

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, 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, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
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

Monday, March 22, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to table the 2019-20 Annual Report of the Office of the Fire Commissioner—report.

Madam Speaker: And I have two reports to table.

In accordance with section 58.8(2) of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and section 48.14(2) of The Personal Health Information Act, I am tabling the 2020 annual report of—Information and Privacy Adjudicator.

And also, in accordance with section 19.5(2) of The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Conflict of Interest Act, I am tabling the 2020 annual report of—Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable First Minister please proceed with his statement.

Todd Miclash

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): It's with a great deal of humility and, Madam Speaker, with a sense of honour that I speak today to you. Today we are celebrating a person who has looked after this place since Howard Pawley was here. And that's a

while ago, longer than the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). It's incredible when you think about it, isn't it? Thirty-four years. The steward of this magnificent Legislature.

I once said to him: It's the nicest Legislature in the country. He said: In the world—the steward.

Since long before its centennial last year, Todd Miclash has carefully presided over not just the bricks and the mortar of this place, but the people who make it work, the people who work here as well.

He has been a gentleman to work with, for all of us, all members of this House. It can't be overstated what a person of integrity he is. He has been accommodating to everyone. I have yet to hear a complaint about his conduct in the dealings he has had with other people in this building or elsewhere. And on behalf of the Legislative Assemblies of the past as well as our own, I offer him our sincere thanks and gratitude.

Not many people understand how considerable a challenge it is every time that there is a change in government. Of course, we don't anticipate that for a long time, but Todd won't be here to deal with that anyway. But when that happens, and it has happened on several occasions, that transformation is an enormous job, as you can imagine, Madam Speaker. And he has met that challenge on several occasions.

When our government was formed in '16—with a record number of new MLAs, I might add—Todd made space for everyone. When various provincial governments have shuffled Cabinets, Todd Miclash has made space. This isn't—there isn't an office in this entire building that Todd and his group have not emptied and filled again, dozens of times, I expect, during every Christmas open house, every time a film crew comes here, which is more frequently recently, every renovation.

When the Golden Boy came down for refurbishment, that was an historic time for Manitobans to share in this building, and part of it, the key symbol of it; Todd oversaw that. A tremendous amount of work, tremendous amount of change in short order, and dealt with it, and he did it all while carrying a pleasant demeanour that he does. In every way possible, Todd Miclash has been part of the solution. He's never fixated on what can't be done. He always offers to help

in doing what can be done, and then he follows through on it.

The only time, I think, I've ever caught him without a smile was this past year when he had his mask on, Madam Speaker. And even then, with all of us being tested, with our collective spirit as people in Manitoba tested, you'd still be met with his friendly: how can I help you?

So I would like to ask everyone to join me in thanking Todd for his dedication, his commitment to his role, for preserving this Legislature—and for Government House, we should mention as well, Madam Speaker—and for his outstanding character which he brought to work each and every day.

Please join me in wishing Todd Miclash all the very, very best in his retirement as he continues to take that positive attitude he has had for so many years here on to the benefit of all he encounters.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, not too many people who leave the Legislature do so still being loved, adored and admired, but Todd Miclash certainly will. And so that is a testament to his character and, of course, to the wonderful work that he's done here over the years. And as members and staff come and go, it certainly is reassuring to see that there has been one consistent face here in the Legislature for some four decades now.

I'm looking at my notes here, and it says that he has served the Province of Manitoba for 37 years, but when you look at that youthful face up there, there's no way that that can be true, Madam Speaker.

We all know him as the building manager, the facility manager on the grounds, and recently he announced his retirement. This Friday, I believe, will be his last day, and so, on behalf of the official opposition and, of course, all my colleagues, everyone we work with, but, very importantly, all of the staff, interns and volunteers behind the scenes who Todd has helped so much over the years, we just want to extend our heartfelt congratulations to you on your well-deserved retirement and to thank you so much for all the good work that you've done in the service of the people of Manitoba.

Now, in the five years that I've been here now, I've certainly always seen Todd happy and smiling and willing to help, and it's always a pleasant encounter any time that you see him in the halls of the Legislature. And just to peel back the curtain a little bit as to some things that go on in this place on some

of those late-night sittings, as we're known to have from time to time, I don't think I'm breaking any confidence to say that Todd—for many of my colleagues from different party backgrounds, Todd has been one of the people who've allowed us to go see the Golden Boy up close, and has granted us an ability to see the true majesty that is this Manitoba Legislature.

* (13:40)

And so, in as much as there is a living memory of this place, Todd is it. And he is the one who has helped convey it down through generations of MLAs, ministers, staff and elected officials.

Now, I'm sure everyone is going to miss Todd from—being here on a regular basis, but I think that that is certainly a testament to his character, and I think that we all ought to just, you know, let him leave now so that he can enjoy, you know, the well-deserved time to enjoy what lies ahead in life, though something tells me that he probably won't be gone from the Legislature for too long. And so, hopefully, he will drop by and visit us from time to time and keep those relationships going.

So, on behalf of everyone, to you, Todd, I want to wish you health, happiness and a great retirement and, once again, to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all that you've done for the great province of Manitoba.

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

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

Mr. Lamont: I will be very brief.

I spoke with Todd last week and he asked me for a favour, one that everyone in this House could easily agree with: that when my turn to speak came up, that I sit down and say nothing. I will disappoint him and everyone else one last time, but it is a testament to his humility that he doesn't like to be the centre of attention.

The Manitoba Legislature is an incredible building and an incredible institution. But institutions are not defined by stone or brick or marble. They are defined by the humans who help run them and they are only as good and strong as the people who support them.

Todd is generous, kind, friendly, hard-working and helpful. He made a contribution to this institution,

just as surely as any of us can ever hope to, and that we could envy him as a leader as well as someone who worked here.

I wish him a well-earned and restful retirement. Congratulations for making it over the wall, and a warm welcome to his replacement.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: And I will be making a statement, but mine will come after members' statements.

So, members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Swistun Family

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I rise in the House today to honour the Swistun family from East St. Paul in recognition of their dedication and vision in the establishment of Silver Springs Park, now known as the Swistun Family Heritage Park.

Swistun Bros. Ltd., Michael Swistun's father Bill and his brothers Don, Henry and Mike purchased the Silver Fox ranch in 1970. The Silver Fox subdivision was the start of the rehabilitation in 1984.

For several decades the Swistun family worked to consolidate the ownership of the entire 168-acre site, rehabilitate the site into a parkland by excavating the ponds, sloping the pit banks, planting trees and constructing walking paths.

William Swistun Sr. and Don Swistun Sr. had the option of walking away from the depleted gravel pit; however, they invested their time and money to ensure the taxpayers of the RM of East St. Paul would not be left with an abandoned gravel pit.

Madam Speaker, the Swistun family has worked hard to build a better community. Michael says, as a family, they didn't want the message to be lost that this isn't just a beautiful valley, this is something that was inspired and executed by a lot of work and investment.

I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in acknowledging Michael Swistun and his family, who are joining us virtually today, on this great accomplishment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

World Water Day

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, water brings us into this world, water sustains us throughout our lives and,

indeed, water—in the form of tears—will mark the end of our time here on earth. Truly, water is life.

And today is World Water Day. To mark the occasion, the Manitoba Legislature will be lit up blue in recognition of the Water Ambassadors of Canada and United Nations World Water Day. The water ambassadors have been delivering clean water to people in over 20 countries for two decades.

Now, of course, there are many communities in Canada, including too many here in Manitoba, with long-term boil water advisories. Particularly shameful is that one of the communities from which Winnipeg draws its drinking water, Shoal Lake 40, has a boil water advisory.

Madam Speaker, as Manitobans, we have a lot of water to appreciate. The province is home to more than 100,000 lakes and rivers, and, in fact, surface water covers 16 per cent of our province: Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Dauphin Lake, Paint Lake, Setting Lake, Pisew Falls, the Red, the Souris, the Nelson, the Assiniboine, to name a few. Every time we turn on a light, our power comes from hydro-electricity, and our largest city was born at the junction of two rivers.

Water is essential. It is sacred and it must be protected, both for us and for the future generations. These are not political statements, Madam Speaker. These are ideas that originate deep within many of our cultures, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. I hope all Manitobans will join in celebrating World Water Day and protect this invaluable resource.

Mni wiconi wakan, the sacred water of life.

I also want to thank Fort Rouge constituent Peg Holt for bringing the suggestion to light the Legislature up blue tonight. I hope that you enjoy seeing the people's building honouring water.

Manitoba Honour 150 Award Recipients

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I am honoured to recognize five Seine River constituents who have been awarded the Manitoba 150 award. These individuals have been leaders in their profession, volunteers in their community and humanitarians.

Paul Norris is a parent, volunteer and coach. Paul has volunteered with the United Way of Winnipeg for the past 11 years and has actively been involved in coaching Dakota soccer. To people who know him, he is known to give until he has nothing left, then give more.

Dr. Katherine Kearns, a mother of two, along with a colleague, opened the Winnipeg Breastfeeding Centre. In her spare time, Dr. Kearns actively volunteers. She travels across Manitoba giving presentations on breastfeeding and monitors medical resident physicians and undergraduate medical students at her clinic.

Ms. Edith Mulhall is a volunteer at the Never Alone Foundation. She has attended outings, delivered meals and crafted blankets for people affected by cancer. Edith says she has learned the value of time through the people she has met.

Mr. Robert Roehle, known to many as St. Norbert's unofficial mayor, has devoted his time and expertise to community and the agricultural industry. Mr. Roehle holds many titles and actively sits on the Pembina Active Living board. Robert has been and remains a visionary and leader in his community.

Sharan Tappia, a mother of two, moved to Canada in 1996. She has volunteered for 24 years and helped raise money for such organizations as Siloam Mission and Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council. As the founding president of Asian Women of Winnipeg, she has hosted events honoring women and celebrating culture.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to put the names of these great Manitobans on the record and congratulate them on all their successes and thank them for everything they do for our community.

Thank you.

Bourkevale Winter Wonderland and River Trail

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I'm honoured to acknowledge the contributions of a group of families in St. James for their efforts in creating the Bourkevale river trail and Winter Wonderland on the Assiniboine.

This project is named after the Bourkevale Community Centre where many of these families volunteer and participate in programming. The winter trail has existed for decades in our area. Seniors in the neighbourhood are always overjoyed at the sight of families creating trails and ice rinks on the river year after year.

In recent years, local families have decided to connect their rinks and trails with one another, and this year the families are celebrating 25 years of their work on the river trails.

The longest point of the trail is four and a half kilometres in one direction and back. The track has ice slides, sculptures, bonfire pits, shelters and benches. Two sons of the families created a 12-foot-tall ice-sculpture Christmas tree weighing over 800 pounds. One child did not want to do anything else for their birthday but play with other kids on the trails. And a young daughter, who is third generation in these endeavours, put on her skates for the first time after she saw so many kids from the community doing the same.

* (13:50)

Families in the area kayak and canoe on the river in summer and enjoy making the most of this untapped resource over the winter months. As one of the family members involved has stated, the river has created a sense of connectedness within our community. This is important always, but especially right now with the pandemic.

These families are currently fundraising to ensure this project continues to delight the community for years to come, and they will be donating excess supplies and equipment from their fundraising efforts to the Bourkevale Community Centre.

Madam Speaker, I am simply amazed by the work of the families who have helped to create the Bourkevale river trail and Winter Wonderland. May you all enjoy many more years together down the trails.

And, Madam Speaker, I would like to request leave to state all of the family names who were involved in these projects for the record.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]* Thank you.

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, the Central Trail families near the Bourkevale Community Centre include: the Dorbolos, the Dycks, the Roffeys, the Zubracks, the Nystroms, the Burchuks, the McLeods, the Lees and the Oughtons.

Thank you very much.

Charlie Clifford

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Today, I would like to recognize one of Portage la Prairie's long-time volunteers, Charlie Clifford, an Honour 150 recipient, who has been volunteering since he was in grade school.

Charlie is a retired teacher and principal who has devoted himself tirelessly to advocating for and

improving the health, safety and well-being of his community through the Canadian Mental Health Association, the First Presbyterian Church, Habitat for Humanity, Sunset Palliative Care, Citizens on Patrol and many other organizations.

Through the years, Charlie has positively impacted the citizens of our community, improving their quality of life by the many hours he has dedicated to volunteering and serving on the boards. He's always ready to provide a helping hand when needed and continues to give back on a daily basis.

A passionate sport enthusiast, Charlie also volunteered at several large sporting events, including the World Junior Curling, Manitoba and Canadian senior games, and the Canada Winter Games.

When Charlie suffered a stroke in 2010 while volunteering to rebuild houses in Texas, he learned to walk and talk again with the help of family and community members. Charlie inspires stroke survivors today, serving as a chairperson with the Stroke Survivor Support Group.

Charlie Clifford is an outstanding individual dedicating his life to making his community a better place to live, work and play, helping people from all walks of life, young and old. He is humble about his service to others, quietly making a difference to many people in Portage la Prairie.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: And I have a statement for the House.

Today, on behalf of all of us who are privileged to work in this incredible Legislative Building, I would like to wish a fond farewell and happy retirement to our facility manager, Todd Miclash.

Todd has been with the Province of Manitoba for 37 years. He worked for three years at Red River College before arriving at the Manitoba Legislative Building in June 1986.

I have reached out to numerous people, including Todd himself, in preparing this statement, and if one thing stands out from everyone I have spoken to, it is his willingness to always help. One of his former supervisors told me that he is a wonderful colleague to all the other facility managers and is always willing to mentor or support them however he can.

In speaking with Todd himself about all the projects and renovations he's overseen in his 34 years

here, he told me that his favourite restoration project would have to be the work on the tower when the Golden Boy was removed and re-gilded in 2002.

He also told me that his favourite movie shot in the building was Capote, with Philip Seymour Hoffman. Todd had a quick chance to speak with him when he was resting in the Chamber's lounge and Todd came in to fix the ice machine, as the noise was keeping Mr. Hoffman awake. The conversation started when Mr. Hoffman told him, You know, you could just unplug it. Todd said Mr. Hoffman stayed in his Capote character the whole time he talked.

A colleague of Todd's also told me about a time he was stuck in a freight elevator with Eddy and a rather large bookcase. When they called another co-worker to help and reset the freight elevator, they ended up shooting past their destination. Todd was stuck in the elevator with Eddy for another half hour before they were rescued. Having a recording of their elevator conversation would be absolutely priceless.

While I gathered information from people about Todd, I also want to share information, for Todd, about his time here.

You have served six Speakers, five premiers and four changes of government.

You have worked through nine elections and 15 by-elections.

There is no doubt what—that with each Cabinet shuffle comes a lot of moving, some stress and a number of challenges. Todd, you have overseen and survived 36 Cabinet shuffles while still maintaining your good nature.

Last but not least, Todd, you have been the facility manager of this building for 12,344 days.

It is now time for you to enjoy life with your wife, your three children and your grandchildren. I understand you enjoy your time camping with the grandchildren in the Whiteshell, playing poker with your high school buddies and cheering on the Winnipeg Jets—all things you can now do without having to set an alarm for the next morning.

On a personal note, you have made events that my office held and projects that we have taken on so much easier with your help and that of your staff. You have never said no. If it is complicated, you find a way. Your knowledge, history and perhaps secrets of this building are unmatched and will be missed.

The final question I had for Todd was what he would miss most about—pardon, let me start that again. The final question I had for Todd was what he would miss most as he retires. His answer was: the people in the building.

Todd, I want you to know that, while you will miss the people, we, in turn, will miss you. You truly have been a pleasure to work with, and, on behalf of myself, all of my colleagues and all the Legislative Building occupants, we wish you health, happiness and relaxation in your retirement. Thank you for your years of service.

And I know that Todd is probably anxious to get back to work, so this part of the day is finished, so you and your staff—and I thank them all for being here to show their love and support for you. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Early-Childhood Education Nursery Grants and Deregulation

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): And here I thought you were going to say that Todd would miss question period the most, Madam Speaker.

So, every parent wants to know that their kids are going to develop to their full potential, and Manitoba parents—to that goal—want affordable, accessible, high-quality child care in this province. And that includes school-age children.

However, Bill 47, that this Premier has brought forward, does not mention child care for kids between the ages of six to 12. Bill 47 does not even mention them one time.

Now, that has many parents and early-childhood educators and centre operators very concerned that the government may be planning to deregulate care in those age groups.

So, we know that with the bill the devils are in the details, Madam Speaker, and so I want to ask the Premier today: Does he, in fact, plan to deregulate school-age child care in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I don't want the member to scare Manitobans who value child care, as this government does, so I'll just simply say, the NDP never ran on or said anything about blowing \$10 billion on Manitoba Hydro in any of their campaign statements or a press release or anything like that, but it didn't stop them from doing it.

Madam Speaker, we have no intentions of doing anything but building more schools—20 new schools in the next decade, and all of them will have great child-care facilities in them.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, you know, that answer is not going to provide any reassurance to the parents and to the families who are worried about school-age child care not being included in Bill 47.

And I can assure the First Minister that these questions aren't going to go away. He has to tell us whether or not he does plan to follow up on his omission of kids aged six to 12 in Bill 47 by actually deregulating those age groups.

We also know that there are hundreds more per year in fees that will be charges to nursery parents because of the cuts that his government has made.

* (14:00)

Will the Premier reverse the decision to cut the nursery school grant and stop raising nursery fees?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, Madam Speaker, if I respond to every false rumour and misrepresentation of the member opposite, I won't have time to put good news on the record, like the good news that we're going to be building 20 brand-new schools for the students of Manitoba; like the good news that we're going to be strengthening our public education system and empowering parents to have an even greater role and opportunity for more input, for more consideration of their views, something that was badly missed under the previous administration for many, many years.

And the good news, Madam Speaker, continues with the fact that we will be making more resources available for education on the front line that will allow us to add to the number of teachers' assistants, improve the quality of education, better services for high-need students that will assist our educators in that respect.

Parents are concerned that their education system's been failing their children, Madam Speaker, and better education starts today.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, again, that question was not about the \$4.2 million that this Premier has

cut from the education system this year, nor was that question about the further \$3 million that he cut from teacher salaries and from clinician salaries across the province.

I'm going to table a letter that illustrates exactly what the question was about. This is a letter directed to the Premier and to his minister, today, from parents in the child-care sector, from parents who have children in the nursery program. They are upset with years of frozen funding and zero commitments to increase operating grants. They're upset that this government is cutting the nursery support program. At the end of the day, this is about early-childhood education, some of the most important years in a child's life.

Will the Premier tell these parents today that he plans to stop with the cuts, he will provide clarity on Bill 47 and that he will bring forward a—finally, a new approach that prioritizes early-childhood education in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm happy to have the opportunity to share with Manitobans that, in terms of our funding for those people who need that vulnerable support—or, for child care, our funding is \$460 million higher than it ever was under any NDP government.

I'm also pleased to say that, in terms of issues like child care, which the member's referenced in his preamble, that we've created over 4,000 new positions for children to be cared for in a child-care environment that's healthy and good and supportive to them, and we've also maintained the second lowest child-care fees in the country of Canada.

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

AgriStability Program Federal Changes

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So, Madam Speaker, I can assure the First Minister that parents will still be waiting for those answers on Bill 47 and on the cuts to nursery programs.

Now, we also know that farmers and producers, who are the backbone of the economy here in Manitoba, are still waiting for answers, when it comes to the member for Fort Whyte, on the AgriStability offer that the federal government has made.

Again, the Keystone Agricultural Producers are strongly supportive of this initiative. The federal

minister has clearly indicated that they are waiting for an answer from the Premier, and yet the Premier has simply refused this request up to now.

And so, it's a pretty simple question, Madam Speaker: Does the Premier support the federal government's AgriStability changes, yes or no?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, as a member of this Legislature who grew up on a farm, I understand which end of the cow to feed. I don't know that the member does, but I'm happy to give him instruction on that.

I do also understand the NDP record on agriculture, and I'm happy to give him—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —a little bit of a preliminary history lesson if he'd be interested in knowing the background on how the NDP government disrespected the agricultural families of our province for the entire time they were in government.

I'm—but I am not surprised to see him endorse a federal carbon tax that will multiply the burden on Manitoba farm families amazingly, that he is defending the record of the NDP on creating a 40 per cent higher hydro rate, that he actually supports the record of the NDP government on consolidating—against their will—rural Manitoba municipalities, that he actually opposed our efforts to work with Indigenous leadership and end the dangerous and archaic practice of night hunting.

You know, week after week, the member keeps stacking up positions that demonstrate clearly to the farm families of this province how little he truly understands or cares about them.

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

Mr. Kinew: Again I'll provide clarity to the Premier's answer. I'll table these documents that demonstrate a missing piece of the conversation on the AgriStability program.

So, again, this RFP, Madam Speaker, is a partnership between the Conservative premiers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and actually what they're looking to do is to potentially privatize the delivery of a program to replace AgriStability.

So, again, I table the RFP for the Premier, and perhaps he would like to explain to farmers and producers in Manitoba why it is that he's doing all of this under cover.

Why is he being secretive? Why is he not providing an answer to the federal minister who's been asking about AgriStability? And what does he, in fact, intend to do with this important farm insurance program?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I won't go into fantasyland with the member, though he likes to reside there all too often, Madam Speaker. I'll only say that there are valid reasons why, in the three most productive agricultural provinces in the country of Canada, every single government, every single agriculture minister, is very, very concerned about the direction that the Ontario-led federal ag department is wanting to go.

We're very concerned about their focus on short-term optics at the expense of strengthening sustainable agriculture in our country, and we're very concerned that this rush to appear to be doing something is not the right approach to take when it comes to supporting Manitoba family farms.

Agriculture's a vital and critical part of our economy. It's been a growing contributor to the recovery of our economy after years of neglect under the NDP government previous, and it's going to continue to be a key part going forward with the right programs designed in the right way and the support of Saskatchewan and Alberta as we move forward as partners in developing our ag economy, Madam Speaker.

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

Manitoba Bridge Grant Program Request to Include Beef Producers

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, it doesn't make any sense as to why the First Minister would conceal this information from the ag industry. Why wouldn't they consult? Why wouldn't they speak to people?

Again, they're conducting all of these deals behind the scenes, in the shadow of darkness, Madam Speaker. And, again, the reasons are very clear. We've been hearing about it from producers right across the province, including in southwestern Manitoba. You look at the beef industry, producers are 'faying'—facing higher input costs and they're not getting as good prices at market.

We've made a simple proposal to the Finance Minister and to this Premier that he make the Bridge Grant program accessible to beef producers. There is

unused money left in the program. It could easily go out into the community to help the beef producers.

Will the Premier commit today to expanding the Bridge Grant program to allow ag producers, cattle producers to be qualified?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): That's the problem with the NDP: they already spent that money 18 times, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is they're very happy to make promises, and the member's very happy to pretend that he's—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —Santa Claus, and the—everybody in rural Manitoba knows that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —Madam Speaker.

The embarrassment of the member should be that there's nothing new with you-know-who, that he's simply repeating the failed strategies of the past, trying to buy farmers with promises of program spending. And they've just gone through a couple of the best years in their history. It's just the wrong approach to take. He doesn't know Manitoba farm families; he hasn't got a clue about what motivates them.

What motivates them is, yes, to make a profit, and yes, to make sure they have a sustainable economic platform in which they can see their children employed closer to home. And that's what they get with this government, and they never got it with the NDP.

Inclusive Education Curriculum Request for Government Support

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, last week our Education Minister used a quote from the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils to push this government's regressive approach to curriculum on, and I quote, sensitive content. End quote.

What this government calls sensitive content means raising awareness about Indigenous history, about the effects of colonization, overdose awareness, anti-racism education, or lessons on human sexuality, gender identity and consent.

* (14:10)

Madam Speaker, MAPC has apologized for their outdated statement. They've taken it off their website and have said they support a progressive curriculum. I'll table it for the minister today.

Will the minister get up and apologize for his attempts to undermine inclusive and progressive education in Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure where the member opposite is getting the information from. Clearly, what—we've had a policy in place on this particular topic for years. In fact, it was the same policy under the NDP.

Madam Speaker, all we're doing is we're putting that policy into legislation. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the minister's approach did absolutely nothing but sow anxiety amongst teachers, who are rightly concerned that Bill 64 is a regressive approach to inhibit their ability to teach inclusive lessons. Instead of using this opportunity to actually work towards a more progressive curriculum, this act reinforces the Province's past approach to sensitive content in schools.

Manitobans know how important these subjects are to personal and professional success later on in life, and we know a more progressive approach is necessary.

Will the minister stand up and commit to supporting a progressive curriculum for all Manitoba students today?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, the policy hasn't changed. The policy is now implemented through Bill 64. I will say we had close to 40,000 submissions through the K-to-12 review.

We are not done consulting with Manitobans. We will continue to consult with Manitobans when it comes to sensitive content. We have laid that out very clearly. There's a lot of work to do on this front and so many other fronts when it comes to education. We will continue to engage in—Manitobans.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, we recognize that one ideal place for these conversations is in the home. However, the reality is that, for many reasons, there are some cases where it's simply not happening. The parent maybe doesn't feel comfortable or knowledgeable on certain topics.

This doesn't make these topics less essential to learn about. In fact, it speaks to the historical gaps in our education system and the need for a more progressive and inclusive curriculum.

These subjects are important lessons for all Manitoban students to learn, and they'll not only gain important knowledge but also valuable lessons in empathy, in acceptance and in tolerance.

Will the minister stand in his place today and commit to a more progressive and inclusive curriculum, yes or no?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we've clearly said that we are going to address curriculum and we're going to engage Manitobans in terms of new curriculum development.

Madam Speaker, this bill puts in legislation what was previously policy. What it does, it reinforces what happens in practice and supports parental choice relating to their children's education. It requires notifying parents when physical health education curriculum is being delivered.

And, it also requires the education authority to have a respect for human diversity policy, to promote a safe and inclusive 'vironment.'

Madam Speaker, more work to do.

Climate Change Government Position

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Climate change is real, and we must act to avoid disaster. Unfortunately, Conservatives do not agree.

This weekend, the federal party voted down a resolution to recognize that climate change is real and that action must be taken. This is a party—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Naylor: —not fit to govern, Madam Speaker.

Climate change is an existential crisis. It must be acknowledged, real targets must be set and real action must be taken. And leaders must speak out when this reality is questioned.

Will the minister condemn any group or party that does not acknowledge the reality of human-caused climate change? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Climate change is real. Our government has initiated multiple projects that address climate change—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: We are not all about words; we are about actions.

And I would welcome the member to put her party's record on climate change against our government's record any day. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Whoops.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, the minister's actions are no different than the beliefs of her federal Conservative cousins.

Asked by the press why her government wasn't setting meaningful targets nor taking aggressive action, here is the word salad delivered by the Minister of Conservation: So, those actual emissions that are collected are not necessarily the concern. The concern is we're following a trajectory that's going to get us to really dangerous levels. Are they going to be climbing at a rate that's just absolutely going to be detrimental or faster to us?

This is nonsensical, and it's irresponsible as anything coming from the federal party.

Why is the minister standing in the way of real progress in addressing climate change?

Mrs. Guillemard: And the member will know that those comments were made specific to our carbon savings account, something she's probably not familiar with because her government never had one.

In fact, I will point out that the OAG report on the previous NDP government's climate action highlighted that the Province conducted no economic or scientific analysis in setting the 2008 or the 2015 targets.

Madam Speaker, they're all words. We're about action.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Naylor: This government delivered ancient PPE, and now this government's looking back on ancient climate policies instead of taking any responsibility for the last five years.

This minister tells local reporters that she has found the balance on climate change, that she has balanced the positions on both sides of this issue.

So, to get that straight, Madam Speaker, on one side we have science, and we have people that know that climate change is an 'exidental'—existential threat that requires immediate action. On the other side, we have climate deniers—those who will not acknowledge that climate change is real.

There is no balancing these—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Guillemard: I'm really happy to hear that the member opposite has discovered science. Maybe she can help educate her fellow members.

If my focus was solely on scoring political points—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard:—then our record would be a slam dunk, but the focus should be, rightly, on slowing climate change for the sake of our planet.

I am positive that the member opposite can agree with me on that point.

Post-Secondary Education Funding Concerns

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): The Pallister government continues to cut post-secondary institutions, and they are using the pandemic as—to sneak in requirements for their funding.

* (14:20)

The so-called transitional support is actually made up of funding cut from base budgets from our institutions then partially returned, but with strings attached. It's clear that, from the beginning, this funding is a—the funding model change from this government, but even in places like Alberta, they are backing off, announcing that they would pare back implementation due to difficulties from institutions.

Now, I asked the minister, Madam Speaker: How much funding does he intend to be contingent on artificial topics? Will it be 10 per cent, 20 per cent or will it be whatever—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I thank the member opposite for the question.

It is—it's interesting that the member stands today to talk about funding. Madam Speaker, \$1 billion in post-secondary education, this year alone, to all our post-secondary institution partners. Where they're—where they got it wrong, we're getting it right.

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

Mr. Moses: Core operating funding will once again be cut for post-secondary institutions this coming year. At Brandon University, their budget—teaching positions for next year is more than \$1 million less than what they were projecting this year, and I'll table the documents to show that.

These are hard choices by our post-secondary institutions, leaving positions vacant and defunding areas that deserve support. And this government is implementing a variable tuition-based model in each area of study, will—that will only make our institutions and post-secondaries worse.

Why is this government causing so much damage to our post-secondary institutions?

Mr. Ewasko: We are here to clean up the damage from the previous NDP government, Madam Speaker.

We know that the previous year was unprecedented. We're working closely with our post-secondary partners and working on moving forward with many great initiatives to ensure that student success in this province is well balanced, keeping tuitions low, with also our programs—increasing the quality of programs here in this province.

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

Mr. Moses: After cutting hundreds of nursing positions across the province—50 nursing seats at Red River College last year—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) went on to say he wanted institutions to be more open and open more nursing spaces, which—we need more nurses.

Now, this is a contradictory approach.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Moses: This is a contradictory approach. At Brandon University—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —amongst the positions cut for funding this year are nursing positions cut and psychiatric nursing positions cut, and I'll table the 'dudget'—budget documents to show that. Once again, this government says one thing and does the other, Madam Speaker.

Why is this government undermining our post-secondary institutions?

Mr. Ewasko: I bring the member's attention to the fact that that's a microphone in front of him, not a megaphone, Madam Speaker. We can all hear him in here.

Madam Speaker, we're working closely with students, student groups, faculty, post-secondary leaders to make Manitoba's post-secondary education here in this province one of the best in the world. I just wish the member would go and do some homework and just stop fear-mongering Manitoba students, in addition to their parents.

Thank you.

Justice System Systemic Inequality

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Peter Nygard has been given accommodations that no other Manitoban in a provincial correctional facility has been given. He has a phone in his cell that he has access to for 16 hours a day, a TV, a chair, two mattresses and a special diet, Madam Speaker.

Now, while Mr. Nygard has unfettered access to his own phone for 16 hours a day, the rest of Manitobans currently housed in correctional facilities have to spend \$3 each time they make a phone call for 15 minutes. This Pallister government continues to enforce barriers for Manitobans living in correctional facilities.

Will the minister tell us today why Mr. Nygard is getting special treatment?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for the question.

Mr. Nygard is getting no special treatment from Manitoba Corrections.

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

Ms. Fontaine: It's clear that this government prioritizes rich, powerful, white men over addressing systemic barriers and inequities in our correctional facilities, Madam Speaker.

Most Manitobans living in correctional facilities have little to no income. John Hutton from the John Howard Society, and I—he says, and I quote: Those who are lucky enough to have a job inside the correctional facility as a trustee would be paid six hours—\$6 a day, or two phone calls. End quote.

We know how important the ability to connect with family, friends and communities are to create community supports for someone who is transitioning out of the correctional facility.

Will the minister commit today to reducing barriers and allow for free access to phones for all Manitobans living within correctional facilities?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, words matter and the member should understand that it's an atrocious allegation that she just made.

I would ask her to review Hansard when it comes out tomorrow. I would accept her apology when it comes.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Indigenous, Black and people-of-colour Manitobans have vastly different experience in correctional facilities than the one that's being currently experienced by Peter Nygard. William Ahmo, an Indigenous man, recently died after an incident with correctional officers at Headingley, and before that incident, he had told his family that people living in Manitoba correctional facilities are treated as less than human.

So while Nygard gets a phone, a TV, mattresses, cells—a cell that's large enough to house three people, Manitobans that are currently housed there that are not white and rich are being discriminated against, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister commit to addressing systemic inequities in Manitoba's justice system in a meaningful way today? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the member's premise is preposterous. It is regrettable. I would think that the

Leader of the Opposition would want to speak to her about the quality of that question.

Madam Speaker, she is reflecting on all Justice officials, all Corrections officials. She's calling all of those people who work hard on behalf of Manitobans racists. It's not true.

Establishment of Parent Advisory Councils Participation of Marginalized Communities

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I hope all members will take the opportunity to read John Wiens' assessment of the Pallister government's wrecking ball—taking a wrecking ball to the public education system.

This government's claim that it will somehow empower parents, when Bill 64 makes it absolutely clear that parent councils will be powerless, is a terrible manipulation, but there's a deeper problem. When I was involved with the parent council at my children's elementary school, we met others in the Winnipeg School Division. One school might be fundraising for a school trip to somewhere else in Canada, but another in inner-city Winnipeg was fundraising to buy a washer or dryer just so students could have clean clothes.

Now, the Premier wants to dismiss poverty but ignores that both parents working full time may not be able to make ends meet.

How are parents who are refugees or who can't speak English or who are working 60 hours a week—how are they supposed to be part of a parent council and engage and defend their children's—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): A great many Manitoba parents who are heroic in their behaviour make the decision to back their kids in their pursuit of a better life through education.

A great number of Manitoba parents, including parents who raised people in this Chamber and have for generations, made sacrifices to make sure they were involved in their children's education, read to their children, made the sacrifice of learning themselves, of going back, in many cases, to additional training, becoming lifelong learners; they led by example. Manitoba parents do that now all across this province.

* (14:30)

The member belittles Manitoba's parents, but at least, Madam Speaker, as opposed to the NDP—who

spend all their time talking about trustees and the rights of superintendents—at least the member's got it right because he's now talking about parents. Good for him.

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

Mr. Lamont: Now, the government again wants to brush off children in poverty and say that it's not an excuse, but let's set aside for a moment that for 30 years the NDP and PCs have trapped tens of thousands of people in poverty by freezing EI rates at 1986 levels.

We all know—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —that there are 10,000 children in the care of CFS. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: They go to school too. You would be poor, too, if the Manitoba government took your family's land, took you from your family and then took \$90,000 in Children's Special Allowances that was yours. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: Who is going to advocate for these children: the foster parents, the government?

Did anyone in this government consider this so-called reform will once again harm the most vulnerable children in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I appreciate the member raising the issue of addressing Indigenous property rights. That's why we have tens of thousands of acres of treaty land entitlement in the hands of First Nations now, where there was nothing done under the previous administration.

But it's interesting, Madam Speaker. He claims that the reforms we're proposing to empower parents and give them a greater opportunity for involvement somehow lack the opportunity for the influence, when in—the reality of the situation is those opportunities weren't there in the past, not to the degree they will be now.

So he can't have it both ways. He says, on the one hand, that the parents aren't capable of using these opportunities for additional input, for gathering information; on the other hand, he says it's toothless reform.

Madam Speaker, it's neither of those things. It's an opportunity to give parents more of a say, more input, more knowledge themselves about how their children are being educated, and to be heard in a way that the previous administration refused to listen and that the member apparently is unwilling to address and support.

And that's unfortunate, Madam Speaker, because these are positive changes.

Setting of Student Union Fees Government Interference Concerns

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): As was brought to the minister's attention last week, in most cases, student union fees are approved by a board of governors. For example, as part of the UMSU act, U of M student fees must be approved by their board of governors.

It's not enough for the minister to claim that the existing definition of a board within the legislation is going to protect democratically set student fees.

Madam Speaker, what assurances, besides tweets and emails, can student unions and associations expect to receive from the minister to protect them from any government interference and to protect democratically set student fees?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I'd like to thank the member for the question.

I'd like to read, for the member, from the Manitoba alliance post-secondary students: We presented to the minister with an amendment to Bill 33, which he agrees would be beneficial to bring forward some clarity. His team is working on clarified wording and will provide an update. We thank the minister for his collaboration and commitment to protect the autonomy of student unions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba's Protein Industry Government Investment

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): As you know, last week, we acknowledged Ag Awareness Day, a day to celebrate one of Manitoba's leading industries and a key economic driver.

One of today's strengths in the agriculture industry is protein.

Would the Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development provide an update on the advancements

the Manitoba government has made, and continues to make, in positioning itself as a global leader in sustainable animal and plant protein?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): I thank the member for that important question.

Just one of Manitoba's many strengths is our protein industry, and we are on track to be a global leader in the protein industry.

Manitoba held its second annual Protein Summit in late February with—attracting over 650 participants from over 30 countries. There's been over \$680 million in protein investments in Manitoba, which has created 600 new jobs since 2019.

However, to be a global leader in sustainable animal and plant protein, we know it cannot be done alone. Thanks to the Manitoba Protein Consortium and our innovative stakeholders, Manitoba is positioned to become the Silicon Valley of plant and animal protein.

Immigrant Integration Program Future Funding Plans

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, last week I asked the minister for an update on the yearly funding for the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program, and he completely evaded my question.

This important program provides valuable supports and works to ensure that newcomers don't fall through the cracks of our immigration system. However, 17 service provider agencies still have not received any confirmation on their status in the new fiscal year.

I am giving the minister another opportunity to tell us today: Will he commit to maintaining funding for the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program, yes or no?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I thank the member for their question.

As the member knows that, settlement services is in the department of the Canadian federal government, and we want the member of the—the sitting member to tune in shortly after April 7th or on April 7th, budget day, for some good news coming to Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I suggest that the minister—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: I suggest that the member—that the minister also considers tuning into the needs of these newcomer families.

The Pallister government instituted a regressive head tax on newcomers in this province. It's really shameful. In justifying this, the Pallister government said that they would put the funds towards the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program to support the most vulnerable newcomers.

The minister's annual report says that the program is funded for three years, yet here we are 11 days from the end of the fiscal year, and there is still no word whether this funding will continue. The head tax continues but supports for immigration are uncertain.

Why is the minister charging this unfair head tax while cutting immigrant programming?

Mr. Ewasko: Well, Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up and speak to the shameful record of the previous NDP government in regards to immigration. Under the previous NDP government, the wait-list for getting approval was well over two years.

I know that when we formed government, we were under three years—we were under one year. Madam Speaker, I'm proud to report today, we're at 60 days.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson (Ms. Adams). Does the honourable member for Thompson have a petition?

The honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara)?

The honourable member for River Heights.

Cochlear Implant Program

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, 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 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 on to the inner ear, the cochlea.

* (14:40)

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implanting 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 during the summer of 2018, as it's only able to implement 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 offers 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 in 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.

Signed by Wendy Leggett, Margaret Robson, Lorraine Bedard-Janssens and many other Manitobans.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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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 has been signed by many Manitobans.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or urine sample.

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at further risk in extreme weather, be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer wait times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they are able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all the phlebotomy, blood sample, sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses)? The honourable member for St. Vital?

The honourable member for St. James.

Public Child-Care Grants

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoban families.

* (14:50)

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early childhood educators leaving the sector.

While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government's cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keeping public child care public, affordable and accessible for all Manitoban families.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Sandhu)?

The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw)? Honourable member for Fort Garry, on a petition?

The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)?

Madam Speaker: Grievances. Are there any grievances?

If not, orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I am going to seek leave for a small change to the Sessional Order. So I am seeking leave to amend the Sessional Order passed by this House on March 15th, 2021, by deleting item 5 and replacing it with the following:

- On March 22nd, 2021, the House will consider Interim Supply. Once concurrence and third reading of the interim appropriation act passes, the Government House Leader may call second readings of bills which may be considered specified. At 4:55 p.m., the Speaker will interrupt debate on bills to allow for royal assent of interim appropriation act—of the interim appropriation act, with the House to not see the clock until royal assent is granted.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to amend the Sessional Order passed by this House on March 15th, 2021, by deleting item No. 5 and replacing it with the following:

- On March 22nd, 2021, the House will consider Interim Supply. Once concurrence and third reading of the interim appropriation act passes, the Government House Leader may call second readings of bills which may be considered specified. At 4:55 p.m., the Speaker will interrupt debate on bills to allow for royal assent of the interim appropriation act, with the House to not see the clock until royal assent is granted.
[Agreed]

Mr. Goertzen: Pursuant to that, could you please call Interim Supply, and, following that, if there's time, bills 63 and 51 for debate?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will now consider Interim Supply this afternoon, and if there's time after that, to address bills 63 and 51.

I will therefore now call Interim Supply.

Messages

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I have a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, which I would like to table.

Madam Speaker: Please stand for the reading of the message.

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, I have been informed of a proposed bill, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021, which will provide interim authority to make expenditures from the Consolidated Fund effective April 1st, 2021, pending approval of the appropriation act, 2021.

The bill also provides for payments to develop or acquire inventory and against certain liabilities accrued and unpaid as of March 31st, 2021. The bill will also provide a portion of commitment authority for future years.

I recommend the proposed bill to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Interim Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have before us the—for us—our consideration for resolution respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The first resolution, pertaining to part A, Operating Expenditures, for the Interim Supply, reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022, as a sum not exceeding \$11,772,882,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount set out in the 2020 Estimates, including Supplementary Estimates, for the purposes set out for part A, Operating Expenditures, for those Estimates.

Does the minister have opening comments? No. Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments? No.

The floor is open for questions. Is there any questions?

Okay, the honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I'm wondering if the minister can tell us: So, last spring, he appropriated \$1 billion, and then he came back two more times, \$577 million and another more recent \$450 million, so a little over \$2 billion.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how much of that \$2 billion has gone unspent?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): The reason why there was three budgetary bills: the first one, of course, was the expenditures on COVID relief. The second bill was related to monies that were flowing out, so through the safe start agreement we got monies—as an example, \$106 million that had to flow out through 'municipalities,' so we needed a second budgetary bill. The third appropriation was to enhance some of the support programs that were in place.

And so all that money—and potentially more—would be spent by year end.

Mr. Wasyliv: So just to clarify with the minister, all \$2 billion are going to be spent by March 31st? Or will there be a significant amount unspent by March 31st of this year, and how much will be unspent by March 31st, 2021?

Mr. Fielding: Yes. We're on track to have somewhere around a \$2-billion deficit. We'll be bringing the Q3 report out later that gives your estimates in terms of where we'll land the year, for the most part, but obviously we wouldn't ask for additional appropriation bill—which we all voted in this House last week—if we didn't anticipate spending that money.

*(15:00)

Mr. Wasyliv: I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how much of the close to \$900 million in the rainy day fund has gone unspent, and will all of it be spent before March 31st, 2021?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we won't make the same mistakes that the NDP made of draining the rainy day fund. Thank goodness we had the foresight to have additional monies as of March.

There was a time where we couldn't access the capital markets like every other provincial government. That has changed. We use a combination of using things like the rainy day fund, debt financing, as well as revenues we bring in from the government.

We have committed to tap into the rainy day fund before the end of the fiscal year.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): To the minister, as of September 30th, the federal government had contributed an extra \$648 million to the Province, above what had been committed earlier.

Can the minister tell us whether there have been additional funds come in from the federal government since September 30th?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, it was an important agreement that was established through the premiers, as well as through the federal government. All governments establish some additional money through the Safe Restart agreements, and so Premier—our Premier (Mr. Pallister) negotiated that with the Prime Minister. Those are the monies that are involved in that—of all—I'll refer them to our Q2 mid-year report that identifies that, within the monies that have been appropriated or received from the federal government in respect to that.

I can tell the member that that money, and more, will be spent. We've allocated probably about \$3.2 billion over the next few years to address COVID types of relief. So the money that the federal government got agreement with the Province we spent and much, much more.

The money from the federal government represents about 20 per cent of the money that we'd spent. The Treasury of the provincial government will take on 80 per cent of the additional supports related to COVID in terms of health, education and supports for business and individuals.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how many Manitoba businesses have closed or ceased operations in the past year?

Mr. Fielding: I can tell you that our government has taken the lead in providing supports for small businesses. In fact, there has been 32,000 individual payments that have given out—that have been allocated with different businesses. There's about 125,000 businesses, so I'll let the member do the math. Roughly 28 per cent of businesses in the province of Manitoba got some sort of support from the provincial government. That includes also the Bridge protection program.

The Leader of the Opposition was completely wrong when he identified the fact that there's monies that is left over; there isn't. We've allocated initially

\$200 million, that's gone to \$215 million, as—just as an example. Over 15,000 businesses got supports.

Mr. Gerrard: I note that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and the provincial government received considerably over \$2 billion from the federal government in equalization transfers. How much of that money was spent on the provision of health care?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we're tracking, as mentioned. In terms of what the mid-tier report talks about, there's also monies that was appropriated. I believe it was \$633 million. There is a section—I'm just looking at the mid-year report right here and believe it is on page 414. So it identifies all our expenditures, in terms of things like a different—additional appropriations for the Department of Health.

So we're more than on track. In fact, we're spending over \$638 million more on things like PPE, vaccine readiness, you name it; that's been a part of the pandemic response so far.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can tell us, there's a number of federal programs that require matching funds from the Province, and the Province has not matched those funds and has undersubscribed those programs.

I'm wondering if the minister can give us a dollar value of how much federal money is not coming to Manitoba because this government hasn't chosen to provide the matching funding?

Mr. Fielding: Well, member's completely wrong. As indicated, the Province has allocated over \$3.2 billion to pandemic supports. That includes about \$1.8 billion this year as well as other things like capital infrastructure improvements that helps the economy. As mentioned, the federal supports have been important agreements that have been established with the federal government.

I'll refer you again to the mid-year report, that it kind of identifies what money has been associated, as a per—as per the mid-year report, and it looks like it's \$648 million. It is set out right here. I can tell you, again, we're investing with the federal dollars that's there, that's 20 per cent to the money that's being spent. And so we anticipate spending all that money and more.

Mr. Gerrard: Just further exploring the, you know, counterpart of federal and provincial dollars, there's been, for example, a recent announcement of a inter-section improvement at Highway 1 and Highway 16.

Can the minister tell us whether there's any federal money involved in that project?

Mr. Fielding: That comes from the provincial Treasury. That was part of the \$500-million commitment to infrastructure investments. So that's made up of things like waste-water projects as well as federal—or, rather, I'm sorry, provincial restart monies to help pave roads and get the economy booming again. So that isn't related to the federal dollars, that's provincial Treasury dollar money.

At the end of the day, we do get money from the federal government that goes into Treasury, and some things have earmarks or some things have strings attached, I guess I would call it. That is not one of them.

Mr. Wasyliw: I have no further questions in this section.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the honourable member for River Heights have any more questions?

The honourable member for Fort–River Heights, can you put on your mic?

Mr. Gerrard: I'm sorry. I have no further questions in this section.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, if there's no further questions, shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

The second resolution pertaining to part B, Capital Investments, for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022, a sum not exceeding \$649,989,000 being 90 per cent of the total amount set out in the 2020 Estimates, including Supplementary Estimates, for the purposes set out in part B, Capital Investments, of those Estimates.

Does the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) have an opening comment? Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

Does the honourable—okay, does—the floor is open for questions. Any questions? If there's no questions, is the committee ready for the question?

Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

So we'll go on to the third resolution pertaining to part C, Loans and Guarantees, for Interim Supply reads as follows: 'reser'–'resor'–

RESOLVED—sorry—that there be granted to Her Majesty, for a fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022, a

sum not exceeding \$332,532,000 being 90 per cent of total amount set out in the 2020 Estimates, including Supplementary Estimates, for the purpose set out in part C, Loans and Guarantees, for those Estimates—of those Estimates.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments? Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

The floor is open for questions. Any questions?

Is the committee ready for the question? *[interjection]*

Oh, sorry, there's a question from the member from River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder if the minister could give us a further breakdown of exactly what those several hundred million dollars of expenses will be related to this request for Supply?

Mr. Fielding: So this is an estimate of what expenditures will have up to the 90 per cent of what we had spent last year. So we'll be identifying in the budget, obviously, where the expenditures will be going. This just provides additional appropriation or money through Interim Supply to address any needs of the government if we don't pass this, whether it be in operating or capital.

Obviously, civil servants wouldn't get paid on the part A. Part B is in terms of some of the capital projects that we've got commitments, maybe it's a two- or three-year types of initiatives in terms of road construction projects. Part C is kind of more related to loans. That's kind of related to the MASC loans or student loans that go forth.

And part D is kind of related to things such as other reporting entities, which, you know, is things like Manitoba Hydro, where you need—you borrow money, as well as other universities and what have you, for projects like Keeyask and other things.

So that's kind of the breakdown of the financials. It goes to about 90 per cent, very consistent with other years, for kind of the capital-related component. The operating component provides funding up to 75 per cent of the appropriated dollars from last year that will pay the operating so, again, we can pay civil servants.

* (15:10)

So hopefully that identifies that from the member.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, one further question. Just an estimate of how long we can go before there would need to be a budget passed or further Supply: Will this take us 'til the end of May or the end of June, or what particular date?

Mr. Fielding: Great question. This takes us to the end of December, so it's consistent with the interim appropriation act that we passed last year.

So, again, it provides funding for, you know, A through D in operating, kind of the capital component, the loans and stuff—and again, that's for student aid and MASC-type of funding loan—farm lending—and part D is operating—or, rather, capital dollars for other reporting entities like Hydro. So that will go all the way to December.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there any further questions?

Mr. Gerrard: Just to clarify, then, we should not have to have another Supply, provided the budget is passed by the end of—well, early December when we would wind up in the fall session.

Mr. Fielding: Well, what this—this is just a reminder for the member. So this is interim appropriation. So obviously once the budget comes out it identifies where the spending dollars are. This just allows the government to operate from now until December, again, operating dollars, the capital dollars that are there. The budget will come out on the 7th.

This will—interim appropriation is the funding source for the government interim—until the appropriation act gets passed later on in the year.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, if there no further questions, is the committee ready for the question?

Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

So now we'll go to the fourth resolution pertaining to part D, Capital Investments By Other Reporting Entities for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022, a sum not exceeding \$2,005,097,000 being 90 per cent of total amount set out in 2020 Estimates, including Supplementary Estimates, for the purpose set out in part D, Capital Investments by the Other Reporting Entities, of those Estimates.

Does the minister have any opening comments? No. Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

The floor is open for questions. Any questions? No questions?

Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

That concludes business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted four resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Interim Supply Motion

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022, out of the Consolidated Fund, for the purposes set out in the 2020 Estimates, including Supplementary Estimates, sums not excluding 11 billion—*[interjection]*—exceeding? Sorry—just—I'll repeat that again, Madam Speaker—sums not exceeding \$11,772,882,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditures, of the Estimates; \$649,989,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount voted as set out in part—*[interjection]*—apologize, Madam Speaker, just start again here. Rookie mistake.

Number one, is \$11,772,882,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditures, of those Estimates; \$649,989,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount voted, as set out in part B, Capital Investments, of those Estimates; \$332,532,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount voted, as set out in part C, Loans and Guarantees, of those Estimates; \$2,005,097,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount voted, as set out in part D, Capital Investments by Other Reporting Entities, of those Estimates.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending

March 31st, 2022, out of the Consolidated Fund, for the purposes set out in the 2020 Estimates, including Supplementary Estimates, sums not exceeding \$11,772,882,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditures, of those Estimates; and \$649,989,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investments, of those Estimates; \$332,532,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part C, Loans and Guarantees, of those Estimates; and \$2,005,097,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part D, Capital Investments by Other Reporting Entities, of those Estimates.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 70—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 70, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

* (15:20)

SECOND READINGS

Bill 70—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, second by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 70, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021, be now read a second time and be referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: I'll making some fairly brief comments here, as well as trying to explain a bit more in terms of the financing of it, and then I'll make some comments as well to the committee—whole.

Bill 70, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021, provides interim spending authority for the 2021-22 fiscal year, pending approval of the 2021 appropriation act. The amount of interim operating expenditure authority requested is \$11,772,882,000.

The authority represents 75 per cent of the sums included in part A, Operating Expenditures of the 2020-21 Estimates of expenditure and includes the Supplementary Estimates of expenditure in 2021-22.

The amount of interim capital investment spending authority requested is \$649,989,000. The authority represents 90 per cent of the sums included in part B, Capital Investments, for the 2021-22 Estimates of expenditure.

The amounts of loan and guarantee—guaranteed authority represents is \$332,532,000. The authority represents 90 per cent of the sums included in part C, Loans and Guarantees, for the 2020-21 Estimates of expenditure.

And the amount of capital investments provided as loans to other reporting entities is \$2,005,097,000—authority represents 90 per cent of the sum included in part D, other reporting entities, capital investments, in the 2020-21 Estimates of expenditures.

The amount of expenditures that are authorized for developing of acquiring inventory for subsequent years is \$200 million. The amount of payments for long-term liabilities is \$88 million. The amount of future commitment authority including in the Interim Supply bill is \$2,635,097,000.

The authority provides for the commitment of expenditures to ensure the completion of projects are fulfilled, contracts initiated but not completed during the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

When Bill 70 reaches the committee stage, I can provide a bit more further comments.

Madam Speaker: Do members have any questions on the bill?

An Honourable Member: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I'm wondering if the minister can tell us that we now have four approved vaccines in Canada, and the government's saying that everybody in Manitoba will get a dose of the vaccine by May 18th: Given that we obviously are now awash in vaccines, is the minister planning to cancel the \$7.2-million non-refundable cheque to

Providence Therapeutics, and, if not, why not? Why are we spending that money when we obviously aren't going to get value from it?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our government's not going to make the mistake that the NDP is suggesting in terms of not being prepared. We obviously know the variants is here. We know that there potentially could be a third or fourth wave.

We're hopeful that we're through the bulk of the pandemic, but to have that technology and the research here, available to do things as maybe boosters, shots that would address some variant of the pandemic, we think makes a lot of sense for Manitobans.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the minister is follow-up from one earlier on. In the mid-term report, the money from the federal government was \$648 million. The minister said that this was 20 per cent of the extra expenditures, but in that same mid-year report, it says that the extra expenditures—total expenditure change on page 9 was \$1.456 billion; the \$648 million is actually 40—about 45 per cent, not just 20 per cent. Would the minister agree with that correction?

Mr. Fielding: No, I don't, unfortunately. So if you look at the mid-year report with—it identifies in this fiscal year, as of the mid-term report, is that we made about \$1.8 billion of expenditures for things like health, education, supports for people as well as businesses. The reason why the number of expenditures goes to 1.4 is because there's some savings in other departments; that monies was not spent. The \$3.2 billion represents additional expenditures that go into other years, whether that be things like capital expenditures which we committed over a two-year period.

So the money that was negotiated by our Premier (Mr. Pallister) with the other premiers, with the Prime Minister and the federal government is very much needed, but only represents about 20 per cent of our spend of the 3.2.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering, given that female workers have been disproportionately hit by the COVID recession, what specific programs is this government putting in place to make sure that they get back to work and have meaningful work when they get there?

Mr. Fielding: We know that some sectors, as well as women, as well as youth, were hit hard by the pandemic; some people call it a K-shaped recovery.

We know that if you look at the report that came out last Friday, that 16,200 Manitobans returned back to the workforce. Of that 16,000, about 75 per cent of that was women—12,300, in fact. Since 2021, there's about 16,100 women have found jobs; this is almost 3 times the number of men, that's respect to that. If you look at some of the sector-specific supports that we have in terms of the Risk Recognition Program, there's 80,000 Manitobans that got some sort of direct support, and of that, the vast majority went to sectors—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, just an extension of that. The—a lot of small businesses in particular, in areas like the travel industry, the hospitality industry and the arts and culture sector which were really badly affected, what is the minister planning in terms of restart in these sectors?

Mr. Fielding: Of course, this bill deals with monies that we're appropriating for next year, so we're going to identify our plan for the 2021 year, obviously, in the budget that does come up. But just to answer some of the questions for the member, there was also a senior support; there's 123,000 seniors that got a cheque to deal with pandemic-related support, so the 200 and—240-some-odd thousand Manitobans that got it. We also provided direct supports to 32,000 individual businesses. Some were women-owned as well as individual direct supports of 360,000 Manitobans. A good portion was for women.

Mr. Wasyliw: Was the—as the minister has already mentioned youth unemployment is some of the worst in Canada, so I'm wondering if he can indicate what specific support or programming he's going to put in place to ensure Manitoba's youth get back to work?

Mr. Fielding: Well, that is an important question, and I can say again we'll be introducing our budget fairly soon that will identify some. We do like a lot of the wage subsidy programs, so I will identify as we are talking about last year's; this is—give appropriation for next year. Total student jobs created last year by the provincial government was 9,628. We had a student job online matching tool that provided 604 hires. We had a student wage subsidy that provided positions for 4,992 different sectors; that was—dollar estimates was around \$24 million. Non-profit summer students, again, there was about 954,000; fall-winter STEP programs, there's about 172 students that were involved in this. The summer STEP programs—

* (15:30)

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Gerrard: To the Finance Minister, the rate of unemployment among Indigenous peoples continues to be higher than the provincial average.

So what is the minister's plan, in terms of ensuring that First Nation and Métis businesses do well and that the unemployment in the Indigenous community falls?

Mr. Fielding: We're very proud of the fact that, although still way too high, the unemployment rate is the second lowest in the country. So we think that is important. We know that labour force showed that the total job edged up by over 16,000, or part of that. Some, of course, were Indigenous, some were other ethnic backgrounds, as well as different sectors that really picked up.

So we think that although much, much more work needs to happen, that is a part of it. We do provide—again, over 32,000 individual businesses got supports from the government during this time period, as well as direct supports to Manitobans; 360,000 Manitobans of the 1.1 that are in the work area got direct supports. That's about 33 per cent. A large number were Indigenous families, as well as youth.

Mr. Wasyliv: We've been calling for sector-specific supports since October, and it was good to see the minister finally, a week ago, giving some supports to the tourism sector.

But I'm wondering why it took so long and will he commit today to providing sector-specific support for the hospitality industries, the arts and sports sectors?

Mr. Fielding: If you look at what the Parliamentary Budget Office said, that Manitoba's supports was second highest—second or third highest in the country—lots of supports that are there. I identified that over 32,000 businesses got supports. We're very happy to work with the hospitality sector, an \$8-million support for them to make sure they're getting through to the other side of the pandemic as well as they're able to look into some other programs. For instance, there's 300-some hotels that got the Bridge Grant program, which is upwards of 15,000.

So, again, 32,000 individual businesses of 125,000, 28 per cent of all businesses, got some sort of direct support from our government during the pandemic.

Mr. Gerrard: To the Finance Minister, there's a lot of Manitobans who are quite concerned about the future of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, and I wonder

if the Finance Minister's been any discussions with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers about the future of the team and the football league?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, there's been ongoing discussions with people from public health, as well as one of our ministers, the minister of legislative and—legislative affairs, in terms of what the summer will look like. Businesses, as well as festivals and carnivals and major sporting events, need to know what the summer will look like. A lot of that is dictated, of course, by the virus and what's going on with the variants and other aspects of it. So we are working closely with all these sectors, including the Blue Bombers.

Mr. Wasyliv: Well, we know this minister wasn't prepared for the second wave and he had no plan for businesses during that period of time.

We're now talking about a potential third wave, and if we go into a third restrictive lockdown, does the minister have some type of plan in place to support businesses and the economy in a third wave?

Mr. Fielding: Well, if the member doesn't think that providing direct supports to over 32,000 individual payments to businesses isn't being prepared and providing lots of financial supports, I'm not quite sure what is.

The Parliamentary Budget Office has suggested that Manitoba is second or third highest of all supports to individuals and businesses that are there. There is lot of supports. I encourage the member to stay tuned for a budget on the 7th of April that will put together our plan to support people, to make sure Manitobans are protected, as well as a road map to the future post-pandemic.

Mr. Gerrard: To the minister, I would know that the government was very concerned about situation in the North—had a save—or a Look North program and so on. But, as it happened, the North has been disproportionately affected economically. And so I'm just wondering what the minister plans for northern Manitoba, in terms of the next little while and how he's going to help those in northern Manitoba come out of the COVID pandemic doing well.

Mr. Fielding: I'll ask the member to stay tuned for a budget on the 7th.

We do think it's important—and there's a reason why the Golden Boy faces the North—that we think prosperity is there. We've obviously done things like, provide things like mining support—that we're working

with the Chamber of Commerce, as well as mayors and reeves, to make sure that's there.

There is some positive, I guess, points I would suggest in terms of what mining may look like. You might reference one of the newspapers—local newspapers—this weekend had talked about potential for further development that happens in North.

So we truly think that's something that is important and can have a major development impact on the North.

Mr. Wasyliw: Now, this minister's well aware that the retail sector has been one of the hardest hit sectors. And over the course of the pandemic, it's changed buying patterns to the point where people are now shopping online. People are creatures of habit and may stay shopping online.

What is the minister planning to do to get consumer confidence again, and so—getting Manitobans to walk into Manitoban stores and shop locally?

Mr. Fielding: A good question.

Number 1, when the retail sector needed supports, we did provide them through the bridge program. That's just one of the programs that were available. I think it's upwards of 2,800 retail business got support in one way or the other from the Bridge Grant—up to \$15,000.

I think the real answer is to making sure that we are beating the pandemic, and the people that are feeling safe and confident and go out can do that. I think it's part of having the right health safety measures to allow people to go in and shop locally.

There have been local investments—I'll give you two examples of that: buy local program, where there's been finances that been established, as well as a program for things like SkipTheDishes rebate program for local restaurants that are there to provide some supports.

But we're going to continue to do such in the budget coming forward.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, one of the announcements that the government made last fall was a virtual education hub that it was investing in, and I'd like an update from the Finance Minister in terms of how that investment worked out, and what are the plans for the coming year.

Hopefully all kids will be back in school in September. Does that mean that virtual education hub will continue, or will it be shut down?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I'd like to say that, you know, the pandemic would end, but I don't think that is the case, at least right now.

We want to make sure people are supported, so I think you will see additional dollars that will be appropriated to the education system. We did invest about \$185 million to the education system. We're on track to have that money appropriated by year end, and in future I think there will be some additional dollars.

I believe the member may be talking about the virtual centres that will be there, although the Education Minister would have far greater detail in respect to that. We do see—some of the things that we've learned in the pandemic is something that we would go forward. And, as such, I think it's important to make these investments in these areas.

But I will have him stay tuned until the 7th of April to have—make announcements on those types of things.

Mr. Wasyliw: Manitoba small businesses have been complaining about unfair competition from e-commerce giants like Amazon. Saskatchewan has recently brought in an e-commerce tax to address that inequality.

I'm wondering if the minister would commit to bringing in a similar tax in Manitoba to make things fair for small business, or would he reject that idea?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I would say that our government is really take a focal point of making life more affordable for individuals in terms of cutting PST, in terms of a whole bunch of different tax measures—the basic personal exemption, things like the payroll tax—to make life a little bit more affordable for businesses as well as consumers. We think it's good for business to do as such.

So those are things that are in place. Our government, for the most part, looks to reduce tax in so many different ways. With that being said, we do want to look at the local marketplace to make sure that there—people do buy locally. The member is right, we did make some further investments in things like a shop local campaign and others, which we'd like to build upon.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period is over.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak in debate?

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I'm just going to put some brief comments on the record.

Obviously—I think it should be obvious to this government—if it isn't, we're all in a lot of trouble—that COVID has revealed how unequal Manitoba is and we've seen how different people have been able to respond to this pandemic and this recession very differently, depending on their life circumstances.

* (15:40)

Fortunately, for a segment of Manitoba, this hasn't threatened their livelihood. It's certainly been inconvenient, it's certainly been stressful, it's certainly been difficult but they've been quite easily able to adapt.

But we know from COVID data that marginalized and racialized communities were disproportionately susceptible, not only to catching the virus but also have higher rates of mortality. And we also know that many of these marginalized and racialized communities were more vulnerable and less established in the workforce. Youth, newcomers, female workers all lost their jobs at disproportionate rates and in the sectors of the economy that they had a higher prevalence tended to be hit even harder.

We know that these communities need the most help in the eventual recovery and we also see that we have some significant gaps in our social safety net.

We know that this government didn't do any planning and were completely unprepared for the second wave, that we have the second highest mortality rate per capita in the country and, sadly, and it gives me no pleasure to say this, this government's woeful neglect has cost the lives of many Manitobans that could be with us here today if this government had the foresight and the vision to have prepared for the second wave.

But it didn't just go to the health aspects of it. It also went to the economy. This minister has told me in Estimates that he did not prepare for the second wave or the second lockdown, that they didn't have a plan, they didn't have any business supports and they were sort of—and it was quite obvious, I think, to any observers that it was just making up as the government went along and were just reacting and lurching to the complaints that were coming from the community. And they didn't ever get ahead of it.

And there are many, many businesses across Manitoba that are no longer in operation today because of that failed leadership. There are many businesses that are on the brink of collapse in Manitoba today because of that failed leadership. And this was completely foreseeable. Everybody knew that this was coming. Other jurisdictions with maybe a little bit more foresight, like BC, were getting ahead of this and not us, sadly.

And this government did very little consultation throughout the pandemic and, when they did, they did even less listening and they rolled out some very inadequate programs that left many Manitobans behind.

So my concern is that we haven't heard of any economic recovery plan and it hasn't been rolled out. I could hear from the minister that whatever type of plan they're cobbling together may be in the budget, but this is really not a time for sort of a political exercise. This is a time where the minister needs to show leadership and roll out a plan immediately, give a blueprint for the Manitoban economy so we know where we're going with this and not worry about whether or not he's stepping on his lead on budget night.

Unfortunately, everything with this government is crass and political and often ends up being quite vulgar, and it looks like this is no exception. Certainly, Manitobans deserve to have some straight talk and say, you know, here's our plan, this is what we intend to do. But we're not getting that.

And it is—I will give the government recognition when it's due. We have been calling for sector-specific support since October. They brought in the first sector support last week. There's no explanation about why the calls from the small business community were ignored until now—why, given all the time that had passed and all the conversations and all the discussion in the media, that they're only doing it now. But, you know, better late than never.

But what we haven't heard today is any supports to the hospitality industry, the arts and sports sectors, how we're going to get retail confidence back in Manitoba. Consumer confidence is a fickle thing and once it's gone, once people change their buying patterns, if they've moved online, even when there's no pandemic, they'll stay online because that just is easier and simpler for them. And that will mean ongoing hard times for our Manitoba small businesses and will continue to be a drag on our economy.

And we've heard no leadership and no direction from this minister about how he's going to re-establish consumer confidence, and how he's going to safely get Manitobans back into local Manitoban shops.

We know from the pandemic that some industries, especially large multinational tech companies like Amazon, have literally been making out like bandits, and this government doesn't have any plan to level the playing field.

You have a phenomenon in Canada and in Manitoba especially called showrooming, where people will walk into a local Manitoba-owned business, take a look at what goods are on sale; they will speak to the clerk; they'll get educated about all the different options and what's a good or bad product and then they promptly go home and they buy it online.

And the reason why they can get it cheaper online is that these big companies don't have to run brick-and-mortar stores; they don't have to have employees; they have a fraction of the overhead costs, and they have a competitive advantage. But they are not paying for the environmental costs of shipping in these products into Manitoba. It would pay a huge environmental cost. They are not paying taxes in Manitoba, and they are not paying to support the health care and the roads and everything else.

Some forward-thinking provinces have started to clamp down on this. In Quebec and in Saskatchewan, where they're bringing in e-commerce taxes in order that their small business community has a fighting chance, and we've seen with this government that they don't have a commitment to small business. They pay lip service to it, but when it's time to actually show up and do something, they're missing in action.

And by not leveling the playing field when it comes to e-commerce, and by basically subsidizing large, you know, multinationals like Amazon that have horrible environmental and labour practices, they're shipping jobs out of this province, and that is going to prolong the recession. It will—don't—won't do anything for the recovery, and it's specifically going to hurt the people who have been hurt: the youth and female and newcomer employees that have been so hurt by the crisis.

In addition, another concern we have is that there is all indications that we may be entering into a third wave, and if it is severe, there could be yet more tighter restrictions, further lockdown provisions, more

businesses being required to shut down in order to protect us again.

This government seems incapable of learning from the past. This—they are terrible students. They do not see how disastrous the second wave was, both from a public health point of view, but also from an economic point of view, and say, you know what? We've learned from it; we're going to get ready this time. Even if we don't have to put a plan in place, we're going to make sure that one's there.

Nothing like this. And, again, if we go into a more restrictive lockdown a third time, I'm hearing from small businesses that that will be the—that will be it for them. That will be the final blow, that they're teetering right now. They're hoping to just hang on, hang on, hang on, and maybe they can survive. But if they get another restrictive lockdown, that'll be it for their business.

And this government has no urgency, and they haven't had any urgency, either from a public health point of view, or from an economic point of view, throughout this whole past year. It is frightening how passive and disengaged this government has been with the actual pain and the hurt that Manitobans have been experiencing this year. It's mind-boggling and sad if it didn't have such horrible consequences for Manitobans.

And, you know, we've seen this government run the highest deficit in Manitoba's history, and they didn't do it responsively. They borrowed money, which taxpayers will now have to pay back, and what did they do with it? They cut taxes on the wealthiest Manitobans, the ones who have been least hurt by the pandemic, and that was a huge subsidy for the already comfortable and well-off in Manitoba and didn't do anything for our economy. And we will have to pay the interest and everything back on this borrowed money to basically give handouts to wealthy campaign donors. It's not right.

We've seen them throw money out the door, wasting on PPE, millions upon—tens of millions of dollars. They're also now wasting and doubling down on the \$7.2-million non-refundable payment for the Providence Therapeutics, a vaccine that will never come.

* (15:50)

We don't need it. On May 18th, they tell us, we're all going to be vaccinated, and Canada is going to be absolutely in—awash with vaccines. I suspect the federal government's going to have to turn around and

either donate or sell the hundreds of millions of doses that we'll have acquired to other countries that don't have it yet.

There's not going to be any shortage after the summer, and we will absolutely not need this done at all. This is a huge waste of money. That's \$7.2 million that they're literally throwing out the window, that they're giving to a connected Conservative insider—which is concerning in itself.

You know, this government has to stop rewarding its friends and start helping Manitobans. They could take that \$7 million that they're literally throwing out the window and that would wipe out the entire deficit for the Pembina Trails School Division.

That school division could hire its 19 teachers that it needs to keep up with enrolment. They don't have to expand class sizes for high school. They can hire back the teachers that do English as additional language, and we can keep librarian-teachers in our schools.

None of these things have to happen. And the money's right there, and it's about values and it's about choices. And right now, this government's telling Manitobans that they would rather piece off a PC insider than pay for public education and teachers in classrooms. And that's just—it goes beyond being disappointing. It's downright shameful.

We see that Manitoba's eligible for hundreds of millions more in federal funding, but the Province has to match those funds. And they have refused to do so, despite having billions in the bank, despite not spending the billions that they've already borrowed.

It's just sitting in a bank account right now—\$900 million in a rainy day fund they've—they're now accessed over \$2 billions in appropriations from last year that was over and above the budget, and they won't even say how much hasn't been spent. And the reason why is they're ashamed.

They haven't spent a good chunk of that money and people need help and they're not getting it. And so this government cynically wants eye-popping numbers to go out and say, hey, we're doing all this. And they're setting aside this money but it's a bait-and-switch, Madam Speaker, because we know they don't actually spend the money.

The help isn't getting to the bedside, the help isn't getting to the classroom and the help isn't getting to the small business, so. It's unfortunate, but this is who they are and I doubt at this point they're going to change.

So thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes. I'd just like to take the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

Yes. We are very concerned about not just the handling of the pandemic for the last year but how we're going to get out of it. If we go back to a year ago, we were calling then—in the month of March—for a new fiscal update.

We were calling for support for early childhood education, for PPE for small businesses, because it was very clear that the immediate result of the shutdown, the lockdown—without adequate business supports—was going to bankrupt people. And it has. It has bankrupted—many businesses have shut down across Manitoba. Many are struggling. Many are losing money every single day they're open.

And one of the consequences—sorry, actually, one of the reasons this has happened is that the government, it was very quick to reopen and very slow to shut down. Throughout September and October, we were urging greater caution and greater investment in PPE. We were asking for harder lockdowns. We were warning about more severe—the fact that Manitoba had—was consistently seeing higher infection counts.

And we're actually starting to see that again now, which is incredibly concerning. It's happening elsewhere around the world. It's pretty clear that other places are in a third wave and one of the things that's different about—the only thing that's different about Manitoba is that it sometimes happens a little bit later.

We're not—we know that we're not immune. We know that it can happen to anybody, and part of the argument that people have been trying to make throughout the pandemic is to say, well, there—it hasn't happened here yet, or it hasn't happened in a gym, or it hasn't happened in this location.

There is no safe place from COVID, and fundamentally, we're dealing with a major—a depression-level financial crisis, again.

In our submission to the Finance Minister we made a series of recommendations, but at the very top of it needs to be that we have to continue—we're still in a—we're—we have to deal with the fact that we're in an emergency—we are still in code red right now—that there are many businesses that are struggling and losing money on a daily basis.

And it's not just a question—we're concerned about two things. One is the possibility of a third wave, another shutdown, but the other is that the—too much, essentially the—there's too much activity and too much growth in areas that are highly volatile. We are—we're actually watching, we can actually see in real time how inequality is playing out, and it's quite disturbing.

I'll just give the example that there have been—there was a case in the newspaper about some young landlords who bought a small building out in St. James-Assiniboia, evicted everybody and boasted that they were going to make \$2 million—or \$5 million for—\$2 million from it, from there, because they were going to evict everybody who's been living there, people, you know, working-class families, middle-class families who've been—had a safe place to live, secure place to live, for over a decade, in some cases.

They were all being turfed out, evicted in the middle of a pandemic, trying to find someplace else to live, and the landlords were going to go and say, well, we're going to crank up the rent by \$500 a unit.

They did a quick calculation; it'll be \$2 million that they'll make in profit, but for every single person who has one of those 28 units, they are going to have to find \$75,000 they didn't have before. Where is somebody going to find \$75,000 to pay rent in a building that may only have had minimal repairs?

So we're extremely concerned, and I did—we did flag this with the minister, the Finance Minister, that the recovery we're in right now—or the perceived recovery—is hugely dependent on enormous amounts of debt and enormous amounts of—and rising house prices and rising rental prices.

So what you're seeing is a direct transfer of money from people who are, you know, working-class families and middle-class families straight into the hands of people who are newly minted landlords and millionaires.

And it's a—this is an incredibly destructive process that is not going to be able to—it cannot sustain itself. There's going to be a point when it breaks the system and people are not going to be able to pay their bills, they're not going to be able to pay their rent, and it's a—and that is what we're going to have to deal with.

We basically postponed a lot of the financial difficulties that were brewing prior to the pandemic, and they're—the risk is that they're going to arrive right now or they're going to arrive as soon as we let our guard down.

So we are dealing both with a public-health crisis as well as an economic crisis. We've been able to sort of keep both under wraps, but we need to be prepared to act, in both cases, boldly, and we need to also—I know we've been urging the government to do this for over a year—to recognize that in a crisis like this, you act differently and that tax cuts for property taxes are not actually going to drive economic growth; PST is not going to drive economic growth.

What we need to do is have stability, and stability is a tremendously undervalued commodity in our society. But that is what we need above all, and we need to have a commitment to investment and stable and steady investment, especially in people who haven't seen investment for a very long time.

So I won't go on much longer than that, Madam Speaker. It is absolutely critical. As we've said many times, this is not a time to be worried about the amount of water that you're using to put out a fire.

We don't need to be worrying about what the water bill is and worrying about the water bill that we're going to be leaving for future generations if what is happening is that our economy is burning down. We need to make sure that businesses and other organizations are around to survive and be a part of the recovery. That is the most important thing we can do.

So I certainly urge—we've already made our submissions clear to the Finance Minister and the government—this is a time we need to be able to build a bridge out of this and not just simply leave people on their own again.

So thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Very briefly, the Finance Minister mentioned earlier on that the federal contribution was 20 per cent, that \$648 million over \$3.2 billion, but, in fact, as we saw from the mid-term, that the extra expenditure is actually \$1.456 billion and so the minister's actually adding in some 1.7 or 1.8 billion dollars he spent in future years, without having any idea what the federal government may or may not contribute toward that.

* (16:00)

So, much of what the minister has said is very speculative and the real numbers right now are that the \$648 million of federal dollars is 45 per cent of the \$1,456,000,000, and not the 20 per cent that the minister claimed.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is that Bill 70, the appropriation act, 2021, be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

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

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 70, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021, for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 70—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021

Mr. Chairperson: Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order.

We now consider Bill 70, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021.

Does the honourable Minister of Finance have an opening statement?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Yes, could I consult with the clerk for a second?

Bill 70 is required to provide interim spending authority for 2020-21 fiscal year. I'll briefly provide a description of the provisions of the bill, just for members.

Subsection 2.1 specifies the interim spending authority for operating expenditures is \$11,772,882,000, provides, again, up to 75 per cent—or, nine months—of operating dollars for the 2020-21 Estimates of expenditure.

Subsection 2(2) of Bill 70 includes, as in past years, interim financing of upwards of 90 per cent of capital investments. This amounts to about \$649,989,000, which is 90 per cent of the sums included in part B (Capital Investments), in 2021-22 in the Estimates of expenditure.

Subsection 2.3—or (3), Bill 70 provides interim financing—or interim funding, rather, for lending, for loan guarantees, such as the student aid as mentioned earlier on, MASC loans for farmers. This amount of funding is \$332,532,000, which is 90 per cent of the sums including part C (Loans and Guarantees), of 2020-21 Estimates of Expenditure.

Subsection 2(4), Bill 70 provides interim funding for capital investments in the reporting entities such as the school divisions, regional health authorities, Manitoba Hydro. This funding is to be provided in the form of loans. The amount of the funds, as in the previous years, represents about 90 per cent of the capital investments for part D, other reporting entities, Investments of 2020-21 Estimates of Expenditure. The amount is \$2,635,097,000.

Subsection 2(5) provides the authority for reporting entities to borrow funds that are provided as capital investments.

And section 3 reaffirms or affirms the money expended under the authorities of the act may be made through whatever department has become responsible for the programs or activities. This is consistent with previous or past appropriations acts and makes allowances for when a department is established.

Section 4 provides authority for up to \$200 million for the acquisition and development of inventory for 2021-22. The amount is based on last year's appropriation for acquisition of things, including things like personal protection equipment. This refers to inventory that would be acquired in 2021-22 and will be used in the subsequent year. This is more related to the accounting of it. You can't count it as spent until you've actually used it.

Subsection 5 authorizes up to \$88 million for payment occurring in 2021-22 that will reduce long-term liability occurred in—accrued in previous years for environmental and other liabilities.

And subsection—or rather, section 6 provides authorities up to \$2,635,097,000 towards commitments under section 45, The Financial Administration Act. This provides for commitments for capital projects beyond 2021-22 fiscal year to cover the completion of projects or fulfilment of contracts for capital projects that are initiated but not completed prior to March 31st, 2021.

And that concludes my comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Chairperson: I want to thank the minister for his comments. Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening statements? *[interjection]* No? Okay.

Shall we proceed—now we shall now proceed with the consideration bill by clause by clause. The title and the enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1–pass; clause 2–pass; clause 3–pass; clause 4–pass; clause 5–pass; clause 6–pass; clause 7–pass; enacting clause–pass; title–pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes business before the committee. The committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Arthur-Virden—[interjection]—oh, Turtle Mountain. I did that twice today. The honourable member for Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 70, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021, and reports the same without amendments.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), that the report be—of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (16:10)

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 70—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 70, the interim 'appropriachy' act—the interim—intern appropriation act, 2021, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 70, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021, as reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Are there any members wishing to speak in debate?

If not, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? [Agreed]

* * *

Madam Speaker: As per the earlier announcement, we will now move to debate on bills 63 and 51.

SECOND READINGS

(Continued)

Bill 63—The Petty Trespasses Amendment and Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So we will move to second reading of Bill 63, The Petty Trespasses Amendment and Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I rise—Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Municipal Relations, that Bill 63, The Petty Trespasses Amendment and Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: I am pleased to be able to rise and put a few words on the record in respect of Bill 63, the petty trespasses amendment and occupiers' liability act.

I apologize for the fact that on the slanted 100-year-old desks; occasionally, a binder moves at great velocity and dumps the contents of your binder on the floor, and so I'm looking to now turn my notes right side up.

While I'm doing that, let me say I was so pleased to hear the tributes today for Todd Miclash in the House. And, if you would indulge me for only a moment, there are so many stories that tell us who Todd Miclash was as a leader and—who had such great passion for this place, for this building. But the one, I think, that speaks the best is about eight years ago, they were redoing the front area above the grand stair, and they discovered, in removing plaster, the signatures of all the original artisans who had done the work.

And they discovered these signatures for the first time in 100 years, and Todd Miclash took these names down; he had staff investigate; they used the Manitoba archives; they found the family members of those craftspersons at that time and he invited them all to—back to the Legislature to be able to witness the signatures of their loved one from years and years and years ago, and he had some kind of a commemoration of that.

And I just thought there's only one example of the many, many instances that undoubtedly exist where that individual took exceptional care to just draw attention to this beautiful Legislature.

So, Todd Miclash, happy retirement. You are a treasure in Manitoba and we wish you well on a well-deserved retirement.

Madam Speaker, to the business at hand, Bill 63, Petty Trespasses Amendment and Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act, concerns have been raised in Manitoba, in rural areas and also in other neighbouring provinces, about trespassing laws, about crime and in other provinces, approaches have been taken to clarify what constitutes trespassing. The intent is, of course, to keep people safe.

There was, in Manitoba, the same effort now placed on going out to talk to people about rural areas and crime.

I am pleased that the Minister of Agriculture and the minister of Justice last year had a public consultation process that went forward which was very, very significant. It had hundreds and hundreds of respondents; various groups were spoken to and gave feedback to propose changes to The Petty Trespasses Act. I can tell you that the majority of the respondents and those who were canvassed responded and supported the direction of the changes that are now up for debate at second reading in the Manitoba Legislature today.

Quite simply, we are committed—this government—to keeping Manitobans safe wherever they live. These changes, we believe, will make the—Manitoba's trespass laws easier to enforce and help to prevent confrontations that can exist between landowners and trespassers.

It is in no one's best interest that some kind of confrontation—a face-to-face confrontation—happens, and right now with our rules, that is exactly what must occur in order for someone to convey to someone else that they shouldn't be on that property.

So we seek to remove that kind of compelled face-to-face confrontation through these rule changes.

Also, I would want to make very clear, that we respect the legal hunting, trapping and fishing rights of First Nations and other Indigenous peoples, and these amendments do nothing to impinge or impugn those rights.

I would want to draw attention to the fact, again, that various municipalities, residents, private citizens in rural Manitoba have raised concerns about the need to take greater action to address rural crime. And the essence of those concerns is that rural residents—some of whom live on farms—need better protection from

people who come onto their property, who steal, who cause damage, who damage valuable property, or who otherwise pose a threat to their safety or their health or their safety of livestock. And, I know that the Minister of Agriculture has spoken in this House, even recently, about these issues as well, and he will continue to bring those concerns forward in other legislation.

Madam Speaker, it matters because Manitoba represents approximately 7 per cent of the entire rural population of Canada, so—but we're responsible for about 12 per cent of Canada's property and violent crime. And so, we must address this. We've taken many, many steps to address safety issues in urban areas; these are steps to address safety issues in rural areas. So I'm pleased to sponsor these changes.

If I move on, I would want to also flag to my colleagues in the House that right now, when it comes to trespass and what constitutes trespass, essentially, if land is completely enclosed by a fence or a wall, well then someone entering into that land or onto that property is deemed to be trespassing. But clearly, that cannot be the only test. Right now, in law, if there is a partially enclosed area or property, then it's incumbent on the property owner to warn—to confront—the trespasser, and then the trespasser has to leave, and then, if the trespasser doesn't leave, that's a problem as well.

So, clearly there's other approaches in other provinces—we believe that those other approaches are better. They are advantageous. And so, this—these rule changes would then seek to say, even if a property doesn't have a fence or a wall that completely contains it, there's an assumption of trespass in certain cases.

Also, of course, though, to be reasonable, this bill contains a list of all those kind of entrants onto property who might legitimately have to go there. Whether that is a mail delivery person—I know that in many rural areas—I know Madam Speaker, you're from—you grew up in rural Manitoba, as well—and many areas don't have mail delivery onto a farm site or a yard site, but there's other people who do come onto the yard. Maybe they're delivering packages; maybe they're delivering parts and equipment; there's people who might be there for survey purposes, assessment, reading meters, construction and other things. And those entrants are, of course, authorized to be on the land. And so, this legislation includes a list of those.

* (16:20)

It's also important, I think, to underscore that that consultation that we undertook in 2020 was very broad. Manitoba Justice officials met with a wide variety of stakeholders, including the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, with MKO, with the Manitoba Metis Federation, with Keystone Agricultural Producers—or what we call KAP—and other agriculture producer organizations. There were hundreds, as I said, of public engagement surveys completed. And so this all indicated to us, back, that there was support for the changes.

Here's what the bill essentially does. As I said, it changes the name, of course—a new act to replace that old title—and it sets out trespass offences in two categories: a general offence that makes it an offence to enter onto property without lawful excuse—and that's not just areas that are then fully surrounded by a wall or a fence, those things include construction sites; residential lawns or gardens; farmyards; storage sites for agricultural equipment; lands and premises used for crops and cultivation, grazing or feeding of animals, raising of birds or fish or beekeeping; all of those things. If you're there and you're not authorized, you'd be trespassing.

But then, also, for properties that don't fall into that category, it would be an offence to ignore a request from an owner, occupier or tenant or not leave when asked to do so. Of course, as I said, there are exceptions to that rule and they are clearly listed in this bill proposal.

And then beyond that, I would just want to also make clear that when it comes to the other bill that is contained in these amendments, that being The Occupiers' Liability Act, I want to make clear that that bill is not about trespassing offences. It is about the civil law legal responsibility of owners, occupiers or tenants to people who are on their property.

So in Manitoba we are blessed to have a beautiful and very, very significant trail system in the province. Many people use those trails—*[interjection]*—in order to do so—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

It's getting a little bit loud here, so I would ask members to bring their conversations down or perhaps go to a loge.

Mr. Friesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So as I said, many people avail themselves, especially now during a pandemic, of the opportunity to hike or walk or bike. There are motorized vehicles

like ATVs, motorcycles that use trail systems, and when they do so and when they're on private land, it's okay, it can be done where those trails are set, where there's permission granted, but there's a separate, lower level of care—in other words, liability—afforded to those individuals by the landowner. That's a long-standing convention in this province.

And so, if you're on a recreational trail, if you injure yourself, it's not the responsibility of the landowner—if you were hiking and you tripped and broke your ankle—that would be—you have to assume some responsibility for being on that land.

I hike often with my wheaten terrier, Murphy, on the Canada trail—the trans-Canada trail—and we go onto property where the signs clearly denote that if we're there, we're there at our own risk and that even though we're entering onto private land, we must stay on the trail and we can't blame the landowner if something happens to us.

So, in this case, with this bill, what we seek to remedy here is to simply say we must be—we must also delineate, though, between those who are authorized to be on those private paths and those people who are entering onto private lands or property for ill intent. So, essentially what this bill does is amend The Occupiers' Liability Act to reduce the legal responsibility of owners, occupiers or tenants of premises to anyone 12 years old or older who are criminal trespassers. You do not owe the same duty of care to them. That duty of care is reduced from the existing general duty to a minimum duty.

Madam Speaker, as I said, I'm looking forward to the debate on these two sets of amendments. We believe that these are changes that are needed, they are changes that are well supported by Manitobans and the hundreds and hundreds of people who responded back on that consultation exercise. We believe that there are changes that will have the effect of reducing confrontation between owners and trespassers. As in all things, the—you know, we seek to make sure that people are safe wherever they live, whether rural or urban, and we believe that these are reasoned amendments and reasoned changes, and we invite the support of all members in the House on these changes.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked

by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Our legal system in Manitoba ensures that everyone is considered innocent until proven guilty—supposed to do that.

So why does the minister's bill do the exact opposite?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It does not. It reasonably resets the framework for what constitutes trespass.

These changes are not in isolation. They follow changes undertaken in other jurisdictions, as I said, for a variety of reasons, including the change that will not require that direct face-to-face confrontation that now must be undertaken between a landowner and someone on their property.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm just wondering—I'm very concerned that this legislation was modelled on other legislation either from Alberta or Saskatchewan.

Can the minister explain which—I think that was part of the survey—which legislation it was modelled on or which cases it would seem to be responding to?

Mr. Friesen: There have been changes in other provinces, including Saskatchewan and Alberta, but I would say that this is more of a made-in-Manitoba approach based on the advice provided by those third party organizations, the hundreds of individuals who responded to questionnaires.

That survey and those questionnaires, all of that work is now posted publicly, and I invite all members of this House to be able to view the results of that survey online.

Ms. Fontaine: What would the minister say to Manitobans who believe that this bill, Bill 63, will contribute to incidents like the murder of Colten Boushie?

Mr. Friesen: I would say to those Manitobans that we actually believe that the effect of this bill will be the opposite, to more clearly define when someone is on property that is not supposed to be there. And this bill speaks to that by actually removing that necessity for the face-to-face confrontation.

We don't want landowners or occupiers or renters to be directly confronting people on their property.

We want them to phone law authorities if they feel like laws are being broken.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, a question for the minister.

I think the minister is outlining a process where there is a group who have a minimum level of care, a group where there's a limited level of care and there may be a group who are maintenance workers and meter readers and so on, where the 'occupied' will—the landowner will have a greater, indeed, level of care.

I've got concerns with two issues. One is that the children under age 12 are not clearly specified. And second, that I have a concern that if you have an Indigenous person who comes to read a meter, that given the—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: I'm trying to anticipate where the member's question was going, but I believe he's conflating two things: that these amendments actually amend two separate acts.

The occupiers' liability law is the one that sets the test, that minimum standard of care. The previous bill, and that is the trespass law amendments, is the one that actually sets out those categories of individuals who are excepted. And, for them, when they're on the property, it would be deemed to be in the performance of their duties—people like meter readers, and, in that case, of course, they wouldn't be trespassing.

Ms. Fontaine: Does the minister believe that a family out berry-picking, who inadvertently crosses on to private property, should be immediately fined, or does he believe that they should be given a warning first?

* (16:30)

Mr. Friesen: The member knows that I am not a law enforcement officer. Law enforcement officers, in the performance of their duty, undertake to assess situations and then, with discretion, make exactly the kind of determinations that the member's referring to. That's not the job of the Attorney General of Manitoba. That's not even the job of a supervising officer. That's not the job of their chief. That's the job of the officer who attends the scene.

Mr. Lamont: I know that the minister is suggesting that people call, you know, pick up a phone. My concern is that there are large parts of rural Manitoba where, I mean—even areas that I'm very familiar with—that if there's a break-in and they've lost their RCMP

detachment, if they make a call it could be two and three hours before anyone arrives.

So, is there some reason—why aren't we investing in greater community policing or engagement in that level rather than—if we actually want to make sure that people are going to be answering, preventing confrontations and making sure that law enforcement is engaged?

Mr. Friesen: Policing matters. That is why we conducted The Police Services Act review. That report has now been received. Our government has received that report and will be implementing a broad action plan based on the recommendations of that report.

As that member knows, this is a very large piece of land called Manitoba, and of course, you know, we're always concerned with being able to augment our police capability, and that's a commitment that our government has made.

Ms. Fontaine: Could the minister share how he plans on enforcing his bill?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the Minister of Justice won't enforce this bill per se. If the member's referring to how this will look in communities, that will be then the responsibility of law enforcement agencies, if they are phoned.

If there's a potential infraction—someone indicates that someone is trespassing, then they will do what law enforcement officials do. And that means they will attend the scene; they will take evidence; they will see what they see, and they will make determinations about charges to be laid if it meets the threshold for charges, indeed, to be laid.

Madam Speaker: Was the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) wanting to ask another question?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, Madam Speaker.

The minister didn't ask my question, the—answer my last question. One is that you have a unlimited duty of care—a specification that this applies to individuals aged 12 or over, but what happens to aged 12 or under?

And, second, if you have an Indigenous person who comes to read a meter, given the racism in some areas of Manitoba, there may be quite concerning situations arise. How would you address that?

Mr. Friesen: On the first question: the general duty of safety continues to apply toward children younger than 12 years old.

On the second question, I would ask for a clarification of the member of what he means, because I'm not certain what he's referring to, but if there's a person who is Indigenous who is reading a meter, then they have every right to be on the property to read the meter.

Ms. Fontaine: I mean, it's not surprising that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) wouldn't understand the minister—or the member for River Heights' question on racism; that's not surprising.

I would ask the minister, though, he—when I asked my question, he said that it was up to the enforcement, but he knows darn well, Madam Speaker, that it is his responsibility of enforcing this new bill.

And so, again, the question is: How does he plan on enforcing what happens on private property?

Mr. Friesen: Well, our duties here, as legislators, are to pass or not pass this legislation.

In terms of how we enforce, well, there are penalties set for infractions on this, and there are maximum fines set that will be in effect. And so enforcement would be done by—if this Legislature passes the legislation, then this would be conveyed to law enforcement agencies and then they would undertake to enforce the bill exactly as I say, exercising discretion on the scene of a reported infraction and making that profession assessment of whether this infraction meets that determination and threshold of wrongdoing that charges should be laid.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), is there a question there?

Mr. Lamont: I just want to—if there's just some clarity. I know that there have been some issues.

I just want to understand: the minister is saying that not having confrontations—or, that this will somehow avoid confrontations because it sort of avoids citizens' arrests, but it is if—is it not the case that by removing that, that it is a possibility of escalation that'll simply, instead of having face-to-face contact, it'll be somebody pulling out a gun?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for raising that issue because it allows me to repeat that, currently under our rules, it requires that landowner, if the property isn't fully enclosed by a fence, to verbally warn someone, and I call it that face-to-face confrontation. So this removes that.

But on the other side of the equation, the member is right. This legislation would also remove that

condition that clearly now exists wherein a person could conduct or undertake a citizen's arrest. We want law-enforcement officials undertaking to do law enforcement and we don't think it serves the public interest to maintain that feature, and that's why it is being removed in this legislation.

Ms. Fontaine: I would be curious to hear the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) and his response to why they're plagiarizing legislation in the form of Bill 57 from a far-right, American think tank.

Mr. Friesen: I have no idea what the minister-member is talking about, so if she would like to take more time, maybe she could explain the accusation that she's making in the House this afternoon.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), is there a question there?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. The concern—I still have a concern if you have somebody who is Indigenous who goes on for a property to read a meter or for other legitimate reason, that if we're not very careful, we may set up a situation where there could be confrontation, just because of attitudes among some people, just as happened in Saskatchewan with Colten Boushie.

And I would ask the minister to clarify what would be the penalty for a landowner if he intervened where there was somebody who was Indigenous who had a legitimate right to be there?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I would want to clarify for that member that this legislation actually clarifies that there shouldn't be that direct interaction between that landowner. And if the member reads the legislation, he will see clearly that, through the posting of signs in appropriate spaces, you are deemed to have clarified and disclosed that this is private property. So it's seeking to exactly avoid this situation that the member mentions.

But I do remind him that in section 1, sub (3.1), it does list there all of those categories of workers who could effectively enter onto your property without constituting a trespass because they're there for legitimate reasons, regardless of what race, creed or colour that individual is.

Ms. Fontaine: Again, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Justice doesn't seem to get the question that's being posed by the member for River Heights and it is, quite simply, that there is systemic racism. And Bill 63, in many respects, fuels and legitimizes moments whereby there is individuals that will come into

contact with each other and one has more power over the other.

So the question is, again, how will the minister—how does the minister plan to mitigate some of that racism when Indigenous peoples come onto property?

Mr. Friesen: Answering the member's former question, she asked something about, you know, far-right plagiarism of legislation.

There were almost a thousand respondents to the government survey on this issue, so that member is then inadvertently or deliberately calling those Manitobans—well, she's characterizing their behaviour and their attitudes and their actions, but I can tell them: 69 per cent—we'll table the document. That member should know that this document exists on the Internet. If—he has an iPad in front of him; he can go to the Internet and see that 69 per cent of respondents supported exactly these petty trespass changes.

* (16:40)

So if he can read, he can read that document online—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Lamont: Yes. Thank you. Just as a point before a question: one is that, no matter how many people have a majority or how many people like something doesn't mean you can overrule the constitution.

I can't—I simply—I'm trying to understand. On the face of this, it looks like this legislation assumes that people are guilty and that there's a violation of the presumption of innocence.

Does government legislation in Manitoba go through an assessment to see whether it conforms with the Charter of rights?

Mr. Friesen: Yes. That member can have every confidence that, as governments—in plural—are assisted with the design of legislation, that considerations are given to make sure that it is constitutional in nature, that it does not conflict with things like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and then from that point it proceeds to the House, where debate takes place.

So, I'm happy for the debate today, and I'm pleased to be able to put on the record today these clarifications for the purpose of the members.

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

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm only going to speak a couple minutes to Bill 63, because I do know that my colleague would like to get up, as well, Madam Speaker, and there is simply not enough time to deal with the sweep of legislation that we have before this House.

I do want to say this: what I think is really important for Manitobans to understand is that, under the cover of COVID-19, under the cover of a global pandemic, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and every single one of their Cabinet should have been doing everything possible to protect and take care of Manitobans, instead, what we see under the cover of this pandemic, is legislation that is aimed at repression of Manitoban's rights.

And it seeks to—and legislation that is actually in direct response to Indigenous peoples here in Manitoba. And so, Bill 63 also has to be seen within its totality and its connection to Bill 57, the protection of critical infrastructure, and Bill 62, which is basically an ag gag legislation, which I think is also important to note that ag gag legislation that we see in Alberta and Ontario and that comes from the states; ag gag legislation was actually created and constructed by the industry in the states, and has been in the US and has been used to suppress whistleblowers, animal rights activists, et cetera, et cetera.

And so, when we look right now what the Pallister government's priorities have been, it is predominantly aimed at silencing Manitobans who are—do not agree with the Premier, or do not agree with the actions of his Cabinet, and to squash dissent.

And so, Madam Speaker, it's really important that we understand that there is a suite of legislation before the House right now that, at some point—unless they all get a bit of courage and say, you know what, we're actually going to stand up for Manitobans' right to protest; we're going to stand up for Manitobans' right to dissent, unless they get a little bit of courage and go against their boss—Manitobans need to know that all of these bills will at some point receive royal assent.

I'm proud to announce that we announced that we are—as one of our five designated bills—are delaying Bill 57, again, The Protection of Critical Infrastructure Act.

We're delaying it until the fall, and hopefully, between now and then, the members opposite will—

like I said, get a piece of courage and actually say, you know what, these bills aren't good for Manitobans and we're going to go up against our boss and we're going to say, hey boss, we need to kind of withdraw these legislation—these pieces of legislation.

Because, while the members are laughing opposite while I'm speaking, I know that they think taking away the rights of Manitobans to protest or dissent or even walk on property without risking getting shot—like we saw in Saskatchewan with Colten Boushie—while they may think that's funny, I can tell you that Manitobans do not think that's funny. I can tell you that Indigenous peoples do not think it's funny.

It is not funny that we have a government that is strategically and legislatively attacking Indigenous peoples on our own territories. On our own territories, we're being told in Bill 63, do not go onto any private property. Even if it's not clearly mapped out, don't dare go on private property, because you're risking getting shot. That's what Bill 63 is doing. Bill 63 is presuming that anybody that comes onto that land is guilty and we're going to ask questions later.

Indigenous people are not happy about the sweep of legislation that we see, but so are Manitobans. Manitobans see what this government is doing, see that the Premier is acting and behaving in an authoritarian way with getting rid of our democratic rights to protest and dissent. That's what they're all sitting there allowing to happen as we sit here today, in the midst of a global pandemic. It is shameful.

And let me just say again, Madam Speaker, I don't know if they don't see what's going on, but Manitobans loathe them; they loathe the Premier; they loathe them. They're all going to lose their seats. We are going to be on the opposite side because of the decisions that they sit by and do nothing about, including legislating a tax against Indigenous peoples.

Am I going to be sad when they're all gone? Not at all. But they should open their eyes and get some courage and withdraw Bill 63, withdraw Bill 62 and withdraw Bill 57.

Miigwech.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 63.

When the—well, this piece of legislation first came forward, there was a couple interesting comments that

just kind of jumped out and key buzzwords, I guess, that stood out to me.

First off, the word clarify; nothing could be further from the truth.

And also the word landowners. We talk about landowners; I want to mention the word and the name Colten Boushie, Colten Boushie, Colten Boushie. Just for the simple matter of—and I raise his name in this Chamber, in this basically non-Indigenous Chamber, because Colten Boushie was supposedly guilty of trespassing. And I put that in quotes, Madam Speaker, the word trespass, because Bill 63, the petty trespasses amendment and occupiers' liability act, is meant to define that and meant to categorize people as trespassers no matter who they are, no matter where they are.

So, Colten Boushie did not trespass. He was on land that inherently belonged to Indigenous people; that inherently belonged to his community; traditional territory of his ancestors and will be traditional territory of his future generations. So he was guilty of nothing, but yet, he was murdered. He wasn't killed. It wasn't an accident. He was murdered.

And then reading this piece of legislation, it just clearly brings back the relevance and the very clear similarities—and maybe I'll use that word—clarifies the similarities between that instance and what's going on here today with Bill 63. And I do want to kind of say an expert—an excerpt that was written. The minister had talked about other jurisdictions getting it right. And so, does that mean Saskatchewan got it right?

The law of self-defence or defence of property, both laws require that the accused's perceptions of threats and response be reasonable and not simply honestly held.

* (16:50)

In part, this may have been because Gerald Stanley, who killed Colten Boushie, did not formally plead any self-defence, though his lawyer stressed in closing arguments to the jury that the Stanleys were on their own and that, unlike urban residents, they could not expect the police to arrive quickly. Moreover, he argued that the Stanleys faced a nightmare situation and that the vehicle there was being used as a weapon and there was stealing and crashing and that the jury should decide whether Stanley had a lawful excuse for careless use of a firearm.

So to me, Madam Speaker, that clarifies to me exactly the intent of what Bill 63 brings forward; it brings forward and incites confrontation. The minister talks about this clarifies and this is going to eliminate those confrontations. Fact of the matter is, it's going to incite that even more so.

When we sit there, we talk about exactly who is inherent in this land and who are the landowners, and the minister talks about if there's a fence up there, if there's a fence that clearly defines your land.

So all those generations ago, if Indigenous peoples put a fence on the east coast, the west coast, the north and south coasts, is that good enough? Would that be good enough to now claim this land as theirs? Because it is; it is inherently Indigenous people that are the rightful inherent landowners here, and Bill 63 works to eliminate that, works to try and so-called clarify the landowners and the landholders of this territory.

There's various First Nations within Manitoba that clearly have and clearly define—by a way of a sign, mind you, even by a way of fence in some cases—clearly define their traditional territory. Their traditional territory is not bound by the Indian Affairs federal government reserve boundary. It's bound by the traditional territory that they share with their ancestors and they share with the neighbouring communities and their neighbouring Indigenous people.

So to me that's exactly where this clarification needs to be extremely clear, and this minister's piece of legislation does nothing but try and cloud that judgment. It's meant to slowly chip away and incite confrontation and incite racism and incite the fact of the matter of anybody's who's trespassing on those areas, because the minister clearly knows and he's clearly targeting Indigenous people that are coming to those so-called private lands and private areas with Bill 63.

When we have those kind of things that is slowly—like I mentioned—slowly chipping away and there are a lot of pieces of legislation that are brought forth by this government, Bill 63 being one, that slowly chip away at what those are. And at some point in time, they're going to pull back the curtain and say, lookit, we have all these things there to get out there and integrate, assimilate and eliminate all Indigenous peoples and their way of life.

Bill—there was The Wildlife Amendment Act that was raised in the fall, I believe, by the member from Gimli, that talked about just simply nuisance beavers.

So what did that mean at that time? That meant that these farmers and these so-called landowners are now going to be walking around armed, they're going to be walking around with a gun strapped to their back, claiming to be out there to—by way of that piece of legislation—to deal with nuisance beavers.

But now, what happens if that same landowner—and I'm going to use air quotes on that: land owner—comes out and says, well, hey, that person is not supposed to be here, those people are not supposed to be on my land, didn't you see my sign? Didn't you—this trail isn't for you.

But now what happens, that confrontation and that heated argument that starts to happen, now is with one person potentially being armed, and we all know how those types of things can escalate very, very quickly.

And when we talk about this piece of legislation as—this act being brought forward, it slowly, slowly chips away. Bill 57 is another one that'll chip away at the inherent right and inherent voice to speak up, the inherent voice and the right to go and free—you know, is this the land of the free? Maybe I'll use the quote: the land of the free and the home of the brave. Because that's what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about: Americanization.

And that's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing. It's Americanizing our way of life here in Manitoba; it's now potentially giving somebody the right to walk around their property armed to the teeth, to be able to defend that property. Even though the minister is trying to clarify, saying, no, no, no, it's going to take away from that, this is going to now put it in the arms of somebody else to deal with, this is

going to alleviate any kind of confrontation, when the fact of the matter is this is going to incite it even more.

So what happens in Colten Boushie's situation, where that landowner felt they were on their own?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 23 minutes remaining, and I am interrupting debate in accordance with the provisions of the Sessional Order for the royal assent of Bill 70.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Honour Janice C. Filmon, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks Your Honour to accept the following bill:

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier):

Bill 70 – The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021; Loi de 2021 portant affectation anticipée de crédits

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In Her Majesty's name, the Lieutenant Governor thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

* * *

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 22, 2021

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Tabling of Reports		Post-Secondary Education	
Johnson	1807	Moses	1816
Driedger	1807	Ewasko	1817
Ministerial Statements		Justice System	
Todd Miclash		Fontaine	1817
Pallister	1807	Friesen	1817
Kinew	1808	Establishment of Parent Advisory Councils	
Lamont	1808	Lamont	1818
Members' Statements		Pallister	1818
Swistun Family		Setting of Student Union Fees	
Wharton	1809	Lamoureux	1819
World Water Day		Ewasko	1819
Kinew	1809	Manitoba's Protein Industry	
Manitoba Honour 150 Award Recipients		Wowchuk	1819
Morley-Lecomte	1809	Pedersen	1820
Bourkevale Winter Wonderland and River Trail		Immigrant Integration Program	
Sala	1810	Marcelino	1820
Charlie Clifford		Ewasko	1820
Wishart	1810	Petitions	
Speaker's Statement		Cochlear Implant Program	
Driedger	1811	Gerrard	1820
Oral Questions		Lamoureux	1821
Early-Childhood Education		Diagnostic Testing Accessibility	
Kinew	1812	Maloway	1822
Pallister	1812	Public Child-Care Grants	
AgriStability Program		Sala	1823
Kinew	1813		
Pallister	1813	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Manitoba Bridge Grant Program		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Kinew	1814	Messages	
Pallister	1814	Fielding	1824
Inclusive Education Curriculum		Committee of Supply	
Asagwara	1814	Interim Supply	
Cullen	1815	Wasyliw	1824
Climate Change		Fielding	1824
Naylor	1815	Gerrard	1825
Guillemard	1816	Committee Report	
		Piwniuk	1827
		Interim Supply Motion	
		Fielding	1827

Introduction of Bills

Bill 70–The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021
Fielding 1828

Second Readings

Bill 70–The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021
Fielding 1828

Questions
Wasyliw 1828
Fielding 1829
Gerrard 1829

Debate
Wasyliw 1832
Lamont 1834
Gerrard 1835

Committee of the Whole

Bill 70–The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021
Fielding 1836

Committee Report

Piwniuk 1837

Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 70–The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021
Fielding 1837

Second Readings

(Continued)

Bill 63–The Petty Trespasses Amendment and
Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act
Friesen 1837

Questions
Fontaine 1840
Friesen 1840
Lamont 1840
Gerrard 1840

Debate
Fontaine 1843
Bushie 1843

Royal Assent

Bill 70 – The Interim Appropriation Act, 2021 1845

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

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