that my children attend, but test results are taking so long that people are sitting at home having exhausted their paid leave.

Has the Premier considered the reason contact tracing numbers are changing is because it sometimes isn't happening at all, or are other students and staff not considered to be close contacts?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I would think it, to put it mildly, Madam Speaker, it'd be somewhat less than helpful to try to discredit senior public health officials here in the Chamber or outside of it, and I would say that's exactly what the member just attempted to do.

I would remind him that this government has taken proactive action in every category. We encouraged grocers and pharmacies to designate hours for seniors so they'd be able to shop more safely. We sent MPI rebates to every driving Manitoban; that was \$110 million. We deferred provincial income tax and corporate tax filing deadlines, removed \$75 million in annual PST on home insurance, which the NDP raised on residents and on small businesses.

These are the kinds of things we've done, and, Madam Speaker, we'll go on, given an additional opportunity. But I remind the member that we are all in this together, and it would be highly unwise to try to discredit our senior public health officials during a pandemic or at any time thereafter, quite frankly.

Nurse Recognition Licensing Fee Waiver

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Our health-care workers have been absolutely incredible on taking on longer shifts, working overnight, sacrificing so much and putting themselves at risk on the front lines for the health of Manitobans during this pandemic.

* (14:20)

Now, we know that Manitoba nurses are still without a proper contract, which is something this government should be addressing immediately, but today I wanted to ask if this government would consider waiving the annual licence fees for nurses as a form of recognition for the incredible work that they've been doing during this public health crisis?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the question and it is always important to recognize at this point in time in a pandemic that excellent work that's going on on the front lines of care by our doctors, by our nurses, by our allied health workers in facilities and long-term-care homes, in hospitals.

The member will remember that this government actually facilitated the fast-tracking of nurses back into the profession by doing exactly that: by waiving their registration requirements. We worked collaboratively with the college. Even today, work is under way collaboratively with the nurses to be able to get things done and to hear their concerns.

It is exactly because of this that the words of the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) are so devastating. Attacking front-line nurses during a pandemic: will she apologize?

Public Health Orders During Pandemic Government Enforcement Measures

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): As we continue to see a high number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in this province, is more important than ever that Manitobans follow the public health orders. Our government has continued to increase the education and enforcement of these orders to keep all Manitobans safe.

Can the Minister of Justice please inform the House on the recent COVID-19 enforcement numbers?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for Waverley for that question.

The fight against COVID-19 requires the effort and commitment of all Manitobans. We are continuing to enhance and strengthen our enforcement efforts to ensure that there will be consequences for those who disregard and disrespect public health orders and put others at risk.

Just last week, our government hired security firm G4S Canada to augment police and provincial staff with these enforcement efforts. I am pleased to share with the House today that over the last week, enforcement officials have issued 95 fines as well as issuing 79 warnings.

It is critical we all follow the fundamentals of wearing a mask, frequent handwashing and maintaining proper social distancing to stop the spread of COVID-19. We are asking all Manitobans to join team—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Provincial Park Reservation Services Government's Private Contracting Plan

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, we've previously shown that the minister is laying out plans to divest the government of parks and assets in parks, and we've also shown the government's long-term plans to sell off cottage lands within our parks.

The minister, however, is not content with just divesting parks and selling parklands, as yesterday she issued an RFP on MERX that would contract out calling services of the parks reservation system to a private call centre.

I ask the minister: Why is she dismantling our parks and park services piece by piece?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): I appreciate any questions coming from a member of the NDP party about parks, considering they let them lag for 17 years. Madam Speaker, what the member is speaking about is a system that has consistently brought the most attention, year over year, for not addressing the public's needs for reservation requirements.

So I'd like the member opposite to explain why, for 17 years, nothing was done to address the public's needs.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, parks are not profit machines. They're a public benefit for all of us now and for future generations.

The minister's plan to date includes divesting parks and park assets, selling off cartage lots in parks and, as we've seen, she's also reducing service levels, cutting back garbage pickup in the Whiteshell and making park passes more costly and inconvenient.

Manitobans want great parks and strong services. They don't want the parks reservations services contracted out for the benefit of a private contractor.

Why is the minister cutting and privatizing parks and park services?

Mrs. Guillemard: You know, I've been really baffled by the member's questioning about any discussion about selling of cottage lots, considering her very own party, in 2002, opened up a lottery for 1,000 cottage lots to be sold. In fact, they were hoping to raise about \$100 million, of which they were only going to earmark \$2 million towards parks infrastructure upgrades.

Madam Speaker, our plan is solid, it is fair, and it involves all members of this great province and all of our wonderful parks.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

On March 16th, 2020, the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) raised a matter of privilege regarding the government's delay in issuing Manitoba health cards to newcomers and the government's failure to answer questions on the issue. The member argued that because of the actions of government members, they were impeded from doing their job for their constituents. The member concluded their remarks by moving, and I quote, "that this issue be taken under consideration by an all-party committee." End quote.

The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) also spoke to the matter of privilege before the Deputy Speaker took it under advisement,

and I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

As the House should know, in order to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege, members must demonstrate both that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity and also provide sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached.

Regarding timeliness, the honourable member for Union Station did not really address this issue. They simply stated that they have taken some time to review the government's comments with regard to these delays and that the issue of COVID-19 made the matter urgent.

I would like to remind all honourable members that it is the duty of the member raising the matter to fulfill this important requirement. Bosc and Gagnon, House of Commons Procedure and Practice, 3rd edition, on page 145 states that, and I quote, the member must satisfy the Speaker that they are bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practical after becoming aware of the situation. End quote.

It is therefore not sufficient to express an opinion that this is the earliest opportunity. Members have to be precise in explaining why this is the earliest opportunity, providing accurate contextual reasons, such as needing to wait to see words in Hansard, for the Speaker to take this into consideration. The member stated that they needed to consult with constituents and they heard lots of concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, but gave no context on how that affected raising the matter at this point in time. Therefore, I must find that the test of earliest available opportunity has not been met.

Regarding the second condition, the member argued that by failing to give accurate information on delays in issuing Manitoba health cards, the government interfered with their ability to serve their constituents and all Manitobans. They stated that because members of the opposition have been provided misleading information, this constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

As Joseph Maingot advises in the second edition of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada on page 241, and I quote, to allege that a member has misled the House is a matter of order rather than privilege. End quote.

In addition, previous Manitoba Speakers, including Speakers Walding, Phillips, Rocan,

Dacquay, Hickes and Reid, have all ruled that in order to prove allegations that a member deliberately misled the House, it is necessary to prove that there was clear intent to mislead by knowingly making statements that would mislead.

As explained by Speaker Hickes in a 2011 ruling, a burden of proof exists that goes beyond speculation or conjecture but involves providing absolute proof, including a statement of intent by the member involved that the stated goal is to intentionally mislead the House at—as it is possible members may have inadvertently misled the House by unknowingly putting incorrect information on the record.

* (14:30)

In 2007, Speaker Hickes also ruled that providing information showing the facts are at variance is not the same as providing proof of intent to mislead. As well, Speaker Dacquay ruled that, without a member admitting in the House that they had stated the goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is virtually impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended to mislead the House.

I also understand that constituents' concerns are very important to all members. We represent people, and it is a duty of any member to bring the voice of their constituents in this Chamber. However, I would like to remind all members of this House that parliamentary privilege concerns itself only with the parliamentary role of a member and not with a member's relationship with their constituents.

In a 1980 ruling that can be found on page 119 of Bosc and Gagnon, Speaker Sauvé stated, and I quote, "While I am only too aware of the multiple responsibilities, duties, and also the work the member has to do relating to his constituency, as Speaker, I am required to consider only those matters which affect the member's parliamentary work. That is to say, whatever duty a member has to his constituents, before a valid question of privilege arises in respect of any alleged interference, such interference must relate to the member's parliamentary duties. In other words, just as a member is protected from anything he does while taking part in a proceeding in Parliament, so too must interference relate to the member's role in the context of parliamentary work." End quote.

Therefore, based on the procedural authorities and the rulings of previous Manitoba Speakers, and with the greatest of respect, I rule that the prima facie case of privilege has not been established in this case.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Madam Speaker: And now I understand that the member from The Pas-Kameesak might be online and available to do the introduction of first reading.

Bill 213—The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits)

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Thompson (Ms. Adams), that Bill 213, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits), now be read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Lathlin: Bill 213 will help protect and seek justice for all victims of sexual assault in northern Manitoba.

Currently, in northern communities like The Pas, only adults have access to be examined by a nurse when sexually assaulted. If a minor, a child, reports a sexual assault, they are flown to the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg when they are seen—where they are seen by a sexual assault nurse examiner.

Health professionals use sexual assault examination kits to gather DNA evidence which can later be used by police to charge predators of sexual assault.

Our children have to leave their homes and communities without being able to take a shower in order to be examined in Winnipeg. They are forced to leave their communities after traumatic events have happened to them to try and seek justice and care. This lack of critical health services will only add to the problem that predators are getting away. This inequality in access to resources for victims of sexual assault has grave implications on the mental health and emotional health of young victims.

Madam Speaker, our children deserve better. This government needs to invest in more resources for underage victims of sexual assault in the North and ensure communities have an adequate supply of trained health professionals in sexual assault kits.

It is my hope that this bill is supported unanimously to support our children and to finally bring the care and justice that is desperately needed in the North.

Ekosi.

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

PETITIONS

CancerCare Closures at Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

On—(1) On September 4, 2020, the provincial government announced that CancerCare outpatient services will be cut at the Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks General Hospital, effective December 2020.

(2) Closing two CancerCare sites in Winnipeg will mean a third of existing sites are lost, with increased burdens placed on outpatient cancer services at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital.

(3) To cut these outpatient services has provoked concerns from health-care workers and CancerCare nurses alike, who have stressed to the provincial government that the cut is contrary to what CancerCare Manitoba's goals of passion care—patient care are and would most certainly increase the burden for the people they are trying to help.

(4) CancerCare nurses have also noted that this decision has more to do with saving money rather than what is in the best interests of patients. This is further highlighted by a 2019 consulting contract bid, which shows that this cut has been made purely in the interest of fiscal performance and will not improve the quality of patient care.

(5) Patients who do not have access to a vehicle or reliable transportation will be hit the hardest by this cut, with the burden falling largely on seniors and Manitobans on low incomes.

(6) Cuts within the WRHA, including the provincial government's closure of the Concordia emergency room, Seven Oaks emergency room, have already compromised health-care access close to home for residents of northeast and northwest Winnipeg.

(7) Deterioration of the health care within the WRHA has met increased wait times, compromised patient care worsen health outcomes. This cut will only continue to deteriorate the quality of care for patients while forcing more demands onto health-care workers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to halt its proposed closure of CancerCare sites at the Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks General Hospital, while guaranteeing access to high-quality outpatient CancerCare services in northeast and northwest Winnipeg.

This petition is signed by Elma Melmquist [*phonetic*], Daniel Demassey [*phonetic*] and Kelley Pabuaya, and many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Dauphin Correctional Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Leann Oakley, Robert Caldwell, and Kaley Sala [*phonetic*] and many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:40)

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Cochlear Implant Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant Program began implementing patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 45 devices per year.

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

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program officers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement Program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Linda Vincent, Cameron Harvey, Harold Forsyth and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Vivian Sand Facility Project—Clean Environment Commission Review

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares, making it the largest claim ever given to a single company in Manitoba's history. It is larger than the city of Winnipeg, which is 46,410 hectares.

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

A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, which covers much of south-eastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and an abundance of wildlife and ecosystems.

Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:50)

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

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

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

As of January 27th, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Wayne McIntyre, Al McPhee, and Amanda Kubrakovich and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

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

The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre in May 2020.

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

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

As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala). The honourable member for St. James?

The honourable member for The Maples.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by Calden Smith [*phonetic*], Perry Smith, Raymond Forbes and many, many other Manitobans.

* (15:00)

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

CancerCare Closures at Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

On September 4th, 2020, the provincial government announced that CancerCare outpatient services will be cut at the Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks General Hospital, effective December 2020.

Closing two CancerCare sites in Winnipeg will mean a third of existing sites are lost, with increased burdens placed on outpatient cancer services at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital.

The cut of these outpatient services has provoked concerns from health-care workers and CancerCare nurses alike, who have stressed to the provincial government that the cut is, quote, contrary to what the CCMB's goals of patient care are and would most likely increase the burden for the people they are trying to help.

CancerCare nurses have also noted that, quote, this decision has more to do with saving money, rather than what is in the best interest of patients. End quote.

This is further highlighted by a 2019 consulting contract bid, which shows that this cut has been made purely in the interest of, quote, fiscal performance, and will not improve the quality of patient care.

Patients who do not have access to a vehicle or reliable transportation will be hit the hardest by this cut, with the burden falling largely on seniors and Manitobans on low incomes.

Cuts within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, including the provincial government's closure of the Concordia emergency room and Seven Oaks emergency room, have already compromised health-care access close to home for residents of northeast and northwest Winnipeg.

The deterioration of health care within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has meant

increased wait times, compromised patient care and worsened health outcomes. This cut will only continue to deteriorate the quality of care for patients, while forcing more demands on health-care workers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to halt its proposed closure of CancerCare sites at the Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks General Hospital, while guaranteeing access to high-quality outpatient cancer services in northeast and northwest Winnipeg.

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

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): First, I have an announcement on a committee. I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, November 26th, 2020, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 4, The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act, various acts amended.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, November 26th, 2020, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 4, The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed).

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call, for a second reading debate, Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, followed by Bill 9 and Bill 41?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 7 this afternoon, followed by bills 9 and 41.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Planning Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call second reading of Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'm happy to bring Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act—

Madam Speaker: The member has to bring a motion and a seconder.

Ms. Squires: Oh, pardon me.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, be introduced for a second reading.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Municipal Relations, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education, that Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Ms. Squires: I'm happy to bring Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, before the House today for its second reading.

Madam Speaker, Bill 7 will amend The Planning Act to extend subdivision approving authority to the City of Brandon. The changes to The Planning Act continue to uphold the provincial-municipal partnership in land use planning, while supporting greater local decision-making on subdivisions for the City of Brandon.

Currently, under The Planning Act, the Department of Municipal Relations is the approving authority for subdivisions across the province, with the exception of Winnipeg. The current process allows the minister to delegate approval of subdivisions to a local planning district, but not to a municipality.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

By way of an example, there are a number of planning districts that have been delegated subdivision approving authority; for example, the South Interlake Planning District, the Cypress Planning District and the Red River Planning District, to name just a few.

At the same time, the city of Brandon is Manitoba's second largest urban centre that demonstrates a high capacity and competence in land use planning and development, including employing a full complement of registered professional planners.

This bill responds directly to a request made by the City of Brandon seeking the same level of subdivision approving authority as the City of Winnipeg. This bill will allow Brandon to maintain subdivision approving authority independent from membership in a planning district and ensure them to provide a full sweep of land use planning services to

their citizens. The proposed changes brings Brandon in line with the City of Winnipeg, which is also granted authority to approve subdivisions under the City of Winnipeg Charter.

The Province is supportive of efforts made by Brandon to strengthen their capacity and enhance good governance practices in the service of their ratepayers.

Land use planning is a partnership between the Province and municipalities and planning districts. The Province retains a strong interest in planning related to regional approaches to sustainable development and protecting natural resources. For example, preserving agricultural land, protecting water resources, maintaining the integrity of the provincial transportation network and mitigating impacts of flooding, are key areas of interest for the Province.

Municipalities and planning districts also play a critical role in planning and have primary responsibility for carrying out local and regional planning. This includes preparing local development plans and zoning bylaws to manage land, regulate activities and guide local decisions.

The bill also authorizes the minister to make regulations to establish eligibility requirements and conditions for when a municipal council can approve subdivisions. This authority will be based on municipalities demonstrating that their requirements and conditions are satisfactory.

These changes to The Planning Act deliver on our government's commitment to reforming planning processes, streamlining approval processes and reducing administrative burdens for municipalities.

Right now, I'd like to table letters from the mayor of Brandon, Mayor Rick Chrest, as well as the chair of the Brandon and Area Planning District, Jeff Fawcett; the reeve of Cornwallis, Bill Courtice; and the reeve of the municipality of Elton, Ross Farley.

* (15:10)

I recognize that these letters have also been sent to all members of the Legislative Assembly and I would like to thank Mayor Rick Chrest for his collaboration in working together to bring this bill forward and providing my department with information about their planning requirements. And I would also like to thank Jeff Fawcett, Reeve Bill Courtice and Reeve Ross Farley for their collaborative efforts, as well, and for their letters of support.

I would like to just take a moment to reflect on Mayor Rick Chrest's letter that he sent to me—to myself as Minister of Municipal Relations, but to all MLAs within the Manitoba Legislative Assembly regarding Bill 7, asking for their support.

Mayor Rick Chrest writes that, now that the bill has been reintroduced as Bill 7, with the hope that everything could take effect by January 1st, 2021—is his request.

The effective date is one year later than planned and all three affected municipalities have been operating on a less-than-ideal interim basis. The bill has the full support of the three municipalities as a means of streamlining and improving the planning scenario for each district. This would seem to be a legislative measure that would merit the support of all MLAs.

As you may know, as mayor of Brandon, I rarely, if ever, appeal to the collective Legislature, but in the interest of seeing this process completed for the benefit of all three municipalities in our district, I am asking for the assistance of the House to see their way clear to offering an all-party concurrence to see the passage of Bill 7. Such a measure would clear the path for each of Elton, Cornwallis and Brandon to properly proceed in our new planning structure and assist developers and residents with a more expeditious framework to guide them.

Thank you for your consideration, Mayor Rick Chrest.

So, with the mayor's words on the record, I—and as well as a few opening remarks from me—I would like to turn this bill over to the House for consideration and I certainly hope that we can come to an agreement to fulfill the request from Mayor Chrest to see this bill have an expeditious passage.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence—15 minutes—10 minutes—15 minutes. I think I got the wrong one here. Bear with me here. Oh, yes, here we go. Sorry about that.

A question period up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the—by the minister, of any members in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions might be of critics and

designates from other recognized parties; subsequent questions might be asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by opposition members. And no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

The honourable member for Concordia.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Every question I could get some applause, that'd be great.

So, I'll just begin. A very simple question. As we often talk about, consultation is so important. If the minister could give us a little bit more detail. She tabled the letters here that we also received from the mayor and others.

Could she detail the consultation that her and her department did in anticipation of drafting this legislation?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): The member for Concordia will recall that it was well over a year ago that I brought this bill into the Legislature for first reading with the hope that it could get passed very quickly, and of course, the mayor of Brandon in his correspondence talks about the delays, and of course he's too polite to point out those delays, so I will for him.

This bill was delayed significantly because of the filibustering and other time-wasting measures employed by the member for Concordia and members of his party. And so I would ask him this year to not delay the passage of this bill any longer and let this bill go through so that the planning can—

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

The honourable member for River Heights. The honourable member for River Heights, could you take your mic off mute?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the minister is this: Will this be a precedent that may be used by other cities—Thompson, Steinbach, Morden, Winkler, Portage, Selkirk? What's your long-term view?

Ms. Squires: So the Province has a strong interest in planning related to regional approaches. This is very integral to sustainable development and protecting our natural resources in the province, so we certainly do want to enhance the regional collaboration.

Having said that, we know that the City of Winnipeg has a very sufficient planning department that can handle subdivision authorities, as does the City of Brandon. If a municipality were able to show the capacity within their municipality to do their planning at this level, consideration would possibly be given.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister knows clear well that this was a bill that was brought forward last session as Bill 6, which means that it could've moved forward at any time by this government. But, of course, they didn't move it forward. It was us that have been asking to move this forward. This was not brought until the last session, when it could have been introduced earlier, but here we are.

So I just simply ask if she could answer the question. Consultation in this regard is very important.

What was the consultation process that her and her department undertook?

Ms. Squires: So I'm always very happy to talk about the consultation that our government has done with municipalities.

Over this past summer, I have worked very diligently, as have all my officials, in collaborating and consulting with municipalities over a number of legislative proposals and amendments in—before the House right now for consideration. And I really do want to take a moment to thank everyone in the Department of Municipal Relations for that continued outreach via Zoom and other technical measures to ensure that we do have that constant collaboration and consultation with our municipalities.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister, of course, is referring to the other piece of legislation that is on the table here, and that's Bill 37. And, in fact, there are many municipalities who are saying, why aren't you consulting with us?

So what I'm trying to get a handle on here is, what was the consultation process for Bill 7, and how has it been different from the consultation process that's not happening right now for Bill 37?

* (15:20)

Ms. Squires: So I can assure the member that my department, as well as myself and other members of our government, have been consulting with members of our—all of our municipal leaders, whether it be on Bill 7 or any other bill before the Legislature for the House's consideration. And, of course, I've appreciated the outreach that my department has done, and

I've also appreciated the collaboration that we've had with these three municipal leaders regarding the bill that's before them.

I know that by now the member would have received that letter from Mayor Rick Chrest, as well as from the chair of the Brandon and Area Planning District, Jeff Fawcett, as well as the reeve of Cornwallis, Bill Courtice—

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

Mr. Wiebe: So I think what I'm hearing here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the only consultation that was done was the letters that came forward from the mayor and from other elected officials.

Now what I'd like to know is what other letters has she received with regards to Bill 37; will she table those letters? And why is she not listening to those elected officials, to those councillors, to those Reeves and to those mayors who are telling her to stop in her tracks when it comes to Bill 37, and instead, why is she moving forward on this bad legislation?

Ms. Squires: Well, I'm very disappointed to hear the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) call Bill 7 bad legislation. This bill is the creation of collaboration and consultation with our member municipalities and is at the behest of these municipalities who have demonstrated the ability to do their planning in regards to subdivision and will also allow them to do more expeditious land-use planning.

So, very disappointed. And I would ask the member for Concordia to perhaps apologize to Mayor Rick Chrest and others who have worked so diligently to bring this legislation this far.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, certainly, the municipalities across the province are disappointed with this minister and the fact that she will not listen when it comes to Bill 37.

Now, when it comes to Bill 7, I've said clearly, publicly, that we are, of course, in support.

But what I'd like to know is what tips can we give to those municipalities? What secret sauce is it that will allow them to have their voices heard in the same way she's now listening to the members and the elected officials when it comes to Bill 7?

Ms. Squires: So, the member's talking about secret sauces and all sorts of other discombobulated initiatives there, but what I can tell him is that planning is very integral to this province's future. And

we know what happens when there are substantial delays in planning or improper planning.

If we were to just think back a few years when the NDP were trying to push through their planning to get that bipole—\$600 million extra costs of the bipole routed down the wrong side of the province. All the improper planning that went in that is demonstrative of what can happen when there is bad planning that occurs in this province. Our government is looking to reverse that trend that was set out by the NDP.

Mr. Wiebe: As I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're simply trying to figure out why the minister won't listen to the majority of municipalities, why at the AMM convention she would not listen to the resolution and bring forward the changes that are being asked with regards to other legislation.

In this regard, I'm just simply asking, is there something different about her relationship with the elected officials in Brandon than in, say, Selkirk, or say in other Interlake communities? What exactly is it that the members for Brandon did differently than other members across this province?

Ms. Squires: Well, I can appreciate that the member for Concordia is confused. So let me just elaborate a little bit about the importance of strong land-use planning. It is integral to the future of this province when it comes to sustainable development and protecting natural resources, just to name a few. That is why our government, in addition to putting in strong planning processes, we invested \$100 million in a GROW Trust to ensure that there's good land management and protection for our natural resources in perpetuity, as well as a \$100-million Conservation Trust that our government established so that we could ensure the integrity of our land now and well into the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Mr. Gerrard: Okay—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, sorry.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes, I just had a question: I know that in one of the original reports there's a Treasury report which partly cited the experience of Andrew Marquess. Now, I know that he was subject to an audit when it came to some dealings with the City a number of years ago. I was just wondering whether—why exactly he'd be a developer who's worth listening to.

Ms. Squires: So, perhaps the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) is confused.

Right now, we are discussing Bill 7. And I certainly hope that the member for St. Boniface has had an opportunity to receive a copy of that bill as well as letters of support for the passage of this bill from Mayor Rick Chrest from the City of Brandon; the chair of Brandon & Area Planning District, Jeff Fawcett; the reeve of Cornwallis, Bill Courtice; as well as the reeve of Elton, Ross Farley.

And I certainly encourage him to look at those letters, read the legislation, and I welcome any comment from him after he's had an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Gerrard: My question has to do with how this is parallel with what's happening with the capital region around the city of Winnipeg.

Are the RMs around the city of Winnipeg going to be treated like the RMs around the city of Brandon?

Ms. Squires: So I just wanted to highlight for the member's awareness the difference between a planning district and a capital region.

Of course, what we're looking to do is bring a capital region through the WMR for overall planning. Planning districts in—apart from a capital region, they have a more hands-on role to manage land development than a proposed capital region, and so in addition to allowing municipalities to share a common development bylaw plan, planning districts can administer building permits for its members and coordinate public processes related to planning for its members. Districts can also request authority from the minister to approve the subdivision.

So there's a very big difference between a capital planning region as—and a planning district.

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

Any further questions? The honourable member for St. Boniface, do you have any more questions?

Mr. Lamont: Yes, I had a question about the role of Michelle Richard—or Richard—who was a PC candidate last year. She's now in a—in the planning and priorities, but in August she was a consultant, and her company says that she's just on a leave of absence. So how long is she supposed to be working for the Province before she goes back to her consultancy?

Ms. Squires: So I can appreciate that the member for St. Boniface hasn't had an opportunity to read the

letters of support from the three municipal leaders as well as from the chair of The Planning Act and—or the planning district in Brandon and, of course, is wanting to segue into human resources issues and talking about personnel matters, which I can assure him there's likely an avenue for inquiries as to who we—in human resources capacity, but certainly Bill 7 is not the avenue for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), do you have any more questions?

Any further questions, the honourable member for St. Boniface?

Mr. Lamont: I'm fine, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one last question: The Brandon model that's being used is not a, like, a capital region model; it's a completely separate model in which there's major planning to be done by the RMs right around Brandon, and they'll do that conjointly.

I'm just trying to clarify exactly how this planning district will work around Brandon.

Ms. Squires: The new entity will be called the Keystone Planning District, and that will allow the two RMs to do their subdivision and other development permits in conjunction but not exclusively with the City of Brandon, who will be its own planning district.

And, of course, the City of Brandon has the capacity to undertake planning for subdivision in its own municipality, whereas the other two regions would benefit from the collaboration of a planning district to provide that assistance for development.

* (15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If there's any further questions?

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We'll go on to—basically, question period has expired, and we'll go on to debate, and the honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Thank you, and thank you to my colleagues who are supportive here of the debate and I appreciate their support here in the House.

You know, I appreciate an opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act. As I mentioned in the question period, we intend to see this through here today, hopefully move it forward and hopefully support those elected officials in Brandon and surrounding areas who are asking for this legislation—have been asking for this legislation for quite some time, have been ready to move on this.

It's important, I think, for us as legislators here in the Manitoba Leg. to listen to those local elected officials, to hear them and to bring forward their concerns when appropriate. And this is a good example of how we can be proactive in that, and we can listen to what they have to say and ensure that their good work that they're doing out in Brandon continues to take place.

We know that this legislation allows the City of Brandon and surrounding areas to become the approving authority for subdivision of land in Brandon, and that the minister then can make regulations to enable councils of other municipalities to approve division of land within those municipalities.

However, this will include regulations and conditions that outlay the eligibility requirements for a council to act as an approving authority. Bill 7 gives the City of Brandon the ability to approve subdivisions of land within the city. It also allows for future designation of approving authorities by regulation.

We know that Manitobans want a government that upholds virtues of consistency and transparency, so, while we of course do not oppose this designation for the City of Brandon, we know that the minister is once again giving themselves broad regulatory powers into the future.

And I only mention that because there is several pieces of legislation, particularly brought forward by this minister of municipal affairs, which actually take power away from local decision makers and plant it firmly in the minister's office by regulation and orders-in-council. And that is certainly not the path that we are hearing municipalities want us to take, but it's certainly the path that this minister and this government have been and continue to take.

We believe that Manitobans would be better served if government broadly consulted through legislation on subdivision, on new subdivision authorities, and there are many across the province which you could foresee going forward, which, we hope, it

would be advantageous, I think, to have some oversight and some ability to advocate for and to push for.

Manitobans look to their government to adequately co-ordinate with members across different levels of government, and this is where I believe that this legislation is—and this is what I was trying to get to in my questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is, you know, why is it that this minister, you know, is willing to table the letters from the mayor of Brandon, from others in Brandon and surrounding communities, in support of this bill, but will not simply answer the other letters and other questions that she is getting from municipalities across the province who are worried about other legislation that she is bringing forward, and that is, namely, Bill 37?

I had the opportunity, as the minister did, to join in—virtually, unfortunately—with AMM, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, in their annual convention. I say unfortunately very emphatically because most members will know it's a great opportunity, usually, not just to hear from councillors and reeves and mayors across the province, but to, you know, rub elbows, so to speak, in some really creative ways and really get the feel for what's happening out on the ground across the province.

We did get a little bit of that. I had some offline conversations with some folks, some elected officials, across the province. But it's that kind of, you know, jam them all into a convention centre for a few days and talk about policy and what's important in their communities, and that's where you really start seeing—I think you get a real feel for what's happening out in the province.

So we certainly miss that. But I did participate, I did listen, and I certainly heard some of the same concerns we've heard over and over again.

But specifically when it comes to land use and planning we heard a lot of concerns about Bill 37 and about the direction that this government is taking with regards to planning, you know, with regards to the city of Winnipeg.

So this is why I ask about, you know, what exactly is different about Bill 7? Why is it that the minister is all of a sudden willing to listen to these councillors and these other elected officials and not to so many others? Why is it that she's not publicly acknowledging and endorsing the resolution that came forward specifically talking about this and the lack of consultation that has happened? You know, she's been

completely silent on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think that speaks volumes to where this government's real motives and real motivations are at.

I heard—I also heard at the AMM, at the convention—I did listen to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and I listened to his speech that he always gives to municipalities, always has an opportunity to speak, and I was able to listen again this year to parse out some of the stuff that he was talking about.

And, you know, I won't go too much into it because I really don't think there was much there that gives any comfort to municipalities. But what I heard him say, and what I've heard him say before, is an acknowledgement of the importance of local elected officials, the people with their boots on the ground, you know, their ear closest to the street, so to speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm glad he's getting on board with this message because it's something we've been screaming and shouting as an NDP party and as a caucus about how we can only do so much in this place.

Our responsibility is to support and amplify the work that's being done at the local level. And it's also our job to listen to what municipalities are telling us, how we can work with them to best accomplish the goals of all Manitobans. That's the work that we've been doing, and apparently the Premier is now on board with that.

So where the disconnect is now between him and his minister, I don't know. I don't know why she won't take the same formula that she's, you know, taken here; you know, at least table the letters. I would love to know what the consultation process was. And I just, I mean, I know it's like beating a dead horse here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but like, why won't she tell the House what exactly was the consultation process? Maybe she went to Brandon and sat down with the elected officials there; maybe the mayor of Brandon has her personal cellphone number, I don't know.

Whatever it is, I'm not begrudging them for doing what they did to get this issue finally moving forward, I'm simply saying, why is it that other municipalities are getting stonewalled, no pun intended, at every turn? And why are they not being listened to?

And it's not like this is, you know, an emerging issue. As the minister said, we were perfectly happy to move forward on the previous Bill 6, which is now this Bill 7. We encouraged the government to bring it forward and we encouraged them to pass it here in the last—in the spring session.

But did they do that? No.

They prorogued the House, and they threw out all their legislation rather than actually moving forward on it.

You know, so we were happy to move forward on 6. When it comes to Bill 37, however, she's right. We did filibuster, and we did filibuster to stop pieces of legislation just like that.

And it was effective because what it allowed the Manitoba municipalities, the association and individual municipalities themselves to do was to get together at their June district meetings. Over and over again I heard from municipalities, not just within the capital planning region, but also across the province, surprisingly. We heard from industry who said, whoa, this is not going to work as it's being brought forward here as this bill.

* (15:40)

So, if we wouldn't have stopped legislation like that, it would've been this government—under, you know, the cloud of a pandemic while nobody's watching—that they would have rammed through bad legislation like that. So, that's right. We did stop legislation that didn't listen to municipalities. And we said clearly that bills like Bill 7, where they're listening to local authorities, where they're sitting down and actually getting input from them, they're asking, how can this work, you know.

And again, why can't we find out what this process is? How did—exactly how did her department ascertain what the best structure for this would be? And I'd love to know that, because I think that there is some good work that's being done there if we're listening to municipalities as closely as the minister claims we are in Bill 7. So, if we're listening to municipalities in that way, why can't we listen to them when it comes to other issues? And that's been the failing of this government, and, you know, we're happy to point that out, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I will note that, you know, the minister was reluctant to bring forward Bill 37. You know, I don't think she wanted to let folks know exactly what was in that bill, with good reason—because she knew that there would be continued opposition to that. And I think that's important to recognize that, you know, if this minister isn't willing to stand behind this legislation, be proud of it, be willing to explain it, you know, it's hard to imagine how local officials, who are seeing their autonomy taken away—how they could be

supportive of it. And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they're not happy with it, if they're not supportive of it, we are not supportive of it, because we listen to municipalities here in this province.

So, I do know that I—I'm—I've already taken a lot of time here. There are many members who want to speak to this, with good reason, because there are—there is a—lots to talk about, about supporting municipalities in this province. So, I will simply leave it at that.

I do hope that this moves forward, that we can hear from—maybe we'll get—you know, maybe we'll get some insight from the mayor and from others who have tabled these documents, who have brought forward these letters. I would love to know, what is it that they did that we can replicate elsewhere, because if we are listening to their voices so clearly here in this Legislature today, why can't we have others from across the province have the same respect given to them by this minister and by this Premier (Mr. Pallister)?

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): As always, it is a pleasure to rise virtually in the Chamber and share some comments on the legislative business that we are processing and dealing with this afternoon.

Now, at the outset, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon all of us to remind ourselves as legislators, and remind the staff and remind the many, many Manitobans who are listening to this audio of their legislators discussing and debating legislation that is pertinent and of value to their day-to-day lives and the lives of those elected officials who represent them on different areas—I think it's important that we remind everyone that we all need, as Dr. Roussin said, to practise the fundamentals of wearing a mask, washing our hands, keeping a respectable six-foot distance from each other and, as been noted many times as well, to get a flu shot.

So, I would just like to remind all of us of that.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I learned—or, I listened with earnest, the comments made by my colleagues across the way. There seems to be a lot of confusion amongst the NDP members, and that is not too surprising. It is—their state of nature is one of confusion. But we are here talking about Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act.

There was a lot of confusion, members opposite talking about different legislation and going down

various rabbit holes down there, and I—I've never seen a member spend so much time talking about how they support pieces of the legislation, but in so talking about a completely unrelated piece of legislation. It makes you wonder whether or not they actually did their whole homework on this legislation.

I think we can also see the value in doing one's homework. The member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) noted that he was interested in learning what the mayor of Brandon, the reeves of Cornwallis and of Elton shared with the minister.

And all that correspondence has been appropriately tabled, the appropriate number of copies. The member is free and, indeed, all MLAs and Manitobans are free to read and understand those jurisdictions' perspectives on Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act.

In fact, one would hope, or one would at least, you know, assume, that the critic would have actually done his job and picked up the phone and called the reeve of Cornwallis, the reeve of Elton and the mayor of Brandon and asked those questions directly. Those are the individuals who are best able to share with, indeed, with the MLA their perspectives about Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act. They would be able to share the fact that Brandon is, indeed, Manitoba's second largest city, and it is a pleasure myself to originally grow up in the Wheat City area; grew up just outside in the Canadian Forces Base, Shilo, and then ultimately out to Spruce Woods and then on to Brandon.

So it's always a sort of—it always—it's always nice to see Brandon being recognized in the Legislature for the community that it is, and that this Legislative Assembly wants to respond to the City of Brandon's request that they simply be treated on par with the City of Winnipeg, which, again, I'm just dumbfounded that any member opposite would not want the City of Winnipeg to be on par in terms of planning powers that, say, the City of Winnipeg would have.

There was also some confusion began amongst the Liberal Party about the capital region versus planning districts. And, again, the issue one needs understanding here is that we are discussing Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act. It is important that all members and all of the elected officials during these times of pandemic and regardless of the backdrop that we are all doing our best to ensure that we are up to speed and focused on the legislation that is before us that we need to share our views on. So when one stands up and asks questions about capital region legislation, which is completely unrelated, or starts

talking about legislation that no—that isn't under discussion, I think it just shows those various constituents the value or the lack of value members opposite have in terms of their role as legislators and, more importantly, their role to do their own due diligence to make sure that they as legislators understand what is going on.

Now, I listened with interest, and, again, I thought it was always amusing the NDP party talking about how our job is to support local government, and I agree. I think we all need to do what we can to work with all levels of government, whether it be the federal government, other provincial governments or municipal governments. But, again, it's one of those classic do as I say and not as I do initiatives when it comes to members opposite.

We need to only look back a few short years ago when, on the eve of an AMM convention, the NDP decided to forcibly amalgamate, literally—I think it was in the midnight witching hour—forcibly amalgamate a number of municipalities and, surprise, surprise, not even tell them.

And when those same municipalities decided to express their concern, what did the NDP say in relation to it? What did they say in relation to the NDP's actions, and what did the NDP say in relation to those concerns being put forward by those same local governments that they say it is our job to support?

* (15:50)

Well, the NDP called them howling coyotes. So it does make one suspicious as to the value of the comments that the NDP are putting forth on the record today in terms of Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act.

But I will give all members the benefit of the doubt. Members opposite indicate that they are indeed supportive of this legislation. They are supportive of giving the City of Brandon—and again, at the City of Brandon's request. This is not just a request of government. This is a request of the elected officials in Brandon, the mayor, their councillors. This is a request by the government of Elton. This is a request by the government of Cornwallis.

And again, if we can't have those discussions in an honest, open manner—and yes, absolutely, there will always be agreements with other levels of government, and that is just a reality of the world that we live in. But we need to approach those differences in a respectful manner where we can have this kind of

debate and conversation, and ensure that we are doing our best to meet their needs. When, as the previous administration did, simply referring to municipalities as howling coyotes does little of that.

I also noted that the minister—the member opposite, when talking about their own consultation with municipal officials and offline conversations, didn't name any officials or municipal councillors that they met with and one has to wonder if one of those officials wasn't the former minister of Conservation, Tom Nevakshonoff, who, as a councillor, has been very vocal on the record as to the embarrassment that the NDP government was when he had the unfortunate situation of being a member but, more importantly, how the NDP party has completely given up on any communities outside of the city of Winnipeg.

And I think members opposite there, their comments only add to that belief and that belief of their former colleague, the former NDP MLA Tom Nevakshonoff. Because again, they say on one hand that they support Bill 7, yet they spend their entire time talking about unrelated legislation.

They had the opportunity today to stand in their seats to make their comments known, to share their views and to make the other elected officials that also represent constituents in this province, that they have their back and that they will respond to this request; that they will ensure passage of Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act; that we will not engage in petty, childish name-calling like howling coyotes and such; and that we will indeed treat them as they should be treated as a mature and valued partner when dealing with—whether it is land planning, whether it is dealing with infrastructure, whether it is dealing with the pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic that we're all currently dealing with.

So on those very, very few comments, I tried to keep it very succinct, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and as always, I appreciate your guidance here in the Legislature today as we debate this legislation, and I look forward to hearing the comments from other elected officials so that we can all sing to those communities of Brandon, Cornwallis and Elton that we've heard you, we're listening to you, and more importantly, we are going to act in a responsible, mature manner and pass Bill 7.

And with those brief comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your time.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to put a few words on the record on Bill 7 and the establishment of the planning district work around the City of Brandon. This is my first delve into some of these municipal relations, and I look forward to just adding some of my comments to the debate this afternoon.

Some of the pieces here as part of this bill is that the minister mentioned that they were listening to local officials when they put this bill forward and, you know, we want to, of course, encourage that kind of dialogue throughout all the bills that will be brought forth to this Legislature.

I want to encourage that everyone, when they are consulting, bring in voices that aren't always the same, that aren't always similar, that sometimes provide that cognitive dissonance that we need in order to make sure that not only when we bring bills forward, but when we bring an argument forward or a debate forward, that we bring in as many voices as possible.

And some of those voices that the minister quoted earlier when she was talking about the bill also have concerns about other bills, right—specifically, Bill 37. And this is what we're getting to when we talk about this government, is the consistency piece that sometimes leaves us wanting for what the direction really is, alright, because we're having these consultations but we're only consulting when, you know what, the feedback resonates with what we feel and not really with what all municipalities want to bring forward.

I think, in many cases, if we want to compare—I mean, we—sure, Brandon would love to be—you know, have the same pieces that City of Winnipeg has, but I'll tell you, Brandon does not want to be treated like City of Winnipeg has by this provincial government.

I can list just two things off right now, especially when it comes to support for transit and support for our own emergency services. We saw that 10 days ago with what occurred at one of our personal-care homes in this city. And I can assure you the City of Brandon does not want to be treated like the City of Winnipeg has by this provincial government.

And we need to be ensuring that, when we bring legislation like this forward, that it is consistent with a theme that can run through a particular government's pieces. And what we're seeing is a theme that runs through some of these things as a bit of inconsistency, right? This bill that is brought forth was during question period by the member from Concordia.

We're trying to understand who the minister consulted with and how this came forward and how can that then be applied to other bills that are brought forward by this government so that there is a consistency instead of this pick-one-pick-the-other piece that sometimes certainly does come across the piece around the AMM.

It—that was my first conference the other day with this particular group. And I do want to acknowledge that the former director of the AMM was Joe Masi. Joe Masi, of course, is a Transcona person that I knew quite well growing up, and he spoke quite fondly of AMM and the work that they've done.

And so when we all know, as members, that organizations like the AMM are important in helping us develop policy to bring bills forward, then we have to be consistent in how we deal with the AMM and other lobby bodies and groups that will have an interest in the legislation such as Bill 7.

I will say, just like the member from Concordia, we will support this bill, but want to know what was it about this bill that can't be applied to other ones that this government brings forward, and so that, you know, we can have a bit of a common approach when it comes to some of these pieces that help cities develop their planning areas even further.

Some of the other things that I'd like to put on the record is I know that COVID-19 does—has provided a lot of challenges for us as we move forward. And, you know—and we listen closely to what this government says about COVID-19 and what this Premier (Mr. Pallister) says about COVID-19 and the challenges.

* (16:00)

And some of the pieces that we have a little bit of difficulty is the—when we talk about team Manitoba, I mean we're only part of this team if we kind of parrot what the leader wants to say. And of course, you know, we don't want that to happen because we need to have some different voices, and like I said earlier, bring a little bit of cognitive dissonance to the debate.

So, bills like Bill 7, like I said, we will certainly—we'll support and we'll continue to ask questions around the pieces of how can bills like this continue to be brought forward that have a little more consensus.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That concludes my remarks.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to just put a few words on the record here. I want to, first of all, congratulate the three municipalities and the local planning distant-district for all working together to build the ideas which went into this legislation.

I think this is important that we have various municipalities able to work together. The city of Brandon and the area around the city of Brandon are a really important part of our province. Brandon has grown significantly over the last two decades, and I just want to make sure that I extend my congratulations in this respect to those in the city of Brandon and wish them well in the years ahead.

I think it is important that we received letters from Bill Courtice, reeve of the RM of Cornwallis; from Ross Farley, the reeve of the RM of Elton; from Rick Chrest, who's the mayor of Brandon; and from Jeff Fawcett, who's with the chair of the Brandon & Area Planning District.

The structure which is being proposed and has come out of the collaborative effort allows for more independence of Elton and Cornwallis in making their decisions but continues to have a close working relationship between the three municipalities. I think this is a good basis for moving forward. We're happy to support this bill.

I want to put on the record the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) was disparaging about my questions in relationship to comparing Brandon to the city of Winnipeg. Brandon has a very strong future ahead and may one day grow to be what the size of the city of Winnipeg is now, but it is important as we look around the structures of various planning bodies that we understand the similarities and differences of different planning bodies and the differences and similarities between a capital region planning and the planning around the area of Brandon.

And one of the reasons for asking those questions was to get on the record the minister talking about her view of what the similarities and differences are. This vision for what should be happening is pretty important in terms of it can be something that's referred back to in the future as the evolution of planning in Manitoba continues.

So I will close by congratulating Rick Chrest, Jeff Fawcett, Ross Farley and Bill Courtice and the citizens of the three municipalities and wish them all well. We will support this legislation. We think it's a good step. I think it's good to have this kind of collaboration.

Thank you.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): It's great to have an opportunity this afternoon to speak to this bill and to elaborate on some of the comments that my colleagues have made earlier in the day.

I do want to begin just to talk a little bit about a little surprise I had with just hearing this member speak—the member speak in regards to this bill. I was expecting to hear, first and foremost, from our members from the Brandon area. I thought that they would have been up and speaking loudly about this bill if this was something that they were very positive about. I thought that, you know, one of the members from Brandon East or West would have been first up to, again, to speak in favor of this, but surprised not. Maybe they'll be up right after me, which is just fine. I thought that was a surprised.

And so I wanted to extend the—my thought of comments from the member from Concordia when he was asking the minister, rightly, about consultation when it comes to this bill. And I would have, at least, have hoped that the minister would have consulted with the members from Brandon about the bill, I think that would have been fair. Maybe she has but she didn't explain that, and I think that it goes to ensuring that these sorts of bills have the proper review and the proper care when it comes to local constituents in Brandon.

I recognize that the—has support from the mayor and the letter that the minister mentioned. I think it's also important that local MLAs are also part of that decision-making process as that's essential—a part of our democracy that all members have the ability to voice the concerns of their constituents.

And so I hope that was certainly part of the consultation process, and if one of the members from that Brandon area want to speak after me, I would encourage them to detail some of those conversations and some of the consultation with the House and so that we're all well aware that this bill is going through a very clear, concise and accurate, thought-out review process.

As this bill is to do with a lot of planning, I think it's important that we consider the track record of planning when it comes to this government. You know, we are looking at specifically what's happening with Brandon in this bill and the 'bandon' land use and planning. But planning isn't limited to just one area. When it comes to proper planning, you have to look at a whole host of areas, and, in fact, it's important to

look at the track record of the decision makers who are putting forth good plans.

And if we look at, for example, plans in health care: well, we know what happened there. A few years ago the government set forward a plan to make changes into health care. They made some cuts and reductions, and, as a result, we're put into a situation right now where when we need our health-care resources the most, during a time of incredible difficulty strain. The plans were not put into place to protect Manitobans, to keep them safe, to, in fact, prevent some of the spread of COVID that we're seeing. And that is due to planning that was amiss in our health-care area.

Let's look at an area such as education. Well, we know that we had a smaller classroom size policy in the past where classrooms had to be of a lower capacity, and that was removed because of the plans of this Conservative government.

Well, let's fast-forward to this year when it is essential—when it is essential—that we have smaller classroom sizes for our kids to make them sure that they're safe in schools. Where was the planning? Where was the planning a year ago when we called for it during the election to have smaller classroom sizes, or two years before that? Where was the planning even this year to have a forethought to—September school year instead of hastily trying to hire more students in the middle of a school year—more teachers in the middle of a school year.

Now, this all goes to the planning that is just talked about in Bill 7, that this government failed to plan equitably for our health care. They failed to plan, again, in education.

And today we're in a result—as a result we're in the mess where we have not enough teachers to support our students and the the government's hastily trying to hire more. We're in a situation where we don't have enough nurses or health-care aides where—because the government didn't plan to ensure that there were enough to meet all of our needs. Now, it's not simply because they couldn't—didn't have the foresight. This pandemic was here in our province since March.

* (16:10)

It's not even necessarily because there weren't enough people to be interested in some of these areas. We know, in fact, that there were folks who are trying to get into post-secondary institutions in their same programs, and there wasn't the funding available from this Province to actually hire nurses to support our

critical health care. Now, this is just simply poor planning. And if this government can't be trusted to plan in terms of keeping us all safe, then how can it be expected to plan properly as it's describing in Bill 7?

Now, again, there—it wasn't just for lack of, oh, it's hard to find nurses, you know, or hard to find health-care aides, or hard to find other people to fill some of these jobs that are so desperately needed right now in the emergency that we're in, you know. Our unemployment rate is still very high. There are still people who are looking for work.

Throughout the summer and the spring, we had record high unemployment levels. And these people were desperately looking for work, and this would have been a perfect opportunity, an absolutely golden chance for the government to say, hey, we've got a group of folks who are looking for work and, at the same time, we've got a huge demand for resources. Let's take this opportunity to retrain some of these folks in health care, in the proper testing—in the ability to conduct tests—in the process of maybe being contact tracers or other needed critical supports that we're looking for right now.

The planning wasn't done by this government. They failed in that regard, and now they're—come around and say that, oh, well, we should be very supportive of this Bill 7. Well, let's take at the whole picture and see how this government plans. And when we take the totality of it all together, we see a failing grade.

And so that makes me really apprehensive about this bill. Although we recognize the letters that were received from the municipality and the City of Brandon and the mayor, and we recognize that it's very important, it also brings me a certain level of apprehension because of the track record of this Conservative government. So, I just wanted to make that quite clear for the members listening today.

I also wanted to just touch on an important aspect when it comes to land use planning and the idea of allowing a municipality to go and plan for their suburbs. And it's a very, you know—the idea of it is very positive, to allow and give them the freedom to go ahead and to have their own autonomy. And I think a lot of members have highlighted the questions and concerns around whether—what other municipalities—whether they'd have that same ability, or how it would differ from this bill versus on other municipalities.

And I did want to also bring up another aspect of that, is that once they're allowed to—you know, this bill

passes, and they're allowed to have some autonomy when it comes to this bill, well, is the Province going to be able to give them the financial resources to do some of the developments that they may be seeking to do? You may have allowed Brandon to make a decision on a new suburb or in the use of certain land in a certain way, but if the Province isn't actually able to fund them or provide financial resources for them to actually develop a project, then it's almost no good.

You know, it's important to both have a plan but also fund and resource that plan in order for it to be actually executed. And so this might be another way—and I'm very worried about that—this is another way for the government to say, go ahead and do what you want to do, and not actually provide them the necessary resources to actually accomplish it. Now, what's the point in having a plan if you don't have the ability to execute it, you know? And I'm very concerned about this.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And we look at industries and that we would hope would, you know, be attracted to it—an area like Brandon, and businesses that would want to go and set up large shops there and employ many of the citizens in Brandon. And they're looking for certainty; they're looking for plans to be in place and to know what sort of, you know, government support they're going to be getting or whether they'll have an—whether they'll have, you know, resources that will be available for them and the staff that they'd be looking to hire.

Now, when businesses are looking for this type of certainty, it's essential—and the ones that I've spoken to have mentioned some very key and important attributes that they'd be looking at in settling in a new development if they're looking to build in an area like Brandon—build a business in an area like Brandon, they'd be looking at things like ensuring that they have a well-educated, available labour force.

Well, how do you get a well-educated labour force? You get that from having fully funded post-secondary institutions. And, again, the government has shown that they've made cuts in that in recent years, so they clearly aren't supportive that way.

Another way the industry is making their decision is when they know that staff that they want to hire have resources like quality schools for their kids. Well, we've seen cuts to public education from this government.

I know employers are worried that their staff would have adequate child care for their staff children

to go to while they're working. Again, we've seen reductions in funding for adequate child care, and these are all bits and pieces that this government has cut away from our system and is actually making it more difficult for places like Brandon to attract new and larger industries to come and set up shop there.

You know, these are all little ways that the government has had a—shown a track record of not doing proper planning, of not having the ability to have the thought process ahead of time and show that they are willing to take a long-term review—long-term approach on how we can have a successful province.

A region like Brandon is looking at the province of Manitoba, the government, to provide adequate resources so that they can thrive, grow, especially coming out of our economic downturn as a result of COVID-19.

And I think it is essential that when we come forward with bills like Bill 7, that we not only put forward a, you know, a plan or ability to have the municipality plan, but we: (a) make sure that they have the resources to do that; that (b) we're actually providing them with base support in terms of quality education, child care, post-secondary support, to make sure that when they're looking at doing these plans, they will fundamentally be assured of the basics, so that they can then go on and say, we will now attract a certain suburb or a certain developer, or a certain business to come and use this land and develop it and actually make positive benefits in our community.

But if these basic fundamentals have—are lacking, as this government has had a track record of displaying, unfortunately, the plans may all be for naught.

And so I'll conclude my remarks and pass it on, allow other members to speak to this bill, but to say that, you know, we are supportive of the ideas of Bill 7, with reservation that it could be made better, and that there's a lot—a lot—that this government could be doing more to support folks not just in Brandon but in rural municipalities right across our province to ensure that they have the right support, the proper support, that they need where they are. Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'm happy to rise today to put a few words on the record about the City of Brandon and the surrounding region in the Westman part of the province.

You know, earlier this summer I was very proud to take in an event at Brandon City Hall that I think

really speaks to the contents of this bill today, the spirit of the legislation perhaps, if not necessarily the exact text.

Now, this event was the flag-raising for the flag of the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation being raised at Brandon City Hall. And it was, I guess, the third in a series of flag-raising that the Brandon mayor and council and their Indigenous advisory group have carried out over the past few years. Started with raising the Metis flag, I believe, and then the Treaty 2 flag, and then this summer, during the pandemic and, actually, shortly before those restrictions were added to the Prairie Mountain Health region, there was a gathering of people from Sioux Valley, people from Brandon, people from some of the surrounding communities coming together to raise that Sioux Valley Dakota Nation flag outside of Brandon City Hall.

And it was a very nice moment, because we had mayor Rick Chrest there, the council of Brandon, we had Chief Jennifer Bone there, from Sioux Valley as well as her council colleagues from that First Nation, which has many, many, many citizens, both in Brandon and in their home reserve nearby.

* (16:20)

And then many community members, you know, police officers, people from local businesses, et cetera, coming out to show their support, and that was really nice to see everybody coming together and realizing that we have to work together in good times and definitely when it comes to fighting the pandemic. We have to work together to defeat this common enemy as well. And, sometimes, it takes a little bit of adversity for us to realize how connected, in fact, we are.

So that was a really, really nice moment of community, and I just wanted to share that because, to me, it showed how the people of Brandon, the elected officials, the people in the surrounding regions, know that their futures are all inextricably connected, and how their destinies are intertwined with one another.

And so that was a really, really nice opportunity for us to come together and celebrate that moment, and so I was very happy and very honoured to be invited to participate that—in that event as well as my colleagues from Brandon who were there as well.

Now, the other big thing I think that we notice when we talk about the city of Brandon is, you know, the city's growing. There's a lot of activity there—a lot of economic activity, a lot of cultural activity as well—

great museums, a folk festival in normal times and things like that—a lot of good schools there.

And so, of course, we support that, and insofar as this bill may help to facilitate, you know, Brandon to continue thriving and to continue growing, welcoming newcomers, both, you know, newcomers from perhaps other countries, and newcomers maybe just from other parts of the province who are going there for school or for health care or for shopping, then we want to support that as well.

And, you know, one of the fast-growing areas, and an area that I imagine will probably be, you know, considered as part of this is south side Brandon, you know. A lot of many, you know, young families setting up shop there, you know, even, you know, I guess, grandparents too. That was one of the highlights of the election campaign last year, was getting a chance to go door to door in that neighbourhood, some of those newer neighbourhoods on the south side of Brandon, and to get to know people and just to see how the community is growing and flourishing.

Now, I know there's been a challenge there on the south side of Brandon getting that school built and, you know, the government sort of dropped the ball a few times with that, first with trying to put through this triple P process and then hiring a contractor who flaked out on them.

But, hopefully, sooner rather than later, we'll actually see that new school in Brandon because we know that Brandon, as with many communities right across the province, if we want people to live there, we want people to set down roots, we want people to flourish, then we need those good public services as well.

And that is related to this bill, just like my colleague from St. Vital who, I might add, I believe has family who lives in south side Brandon—hopefully, I'm not, you know, telling any tales out of school there that he didn't want me to share, but he's got, you know, some Brandon family as well.

But that's a point that our colleague from St. Vital was making. In order for a community to survive, you know, planning is an important part of it, municipal leadership, respecting the rights of locally elected municipal leaders—very important.

But then, also, you need those public services. You need the schools, like a new school in south side Brandon. You need good quality health care. You need, you know, a thriving economy, and you need all

those things to come together and, of course, you need those things to be able to do on the weekends as well that make life all the more enjoyable.

And so, you know, whether that means taking in Clear Lake or, you know, some of the cultural scene, or, you know, travelling around Westman, then that's pretty awesome too.

I also want to acknowledge since we're talking about Brandon and region today that we've seen that Brandon is very resilient, and we've seen that the surrounding communities are very resilient, and that's been on display this year for sure.

You know, we saw there was that big storm during the summertime that—actually at city hall on that occasion too, you know, speaking with, I guess, some of the local leadership about the impacts of that big storm, and also just talking to people who are coming in and out of city hall to pick up these Red Cross clean-up kits that they were distributing there.

So basically, just like a big plastic bucket full of, you know, cleaning supplies and other things because so many people had flooded basements and, you know, people were dealing with property damage and stuff like that, and Red Cross and the City of Brandon, I guess, were distributing that to people and so many people just coming in and out, and you saw the resilience there, you know.

People banded together at that time, you know, heard about people going door to door to help spread the word and warn people about what was taking place, and unfortunately, we heard that there was many other communities in the surrounding region who were impacted as well, like Rivers, and so I for sure want to acknowledge them and the impact that they endured at that time.

But, of course, we know that Brandon's also resilient because they had to deal with the second wave maybe earlier than some other regions in the province. We were all very concerned about the outbreaks at the Maple Leaf plant and some of the community spread that was taking place.

But we did see something that I think's very inspirational. We saw the people of Brandon, we saw the people of the Westman gathering together, listening to Dr. Roussin's advice and flattening that curve, bending that curve and making sure that the community spread in their region actually slowed down.

So, hopefully, we can all repeat that at a province-wide level now, now that we're confronted with the second wave having spread across Winnipeg and Southern Health and the North and so many other regions.

I did just want to acknowledge that, you know, Brandonites and other folks in nearby communities, they did something special this summer. I'm sure none of them were happy to see COVID in their communities and there's nothing good about that, but the response of folks in the region is something that I think we have to acknowledge.

I also know that the post-secondaries in Brandon are an important part of the future. Today we praise the good work of Assiniboine Community College which, of course, you know, serves other communities, you know, the Parkland campus, you know, operation here in Winnipeg. But I think rightfully so, we do associate ACC with Brandon as being their main operation and they're doing good work.

And so we would like to see the government support that proposal that they have for more seats for nursing programs. We all want to see more nurses working at the bedsides, so let's see the investments take place to make that necessary.

Similarly, Brandon University doing a lot of good work educating young people, presumably a lot of those families in south side Brandon and maybe new subdivisions that may result from this bill, they're going to raise kids that they want to see go to ACC, that they want to see go to BU and then take that successful step onto their careers afterwards. And so we definitely support all of that work.

And, really, I guess, what this bill is trying to facilitate, if I understand the government's intention correctly, this actually just make possible what the goals of Brandon and some of the surrounding communities are and the goals that they have set for themselves, which is essentially to be the hub for the region, to be the hub for the Westman, to be the hub also for some of those Parkland communities as well.

And so if we can support that, if we can support making Brandon a hub for the region, I think that's a laudable goal. That's a very important goal. We can help make sure that the community can thrive and continue to flourish, that we can continue to bring people into the region. And we have those draws that would make them want to move there or at least travel there on occasion.

So those things—it means having strong health care. We need to have that hospital properly resourced. You know, the dispatch that happens on the same campus there to dispatch EMS around the province, we know that has to be properly resourced.

We need to have the post-secondaries to have all the resources and, you know, the seats necessary to train people to work in those good jobs, whether that's in ag or value-added related manufacturing, whether that's in health care, whether that's in the education system. We got to see all of those investments flourish because it's all part of one big shared vision.

And in order for us to ensure that Brandon has what it needs, you have to put in some legislative changes from time to time, regulatory changes to allow the local officials, but you also have to make the investments to allow the local officials to implement their plans. And you've got to make the investments to ensure that the families can get everything that they need in the region.

And so, certainly, we want to see the health care flourish, we want to see the education system flourish and, of course, we want to see the economy flourish. And so we did hear from local officials and, you know, some other representatives who are very much in favor of this bill and so we're happy to listen.

But at the same time, you know, I just return to that initial anecdote that I spoke about off the top, which is, you know, we had that gathering there this summer. I know some of my colleagues were there as well. And we saw many people from different walks of life, many different professions, all coming together right there in that symbolic centre of the city of Brandon, city hall.

And they're celebrating, I think, an achievement for one part of the community, but I think they recognize that it wasn't just a victory for that one part of the community. It was a victory for everybody. And so, hopefully, we can keep that in mind as we work together to make it through this pandemic and start laying down the foundation of future plans which will benefit everybody in the province of Manitoba.

* (16:30)

Again, a rising tide lifts all boats. We do the planning right; we make sure the health care is properly resourced; we make sure that the post-secondary education system is strong; that's going to benefit everybody. That's not just a victory for the health-care system; that's a victory for all of us. That's

not just a victory for the education system; that's a victory for all of us.

And so, that's what we want to do on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, and I'm sure that's what all Manitobans want to see happen; want to see a province that works for all of us in Manitoba.

And so, I just wanted to take the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding Brandon and, of course, the piece of legislation that we're deliberating on here today.

Thank you. Miigwech. Merci.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Can you hear me?

Madam Speaker: Yes, we can.

Mr. Brar: I appreciate the opportunity for putting a few words on the record regarding Bill 7, and especially Brandon.

I have a special connection with Brandon, and I would start with saying that I love Brandon. I've been in Brandon for a few months in 2014. Even before joining Manitoba Agriculture, I was working as a research technician at a research farm in Minto, which is 30 minutes drive south of Brandon.

And I got a chance to drive around Brandon, work around Brandon and interact with the communities in the city itself. And I was very much impressed by the people of that town. It's a great community.

I spent just under five months living in that town, and during that period, I developed good connections with people. I would want to say that Manitobans, we are friendly, but Brandonites, they are even more friendly.

My son learned his soccer, first time in his life, in Brandon, and I got a chance to visit some towns around Brandon taking him to his games.

And while I was there, there was a storm. There were floods, and I have seen community members helping each other. I was so much thankful to my neighbours when a big tree fell in the backyard of my home and there were 10 people helping me with their chainsaws. So that's Brandon.

I have regularly attended Ag Days in Brandon. Many times I have visited Manitoba Forage Council. They are doing a great job.

So today, I got this opportunity to talk about Bill 7 and Brandon. I'm thankful, and I want to say this: that I have listened to the debate so far, and I have listened to good contributions by—contribution of ideas,

actually—by so many members from both sides of the Chamber.

I would like to say to one of the PC members who just said NDP party. We are NDP, and D is democratic. I want to underline and bold: D is democratic.

So, PC members, they have very few ideas to support this bill, so they would choose to talk about how the opposition critic should research this matter. Instead of saying good things about their bill, they are talking about us. We are happy they're talking about us but I expect them to talk more about the bill they put forward.

So, when we talk about Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, I think before amendment to a plan, you have to have a plan, and this government has no plan. We have seen their cuts in education. We have seen their cuts on health. We have seen the way they handled COVID-19 pandemic, especially second wave. So, they have to have a plan first, and then start amending the plans.

I am not against Bill 7.

Bill 7 is the bill that me and my colleagues on this side of the House, we support it, but through this opportunity I want to remind Manitobans and all those who are listening right now that this is the government that, on one hand, will talk about decentralizing things, but on the other side, they would centralize very important things. They would undermine the powers of the municipalities. They would undermine Public Utilities Board and would strengthen the office of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to just raise your hydro bills with a stroke of a pen.

When they bring BITSA bill, we stood against it. They would talk about centralizing the powers of Education minister and undermine the school divisions.

So I want to remind this government that they are self-contradictory at many points when they bring such legislations.

It's good that this bill—it empowers the local governments to decide on various things. I'm happy that it gives the authority for subdivision of land in Brandon, and we support this.

But this bill also talks about the minister who may make regulations to enable councils of other municipalities to approve division of land within those municipalities.

However, this will include regulations and conditions that outlay the eligibility requirements for a council to act as an approving authority. And, again, we didn't hear the details of these regulations.

This bill also gives City of Brandon the ability to approve subdivisions of land in Brandon, and it also allows the future designation of approving authorities by regulation. Manitobans want a government that upholds virtues of consistency and transparency.

While we don't oppose Brandon's designation, the minister is handing themselves broad regulatory powers in the future. Manitobans would be better served if the government broadly consulted through legislation on new subdivision authorities.

Manitobans took to—look to the government to adequately co-ordinate with members across different levels of government and their hope is in good faith, but it seems the Premier and his government does not know how to foster good relationships with municipal governments.

* (16:40)

Unfortunately, the Pallister government has only made things harder for our communities and municipal leadership.

I've been contacted by a few members from Interlake, and they complain about this government taking away the local government powers about making decisions about gravel pits, quarries. They were very upset when the decisions made by the local governments were turned down, changed, over-powered by this government at the central level.

Once again I want to remind this government that decentralization is good to empower the local municipalities, but this government failed to empower local municipalities by failing to fund them properly, by failing to bring legislations that empower them.

So, in conclusion, I just want to say that we support this bill but we wanted to mention these few ideas, share these few ideas that this government should have thought about or included when they drafted this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act.

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

House Business

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on House business I would like to announce in addition to the bill previously referred, that Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, will also be considered at the November 26th, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that in addition to the bill previously referred, that Bill 7, The Planning Amendment Act, will also be considered at the November 26th, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

* * *

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if it's the will to call it 5 p.m.?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House will adjourn and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

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